

Penny Sharpe

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage

**Yasmin Catley**

Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism
Minister for the Hunter

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**Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone project secures planning approval**

Friday, 12 September 2025

Photos available: <http://bit.ly/46aM51b>

NSW is another step closer to building a reliable, affordable energy system, following planning approval for the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) project.

The NSW Government is fast tracking the state's first Renewable Energy Zone that upgrades existing grid infrastructure such as distribution poles and wires. This approach will reduce the impact on communities and the environment.

The network upgrades, which will enable 1 gigawatt (GW) of network transfer capacity, include upgrades to existing distribution lines and the construction of two new substations.

Projects like the Hunter-Central Coast REZ are key to the Minns Labor Government's energy plan. Already around 36% of the state's electricity comes from renewable energy, and we've supported enough renewable projects signed up to get us more than two-thirds towards our 2030 generation target and a quarter of the way there on our long-duration storage target.

Full planning approval was achieved following the exhibition of the Review of Environmental Factors and a review of submissions by councils, state authorities, businesses and individuals.

The Hunter-Central Coast REZ network infrastructure has been assessed as having a relatively low environmental impact, as most of the works are taking place on existing easements.

Ausgrid has committed to addressing the Review of Environmental Factors feedback, which included priorities such as jobs, support for local businesses and procurement, protection of visual amenity and environment, community benefits, effective traffic management and ongoing community engagement.

The REZ is forecast to create an average of approximately 590 direct jobs per year in the local area during construction, including roles for engineers, electricians and labourers. Ausgrid is committed to prioritising jobs and skills training, local procurement and Aboriginal business participation.

The project is now subject to final approvals from the Australian Energy Regulator.

The Review of Environmental Factors is available for download, at Ausgrid.com.au/HCCREZ.

This project is separate to the Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement currently on public exhibition.

Quote attributable to Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Penny Sharpe:

“Planning approval for the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone project is further evidence of progress on a key upgrade that will help keep the lights on as coal-fired power plants retire.

“Upgrading existing distribution poles and wires allows us to minimise the impact on communities and the environment, and speeds up the delivery of this critical infrastructure.”

Quote attributable to Minister for the Hunter, Yasmin Catley:

“The Hunter-Central Coast region has always been a powerhouse for industry and innovation and now it’s taking a bold step forward into the clean energy future.

“Fast-tracking the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone is about more than just new poles and substations, it’s about delivering affordable, long-lasting energy while creating good jobs, supporting local businesses and protecting our communities and environment.

“By upgrading existing infrastructure, we’re minimising disruption, maximising benefits and ensuring our local communities are at the heart of the state’s renewable transformation.”

Quote attributable to Minister for the Central Coast, David Harris:

“This important milestone in the development of the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone project is good news for communities in the Central Coast and Hunter.

“The REZ will help ensure a reliable and sustainable energy future for our regions.”

Quote attributable to EnergyCo chief executive Hannah McCaughey:

“Fast tracking the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone project is part of EnergyCo’s plan to keep the lights on for everyone in New South Wales, while providing tangible benefits to Hunter communities and their economies.

Quote attributable to Ausgrid CEO, Marc England:

“Finalising the Review of Environmental Factors marks a significant milestone toward delivering upgraded network infrastructure that supports clean, reliable energy for the Hunter–Central Coast region.

“Ausgrid is committed to working closely with landowners and local stakeholders as we enable a lower cost transition that reduces the impact on our communities.”

Additional information for media:

What is a Renewable Energy Zone?

- REZs will group new wind and solar power generation into locations where it can be efficiently stored and transmitted across NSW.
- Five zones have been identified and will keep NSW electricity reliable as coal-fired power stations retire, delivering large amounts of new energy to power our regions and cities.
- REZs will help deliver lower wholesale electricity costs and place downward pressure on customer bills through increased competition, while supporting local jobs and business opportunities during construction and operation.

What is the Hunter-Central Coast REZ?

- The Hunter-Central Coast REZ will be the first renewable energy zone in Australia to upgrade existing distribution poles and wires.
- The REZ has an intended network capacity of 1 gigawatt (GW) and stretches from the Upper Hunter in the north to the Central Coast in the south and includes the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens regions.

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