

Agenda

Hunter Central Coast Regional Reference Group – Meeting

Monday, 4 May 2026

10:00am – 12noon

Venue: Tertiary Education Centre (87 Hill Steet, Muswellbrook) or Teams

Business items

Item	Lead	Time
Welcome	Chair	1 minute
Acknowledgement of Country	Rodney Groves HTP First Nations Lead	2 minutes
Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Alliance <ul style="list-style-type: none">Celebrating bicentenary in 2028	Jennie Curran, Chris Tyrell, Iain Riggs, HVWTA	20 minutes
Ausgrid – Local Engagement Committee	Amanda Stephinson, Jason Wall- Ausgrid	10 minutes
Hunter Agenda 2026 – key insights and takeaways	Amanda Wetzel	5 minutes
Hunter Community and Employment Benefit Program - workshop	Yvette Lloyd, Ryan Skinner – Community Benefits and Outcomes team	30 minutes
Muswellbrook Energy Centre - Vision	Jeff Drayton – Mayor Muswellbrook Council	10 minutes
Hunter Discovery Hub – co-design and walking tour	Emily Davies O’Sullivan - EnergyCo Michael Johnson, Nicole Ryan - Transgrid	35 minutes
General Business	Chair	2 minutes

Online	In person	Apology	Name	Represents
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Pynsent (BP)	Independent Chair
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sue Moore (SM)	Mayor Singleton Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Watton (DW)	Mayor Cessnock City Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Adam Schultz (AS)	Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	John Sullivan (JFS)	Singleton community
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Phillip O'Neill (PO)	Cessnock community
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diane Crosdale (DCR)	Lake Macquarie community
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Anderson (CA)	Regional Environment
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Samantha Martin- Williams (SMW)	Regional Business
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ashley Williams (AW)	Regional Aboriginal Rep
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jeffrey Drayton (JD)	Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amanda Wetzel (AW)	Newcastle Community
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Darren Clarke (DC)	RRG Secretariat
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emily Davies O'Sullivan (EDOS)	RRG Secretariat
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sam Harding (SH)	RRG Secretariat
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walter Mansfield	RRG Secretariat

Visitors

	NAME	POSITION
Apology	Dayne Harris	Assets Manager, Lake Macquarie City Council
In Person	Rodney Groves (RG)	First Nations Engagement Lead - HTP Community Team (EnergyCo)
In Person	Kirsten Lees	Manager Project Comms and Engagement (EnergyCo)

Online	Amanda Stephinson (AST)	Communications and Engagement Lead HCC REZ (Ausgrid)
Online	Jason Wall (JW)	Project Director HCC REZ (Ausgrid)
In Person	Jennie Curran (JC)	Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association
In Person	Chris Tyrell (CT)	Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association
In Person	Iain Riggs (IR)	Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association
In Person	Jimmy Manning (JM)	Senior Comms and Engagement Officer
In Person	Yvette Llouyd (YL)	Director Community Benefits & Outcomes
In Person	Ryan Skinner (RS)	Manager Program Delivery
In Person	Michael Johnson	Transgrid
In Person	Nicole Ryan	Transgrid
In Person	Anne-Maree Mitchell	Transgrid

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

RG delivered an Acknowledgement of Country.

Apologies as per the above.

Conflicts 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.
- Noted that Singleton and Cessnock Council are alliance partners of the Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association

HUNTER VALLEY WINE & TOURISM ALLIANCE - Celebrating bicentenary in 2028

Presented by Jennie Curran, Chris Tyrell, Iain Riggs

- JC – Introduced the HVWTA and noted already working closely with EnergyCo.

- JC – HVWTA will be celebrating their bicentenary in 2028 noting it is the first wine region in Australia to celebrate this milestone.
- IR – Noted the Hunter Valley is the oldest continuous wine region in Australia.
- CT – Bicentenary is an opportunity to celebrate and will be the launchpad for new generational change for the region.
- JC – Spoke to the Bicentenary concept plan and how the community benefits program could help contribute to the opportunities the bicentenary provides.
- IR – Acknowledged the longer-term goal is to get World Heritage listing with the shorter term goal achieving Australian Heritage listing noting this will boost tourism to the region.
- AW – Noted that legacy has been spoken about in previous RRGs. Asked where the HVWTA see for their future legacy and how EnergyCo could help achieve that.
- IR – Spoke to the need of the region needing a wine museum that could honour founders. Noted the strong youth emerging in the wine industry and that they have a big future ahead and will carry on the legacy achieved to date.
- CT – Noted that it's not easy to get young wine makers to stay. More growth and vineyards are required and to do that there is a need to protect agricultural areas into the future.
- CT – Proposed to circulate RRG members with a soft copy of their Bicentenary concept plan.

LOCAL ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Presented by Amanda Stephinson and Jason Wall

- JW – Started by providing a brief update on the HCC REZ infrastructure project. Noted that construction is progressing well with Genus commencing work between Kurri Kurri and Branxton.
- AST – Provided an overview of the local engagement committee for the HCC REZ infrastructure project.
- SM – Questioned if the committee members were getting paid.
- AST – Yes, if their company/organisation allows. It is outlined in the Terms of Reference.
- SM – Queried about the compulsory land acquisitions and why they were happening.

