

Penny Sharpe

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

**David Harris**

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing
Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research
Minister for the Central Coast

Media Release**\$6 million awarded to First Nations projects in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone**

Aboriginal communities in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) will benefit from \$6 million in funding for community-led projects that will deliver lasting economic, social and environmental benefits.

Speaking in Dubbo today, Minister for Energy Penny Sharpe announced the successful recipients of grants under the First Nations Fund, which ensures renewable energy projects connecting to the REZ provide meaningful opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities.

The grants will allow recipients to develop critical projects that create jobs and boost the local economy, strengthen culture and deliver environmental outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

The successful recipients and eight projects include:

- Dubbo Local Aboriginal Land Council: Revitalisation of Talbragar Reserve;
- Gilgandra Local Aboriginal Land Council: Roof restorations for local social housing, and development of community spaces;
- Oyster Tribe Aboriginal Corporation: Wiradjuri Aboriginal Youth Connection to Culture program;
- Wellington Local Aboriginal Land Council: Housing for the Aboriginal community of Wellington, Nanima Village Old School restoration and cultural heritage, and a tourism officer;
- Wiradjuri Wellington Aboriginal Town Common Aboriginal Corporation: Restoration of two State Heritage Listed structures on the site of the Town Common and land rehabilitation.

The First Nations Fund will open for more applications on Monday 22 September 2025, with \$4 million available.

These grants are part of the Minns Labor Government's initial \$128 million investment in the Central-West Orana REZ Community and Employment Benefit Program, to ensure NSW's regional communities benefit from the renewable energy transition.

\$60 million in grants were awarded to 54 local projects in the Central-West Orana REZ in April.

More funding will be available to communities over the next three decades, generated from fees paid by projects with an access right to connect to the REZ network infrastructure.

For further information on community benefits, visit: www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/cebp.

The Minister was in Dubbo to take part in The Gathering which brought together local Aboriginal community members, organisations and land councils, renewable energy providers, government, and experts to explore opportunities and shape an inclusive energy future in the Central-West Orana REZ.

Quote attributable to Minister for Energy, Penny Sharpe:

“Renewable energy projects are delivering investment in local communities.

“This funding will help Aboriginal organisations support initiatives that reflect local needs and provide enduring benefits for the community.

“With the First Nations Fund opening for more applications next week, there will be even more opportunities to support Aboriginal communities in the region.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, David Harris:

“This funding is a step forward to help empower local Aboriginal communities to develop critical renewable energy projects for the region.

“By providing funding to regional Aboriginal communities we are continuing to work to Closing the Gap by creating jobs and boosting the local economy in these communities.

“NSW is unique in having a specific Closing the Gap priority reform – Reform 5 – that specifically focuses on Aboriginal economic prosperity, jobs and nurturing business and the First Nations Fund is a great example of that in operation.

“I want to encourage all Aboriginal organisations and communities in the region to consider applying for the First Nations Fund.”

Quote attributable to EnergyCo chief executive Hannah McCaughey:

“I’m excited to see these projects provide tangible, community-led benefits for Aboriginal communities across the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone.

“EnergyCo is committed to meaningful and genuine engagement with Aboriginal people and communities as we deliver NSW’s five renewable energy zones.”

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