

To Whom it may concern,

The following submission is in response to the Energy Co's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)  
SSI-48323210

## Project Details

Application Number	SSI-48323210
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EPBC ID Number	2022/09353
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Assessment Type	State Significant Infrastructure
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Development Type	Electricity supply
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Local Government Areas	Warrumbungle Shire, Mid-Western Regional, Dubbo Regional, Upper Hunter Shire
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Exhibition Start-End Date	28/09/2023 -08/11/2023
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My family and I are active members of the local Cassilis community on the Eastern side of the Central-West Orana REZ Transmission Project. I understand the need for a renewable energy source for our community, businesses and the Australian community going forward.

However, I am disappointed in the consultation process, the way this has been communicated and believe from reading this EIS, that this project is being rushed through with very little understanding of local communities and the impact on their businesses and lives. My issues with the EIS are related to the Eastern end of the Project because that is where I was born, live in, which my children are being raised and have the greatest knowledge of. I would like to point out the following 3 issues that I believe have not been adequately addressed by Energy Co with the Current EIS;

1. Lack of community consultation with the Cassilis Community.
2. The dangerousness of the preferred general construction route to the M1 Switching Station and transmission lines gates at the Eastern end of the Line.
3. The lack of acknowledgment or understanding that this project will put on the Golden Highway (HWY) through the project's footprint and East of the project affecting small town Business centres, such as Merriwa.

## Issues that need to be addressed

### **1. Lack of community consultation with the Cassilis Community.**

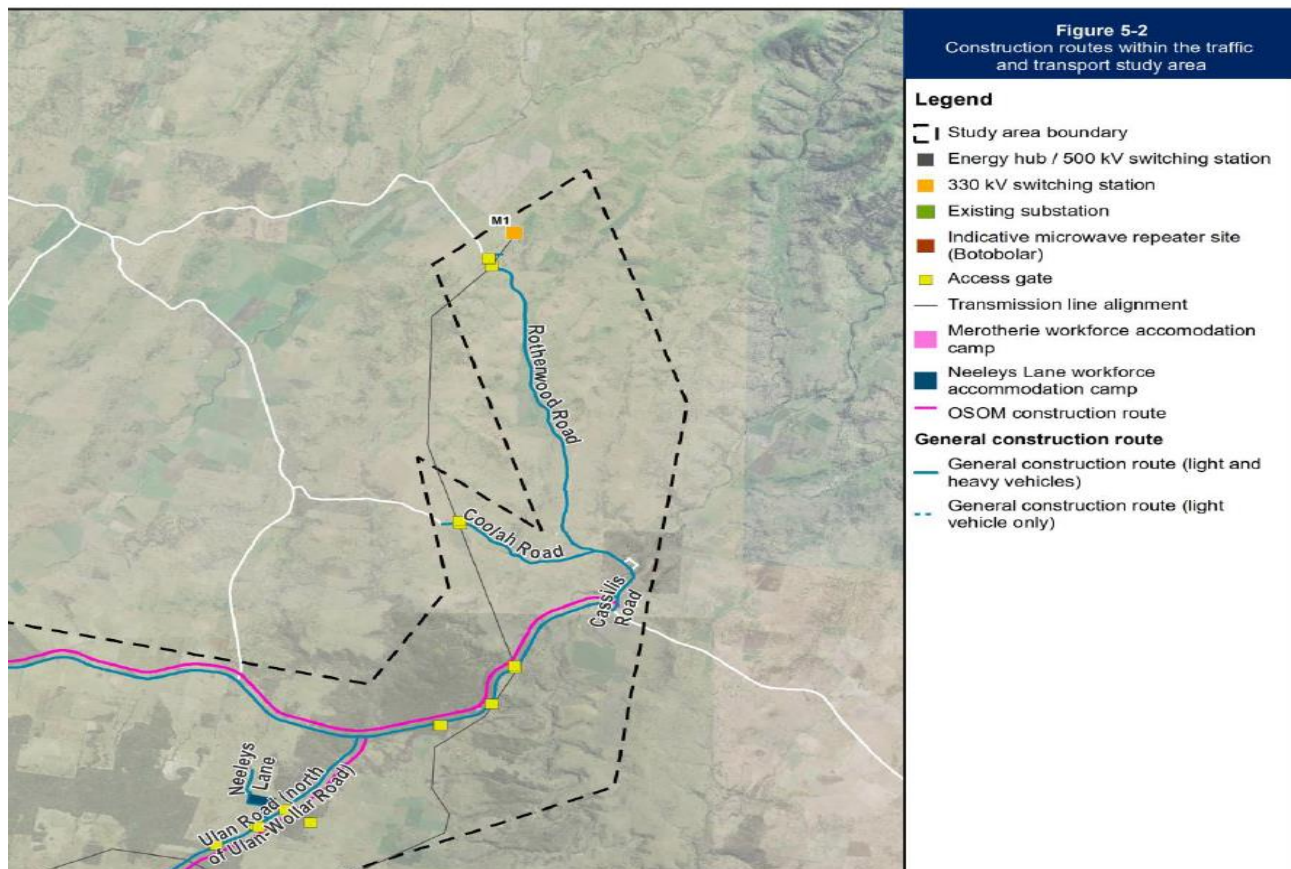
During the community engagement process there has been no Energy Co community consultation session held in the village of Cassilis regarding the EIS. Therefore, it has been very hard for the community to engage or work with Energy Co to put forward their concerns or ideas that would have helped lessen the impacts on the community and their day to day lives. For example, none of the 16 houses on Ancrum Street Cassilis knew until last week (only one week before the exhibition extended End date being 08/11/23) that their suburban street was the preferred general construction route for the M1 Switching station (Table 5-3 page 57 of the technical paper 13 – Traffic and Transport).

