

5 May 2026

## **Business Hunter welcomes reforms to fast-track renewable projects**

Business Hunter has welcomed the NSW Government's proposed new laws to accelerate the delivery of renewable energy projects, describing the move as a critical step toward unlocking investment, strengthening energy security and supporting economic growth across regional New South Wales.

Legislation due to be introduced today aims to streamline planning pathways for high-priority renewable energy projects identified by the NSW Minister for Energy, addressing bottlenecks that are delaying the rollout of the renewables pipeline.

Business Hunter CEO Bob Hawes said the organisation has been advocating for faster, more coordinated planning processes to ensure renewable projects can be delivered at the pace required by industry and communities.

"The prohibitive cost and complexity of the planning assessment system is holding back the progress of renewable projects and the state's clean energy transition," Mr Hawes said.

"At our recent Economic Update event, a consultant told the audience they were unable to confidently tell a client whether their project approvals would cost closer to \$50 million or \$500 million because of the uncertain and complicated pathways involved.

"These reforms represent a pragmatic and much-needed shift toward streamlined approvals and clearer pathways, which will help unlock billions of dollars in investment, deliver clean energy alternatives and create jobs across regional communities.

"This is about getting the balance right – ensuring robust environmental and community safeguards remain in place, while removing unnecessary duplication and uncertainty."

Mr Hawes said accelerating the pipeline of renewable energy projects was important in supporting large energy users to shift to lower-emissions power sources and meet their net zero targets and requirements.

"The delivery of reliable, affordable, firmed power is not meeting industry requirements, as the Tomago Aluminium experience demonstrates," Mr Hawes said.

"Projects that can replace coal-fired generation capacity and deliver reliable renewable energy are moving too slowly, limiting the ability of large energy users to transition.

"Streamlined planning pathways are essential if we are to meet growing energy demand while maintaining our competitiveness as a place to do business."

Mr Hawes said Business Hunter would continue to advocate for measures to support the energy transition, including investment in transmission infrastructure, workforce development and targeted support for regional communities.

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