

Project Ares Hyperscale Data Centre Stakeholder Engagement Plan

ENERGY
NORTH

PROJECT : ARES

Project Ares Hyperscale Data Centre

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Prepared by Energy North Pty Ltd

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This Plan is a public document prepared in accordance with the NT EPA’s expectation that proponents make their stakeholder engagement plans publicly available.

Acknowledgment of Country

Energy North acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the country on which Project Ares is proposed, including Murranji Station and the surrounding Barkly Region. We recognise and respect their enduring spiritual, cultural, and custodial connection to land, water, sky, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal peoples who may be connected to or have an interest in this country. Energy North is committed to engaging with Traditional Owners in a genuine, respectful, and culturally appropriate manner throughout all phases of the Project.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Plan

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan (the Plan) has been prepared by Energy North Pty Ltd (Energy North) to guide its approach to stakeholder engagement for Project Ares, a proposed hyperscale data centre campus at Murrarji Station in the Barkly Region of the Northern Territory.

The Plan has been developed in accordance with the NT EPA's Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Guidance for Proponents (2021) and the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. It sets out Energy North's approach to engaging with all stakeholders throughout the life of the Proposal, from the referral stage through to construction, operations, and decommissioning.

This Plan is a living document. It will be reviewed and updated throughout the life of the Project to reflect:

- Stakeholder feedback and subsequent changes to the project
- Changes in the project programme or regulatory timeline
- Changes to stakeholder and community needs or information requirements
- New stakeholders identified through the engagement process
- Progress through project phases - referral, EIS, FEED, construction, and operations

Updated versions of the Plan will be provided to the NT EPA at key assessment milestones and made publicly available.

1.2 Proposal Overview

Project Ares proposes to develop a hyperscale data centre campus at Murrarji Station in the Barkly Region of the Northern Territory, approximately 50 km north-west of Elliott. The Proposal comprises a single-build 1 GW IT capacity data centre campus, supported by 3,000 MWp of solar PV generation, 16 GWh of battery energy storage, and gas-fired generation for firm power and backup, with associated infrastructure including access roads, rail siding, borefield, airstrip, and construction workforce accommodation village. All key parameters are indicative and subject to confirmation through detailed design and FEED. A full description of the Proposal is provided in the NT EPA Referral Report.

1.3 Regulatory Requirements for Approval and Operation

Project Ares requires assessment and approval under a range of NT and Commonwealth regulatory frameworks. A full description of the applicable regulatory requirements for approval and operation is provided in the Regulatory Context chapter of the NT EPA Referral Report. This Plan supports Energy North's compliance with the stakeholder engagement obligations under each of those frameworks, and in particular the Section 43 general duty of proponents under the EP Act 2019 (NT).

The Proposal is being assessed under the assessment bilateral agreement between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth, under which the NT EPA assessment process, including the public exhibition period during which the community can make submissions - is accredited to also satisfy the assessment requirements of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). The engagement programme described in this Plan therefore supports a single, integrated assessment process serving both NT and Commonwealth requirements.

2 Engagement Framework and Principles

2.1 Energy North Stakeholder Engagement Framework

Energy North's approach to stakeholder engagement is guided by a seven-step framework that reflects the company's commitment to genuine, ongoing, and meaningful engagement with all stakeholders throughout the life of the Project.

Table 2-1: Energy North Stakeholder Engagement Framework

Step	Action	Description
1	Identify	Identify key stakeholders and community representatives with interest in the Project
2	Inform	Disseminate timely and accurate information to affected stakeholders to raise awareness of the Project
3	Understand	Increase stakeholder understanding about the Project, including its context, aims, opportunities and constraints
4	Listen	Ensure community beliefs, culture, values and concerns are well understood
5	Accumulate	Accumulate feedback from affected stakeholders to inform Project development and ensure outcomes appropriately meet the relevant needs of those concerned
6	Report back	Provide updates about consultation outcomes to stakeholders involved and how feedback has been considered in project planning
7	FPIC	Ensure that affected stakeholders are provided with adequate time, information, and support to enable their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) to project activities

2.2 Engagement Principles

Energy North's engagement approach is grounded in the following principles, which apply across all stakeholder groups and all project phases.