The EIS is a huge document that includes a lot of technical reports that are hard for people in the community to understand the impact of the construction period of this project. The size of the paper and lack of consultation makes it extremely hard for someone who works full time, has a young family, or runs a business to understand the impacts of this project on them or the community they live in and are involved in as they are bogged down with paperwork and time to submit appropriate feedback.

The lack of Consultation has also led to confusion throughout the community because there has only been consultation sessions held by the local wind tower project (tilt energy) who have advised that their proposed Temporary workers camp will not be traveling through Cassilis, however Energy Co's general construction route to the M1 switching station will go through the Village. This confusion and lack of transparency has led to distrust of government, renewable energy projects, and consultation from large corporates. Which has led to increasing anxiety and stress in the community.

## 2. The dangerousness of the preferred general construction route to the M1 Switching Station and transmission lines gates at the Eastern end of the Line.

The General construction route to the M1 switching station and transmission line from the Neeleys lane workers camp (some 800 workers) (screen shot below) is through the village of Cassilis.



In Section 5.2.1 (page 73 of technical paper 13) it states that during construction; *“Vehicles utilising the transmission lines would typically be 32 vehicles per hour (12 light vehicles and 20 heavy vehicles)..... This it would not adversely impact the performance and capacity of the road network....*

*With the addition of forecasted construction traffic, the impact to the road network’s capacity and efficiency would be minor.”*

These statements clearly show that Energy Co during their planning process have not taken the time to drive some of these roads. The general construction route proposed to the M1 Switching and Transmission lines from Neeley’s Lane Workers Camp is along the Golden HWY onto the Cassilis Road into town, turning up the hill on to Ancrum Street then turning on to the Coolah Road at the top of Ancrum street.

Energy Co description in the EIS of Ancrum Street is below;

Table 4-4 Local road network within the study area

Road name	Description	Pavement	Configuration and speed limit
Ancrum Street, Cassilis	A short section of local road in Cassilis town centre between Coolah Road and Uarbry Road	Sealed with unsealed shoulders and no line marking	Bidirectional two-lane road (one lane in each direction) 50 km/h

Ancrum Street (with 16 houses on it) is a quiet suburban Street that has a very steep start to it, that heavy vehicles currently avoid because it is too steep for them to use. Currently semi's avoid this route altogether because they can't turn onto Ancrum Street without losing traction on the steep slope at bottom of the hill. The project during its peak states that they estimate that 20 heavy vehicles per hour would use this route, which shows a lack of understanding of the local roads.

Another issue with the use of this street, that the EIS doesn't address, is that it says Ancrum St is bidirectional. This may be the case assuming that no cars are parked on the edge of the street in front of their houses (which is where some of the residence park). With a vehicle parked on the side of the road in front of their house the street is not bidirectional. Nor is there line marking on the street which will make this steep street very dangerous with an increase of 32 vehicles per hour. I don't know how this is a minor impact when recent observations show that on average only 4 cars use this Street per hour. With the EIS stating roughly a vehicle every 2 mins (being 12 light and 20 heavy) that results in an 800% increase in traffic on this suburban street.

