



Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)



Hunter Central Coast Regional Reference Group

4 May 2026

Acknowledgement of Country



Energy Corporation of New South Wales acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and show our respect for Elders past and present through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Agenda



Item	Lead	Time
Welcome	Chair	1 minute
Acknowledgment of Country	Rodney Groves HTP First Nations Lead	2 minutes
Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Alliance - Celebrating bicentenary in 2028	Jennie Curran, Chris Tyrrell, 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	10 minutes
Hunter Community and Employment Benefit Program	Yvette Lloyd, Ryan Skinner, Jimmy Thomas	30 minutes

Agenda



Item	Lead	Time
Muswellbrook Energy Centre–Vision	Jeff Drayton – Mayor Muswellbrook Council	10 minutes
Hunter Discovery Hub –Walking tour and co-design	Emily Davies O’Sullivan -EnergyCo Michael Johnson –Transgrid	35 minutes
General Business	Chair	2 minutes

Welcome



- Any new conflicts of interests to be declared
- Previous actions:

Action	Raised by	Comment	Responsible	Status
Deep dive session into the SODA including conservation opportunities, stewardship opportunities for landowners and First Nations participation.	Craig Anderson 2/2/2026	Extraordinary meeting to be arranged between now and next RRG in May. RRG Extraordinary meeting held Monday 16 th March	EnergyCo/ DCCEEW	Closed

Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Alliance

Jennie Curran, Chris Tyrell, Iain Riggs

HUNTER VALLEY

WINE AND TOURISM ASSOCIATION

BICENTENARY 2028

200 Years of Hunter Valley Wine

Presentation to the Regional Reference Group
Hunter Transmission Project

April 2026

*A once-in-a-generation milestone for
Australia's oldest wine region —
and a defining opportunity for
EnergyCo to leave a lasting legacy
in the Hunter Valley.*

Presented by

Jennie Curran
CEO, Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association

Iain Riggs AM
Owner, Riggs Winemaking & Chair Bicentenary Committee

Chris Tyrrell
CEO, Tyrrell's & President, Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association



THE OPPORTUNITY

200

Years of continuous viticulture

2028

The Bicentenary year

\$640M+

Visitor economy contribution
to the Hunter Valley region annually

Australia's oldest wine region turns 200 in 2028.

In 1828, the first commercial vineyard was planted in the Hunter Valley. Two hundred years later, the region produces some of the world's most distinctive Semillon and Shiraz, hosts 1.6 million visitors annually, and anchors the Hunter's visitor economy. The Bicentenary is a nationally significant milestone — one that presents a genuine opportunity for EnergyCo and the Hunter Transmission Project to co-invest in legacy projects that benefit the region long after construction is complete.

THE BICENTENARY CONCEPT PLAN

VISION

Proud of our heritage and committed to a sustainable future, Hunter Valley Wine Country will use the Bicentenary to celebrate, protect and future-proof Australia's oldest wine region.

1

**CELEBRATE
& PROTECT
OUR LEGACY**

Honouring our old vines, pioneers and unique sense of place.

2

**CREATE
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR THE FUTURE**

Building capability, innovating, and future-proofing the region.

3

**COLLABORATE
TO GROW
& PROSPER**

Harnessing partnerships across government, industry and community.

THREE-YEAR PHASED PROGRAM

2026

Plan, invest, engage

2027

Activate, market, prepare

2028

Launch, celebrate, leave a legacy

International Masters of Wine Symposium — Regional Visit

April 2027

A 3-day immersive Hunter Valley program within the 2027 IMW International Symposium in Adelaide. Attended by international Masters of Wine and global trade — putting the Hunter on the world stage.

2028 Vintage Launch

Feb – Mar 2028

Official Bicentenary launch at Cote Vineyard. Traditional Smoking Ceremony, fermenter restoration reveal, and a hands-on trade familiarisation program for nation wine buyers.

Gala Dinner at Dalwood Estate

May 2028

Marquee national event celebrating 200 years. Guests include national and state MPs, international media, and corporate partners. Builds directly on the existing Legends Award platform.