Table 2-2: Engagement Principles

Principle	What this means for Project Ares
Rights-based	Energy North recognises the rights of Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities, and affected stakeholders to participate in decisions that affect them. Engagement will be conducted in accordance with applicable legislative requirements and international best practice standards including FPIC principles.
Authentic	Energy North will report openly on impacts, issues and concerns raised, and demonstrate how feedback has been captured and used to inform project development and assessment.
Inclusive	Engagement materials will be clear, accessible, and culturally appropriate. Energy North will ensure a broad and diverse range of stakeholders are consulted, with particular attention to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement protocols.
Transparent	Energy North will use open communication across all aspects of the Project, actively encourage participation, and be clear about the matters on which we are seeking input and how that input informs decisions.
Responsive	Energy North will acknowledge and respond to queries, issues and complaints promptly, and consistently communicate responses to emerging issues or opportunities.
Respectful	Energy North will allow genuine dialogue, respect cultural protocols and the pace of engagement preferred by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities, and create opportunities for stakeholders to participate in respectful discussions.
Accountable	Energy North will provide key points of contact for concerns or queries, maintain a clear complaints mechanism, and take ownership for issues that arise.
Collaborative	Energy North will seek to build long-term, trust-based relationships with Traditional Owners, communities, and stakeholders, focused not just on consent but on shared project benefits.

2.3 Commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Stakeholders

Energy North is committed to a rights-based, respectful approach to engagement with Traditional Owners, supported by the Northern Land Council (NLC). Energy North recognises that Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is not a transactional step but an ongoing, culturally grounded process. Our engagement with Traditional Owners will be:

- Focused on building a genuine, collaborative relationship, centred not just on consent, but on shared project benefits and long-term outcomes for communities
- Responsive to the pace and protocols preferred by Traditional Owners and the NLC
- Transparent about the Proposal, its potential impacts, and Energy North's regulatory context
- Supportive of Traditional Owner decision-making, providing adequate time, information, and support without pressure or assumptions
- Consistent with the requirements of the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)

Energy North acknowledges that benefit-sharing arrangements with Traditional Owners will be developed collaboratively and in a staged manner, commensurate with the project's development milestones and in accordance with applicable legislative requirements.

Consistent with FPIC, Energy North's engagement with Traditional Owners is built around four elements:

- **Free** – decisions are made voluntarily, free from coercion or pressure, with inclusive participation
- **Prior** – engagement is sought ahead of activities, allowing adequate time for traditional decision-making processes
- **Informed** – Traditional Owners receive relevant information in an accessible and culturally appropriate way, with interpreter support where required
- **Consent** – decisions are made collectively, respecting customary decision-making structures, and may be conditional or revisited over time

2.4 Best Practice Standards

In addition to the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation and the NT EPA's Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Guidance for Proponents (2021), Energy North's engagement with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal stakeholders draws on, and has regard to, the following best-practice frameworks. These are voluntary frameworks that guide Energy North's approach; they do not displace Energy North's obligations under the EP Act, the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth), the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth), or the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (NT):

- Clean Energy Council, Leading Practice Principles: First Nations and Renewable Energy Projects (2024) - relevant to the Proposal's renewable energy generation component
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), in particular Article 32 concerning the development of Indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources
- Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Akwé:Kon Voluntary Guidelines (2004) - for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessment regarding developments proposed to take place on, or likely to impact, sites and lands traditionally occupied or used by Indigenous and local communities

3 Purpose, Scope and Objectives

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to provide a clear and transparent framework for stakeholder engagement across all phases of Project Ares. The Plan is designed to ensure that Energy North meets its obligations under Section 43 of the EP Act, the NT EPA's Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Guidance for Proponents (2021), and applicable Commonwealth and NT legislation governing engagement with Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners.

3.2 Scope

This Plan applies to all stakeholder engagement activities undertaken by Energy North in connection with Project Ares, across the following project phases:

- Referral and EIS phase - from lodgement of this Referral through to receipt of environmental approval
- FEED phase - detailed engineering, environmental assessment, and approvals
- Construction phase - early works, main construction, and commissioning
- Operational phase - data centre operations over the project's 25+ year operational life
- Decommissioning and rehabilitation - progressive and final decommissioning

3.3 Objectives

Energy North's engagement objectives, aligned with the Section 43 general duty of proponents under the EP Act and the NT EPA's guidance, are to:

- Provide communities, government agencies, and Traditional Owners with clear, timely, and accessible information about the Proposal and its potential impacts and benefits
- Engage with Traditional Owner groups through the NLC in a culturally appropriate manner, in accordance with the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)
- Seek and document community and Traditional Owner knowledge relevant to the environmental and cultural values of the project area
- Address Aboriginal values and the rights and interests of Traditional Owners in relation to the project footprint
- Provide genuine and ongoing opportunities for all stakeholder groups to engage across all phases of the Proposal
- Consider stakeholder feedback in project planning, design, and assessment decisions, and incorporate it where appropriate
- Build and maintain respectful, long-term relationships with communities and stakeholders in the Barkly Region.

