

Agenda

Hunter Central Coast Regional Reference Group – Meeting

Monday, 3 November 2025

10:00am – 12noon

Venue: Cessnock Council or Teams

Business items

Item	Lead	Time
Welcome	Chair	1 minute
Acknowledgement of Country	Rodney Groves HTP First Nations Lead	2 minutes
Hunter Transmission Project EIS Summary of EIS feedback themes	Stephanie Lewis – HTP Communications & Engagement Manager Carolyn McCallig – HTP Planning & Environment Lead	30 minutes
Community and Employment Benefit Program (CEBP) - What is the CEBP - Insights and what has been delivered in Central-West Orana - Program of engagement for the Hunter	Ryan Skinner – Manager Program Delivery Yvette Lloyd – Director Community Benefits and Outcomes	20 minutes
HCC REZ Network Upgrades update	Amanda Stephinson & Jason Wall - Ausgrid	10 minutes
Port to REZ and Newcastle Logistics Precinct updates	Liz Sacco – Stakeholder Engagement Manager	10 minutes

Item				Lead	Time
Hunter Cumulative Impacts update				Emily Davies O’Sullivan	15 minutes
General Business 2026 schedule of meetings to be discussed and confirmed				Chair	10 minutes
Online	In person	Apology	Name	Represents	
☐	☒	☐	Bob Pynsent (BP)	Independent Chair	
☐	☒	☐	Sue Moore (SM)	Mayor Singleton Council	
☐	☒	☐	Daniel Watton (DW)	Mayor Cessnock City Council	
☒	☐	☐	Adam Schultz (AS)	Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council	
☐	☒	☐	John Sullivan (JFS)	Singleton community	
☐	☒	☐	Phillip O’Neill (PO)	Cessnock community	
☐	☒	☐	Diane Crosdale (DCR)	Lake Macquarie community	
☐	☒	☐	Craig Anderson (CA)	Regional Environment	
☐	☒	☐	Samantha Martin- Williams (SMW)	Regional Business	
☐	☐	☒	Ashley Williams (AW)	Regional Aboriginal Rep	
☒	☐	☐	Jeffrey Drayton (JD)	Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council	
☐	☒	☐	Amanda Wetzel (AW)	Newcastle Community	
☐	☒	☐	Darren Clarke	RRG Secretariat	
☐	☒	☐	Emily Davies O’Sullivan (EDOS)	RRG Secretariat	
☐	☒	☐	Sam Harding (SH)	RRG Secretariat	
☐	☐	☒	Walter Mansfield	RRG Secretariat	

Visitors

	NAME	POSITION
Online	Carolyn McCallig (CM)	HTP Environment and Planning Lead (EnergyCo)
In Person	Stephanie Lewis (SL)	HTP Communications and Engagement Manager
In Person	Rodney Groves (RG)	First Nations Engagement Lead - HTP Community Team (EnergyCo)
In Person	Yvette Lloyd (YL)	Director Community Benefits & Outcomes
In Person	Ryan Skinner (RS)	Manager Program Delivery
Online	Kirsten Lees	Manager Project Comms and Engagement (EnergyCo)
Online	Liz Sacco (LS)	Port to REZ Stakeholder Engagement (EnergyCo)
Online	Amanda Stephinson (AST)	Communications and Engagement Lead HCC REZ (Ausgrid)
Online	Jason Wall (JW)	Project Director HCC REZ (Ausgrid)
Apology	Panduka Manamperi	HCC Project Director

The Chair welcomed members and visitors in attendance both in person and virtually.

RG delivered an Acknowledgement of Country.

Apologies as per the above.

Conflict of Interest

- Chair asked if any members had any conflict of interest to be declared. Chair advised of a family member working for Port of Newcastle.

HUNTER TRANSMISSION PROJECT EIS UPDATE:

Presented by Stephanie Lewis and Carolyn McCallig

- SL and CM provided an overview of the HTP EIS exhibition feedback, key themes and stakeholders as well as project timeline and milestones.

- JD – Sought clarification if it will be left up to contractors or EnergyCo to sort workers accommodation.
- CM – Confirmed that it will be EnergyCo. Noted that housing camps were proposed in the EIS and that anything different will need to go through a modification process.
- DCR – Stated that bushfire risks have been raised in the Lake Macquarie Community and wanted to know relevant contact within EnergyCo.
- CM – Confirmed EnergyCo currently updating bushfire assessment report and happy to take on further feedback.
- AS – Questioned if worker accommodation would be modular/relocatable housing. What happens to housing at the end of the project. Noted it was raised at recent Hunter JO meeting.
- CM – Ongoing conversations are happening and will continue to talk to Councils.
- PO – Queried about the lack of Aboriginal group EIS submissions.
- SL – Received a formal submission from Mindaribba LALC. Likely there were others but remained anonymous.
- PO – Raised Mindaribba LALCs submission noting it was unhappy with consultation to date and noted that some organisations submitted late due to wrong closing date on website.
- SL – Noted there were a number of late submissions and that they will be considered and responded to.
- RG – Noted that Mindaribba's submission was regarding an ecology site. EnergyCo are meeting with Mindaribba CEO in a few weeks to discuss.
- CM – Noted that EnergyCo is currently preparing an Aboriginal Cultural Assessment report.
- AW – Raised the Connecting to Country Guidelines and how they can be embedded.
- RG – Noted the First Nation Working Group is working through that.
- AW – Asked if biodiversity offsets had been raised as an issue given the unequal playing field in that space.
- CM – Acknowledged she was across the debate and discussion. Not an overwhelming theme.

COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYMENT BENEFIT PROGRAM (CEBP):

Presented by Yvette Lloyd and Ryan Skinner

- RS and YL – Provided an overview of the CEPB under the act, why it's different in the Hunter and funding delivery streams.
- SM – Raised housing issue at recent Hunter JO meeting. Noted she views Hunter REZ as a transmission only REZ. Important that housing infrastructure is utilised and left behind as a legacy and community benefit.
- DC – Noted that the Hunter REZ does include generation.
- SM – Still unclear about what projects will have access to the grid.
- JD – Not the case in Muswellbrook. Currently approximately 15-20 renewable energy projects proposed. Believes all projects should be treated the same when it comes to providing housing infrastructure as they all have an impact on the community.
- JD – Noted that Muswellbrook Council was going to visit Central-West Orana to learn what they have done and what they can do better.
- SMW – Queried what consultation has taken place with the Net Zero Economy Authority (NEZA) to date as there is a risk of duplication.
- DC – Confirmed EnergyCo meet regularly with NZEA and are working with them on supporting local job opportunities around the transition.
- SM – Noted that Singleton Council have their own legacy fund.
- JS – Noted the competitive interests of Council legacy fund and the CEPB.
- SMW – Mentioned the long term established foundations in the Hunter and encourages EnergyCo to think differently about partnerships. Already mature processes in place.
- RS -Noted all communities will have different needs and will be based on feedback received during consultation.
- YL – Acknowledged the opportunity to partner with Councils.
- YL – Outlined the consultation EnergyCo is looking to undertake and what the RRG thought would work best.
- BP – Look to consult through regular meetings set up with Council.
- CA – Also needs to be a focus on employment-based programs. Currently not enough people to do the work required.
- PO – Noted that it's hard to have the discussion around CEPB when the scale of the funding is not clear.
- YL – Likely to start consultation early next year and until then, the scale is unknown. That is the position EnergyCo is in until the regulation amendment is approved.

- AW – Questioned the use of the word legacy. Two ways it can be used in terms of backlog of projects that need to be done vs legacy that makes the future better. Shouldn't just be used for backlog of projects that should be fixed anyway. If it is future focused, there needs to be strategic planning in place. Important that participants can be given the heads up to do this before being consulted so they are ready to have that discussion.
- YL – Agreed and noted that.

HCC REZ NETWORK UPGRADES UPDATE:

Presented by Amanda Stephinson and Jason Wall, Ausgrid

- AST and JW provided an overview of upcoming key dates, recent engagement activities and current activities taking place.
- SMW – Queried about how the Ready for Renewables workshops had been communicated and what registration numbers looked like.
- DC – Confirmed workshops were advertised through all peak bodies and Council's. As of 3rd November the following attendees had RSVP'd:
 - Central Coast: 30 attendees representing 19 businesses
 - Maitland: 45 attendees representing 30 businesses
 - Muswellbrook: 35 attendees representing 25 businesses
- SM asked if any Singleton businesses had registered.
- DC noted that a Procurement Capability Uplift Program workshop was held in Singleton earlier this year. As of 3rd November, at least five Singleton businesses have registered with 1-2 attendees registered from each business.
- BP stated that he has attended two business workshops in the past and were well attended.

PORT TO REZ AND NEWCASTLE LOGISTICS PRECINCT UPDATES:

Presented by Liz Sacco

- LS provided a general update on the Newcastle Logistics Precinct (NLP).
- PO – Noted he was recently interviewed by WSP for the NLP Social Impact Assessment. He noted that the team was looking to undertake desktop studies and queried if they would be invited to visit the site in person.

- LS – Explained that there are many different teams making up the WSP project team and that some of the teams do get out on site with EnergyCo.
- AW – Questioned what NLP's consultation with the First Nations community will look like.
- LS – The Aboriginal Engagement team within EnergyCo is leading the engagement and will take their lead on what that consultation will look like.
- BP – Attended the EnergyCo stand at Mayfield Day and made an observation that there is little to no detail about the volume of movements and how often they will occur.
- DCR – Questions how that calculation would be undertaken given the complexity as it all depends on the timing of the projects and there is usually a long approval time for wind farms.
- LS – Provided an overview of the Port to REZ project.
- AW – Acknowledged the NLP and Port to REZ are two separate projects but hard to understand what the NLP will be serving without a clear understanding of the volume and movement of blades coming through the port.
- JS – Questioned if other means of transport had been investigated to get the wind blades out to the regions.
- LS – Team looked at rail but given the blades can be up to 85-95m long, the rail network tunnels are too small to accommodate the blades and another challenge would be getting the blades off the rail network, onto an oversize over mass truck and out to its final destination.

HUNTER REGIONAL MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE STUDIES:

Presented by Emily Davies O'Sullivan

- EDOS provided the purpose of the studies and what the outputs would cover.
- DC – Noted the studies would include major projects in the region, not just looking at renewable energy projects. Noted that the studies won't provide all the answers but a list of challenges and opportunities and a long list of what EnergyCo can deliver.
- PO – Queried why there wasn't a study looking at cumulative impacts from a transport perspective.
- DC – Noted this is a separate piece of work that is being undertaken by Transport for NSW.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

- BP – Going forward in 2026, RRG meetings will be held quarterly on the first Monday of the month commencing February 2026. Additional out of session meetings can be held if required.
- DC – Noted a number of recent achievements and upcoming engagements including:
 - EnergyCo winning Government Partner of the Year at the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce Awards
 - Ready for Renewables workshops commencing this week in the Hunter.
 - REZ wide social risks and opportunities co-design underway. Special thanks to AW and PO for taking part.
 - Biosecurity training in the Hunter happening in February 2026.
 - EnergyCo recently participated in the Hunter Trade Mission.
- DC – Thanked members for supporting the RRG's transition to a Hunter wide RRG.

CLOSE AND WRAP UP:

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11:58am.