Community Open Weekend

2028

A celebration for the local community — the people whose home and landscape this history belongs to.

Heritage Vineyard Protection

The Hunter Valley is Australia's oldest continuously producing wine region. These vineyard landscapes are cultural, historical and environmental assets of national significance. We are pursuing National Heritage Listing for the Hunter Valley and sub-regions of Pokolbin and Broke-Fordwich, with a long-term pathway toward UNESCO World Heritage recognition.

Heritage Trail Activation

Visitor infrastructure — 2027 onwards

Immersive digital storytelling, providing an engaging and contemporary way for visitors to connect with the region's cultural and viticultural history. A permanent community and visitor asset.

Fermenter Restoration Project

Planning underway

Recommissioning of historic concrete fermenters, with young winemaking teams producing wines for judging and sale in the Bicentenary year. Heritage craft meets the next generation.

Vine & Genetic Diversity Preservation

In partnership with AWRI

Partnering with the Australian Wine Research Institute on the genetic diversity of Australian heritage wine grapevine germplasm — preserving the biological legacy of 200 years of viticulture.

Bike Trail Network

Infrastructure · 2027 onwards

A connected cycling and walking trail network within and connecting Hunter Valley Wine Country, aligned to the broader Shiraz to Shore Concept Plan. Enhances visitor experience, supports local businesses, and delivers lasting community infrastructure.

Hunter Valley Wine Country Shuttle Service

Transport · Planning from 2025

A funded shuttle service operating across the region and linking Newcastle Airport to the Hunter Valley. Addresses the single most frequently cited access barrier for visitors, reduces road use, and supports local employment.

Innovation & Sustainability Hub

Research · From 2026

A university partnership driving research into regenerative viticulture, water management and climate adaptation. Future-proofing the region's agricultural and economic resilience.

Next Crop Wine Industry Leadership Program

Workforce · 2026

A tailored leadership capability program for emerging Hunter Valley wine and tourism professionals. Builds the next generation of industry leaders and addresses workforce pipeline challenges.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HTP COMMUNITY BENEFIT PROGRAM

EnergyCo's Community and Employment Benefit Program aims to improve liveability, create local employment, support First Nations communities, drive regional economic development and boost resilience and innovation. The Bicentenary program directly addresses each of these priorities.

HTP BENEFIT PRIORITY	BICENTENARY ALIGNMENT	RELEVANT PROJECTS
Improve liveability	Heritage trails, bike networks, shuttle service and digital storytelling installations create permanent community and visitor assets	Heritage Trail Activation, Bike Trail Network, Shuttle Service
Regional economic development	Bicentenary events drive visitation, cellar door spend, accommodation and hospitality in line with NSW Visitor Economy 2030 targets	Signature Events, Vintage Launch, Gala Dinner
Local employment & training	Events, infrastructure and programs generate construction, hospitality, tourism and research jobs during and beyond 2028	Next Crop Leadership Program, Events workforce
Resilience & innovation	Research partnerships and the Innovation Hub build industry adaptive capacity for climate, water and market challenges	Innovation & Sustainability Hub, AWRI Vine Preservation
First Nations outcomes	Traditional Smoking Ceremony, cultural storytelling and a First Nations-inclusive program design across all Bicentenary activities	Vintage Launch, Heritage Trail, all signature events

ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Investment in the Bicentenary delivers measurable, lasting benefits across five dimensions — each directly relevant to EnergyCo's community benefit objectives for the Hunter region.

VISITOR ECONOMY

- Increased visitor expenditure in 2028
- Growth in midweek and off-peak travel
- Higher yield per visitor
- Boosted accommodation and hospitality

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- Job creation in hospitality, events,
- marketing, research and tourism
- Long-term workforce development
- through training and skills programs

INDUSTRY GROWTH

- Increased cellar door visitation and wine sales
- Stronger export market connections
- Enhanced producer capability and resilience

HERITAGE PROTECTION

- Preservation of old-vine blocks
- National and international recognition
- Foundations for UNESCO pathway

INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

- Major uplift in global media exposure
- Stronger international wine and
- tourism partnerships

The Bicentenary aligns directly with NSW and Australian Government strategic priorities across tourism, heritage, agriculture, cultural policy and international trade.