3.4 How Stakeholder Input Can Shape the Proposal

Energy North is committed to meaningful engagement and to being clear about where stakeholder input can genuinely shape outcomes. There are many aspects of how the Proposal is sited, developed, delivered, and managed where engagement will directly inform project decisions, such as:

- Layout and siting of infrastructure within the project area, to avoid or reduce environmental, heritage, and amenity impacts
- The scope, timing, and methodology of cultural heritage and ecological surveys, including Traditional Owner participation
- Groundwater monitoring and water management measures
- Environmental management and mitigation, including measures for threatened species such as the Greater Bilby
- Traffic management, heavy-vehicle routing, and construction scheduling
- The structure, targets, and benefit-sharing arrangements of the Territory Benefit Plan
- Community investment priorities and benefit-sharing programme design
- Employment, training, and local and Aboriginal procurement pathways and targets
- Rehabilitation and end-of-life land use

4 Previous Engagement

At the time of this referral, stakeholder engagement has focused on government and regulatory agencies, preliminary engagement with the Northern Land Council (NLC), and engagement with adjacent pastoral landholders. Broader community and stakeholder engagement, including formal on-country engagement with Traditional Owners, engagement with the Elliott community, and engagement with industry and environment groups – has not yet commenced and remains to be undertaken. Energy North is being explicit about the status of engagement so that the consultation completed to date, and the consultation still to occur, are clearly distinguished.

This sequencing is deliberate. Energy North has prioritised completing key technical inputs, including pre-FEED engineering and desktop ecological and groundwater assessments, and establishing the regulatory and land-access pathway through the NLC, so that Traditional Owners, community members, and other stakeholders are engaged with accurate, complete, and meaningful information about the Proposal and its potential impacts. Broader engagement is planned to commence in 2026, both through and alongside the NT EPA public exhibition process. The engagement still to be undertaken is set out in Section 6 (Engagement Methods and Techniques) and Section 7 (Engagement Programme and Timetable).

4.1 Summary of Pre-Referral Engagement

A summary of pre-referral engagement activities is provided in Table 4-1. Engagement with each of the stakeholders listed in Table 4-1 is ongoing and will continue throughout the assessment and EIS process. Full background on how this engagement has informed the Referral Report is provided in the Consultation chapter of the NT EPA Referral Report. Full engagement records are maintained by Energy North and will be provided to the NT EPA as part of the EIS process.

Table 4-1: Pre-Referral Engagement Summary

Stakeholder	Timing	Method	Key Outcomes
NT EPA	Ongoing from 2023	Meetings; emails; phone calls	Informed likely regulatory pathway; environmental factors for assessment; baseline data adequacy
NT DLPE – Flora and Fauna Division	Ongoing from 2024	Meeting; presentation; emails	SREBA and existing baseline datasets indicated adequate for referral; preliminary disturbance footprint presented, no in-principle concerns raised; Survey methodology approach for Threatened species; pre-clearance conditions
NT DLPE – Water Resources Division	Ongoing from 2025	Meeting; emails	Wiso Basin constraints identified; licence application pathway confirmed; conservative upper bound approach adopted; draft Groundwater Extraction Licence application (GWEL) submitted for review
Department of Mining and Energy (DME)	Ongoing from 2023	Recurring meetings; briefings; emails	Whole-of-government facilitation; land, energy, water and infrastructure planning coordination
Office of the Territory Coordinator (OTC)	Ongoing from 2025	Meetings	Project development pathway
Department of Logistics & Infrastructure (DLI)	Ongoing from 2024	Meetings; emails	Infrastructure corridor planning and coordination
DCCEEW (Commonwealth)	Ongoing from 2024	Meetings; emails	EPBC referral pathway; bilateral assessment; Threatened Species management
DTBAR	Ongoing from 2024	Meetings; briefings	Trade and investment facilitation; Digital Territory Strategy alignment
NT Ministerial Offices	Ongoing from 2024	Ministerial briefings; correspondence	Project overview provided; ongoing NT Government engagement and facilitation
Commonwealth Ministerial Offices	Ongoing from 2024	Meetings; briefings	Project overview and Government support confirmed through designation

Stakeholder	Timing	Method	Key Outcomes
			of Commonwealth Major Project Status (MPS), financing agency coordination
Commonwealth Major Project Facilitation Agency	Ongoing from 2024	Meetings, briefings, MPS application correspondence	Designation of Major Project Status, Whole of Government Facilitation
Northern Land Council (NLC)	Ongoing from 2024	Meetings; emails; phone calls	Engagement approach discussed and proposed; land access and Native Title pathway discussed; heritage survey approach; TO involvement in survey work
AAPA	Ongoing from 2026	Correspondence; initial meeting	Authority Certificate application pathway discussed; sacred sites clearance process confirmed
Host Landowner	Ongoing from 2023	Emails; phone calls	Ongoing – subject to confidentiality obligations
Adjacent Pastoral Stakeholders	Ongoing from 2024	In-person meetings; emails, phone calls	Project briefing; groundwater and fire management identified as key concerns

4.2 Approach to Pre-Referral Engagement and Referral Adequacy

Energy North recognises that the NT EPA expects engagement with key stakeholders prior to lodgement of a referral, so that stakeholder views can be gathered while the proposal is still being developed and can inform the identification of potential impacts. Energy North's approach to pre-referral engagement, and the adequacy of the referral as a basis for assessment, is set out below.

