



Nature Conservation Council

The voice for nature in NSW

16 May 2025

Submission to the NSW Transmission Planning Review 2025 Options Paper

The Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales (NCC) is the state's peak environment organisation. We represent over 200 environment groups across NSW. Together we are dedicated to protecting and conserving the wildlife, landscapes and natural resources of NSW.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats facing the natural environment and humanity. In NSW, over 1000 species are at risk of extinction. Only 50% of listed threatened species are expected to survive the next 100 years.

We note that infrastructure projects and major works have played a role in contributing to the decline and extinction of some native species. However, transitioning to a net-zero economy as quickly as possible, and reducing our reliance on coal-fired power is essential to arrest both the climate and extinction crisis.

Delays to the renewable energy transmission rollout risk throwing the NSW renewable energy target – and our state's emission reductions targets – off course. Community support for renewable energy, especially within the state's Renewable Energy Zones, is critical to a smooth transmission rollout.

NCC has worked with community groups in the Hunter and New England REZs to develop [joint policy recommendations to improve outcomes for nature and communities from the NSW REZs](#).

We provide the following recommendations with respect to transmission to improve clarity in roles of relevant agencies, address community concerns relating to benefits and impacts on nature and ensure sufficient transmission capacity to meet renewable energy demand.

Ecological protection and restoration priorities should be identified for each REZ to guide planning

The renewable energy transition is a once in a generation opportunity to revitalise the regions and address historic land use impacts on a regional scale. However,



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consideration of environmental impacts is currently considered on a project-by-project basis.

NCC recommends that a single agency lead consultation with REZ communities and relevant experts to identify regional protection and restoration outcomes and targets sought. These regional protection and restoration outcomes should consider cross-sectoral impacts and restoration opportunities for nature and form the backdrop for further planning of renewable energy projects within REZs.

NSW Department of Planning and EnergyCo should play an active role in contributing to specific nature positive environmental regional outcomes

To have the most positive environmental impact, EnergyCo and the NSW Department of Planning should work more closely and collaboratively to coordinate renewable energy developments within REZs to contribute to protection and restoration priorities.

This includes proactive outreach to local community and environmental groups at an early stage in transmission projects.

Assignment to a specific agency to develop regional community benefit plans related to REZs or transmission projects is also a critical ingredient to the social licence needed for timely transmission rollout.

Ensure sufficient transmission capacity to meet renewable energy demand

There are lengthy delays with key NSW transmission projects that risk undermining the renewable energy transition and extending the life of coal fired power plants.

To date, transmission augmentation decisions have followed a "least regrets, just in time" decision making framework. This has resulted in project delivery that is too late (eg. Humelink) and too small (eg. Project Energy Connect). Given the end-point of the system is clear (a zero emissions grid), shifting the decision-making framework towards starting projects earlier and bigger "just in case" would deliver significant benefits for relieving supply constraints, reducing time pressure on community engagement and environmental assessments, reduce reliance on aging coal assets, and achieving climate targets faster.

While there is significant overlap between the ISP and other transmission planning reports, it is appropriate that a NSW state government body is accountable for decisions



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and delivery, as state governments have ultimate accountability for secure and affordable electricity delivery.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation. Your contact person at NCC is Senior Climate and Energy Campaigner, Jacqui Mills.

Yours sincerely,

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