The EIS also fails to mention the school Zone at the top of Ancrum street and the start of the Coolah Road. There is currently no school crossing for the children or foot paths for the children to walk to or from school and yet Energy Co's proposal is to increase the traffic by 32 vehicles per hour (12 light vehicles and 20 heavy vehicles) with no mention of the 40km school Zone, or acknowledgment of the extra local traffic during pick and drop of times. Not only have they not mentioned the school zone they have not consulted with the parents or children of the school with this extra traffic turning onto the Coolah Road right at the School. There has also been no acknowledgement of the heavy vehicles coming down the hill with the noise of their engine brakes past a learning environment (being the local primary school) and the noise impacts on the quiet village of Cassilis. This has not been addressed and this lack of understanding/knowledge of the proposed general construction route is a huge oversight that will significantly increases the risks of a child being hit on the Road whilst walking home from school. This risk is High and an alternate route should be adopted!

If Energy Co drove this route during their planning process, they would have realised this and hopefully addressed it or looked for an alternative route. If they did drive this route it shows the lack of awareness and low consideration for the Cassilis town in the EIS, especially when there is an alternative route to avoid the Village of Cassilis altogether.

An alternative route to the Transmission lines and M1 switching station could be;

- From Neeleys lane workers camp, they could head West along the Golden HWY, then right onto the Vinegaroy Road, then right on to the Coolah road through to the transmission line access gates or continue along and turn left on to the Rotherwood road through to the M1 switching station which would be avoiding a school zone, a quiet village street and large Hill with less disturbance on the village.

**3. The lack of acknowledgment or understanding that this project will put on the Golden Highway (HWY) through the project's footprint and East of the project affecting small town Business centres, such as Merriwa.**

As a business owner, a parent, an employee, and a community member I drive this road every day. Currently trucks using this road find it difficult with the lack of overtaking lanes, how narrow the road is, the blind spots that occur on it and the driver frustration that occurs because of the low speeds that the trucks are reduced to, over the 12 hills that are crossed between Tongy Lane and Merriwa. The trucks that use this road from west of Dubbo delivering or picking up supplies from Newcastle have nicknamed it the "Goat track" which says how bad it has become. There is also no accumulative data that includes the total traffic during construction of the transmission lines and all the associated renewable energy projects that are going ahead in the Central West Orana REZ. This Data should be collected and supplied to the communities within in this project before construction starts so the full extent is understood.

The data used in the EIS (Table 4.8 page 49 technical paper 13) is dated between 2016-2020, it doesn't include the section of road through to Merriwa and let alone the recent run of Fatal and Serious injury's (FSI) that have occur in this section over the last 3 years which has closed the HWY for a number of hours (last 3 crashes has been 7-9hrs each). With the increased traffic from Energy Co and the projects in the Orana it is not just the turn offs in the Zone that needs to be addressed, it is from Merriwa heading west (onwards) that should be addressed as turn offs on to the HWY or off the HWY are going to be impacted with the extra traffic and wide loads with no alternative route for traffic should something happen on this HWY.

Using the old data that Energy Co has used the EIS states that 41% of crashes on the Golden HWY are classified FSI. This is before any of the energy co traffic, or the Orana Renewable energy Zone Traffic is added to the HWY, therefore increasing the risk further. This is a very high percentage with Energy Co not showing how they are going to mitigate this, with its increased traffic on this HWY during the construction period.

There is no mention of the cumulative impact of Energy Co's developments on the town of Merriwa even though all the Over size, over mass (OSOM) and other vehicles for the developments will travel through the main shopping precinct of Merriwa. The current Impact of OSOM vehicles travelling through this centre is very significant. Currently they travel through town with 20 -30 vehicles that have built up following closely behind. No one can cross the street, no one can park in the main street and businesses will be impacted with the increased number of these. Safety concerns also arise when you consider that school children cross this section of the highway to access the swimming pool, and further to the east to access the ovals, tennis courts etc for sport where there are no pedestrian crossings. There has been no mention of a heavy vehicle bypass for this section of town or any discussion on how the impacts of all these vehicles on this community are going to be mitigated. There is no mention of safety crossings being put in so school children can access sporting facilities in the town. The EIS does not discuss the cumulative impact on the Merriwa community and its business precinct and once again shows very little knowledge of local concerns, impacts and no mitigation measures.

I would like these issues addressed and fixed. I am happy to be consulted further as would the community of Cassilis and Merriwa who have not be adequately addressed with this current Energy Co EIS.