Engagement with directly affected parties has commenced. As summarised in Table 4-1, Energy North has undertaken targeted pre-referral engagement with the parties most directly affected by, or most directly involved in, the Proposal, including the NLC as the representative body for Native Title holders, adjacent pastoral landholders, the host landowner, AAPA, and the relevant NT and Commonwealth regulatory agencies. This engagement has already surfaced and captured key concerns, for example, groundwater drawdown and fire management raised by adjacent pastoralists, and heritage survey approach and Traditional Owner involvement in surveys raised through the NLC. Broader engagement with interest-based stakeholders, including the Elliott community and industry and environment groups, is sequenced to follow during the EIS process.

The referral identifies the issues that broader engagement is expected to raise. The matters anticipated to be of greatest interest to the community, Traditional Owners, and other stakeholders have been identified and are addressed in the scope of the referral and the proposed assessment. These include groundwater extraction and water security; impacts on the Greater Bilby and other threatened species; heavy vehicle traffic on local roads; sacred sites and cultural heritage protection; employment and economic participation opportunities for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal

communities; and greenhouse gas emissions and the Proposal's renewable energy commitments. Because these matters are already identified and built into the assessment scope, the absence of completed broader engagement at referral does not leave a material gap in the issues identified for assessment.

The forward engagement programme is designed to inform the EIS. The engagement methods and timetable set out in Sections 6 and 7 are structured to deliver community, Traditional Owner, and stakeholder input during the assessment process and in time to inform the EIS – so that the Proposal continues to be shaped by engagement as it is refined through FEED and detailed design. Energy North considers that this approach is consistent with the purpose of the NT EPA's guidance: that engagement gathers stakeholder views while the proposal is still being developed and uses them to inform proposal planning, mitigation, and assessment.

5 Stakeholders

5.1 Stakeholder Identification and Mapping Methodology

Energy North undertook a structured stakeholder mapping exercise to identify entities with a potential interest in, or who may be affected by, the Proposal. Stakeholders were identified on the basis of:

- Regulatory or approval role in relation to the Proposal
- Potential to be directly or indirectly impacted by the Proposal
- Custodial, cultural, or Native Title interests in the project area or surrounds
- Land access or operational interests that may be affected by the Proposal
- Broader interest in the environmental, social, or economic outcomes of the Proposal

The identification of Aboriginal stakeholders, including Traditional Owners and Native Title holders, is being undertaken in conjunction with the Northern Land Council and will be confirmed and refined through the forthcoming on-country engagement process. Stakeholder identification is an ongoing process. Additional stakeholders identified through the engagement process will be added to the register accordingly.

5.2 Stakeholder Groups

The stakeholder mapping process identified five key stakeholder groups. For engagement-planning purposes, these groups are broken down further into the specific organisations and sub-groups set out in the stakeholder register (Table 5-1) and in the engagement methods described in Section 6. The five key stakeholder groups are:

- Government and regulatory agencies – NT and Commonwealth government departments, ministers, statutory authorities, and regulators (including the NT EPA, DLPE, AAPA, and DCCEEW) with an approval, assessment, or facilitation role in relation to the Proposal
- Aboriginal stakeholders – Traditional Owner groups, the Northern Land Council (NLC), prescribed body corporate(s), and Aboriginal corporations with custodial authority or representative roles in relation to the project area and surrounds
- Host landowner and pastoral stakeholders – the host landowner (Murrarji Station) and neighbouring pastoral properties
- Local communities, including Elliott and the broader Barkly Region – Elliott residents, community organisations and regional service providers, and local businesses with potential to participate in the project supply chain

- Industry, environment, and peak body organisations – industry associations, environment groups, peak bodies, and relevant educational and research institutions with an interest in the Proposal

5.3 Stakeholder Register

Table 5-1 provides the full stakeholder register for Project Ares.