- AST – Majority are due to personal circumstances, for example a property has shared owners, and one owner has been unable to be contacted. Noted that once the compulsory land acquisitions progress commences, they tend to be resolved before being compulsory acquired.
- SM – Questioned how many compulsory land acquisitions there are for the project.
- AST – Noted that Ausgrid are currently only looking at the first two portions of the project. Within that there are about 10 compulsory land acquisitions. Noted they are expected to reduce as negotiations continue.
- DW – Asked which LGAs the compulsory land acquisitions are in.
- JW – 2-3 in both Cessnock and Singleton LGA. Not aware of any in the Muswellbrook LGA. Noted that some compulsory land acquisitions are Government owned parcels and large industrial landowners and are not all private landowners.

HUNTER AGENDA 2026 – KEY INSIGHTS AND TAKEAWAYS

Presented by Amanda Wetzel

- AW – Provided an overview of the Hunter Agenda, the key messages and insights from the speakers.
- JD – Noted he was also in attendance at the Hunter Agenda event. Raised that what he heard was nothing new and queried when actual change might occur, rather than just talking about it.
- AW – Noted that agencies need to be enact the change themselves. AW highlighted that communities, including councils, need to be agents of change. The role of FJIA and NZEA can coordinate but agency needs to remain within communities otherwise there is a reliance upon government to manage the change process. Communities can take ownership and be involved in the change process rather than be passive to it.

HUNTER COMMUNITY & EMPLOYMENT BENEFIT PROGRAM

Presented by Yvette Lloyd and Ryan Skinner

- YL – Provided a brief overview of the Community & Employment Benefit Program (CEBP).
- YL – Noted that the CEBP can be delivered in three ways: grants, partnerships with NSW Government agencies and by procuring benefits directly.

- RS - Spoke to the completed Desktop Study, the proposed consultation plan and sought feedback on the proposed approach from the RRG. Outlined that consultation feedback would ultimately inform Hunter CEBP design.
- JD – Queried why the Hunter scheme would be smaller than the CWO scheme when the Muswellbrook LGA is impacted from other REZ infrastructure coming through Muswellbrook.
- YL – Explained that it is due to CEBP being funded by generator access fee contributions (which can be significant in a large REZ), however the Hunter Central Coast REZ has a smaller capacity and does not have an access scheme.
- JD- Understands that but believes CEBP doesn't yet reflect the scale of the impacts of the communities in the Hunter.
- DCR – Agreed with JD and said the Hunter community will be asking questions about CEBP and why more funding isn't available.
- AW – Questioned what the community is being asked to influence. Could community input be used to increase the CEBP Hunter funding or help change the legislation?
- YL – That would need to be a separate conversation with other members of EnergyCo.
- DCR – Encouraged EnergyCo to prepare for the pushback now and to have answers for the community ready. Noted that it is difficult to change legislation.
- AW – Noted that the Hunter community has an incredible amount of agency and will look to solve the issue and provide options to increase the funding.
- DW – Regarding the CEBP consultation, noted the risk of community fatigue and that Cessnock has established networks within the community.
- YL – Noted and outlined that the Consultation Strategy aims to tap into established networks to minimise fatigue.
- AST – Questioned if the CEBP applies to all geographical boundaries including Upper Hunter and Newcastle Councils.
- YL – All LGAs that intersect the HCC REZ are eligible under the legislation, but community feedback will inform Hunter CEBP design and whether funding will be concentrated in more impacted areas within the LGAs.
- BP – Asked the HTP team members how successful the HTP webinars were and if they should be undertaken for the CEBP consultation.
- JM – Have been used as a good resource for people to watch back online.

- SM – Concerned that people in the community already feeling overwhelmed and won't want to be part of the CEBP and will miss out. Concerned that the CEBP will create a community vs community issue.
- RS – Noted that the CEBP is a benefit sharing program and is not a compensation program and that there is a view that funding will likely be directed towards affected communities. Community consultation will shape an understanding of the key impacts and help guide how the funding will be distributed.
- BP – Questioned if Council's strategic plans have been included in the Desktop Study.
- RS – Highlighted the range of documents that were included in the Desktop Study and that the full list can be circulated to the RRG (captured in action register below).
- RS- Shared the ranked priorities from the Desktop Study, informed from strategic documents.
- RRG would like the opportunity for the questions and priorities for the CEBP to be circulated to members (captured in action register below).
- CA – Would like to see P2R impacts included and captured in the CEBP. Should be broadened beyond generation.

MUSWELLBROOK ENERGY CENTRE - VISION

Presented by Mayor Jeff Drayton

- JD – Provided an overview of his vision for the Muswellbrook Energy Centre.
- JD – Will be located at Muswellbrook's Tertiary Education Centre and will be modelled on Transgrid's Discovery Hub in Wagga Wagga.

HUNTER DISCOVERY HUB

Presented by Michael Johnson, Nicole Ryan & Anne Marie Mitchell

- NR – Reflected on the success of the Wagga Wagga hub with it proving popular with the community, schools and local groups.
- MJ – The success of the hub reflects the adaptable space created through feedback received from the co-design process.
- JD – Recently visited the hub in Wagga Wagga and highlighted how well it is working.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

- BP – Noted Extraordinary RRG scheduled for 19th May at 2pm.

CLOSE AND WRAP UP:

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12:00. The RRG then undertook a walking tour of the Muswellbrook Energy Centre.

ACTION REGISTER

Action	Raised by	Comment	Responsible	Status
RRG sought a list of documents used in the Hunter Desktop Study.	RRG	Desktop Review documents to be circulated to RRG members to ensure all appropriate documents captured.	Yvette Lloyd & Ryan Skinner	Open
RRG would like the opportunity to provide further details on the Hunter CEBP.	RRG	Desktop findings and priorities to be sent to RRG members with questions to provide fee	Yvette Lloyd & Ryan Skinner	Open