Local Engagement Committee and Community Benefit Fund - Ausgrid

Amanda Stephinson, Jason Wall - Ausgrid

Local Engagement Committee



Context

- The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) approved **\$5 million** in funding for Ausgrid to establish a Community Benefit Fund in December 2025
- The fund will support communities located along the Hunter Central Coast Network Infrastructure project corridor (Kurri Kurri to Muswellbrook) but will also consider the interests of the broader region
- The fund is designed to support local initiatives that strengthen community wellbeing, enhance local facilities and services, and deliver long-lasting benefits for residents across the region.

Local Engagement Committee



The Local Engagement Committee will:

- Review funding proposals above an agreed threshold
- Assess alignment against:
 - Social Legacy outcomes and measurable impact
 - Relevant Energy Enablement Pathways (Culture, Employment, Education, Transport, Enterprise, Health, Prosperity)

Consider:

- Equity of access, Intergenerational benefit, Cultural appropriateness, geographic fairness and underrepresented groups
- Provide written advice and recommended conditions
- Review annual reporting on fund outcomes
- Provide input into monitoring metrics and public reporting

The LEC will not:

- Approve or veto projects
- Assess individual and small grant applications(unless strategically significant)
- Reduce statutory consultation processes

Local Engagement Committee

Local Engagement Committee

- A Local Engagement Committee has been established to provide independent, community-based oversight of the fund and ensure the fund reflects the needs and aspirations of the people who live and work in the corridor.

Local Engagement Committee Members

- The committee is independently chaired by a local community representative and has 12 members
- The members were selected to represent a balanced mix of local perspectives, skills and experiences.
- Members include First Nations representatives, council, youth representatives, education and representatives from community and services providers in the region

Local Engagement Committee next steps

- Meetings will be held quarterly with the first meeting scheduled for 13 May in Muswellbrook
- Further updates will be provided after the initial meeting

Hunter Agenda 2026 – key insights and takeaways

Amanda Wetzel

Hunter Community and Employment Benefit Program -workshop

Yvette Lloyd, Ryan Skinner, Jimmy Thomas



The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)



Hunter-Central Coast Regional Reference Group

CEBP

4 May 2026

Community and Employment Benefit Program

Overview

The *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (the EII Act) requires components of REZ access fees to be used for a “community purpose” and an “employment purpose” (ss 26[2] and [4]) and gives EnergyCo, as the infrastructure planner in a REZ with a declared access scheme, a function to administer, manage and make payments of money held for these purposes (cl 42D of the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Regulation 2021*).

The **Community and Employment Benefit Program** (the Program) provides the framework for how EnergyCo administers access fees for community and employment purposes across REZs within a declared access scheme.

The Program will:



Invest hundreds of millions into regional communities



Share the benefits of the REZ with impacted communities



Be informed by local community priorities



Leave communities better off than they were before

EII Act: Community and Employment Purposes



Community purposes and employment purposes are defined in the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Regulation 2021* - see Sections 56 and 57, respectively.

Program delivery through three mechanisms:

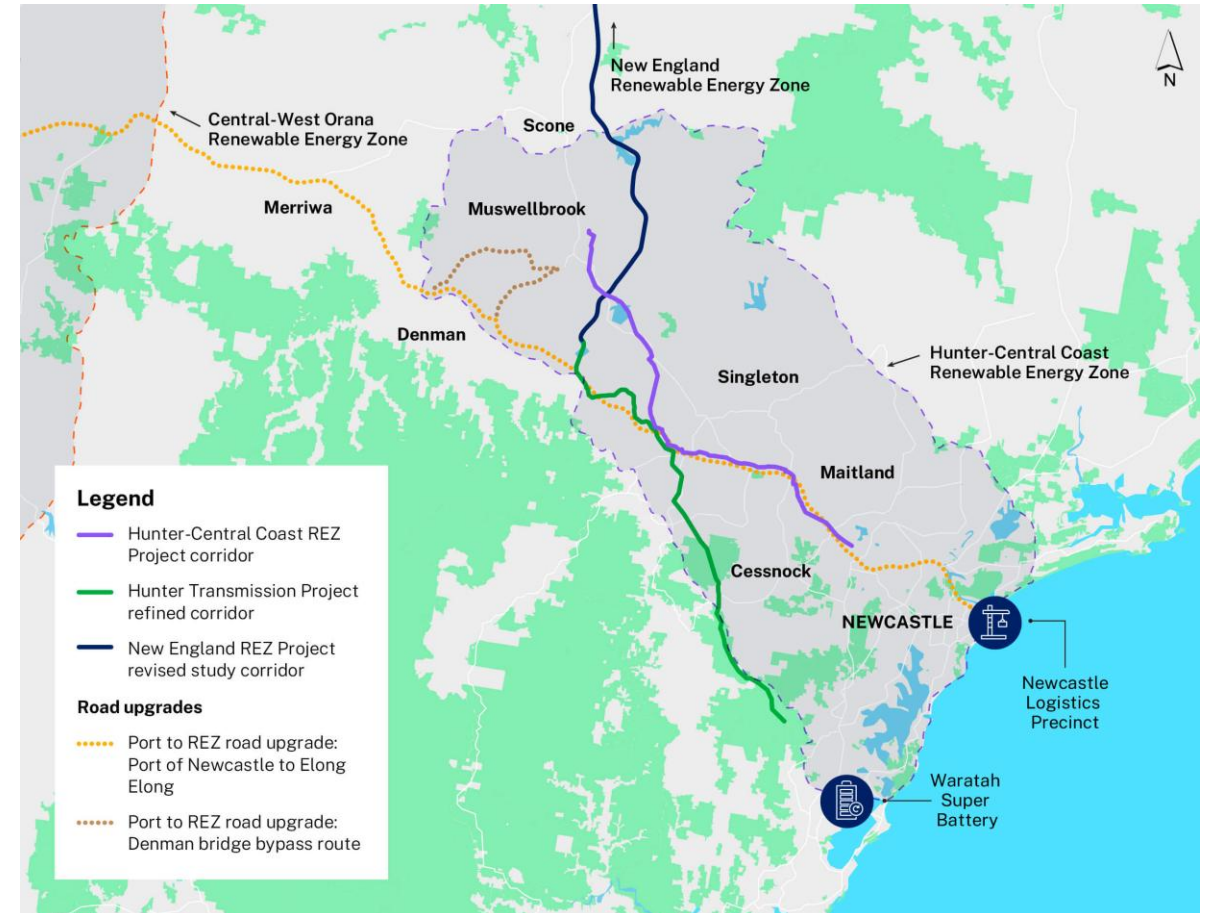
- 1) Grants to non-profit community organisations, councils, LALCs and other stakeholders
- 2) Partnerships with other NSW Government agencies
- 3) EnergyCo procuring or commissioning benefit projects directly

Purpose	Examples
Community purposes	Public or community services or infrastructure, health services or infrastructure
	Services, programs or infrastructure for First Nations people
	Accommodation or housing
	Local or regional energy programs or infrastructure, environmental programs or infrastructure
	Parks and recreation infrastructure, education programs or research, arts or cultural programs, tourism programs or infrastructure
	Any other service, program or infrastructure which benefits the relevant local community
Employment purposes	Employment programs and associated services and facilities
	Skills and training programs and associated services and facilities
	A program, service or facility that supports the relevant employees to gain employment skills or experience

Community and Employment Benefit Program

Hunter-Central Coast context

- CEBP funding was previously limited to **access fees**.
- **No declared access scheme** for the Hunter-Central Coast REZ and no new generation linked to the Hunter Transmission Project.
- Regulatory change (enacted 27 March 2026) now allows **additional funding sources** to be used.
- **Smaller Program funding envelope** compared to Central-West Orana due to the absence of ongoing access scheme contributions
- Program guidelines will be developed, including full eligibility and funding details.