Table 5-1: Project Ares Stakeholder Register

Stakeholder Group	Organisation / Body	Relevance to Proposal	Anticipated Interests and Concerns	Engagement Status
Government	NT EPA	Environmental assessment under EP Act; bilateral process with DCCEE	Assessment pathway; referral scope; EIS requirements	Engaged – ongoing
Government	NT DLPE – Flora and Fauna Division	Threatened species; Greater Bilby; SREBA dataset	Survey methodology; pre-clearance conditions	Engaged – ongoing
Government	NT DLPE – Water Resources Division	Groundwater licence; Wiso Basin allocation	Water availability; licence pathway; monitoring	Engaged – ongoing
Government	Power and Water Corporation (PWC)	Provider of water, power, and sewerage services to Elliott and surrounding Barkly communities; regional groundwater interest	Town water security and regional groundwater	Planned - 2026
Government	Department of Mining and Energy (DME)	Whole-of-government facilitation; PDA; land and energy coordination	Project development pathway; statutory approvals	Engaged – ongoing
Government	Office of the Territory Coordinator (OTC)	Project development pathway; land tenure; statutory championing	Tenure conversion; planning approvals	Engaged – ongoing

Stakeholder Group	Organisation / Body	Relevance to Proposal	Anticipated Interests and Concerns	Engagement Status
Government	DLI	Development consent; infrastructure corridor; road authority	Planning Act consent; infrastructure alignment	Engaged – ongoing
Government	AustralAsia Railway Corporation (AARC)	NT/SA statutory corporation responsible for the Adelaide–Darwin rail corridor and coordinating third-party developments along it; engagement counterpart for the proposed rail siding connection	Rail-corridor access and siding connection; rail safety and operational interface	Planned – 2026
Government	NT Pastoral Land Board	Non-pastoral use permit for the project area under the Pastoral Land Act	Non-pastoral use approval; pastoral land management and land condition	Planned – 2026
Government	NT Ministerial Offices	Project overview and NT Government support	Economic development; project progress	Engaged – ongoing
Government	NT Department of Trade, Business and Regional Development (DTBAR)	Trade and investment facilitation; Digital Territory Strategy; Asia-Pacific market development	Investment facilitation; digital economy strategy alignment	Engaged – ongoing
Government	Barkly Regional Council	Local government; community awareness; regional services	Local employment; service capacity; community benefits	Planned – 2026
Government	NT WorkSafe	Construction notification;	Safety compliance	Planned – FEED phase

Stakeholder Group	Organisation / Body	Relevance to Proposal	Anticipated Interests and Concerns	Engagement Status
		dangerous goods approvals		
Government	Bushfires NT	Fire Management Plan development	Fire risk; management protocols	Planned – FEED phase
Government	NT Health	Health services planning for construction workforce	Health service capacity; workforce impacts	Planned – EIS process
Government	AAPA	Authority Certificate application; sacred sites clearance	Sacred sites protection; heritage survey approach	Engaged – ongoing
Government	DCCEEW / NEPA (Commonwealth)	EPBC Act referral; bilateral assessment; Greater Bilby	MNES assessment; baseline data; bilateral process	Engaged – ongoing
Government	Commonwealth Ministerial Offices & Agencies (MPFA, NAIF, CEFC, EFA)	Commonwealth support; financing facilitation	Commonwealth investment; EPBC pathway	Engaged – ongoing
Traditional Owners & Organisations	Northern Land Council (NLC)	Representative body for Native Title holders; land access; engagement facilitation	Engagement approach; FPIC; heritage surveys; TO involvement in surveys; land access pathway	Engaged – ongoing
Traditional Owners & Organisations	Traditional Owners and prescribed body corporate (to be confirmed through NLC engagement)	Custodial authority over project area and surrounds; to be confirmed through NLC facilitation	Water use on country; sacred sites; employment; economic participation; ecological and heritage surveys	Planned – 2026 on-country workshops via NLC

Stakeholder Group	Organisation / Body	Relevance to Proposal	Anticipated Interests and Concerns	Engagement Status
Pastoral Properties	Host Landowner (Murrnji Station)	Current holder of PPL 1074; land access arrangements	Land access terms; project impacts on pastoral operations	Engaged - ongoing
Pastoral Properties	Adjacent Pastoral Landholders	Neighbouring properties; groundwater; fire management	Groundwater drawdown; fire risk; traffic; airstrip operations	Engaged - ongoing
Community Groups	Elliott Community	Nearest township (~50 km); construction and operational impacts	Employment; traffic; community services; economic benefits	Planned – 2026
Community Groups	Barkly Regional Council community services	Regional service delivery; community infrastructure	Service capacity; construction period impacts	Planned – 2026
Research Institutions	Relevant educational and research institutions	Workforce development; training pathways; research collaboration	Training and employment pathways; research opportunities	Planned – 2026
Service Providers / Business Owners	Local businesses, Elliott and Barkly Region	Local procurement; supply chain opportunities	Local content; employment; business opportunities during construction and operations	Planned – 2026
Residents and Communities	Elliott residents and Barkly Region communities	Potential social and amenity impacts during construction and operations	Traffic; noise; employment; community investment	Planned – 2026 public information sessions
Industry Representative Groups	NT Cattlemen's Association	Pastoral land tenure; groundwater impacts on stock water	Groundwater; land access; pastoral coexistence	Planned – 2026

