

# BUSINESS HUNTER

10 August 2025

Professor Roy Green  
Energy Industry Jobs Plan Review Taskforce

By email: [eijpreview@pmc.gov.au](mailto:eijpreview@pmc.gov.au)

## **SUBMISSION: Statutory Review of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP)**

Business Hunter welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Statutory Review of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP). This written submission is in addition to verbal feedback provided to Professor Roy Green and Energy Industry Jobs Plan Review Taskforce members in a consultation session on Friday 28 July 2025.

Business Hunter is the peak business group in the Hunter region. We serve more than 4,400 member and affiliate businesses operating across the region, representative of industries spanning all sectors and all sizes of business, from start-ups through to leading regional organisations and corporations, many with national and international profiles.

Our cohort of Hunter First members is a collective of more than 100 businesses and organisations with a significant presence or stake in the Hunter region. This group includes many businesses either directly or indirectly involved with the energy and resources sectors and a number of the region's local government organisations. We also represent and work with a network of 17 local chambers of commerce, including those in parts of the region with local economies strongly linked to mining and power generation.

Business Hunter's primary interest in the context of this review is in the potential declaration of an EIJP for the Eraring Power Station in Lake Macquarie. The Eraring Power Station has been a cornerstone of NSW's energy system and a significant employer in the Hunter region. The proposed closure of Eraring marks a pivotal shift – not just in the state's energy mix, but in the structure of the regional economy. It is essential that this transition is managed carefully to minimise economic disruption, support affected workers, create new employment pathways and unlock new growth opportunities for the region.

The Terms of Reference for the Statutory Review of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan state that the review relates exclusively to Part 5 of the Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024, which establishes the framework for the EIJP. The EIJP supports workers in closing power stations and workers of 'dependent employers', such as coal mines supplying those stations, to transition to new work and career pathways.

The review of Part 5 was mandated in the legislation to take place within 12 months of the Act coming into effect. However, at this early stage of the community of interest process for the Eraring Power Station closure, and with an EIJP not yet confirmed, it is difficult to make meaningful comment on the effectiveness of the provisions in Part 5. We can only make general comment on the consultation process undertaken to date as part of the community of interest process for Eraring.

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Business Hunter has engaged directly with the Net Zero Economy Authority directly on the Eraring EIJP through meetings and consultation sessions and has assisted in connecting the Authority with stakeholders businesses and organisations in the region, including potential receiving employers.

The EIJP process was not well understood by business prior to the community of interest process beginning, given the relatively recent enactment of the legislation and lack of practical precedent. It is our impression that many uncertainties remain about how the EIJP will operate, which workers it will assist and what obligations it will impose on closing and dependent employers.

Part 5 of the legislation provides some insight into these matters but leaves many details unclear. For instance, it states that closing and dependent employers will be expected to provide transitioning workers with paid leave time to seek career advice but does not indicate what an employer's specific obligations might be in regard to the amount of leave hours or number of sessions to which an employee might be entitled. It is anticipated that this sort of detail would be established within the EIJP, but without prior examples for industry to reference, uncertainty remains about the scope and nature of expectations on employers.

Business Hunter acknowledges the critical importance of the EIJP in facilitating a just and sustainable transition for workers affected by the closure and transformation of the Eraring power station. We strongly support the Act's focus on providing comprehensive support and retraining opportunities for transitioning employees. However, we believe the EIJP framework should also explicitly recognise and provide support for dependent local businesses that are intricately linked to the energy industry's ecosystem. We also believe the EIJP framework should not duplicate provisions under the Fair Work Act that apply to employers in cases of business closure and employee redundancy.

The Eraring power station is a major economic driver, not only for its direct workforce but also for numerous local suppliers, contractors, service providers, and ancillary businesses. These dependent businesses contribute significantly to the regional economy and local employment. Without targeted support, many of these businesses face financial strain or closure, leading to broader economic decline.

Business Hunter argued in its submission on the community of interest process that an Eraring EIJP should consider the impacts of the power station closure on employees and businesses in the broader Eraring supply chain, not just workers at the closing power station or in those businesses formally identified as 'dependent employers'.

Additionally, we maintain that the financial impacts of the Eraring closure on those businesses formally identified through the community of interest process as dependent employers should be fully considered to ensure employer obligations imposed under the EIJP are not overly onerous. The EIJP should recognise that these businesses may themselves experience significant financial loss as the result of the closure and be forced to either find new markets or potentially close altogether. These impacts need to be considered to ensure employers are supported and encouraged to adapt and, where feasible, continue

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operating. Eraring and its supplier mines currently contribute about 15 per cent of the Lake Macquarie economy and sustain many local businesses. Where possible, supply chain businesses need to be supported to continue trading and identify new markets for their products and services, so they can remain active employers in their community and contributors to the local economy. This applies to all businesses across the Eraring supply chain.

There is also strong support in the Hunter region for a framework similar to the EIJP to be established to support workers in any closing coal mines, not just those identified as dependent employers for a closing power station. While coal-fired power stations are the 'first movers' in the region's energy transition journey, there is significantly greater economic dependence on coal mining throughout the region, with NSW Mining recording 16,600 employees currently working in the Hunter and nearly 2800 supply chain businesses across the region supported by the industry.

While we acknowledge much of this feedback is outside the terms of reference of the statutory review, we believe it is important to again put it on the record, given the EIJP process is new, largely untested and may be subject of more comprehensive review in future.

The closure of the Eraring Power Station is the first major step in a pending structural adjustment of the Hunter workforce and economy that will occur over coming decades as the region and nation shift to a lower-carbon economy. While the pending closure poses significant challenges, it is also an opportunity to establish a robust model for transitioning workers to new employment that can potentially be replicated across the region and beyond.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Should you wish to engage further on these matters raised, please contact me at [bob.hawes@businesshunter.com](mailto:bob.hawes@businesshunter.com) or on 02 9466 4665.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Hawes  
CEO, Business Hunter