Muswellbrook Energy Centre – Vision

Mayor Jeff Drayton - Muswellbrook Shire Council

Muswellbrook Update

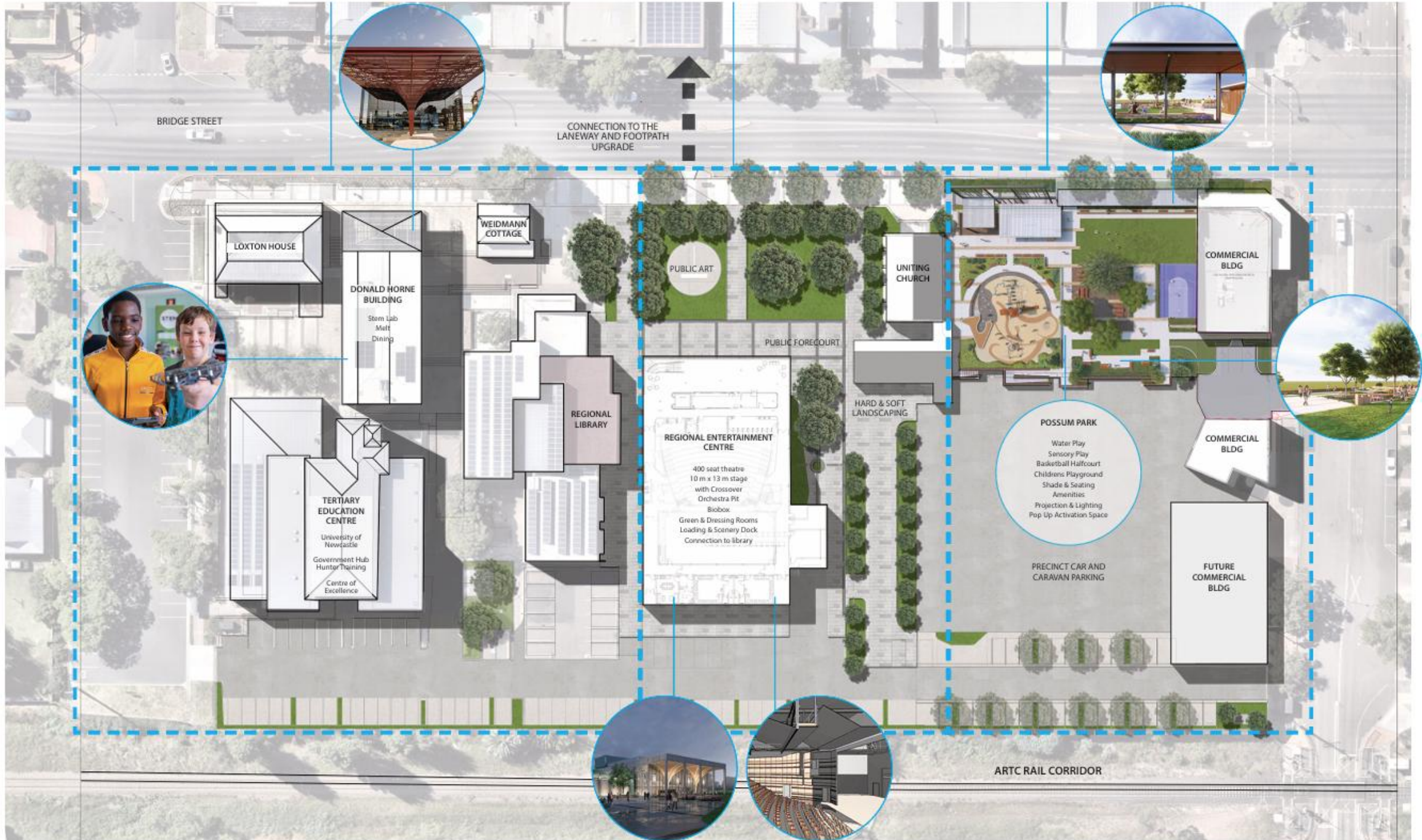
Mayor Jeff Drayton

4 May 2026

HUNTER INNOVATION PRECINCT

REGIONAL ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

POSSUM PARK



Focal point for Energy Projects

- Council collaboration with EnergyCo and Transgrid to establish the **Hunter Energy & Resources Centre**
- To be located at Muswellbrook's Tertiary Education Centre (TEC) building in the Hunter Innovation Precinct
- Modelled on Transgrid's Discovery Hub in Wagga Wagga
- Expected to open early 2027
- Renewable energy project proponents to be co-located within the TEC and broader precinct



HUNTER

**ENERGY &
RESOURCES
CENTRE**



Transgrid Discover Hub Wagga Wagga

- community-focused space providing information, education, and engagement on energy projects and Australia's transition to renewable energy.
- one-stop destination for the community, landowners, businesses, and visitors to learn about major energy infrastructure projects, and the broader energy transition in Australia.



The Hub offers:

- *Educational Discovery Space:* Interactive exhibits for schools and community members to explore energy, engineering, and environmental concepts, with programs tailored for secondary students
- *Community Share Space:* Facilities for workshops, meetings, and events, allowing local organisations and partners to engage with visitors
- *Project Engagement:* Information on energy generation, storage and transmission projects
- *Career and Innovation Insights:* Learning about power generation, transmission, renewable energy, sustainability, and careers in the energy sector.



Hunter Discovery Hub – Walking tour and co-design

Emily Davies O’Sullivan - EnergyCo
Michael Johnson – Transgrid

Collaborative planning for regional innovation and growth

HUNTER DISCOVERY HUB – REGIONAL REFERENCE GROUP CO-DESIGN SESSION

SETTING THE SCENE

Session purpose and outcomes

Session Purpose

The session aims to inform the **Hunter Discovery Hub design** using collective knowledge about energy transition needs and the region.

Participant Contributions

Input will shape concept development, content planning, and engagement strategies.

Ongoing Engagement

The session is the first of an ongoing, iterative consultation process building confidence and focus.