Stakeholder Group	Organisation / Body	Relevance to Proposal	Anticipated Interests and Concerns	Engagement Status
Industry Representative Groups	NT Indigenous Business Network (NTIBN)	Aboriginal business participation; procurement	Aboriginal procurement targets; supply chain access	Planned – 2026
Industry Representative Groups	ICN NT	Local industry participation; supply chain	Local content; procurement opportunities	Engaged - ongoing
Industry Representative Groups	Environment Centre of the NT (ECNT)	Environmental oversight; threatened species; climate	GHG emissions; biodiversity; groundwater; renewable credentials	Planned – aligned with NT EPA public exhibition
Industry Representative Groups	Arid Lands Environment Centre	Arid zone biodiversity; water resource management	Water extraction; biodiversity impacts	Planned – aligned with NT EPA public exhibition

6 Engagement Methods and Techniques

6.1 General Approach and IAP2 Spectrum

Energy North applies a tiered engagement approach, with the level and intensity of engagement commensurate with the level of impact and interest of each stakeholder group. The approach is guided by the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, from informing and consulting through to involving and collaborating. All engagement activities will be documented in the stakeholder engagement register and reported to the NT EPA as part of the EIS process.

6.2 Engagement Methods by Stakeholder Group

Government and Regulatory Agencies

Engagement will be conducted through recurring structured meetings and project briefings, ministerial briefings and correspondence, formal submissions and regulatory pre-consultation, and emails, phone calls, and written correspondence.

Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Stakeholders

Engagement will be undertaken in a culturally appropriate manner, guided by the NLC and with respect for the protocols of the relevant Traditional Owner groups. Methods will include:

- On-country workshops facilitated by the NLC, conducted post wet season when country is accessible
- NLC-facilitated community meetings in appropriate locations

- Plain-language project information materials developed in consultation with the NLC
- Interpreter support where required
- Traditional Owner involvement in ecological and heritage surveys
- Regular project updates through the NLC throughout FEED and construction

Engagement with Traditional Owners will be conducted at a pace that respects traditional decision-making processes, determined in consultation with the NLC and Traditional Owners and consistent with FPIC principles. To enable engagement to proceed efficiently and predictably, Energy North will commence engagement as early as practicable, resource it appropriately, and be transparent with the NLC and Traditional Owners about project timelines and milestones, so that the engagement programme can be planned collaboratively and key decision points anticipated.

Host Landowner and Pastoral Stakeholders

Engagement with the host landowner is ongoing and conducted in accordance with confidentiality arrangements between the parties. Engagement with adjacent pastoral stakeholders will focus on project briefings, groundwater monitoring, fire management planning, access road and traffic management, and airstrip operations, as well as any other matters they raise during the assessment process.

Local Communities

Community engagement will be designed to be accessible, inclusive, and responsive to community needs, including:

- Public information sessions in Elliott
- Plain-language project summary and frequently asked questions document
- Community Liaison Officer (CLO) based locally during construction
- Project enquiries register and grievance mechanism
- Regular project updates through agreed community channels

Service Providers and Business Owners

Local businesses in Elliott and the Barkly Region will be engaged through industry briefings, project updates, and the Territory Benefit Plan development process to identify local procurement and employment opportunities during construction and operations. Energy North will work with the Industry Capability Network NT (ICN NT) to connect local and regional businesses to supply-chain and procurement opportunities, including through registration of the Proposal on the ICN Gateway.

Industry, Environment and Peak Body Organisations

This group includes environment and conservation organisations (such as the Environment Centre NT and the Arid Lands Environment Centre), business and industry networks (such as the NT Indigenous Business Network and Industry Capability Network NT), and relevant sector and peak bodies. These organisations have a broad interest in the environmental, social, and economic outcomes of the Proposal - environment and conservation organisations principally in groundwater and water management, threatened species (including the Greater Bilby), and greenhouse gas and renewable energy matters; and business and industry bodies principally in local content, procurement, and economic participation.

Engagement will be aligned with the NT EPA public exhibition process, providing formal opportunities for input through the submissions process. This will be supplemented by direct

briefings and meetings, provision of the Referral Report and supporting technical documents, and responses to issues raised during exhibition.

6.3 Engagement Tools Matrix

Table 6-1 summarises the engagement tools to be applied to each stakeholder group.

