



Big Sky Country – The Hay Plain

ERM and Engie would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Hay Plain and pay respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge and respect their Indigenous knowledge systems and recognise continuing connection to lands, waters, culture, and community.



Hay LALC archaeological survey

Cultural heritage assessments across NSW in 2023 and 2024 have seen a huge increase as clients apply for approval to construct and operate solar and wind farms in renewable energy zones (REZs) in NSW. Large swathes of rural NSW are currently under assessment with Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) and Representative Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) busy getting involved in the consultation process for each project. The Plains Renewable Energy Park (PREP) south of Hay, is well positioned within the South-West REZ due to the abundance of high-quality wind and solar resources, and proximity to transmission infrastructure.

THE PROJECT



Due to the size of the PREP and the length of the ongoing assessments, heritage consultants can participate in long term projects covering large landscapes. This allows climate patterning and site distribution to be recorded and assessed. Strong relationships between heritage consultants, energy providers and the Traditional Owners (TOs) of the Hay Plain are pivotal to the success of cultural heritage protection in the coming decades.



Engie Australia and New Zealand (Engie) proposes to construct and operate, the Plains Wind Farm, in the Riverina Murray region of NSW. The Project Area is located about 15 km south of Hay within the boundary of Hay LALC.



Engie engaged Environmental Resources Management Australia Pty Ltd (ERM) to complete an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) to identify, assess, and develop management recommendations for any identified Aboriginal Cultural Heritage within the Project Area.



EARLY CONSULTATION = BIG BENEFITS

The PREP has undergone many design changes over the last two years, including changes to avoid all significant cultural heritage sites. The ongoing and strong relationship established between Engie and Hay LALC during early consultation in 2022, prior to any archaeological assessment, has ensured that Hay LALC and Nari Nari Tribal Council's participation was possible throughout all stages of the consultation process. **Early and meaningful consultation with Engie has meant that the project has seen high participation and interest from RAPs.**

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

During the consultation process Hay LALC and Nari Nari Tribal Council requested that test or salvage excavation should be completed under the authorisation of the Minister's Conditions of Approval, to avoid unnecessary impact to sites. This request was supported by ERM, in accordance with the Clean Energy Council's *Leading Practice Principles: First Nations and Renewable Energy Projects (2024)*, which focus on respectful engagement and the protection of cultural heritage. The final design for the project has been informed by the results of archaeological survey.

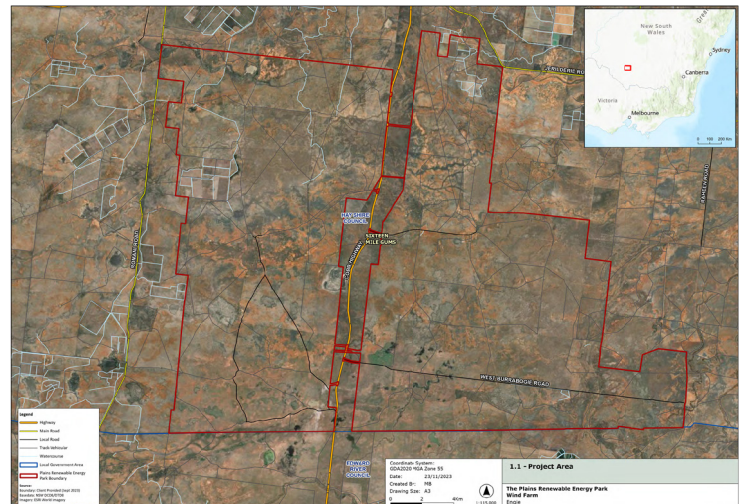


Figure 1-1: Project Area



Artefact scatter and hearth



Grindstone