UNDERSTANDING THE HUNTER DISCOVERY HUB



What is the Hunter Discovery Hub?

Purpose and Accessibility

The Hub a trusted, accessible community hub that supports understanding of the energy transition in the Hunter, builds social licence, and connects local people to information, skills / training, and opportunities..

Objectives

- Improve community understanding of the energy transition and local impacts
- Create a central, trusted place for engagement and information
- Support positive, ongoing dialogue between community, government, and industry
- Remove silos between community and the various stakeholders in the sector
- Physical hub in a high-visibility, accessible location supported by the local government

Hub Offer

- Interactive information and education space
- School and community programs
- Careers and skills pathway information
- Events, workshops, and stakeholder engagement
- Digital extension (online content and resources)

Ongoing Learning

Emphasises exploration, curiosity, and continuous learning as the energy transition evolves over many years.



Who is involved and project timeline

Diverse Stakeholder Collaboration

Multiple stakeholders including communities, industry, education, government, and First Nations shape the project's direction.

Role of Regional Reference Group

The Regional Reference Group advises, connects, and tests ideas ensuring alignment with local realities.

Phased Project Timeline

Project phases include approvals, co-design, refinement, and construction and user testing through to early 2027.

FOCUSED CO-DESIGN AND NEXT STEPS



Q1: What do people want to know about the energy transition?

Different messages for different stakeholders

Back to basics – where to we start with the communication



Q2: How do people want to receive information?

- Traditional and non traditional communication
- Diverse audiences
- Target audiences – students,

Q3: Who else
do we need to
talk to?

Community groups

Individuals

Industry

Aboriginal Community



Wrap-up, reflection and next steps

- Reflecting Key Themes
- Next Steps
- Maintaining Momentum

General business

General Business



- Extraordinary RRG – HTP Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) -19th May 2-3pm
- Upcoming RRGs:
 - 3rd August – Cessnock
 - 2nd November- Singleton