Table 6-1: Engagement Tools by Stakeholder Group

Stakeholder Group	Letters / Correspondence	Emails / Phone	Project Briefings	One-on-one Meetings	Community Sessions	Plain-language Materials	On-country Workshops	Site Visits
Government and Regulatory	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Traditional Owners and NLC	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Host Landowner and Pastoral	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Local Communities	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Research Institutions		✓	✓	✓				
Service Providers / Business		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Industry / Environment Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓				

7 Engagement Programme

Table 7-1 provides an overview of engagement activities across the project's phases. The phases are broadly sequential, although some, such as FEED, run concurrently with the regulatory assessment process. Timing will be confirmed, and the programme updated, as the project progresses through assessment and approval.

Table 7-1: Engagement Programme

Project Phase	Key Engagement Activities	Primary Stakeholders
Pre-referral (completed)	Government and regulatory agency engagement; NLC initial engagement; AAPA engagement; adjacent pastoral initial contact	NT EPA; DLPE; DME; OTC; DCCEEW; NLC; AAPA; pastoral stakeholders
Referral lodgement	Notify key stakeholders of referral lodgement; provide Referral Report and plain-language summary and FAQ to relevant parties	Barkly Regional Council; NLC; adjacent pastoral stakeholders; host landowner
NT EPA consideration of referral	Respond to NT EPA information requests; maintain engagement with government agencies	NT EPA; DCCEEW / NEPA; government agencies
NT EPA public exhibition	Public information sessions in Elliott; formal on-country TO engagement (NLC-facilitated); engagement with industry and environment groups; commencement of TBP development process; formal response to all submissions	Elliott community; Traditional Owners (via NLC); NT Cattlemen's Association; ECNT; Arid Lands Environment Centre; NTIBN; ICN NT; Barkly Regional Council
EIS Terms of Reference	Engagement on TOR scope with NT EPA; update stakeholders on assessment pathway	NT EPA; NLC; government agencies; community stakeholders
Draft EIS preparation	Continue TO engagement (NLC-facilitated); complete heritage and ecological surveys; groundwater assessment; social impact assessment; TBP development	NLC; Traditional Owners; DLPE; DCCEEW; adjacent pastoral; Elliott community
Draft EIS public exhibition	Public information sessions; formal submissions process; SIA community engagement; TO engagement on EIS findings	All stakeholder groups
FEED phase (concurrent with assessment)	Engagement on design matters with key agencies; groundwater monitoring programme establishment; TBP finalisation	NT EPA; DLPE; DME; NLC; Traditional Owners; adjacent pastoral; Barkly Regional Council
Construction	CLO established and operational; community updates; TO heritage monitoring; annual TBP reporting	Elliott community; NLC; Traditional Owners; adjacent pastoral; Barkly Regional Council
Operations (ongoing)	Operational community liaison; annual TBP reporting; ongoing NLC and TO engagement	Traditional Owners; Elliott community; NT Government; adjacent pastoral

Stakeholder feedback received during FEED will be formally considered in design decisions and documented in the engagement register. A decommissioning engagement plan will be prepared in consultation with Traditional Owners, the NLC, and affected stakeholders prior to commencement of any decommissioning activities.

8 Resources and Responsibilities

Energy North will resource dedicated community and stakeholder engagement functions to implement this Plan, including specialist support for culturally appropriate engagement with Traditional Owners through the NLC. The NLC and AAPA will play a key facilitation role in coordinating Traditional Owner engagement, heritage surveys, and ongoing liaison between Energy North and Traditional Owner groups. A Community Liaison Officer will be established during the construction phase as a local point of contact for the Elliott community and adjacent pastoral stakeholders.

9 Stakeholder Involvement in Monitoring

Energy North is committed to involving stakeholders, particularly Traditional Owners, in the monitoring of project impacts and mitigation programmes:

- Traditional Owner involvement in ecological surveys - Energy North will offer Traditional Owners the opportunity to participate in on-country ecological surveys, with the form and extent of involvement to be agreed with the NLC and Traditional Owners and subject to safety requirements and the nature of the survey work.
- Heritage surveys - heritage surveys will be progressed in coordination with the NLC and AAPA. Traditional Owners will have the opportunity to identify cultural heritage values and siting constraints that will be taken into account in finalising the project layout. Survey reports will be prepared in accordance with AAPA requirements.
- Groundwater monitoring - a groundwater monitoring programme with adaptive management trigger levels will be established; monitoring results shared with adjacent pastoral stakeholders and DLPE Water Resources Division
- Traditional Owner involvement in groundwater monitoring - Traditional Owners have a cultural connection to water on country. Energy North will explore opportunities to involve Traditional Owners in groundwater monitoring activities, including through on-country visits to monitoring bores, consistent with the approach agreed with the NLC.
- Community Liaison Officer - during construction, the CLO will monitor and document community impacts and concerns, ensure issues are responded to in a timely manner, and report regularly to Energy North's engagement team on the effectiveness of community engagement activities.
- Territory Benefit Plan reporting - annual reports against TBP commitments, including Aboriginal employment, business participation, and benefit-sharing outcomes, will be provided to Traditional Owners and the NT Government in accordance with applicable policy requirements

