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18 July 2025

EIJP Operations and Engagement team
Net Zero Economy Authority

By email: EIJP@pmc.gov.au

SUBMISSION: Community of Interest process for Eraring Power Station

Business Hunter welcomes the opportunity to comment on the development of an Energy Industry Jobs Plan for Eraring Power Station.

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. It also includes Lake Macquarie City Council and its independent economic development agency Dantia.

We also represent and work with a network of 17 local chambers of commerce, including those parts of the region with local economies strongly linked to mining and power generation.

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.

Business Hunter has engaged directly with the Net Zero Economy Authority on the Eraring Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) on a number of occasions and assisted in connecting the Authority with stakeholders businesses and organisation in the region. We look forward to continuing a collaborative relationship as the EIJP process evolves.

Business Hunter understands that this early stage of consultation seeks to establish whether an EIJP should be put in place for the Eraring Power Station closure to support workforce transition. In this context, we offer the following comments.

1. An EIJP should be implemented for the Eraring Power Station closure.

The Eraring closure will affect just over 200 Origin Energy employees directly but many more in the supply chain, including contractors and those employed at the Myuna and

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Mandalong mines that primarily provide coal to the power station. With Eraring being the dominant employer and generator of economic activity within its immediate community, the ripple effect will be much larger, also affecting service businesses that support the business and its workforce. We acknowledge and commend the support Origin is already providing to employees by offering retraining opportunities under its Future Directions program, but maintain that more support will be needed to complement this program and encompass workers in the broader supply chain who will be affected by the plant's closure. Given that coal-fired power generation is being phased out within the region, and nationally, like-for-like employment is unlikely to be available for most Eraring employees. It is more likely they will either transition into related industries with their existing skills or need to retrain to move into a new area of employment.

2. An EIJP should ensure workers and business owners in the broader supply chain can access support to retrain or pursue alternative employment pathways.

The EIJP should consider participating employees in the broader Eraring supply chain. Business Hunter believes this should include not only direct suppliers and contractors, but service-oriented businesses that rely exclusively or primarily on Eraring for their source of income – for example, businesses providing food and hospitality services. Employees and small business owners in this broader supply chain should be eligible to receive advice and retraining. Where they are not eligible for retraining under the terms of the EIJP, we would urge the NZEA to work with other government agencies to connect them with supports available through other programs, such as the Workforce Australia Local Jobs Plan. We believe the NZEA, working with the legislative remit of an EIJP, can play an important coordinating role in this regard, as well as undertaking the necessary supply chain mapping to determine the full impact of the Eraring closure on the local workforce and economy.

3. An EIJP should consider opportunities in existing and emerging industries for retraining and redeployment of participating employees.

The EIJP will benefit from being informed by a skills audit of the existing workforce (including those indirectly employed) and mapping redeployment opportunities in existing and emerging industries. The emerging renewable energy industry has been mooted as a potential sector to capture transitioning workers from thermal power stations, but while the Hunter region has been the focus of substantial interest and investment in renewables, most projects are still in development and not likely to be operational before the scheduled closure of Eraring in 2027. It is more likely that existing industries will offer the most immediate opportunity for re-employment. Business Hunter has been working with the NZEA to identify major employers within our membership and the region that might be able to accommodate Eraring workers in the future workforce plans, including those in mining, manufacturing, construction and defence. This consultation with businesses in related industries will help to ascertain what skills within the Eraring workforce are valued and considered transferrable. We would also urge the NZEA to work closely with TAFE to maximise retraining opportunities through the Net Zero Manufacturing Centre of Excellence at Tighes Hill, once it is established.

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4. Financial impacts of the Eraring closure on businesses in the supply chain should be fully considered in determining employer obligations under the EIJP.

While all employers in the Eraring supply chain should be encouraged to provide reasonable support to workers to find and transition to new employment, the EIJP should recognise that many of these businesses will themselves experience significant financial loss as the result of the closure and be forced to either find new markets or potentially close their businesses altogether. These impacts need to be considered to ensure the obligations made on employers under the EIJP do not place additional and unreasonable financial burden on them. 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.

5. The proposed geographic area of the Eraring EIJP could be extended to include Muswellbrook LGA and the entirety of the Central Coast LGA.

The proposed geographic area captures most of the Lower and Upper Hunter areas from which supply chain businesses or prospective new employers for Eraring workers are likely to be based. However, because it is based on SA3 areas, rather than LGAs, it omits some areas that have close communities of interest and economic ties with other parts of the region. The Muswellbrook area is a stronghold of the mining industry and potentially a source of prospective future employers for Eraring workers, and possibly employees and businesses in the Eraring supply chain. Similarly, the Central Coast has strong manufacturing and construction sectors, and many workers who commute in and out of Lake Macquarie and Hunter areas, so the Gosford SA3 area may also warrant inclusion.

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.

Business Hunter has already established a strong working relationship with the NZEA and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with them through the development of this EIJP and future initiatives.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Should you wish to engage further on this matters raised, please contact me at bob.hawes@businesshunter.com or on 02 9466 4665.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Hawes
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