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Major landscaping plan for new Scone substation

EnergyAustralia will plant 3000 trees as part of a major landscaping plan for the proposed Scone zone substation site, according to the project's environmental assessment.

The tree planting will replace five trees for every one cleared during development of the substation on a site off the New England Highway, south of the township of Scone.

EnergyAustralia's Executive General Manager Geoff Lilliss said the substation was the key facility in a \$28 million upgrade of the electricity network supplying the district.

"This project will boost power supplies to more than 5,000 homes and businesses in Scone, Moonan, Gundy and Rouchel," Mr Lilliss said.

"It involves replacement of the existing Scone zone substation in Barton Street, development of a high voltage power line from Aberdeen to supply the new substation, and improvements to power lines.

"It's part of a \$142 million boost to power supplies investment we will be making in the Upper Hunter electricity network over the next five years."

EnergyAustralia has delivered letters with detailed plans for the substation to 100 homes and businesses.

Mr Lilliss said community feedback had helped improve the substation project, in particular the landscaping plan designed to screen the site and improve the character of the area.

"We undertook extensive consultation with local community representatives and groups at the start of project planning last year and this feedback has helped shape our final designs," Mr Lilliss said.

"In particular, we have recognised the work already done by Landcare on this site, and we have used their input to develop a landscaping plan that retains as much vegetation as possible as well as providing generous compensation for the clearing that will be required.

"We estimate that we will need to remove 600 trees, but we will be replacing them with another 3000 local native species suitable to the saline conditions."

Mr Lilliss said EnergyAustralia had also been working with Scone High School on a proposal that would enable part of the site to be used as pasture for the school's livestock, as well as providing a water tank and pumps that would allow the school to use rainwater from the substation site for irrigation.

Mr Lilliss said the substation would be the first EnergyAustralia project in the region to be assessed under the new State Environment Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007, which took effect at the start of this year. The legislation replaces the local government Development Application process for public infrastructure works, such as electricity network projects.

"As required by the new SEPP, we have entered into a formal consultation process with neighbours adjoining the site and Upper Hunter Shire council," Mr Lilliss said.

"But the consultation undertaken local community representatives and groups last year has been incorporated into final designs."

Aberdeen-Scone power line

Mr Lilliss said EnergyAustralia was also working with residents along the proposed route for the Aberdeen-Scone power line required to power the new substation.

"We need to develop a new overhead line from south of the Dartbrook Coal Access Road at Kayuga to the new Scone substation, via our Aberdeen zone substation," he said.

"We have written to residents and businesses asking for input on the proposed route, which bypasses the Aberdeen town centre and utilises easements and road reserve on streets to the west of the township.

"We're getting some good feedback from residents along the route, and we already have our design team looking at some of the options that have been suggested.

"We're confident that this process will deliver a final route that minimises impacts on the local community."

Mr Lilliss said EnergyAustralia hoped to be in a position to start work on the power line in June, with work on the substation scheduled for May.

The substation and power lines are expected to be in service by the end of 2009.

Media contact: EnergyAustralia Hunter News Pager 02 9962 9754