

BUSINESS HUNTER

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Independent Planning Commission
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Submission: Hunter Valley Operations North and South Continuation Project

Business Hunter welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in support of the Hunter Valley Operations (HVO) North and South Open Cut Coal Continuation Project. This submission reinforces comments made by our CEO Bob Hawes at the Independent Planning Commission public hearing in Branxton on 16 July 2026.

As the peak business organisation for the Hunter region, Business Hunter represents more than 4,500 member and affiliate businesses operating across all sectors of the regional economy. Our membership ranges from small and emerging enterprises through to major employers supporting thousands of jobs across the region.

Business Hunter supports the HVO Continuation Project on the basis that it:

1. is consistent with the NSW Government's policy position on mine extensions as outlined in the *NSW Coal Industry 2026-2050* strategy
2. will deliver substantial economic and employment benefits for the Hunter and NSW
3. will support the region's broader energy transition and economic diversification objectives.

The continuation of HVO is consistent with the NSW Government's *Coal Industry 2026-2050* position paper. The strategy document recognises the ongoing contribution of the coal industry to employment, economic activity, export earnings and energy security over the coming decades. It supports extensions to existing mining operations where they deliver economic benefits, support jobs and can satisfy the state's rigorous planning and environmental assessment requirements.

The NSW Coal Industry Strategy also recognises NSW's mining industry role as a reliable, international trading partner and supports the continued export of high-quality thermal and metallurgical coal to trading partners as they pursue their own energy transition and development pathways. HVO's product will continue to play an important role in meeting demand across key export markets in Asia, supporting economic growth and development while contributing to the state's export economy. Being a large mine, it plays a critical role in headlining the capacity of the region and the state of NSW to respond to demands of overseas markets.

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The economic contribution of the existing mine operation, and estimates of the continuation and growth of those benefits, are well documented and extend far beyond the mine operation itself. In addition to sustaining direct employment, the project will support a significant network of contractors, suppliers and service providers throughout the Hunter and state economy. The continuation of these jobs and business opportunities is particularly important at a time when the region is navigating a period of substantial economic change.

Business Hunter has consistently advocated for a balanced, practical and orderly approach to the economic transformation and energy transition under way in the Hunter region. We strongly believe the transition to a lower-emissions economy should not occur through the premature closure or decline of existing industries. Rather, success will come through an evolutionary approach in which emerging industries are established and expanded alongside the industries that currently underpin employment, investment and economic activity across the region.

A successful transition requires an environment of confidence, certainty and stability for businesses, workers, communities and investors. The HVO Continuation Project represents an important element of that stability. By sustaining employment and economic activity during a period of significant change, the project will provide the time and certainty needed for governments, industry and communities to implement and assimilate long-term transition and diversification strategies.

Importantly, the Hunter region is not yet sufficiently advanced in its transformation to absorb in the short- to medium-term the consequences of a major reduction in economic activity of the scale generated by HVO. While progress is being made in developing new industries and economic opportunities, the region remains heavily reliant on existing sectors, including mining and the substantial supply chains they support. Continued operation of existing business and industry and collaboration between business, industry and government is essential to ensure the region is well-positioned to achieve its long-term transition and transformation objectives.

The region is showing signs it can cope with small-scale disruption, such as the closures in recent years of smaller mines, but this would not be the case if HVO were to close. The scale is not comparable to the earlier closures. The displacement of workers, contractors, supply businesses and local community support would have a significant impact on the region.

We also acknowledge the extensive work undertaken by the proponent over a number of years in consultation with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and other stakeholders to address concerns raised throughout the assessment process. This engagement has resulted in significant modifications to the original proposal, including measures aimed at reducing emissions and minimising impacts. We further note the strong level of support expressed during the public exhibition of the Amendment Report.

The HVO Continuation Project has been subject to a comprehensive planning and assessment process, including extensive public consultation and detailed consideration of

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potential impacts and mitigation measures. We recognise that the project has attracted considerable public interest and acknowledge the applicant's efforts throughout the assessment process to identify, respond to and mitigate potential impacts. This commitment to ongoing engagement and continuous improvement should be recognised as part of the Commission's deliberations.

Business Hunter maintains that where a project has appropriately addressed the matters required under the relevant assessment framework and can demonstrate a balanced and managed approach to addressing negative impacts, it should have the opportunity to proceed. The role of the planning system is to assess competing considerations and achieve an appropriate balance across economic, social and environmental impacts and outcomes.

For these reasons, Business Hunter supports the Hunter Valley Operations North and South Continuation Project. The project will continue to provide significant economic and social benefits to the Hunter region and NSW while supporting the stability required for the Hunter's ongoing energy transition and economic transformation.

We look forward to the determination of the application for this important project and welcome further engagement on this submission.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Hawes
CEO Business Hunter