10 Reporting and Feedback

10.1 How Results will be Reported Back to Stakeholders

Energy North is committed to closing the feedback loop, ensuring engagement outcomes are reported back to affected stakeholders transparently and in a timely manner. The following mechanisms will be used:

- NT EPA public exhibition submissions response – all submissions formally documented and the issues raised addressed as part of the EIS process; summary provided to the NT EPA
- Plain-language summary and FAQ – provided to community members to explain the Referral and NT EPA assessment process in accessible language
- Stakeholder engagement reports – formal reports prepared and submitted to the NT EPA at key assessment milestones (referral, draft EIS, final EIS)
- Traditional Owner feedback – outcomes of Traditional Owner engagement provided to the NT EPA and DCCEEW as part of the assessment process
- Annual TBP reports – annual reports against Territory Benefit Plan commitments provided to Traditional Owners and the NT Government in accordance with applicable policy requirements

10.2 Grievance and Complaints Mechanism

A project enquiries contact is available during the referral and EIS phase for stakeholders wishing to ask questions or raise concerns about the Proposal (see contact details below). A formal grievance and complaints mechanism will be established prior to construction commencement. The mechanism will:

- Provide multiple channels for raising concerns – including phone, email, and written correspondence; during construction, in-person contact through the Community Liaison Officer
- Acknowledge complaints promptly, typically within five business days
- Investigate and respond to all complaints within an agreed timeframe
- Record all grievances in the complaints register
- Escalate unresolved issues to Energy North senior management
- Report on complaints to the NT EPA as part of stakeholder engagement reports at key assessment milestones

Project enquiries during the referral and EIS phase can be directed to the project email address: projectares@energy-north.com.

11 IAP2 Commitment and EP Act Compliance

11.1 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Table 11-1 demonstrates how Energy North's engagement approach aligns with the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

Table 11-1: IAP2 Spectrum Application to Project Ares

IAP2 Level	Promise to Stakeholders	Application to Project Ares	Stakeholder Groups
Inform	We will keep you informed.	Project information, plain-language summary, FAQ, regular updates throughout all project phases	All stakeholder groups
Consult	We will listen to your concerns and provide feedback on how your input influenced decisions.	Formal submissions during NT EPA public exhibition; government agency engagement; pastoral stakeholder engagement	NT EPA; government agencies; adjacent pastoral; industry and environment groups; Elliott community
Involve	We will work with you to ensure your concerns are reflected in alternatives developed.	Involvement in ecological and heritage surveys; input to project siting decisions; FEED design feedback; Territory Benefit Plan and local procurement input	Traditional Owners and NLC; local communities; pastoral stakeholders; Barkly Regional Council; NTIBN; ICN NT
Collaborate	We will look to you for advice, ideas and solutions and incorporate those into decisions.	Territory Benefit Plan co-development; heritage survey coordination; cultural heritage siting constraints; benefit-sharing programme design	Traditional Owners and NLC; Barkly Regional Council; NTIBN; ICN NT

11.2 Section 43 EP Act General Duty Compliance

Table 11-2 demonstrates how this Plan addresses each element of the general duty of proponents under Section 43 of the EP Act.

Table 11-2: Section 43 EP Act General Duty Compliance

Section 43 General Duty	How this Plan Addresses the Requirement
s.43(a): Provide affected communities with information and opportunities for consultation	Public information sessions in Elliott; plain-language project summary and FAQ; NT EPA public exhibition process; ongoing community liaison throughout FEED and construction; project enquiries register and grievance mechanism
s.43(b): Consult with affected communities, including Aboriginal communities, in a culturally appropriate manner	NLC-facilitated on-country workshops; engagement at a pace determined by Traditional Owners and NLC; interpreter support as required; culturally appropriate materials; FPIC principles throughout; specialist Indigenous engagement advisor
s.43(c): Seek and document community knowledge and understanding of natural and cultural values	Traditional Owner involvement in ecological surveys; heritage surveys progressed in coordination with NLC and AAPA; knowledge documented in AAPA-format reports; Cultural Heritage Assessment and Social Impact Assessment as part of EIS
s.43(d): Address Aboriginal values and rights and interests of Aboriginal communities	NLC engagement on land access and Native Title requirements; AAPA Authority Certificate application; Traditional Owner involvement in project planning and design; Territory Benefit Plan with Aboriginal employment and economic participation objectives