

BUSINESS HUNTER

24 September 2025

NSW Planning Portal
Major Projects – Hunter Transmission Project
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Submitted via Planning Portal

SUBMISSION: Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement

Business Hunter welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Hunter Transmission Project.

As the peak business organisation for the Hunter region, we represent a diverse membership base spanning key sectors such as manufacturing, energy, agribusiness, mining, health, construction, professional services, and logistics. 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 to leading regional organisations and corporations, many with national and international profiles. We also represent and work with a network of 17 local chambers of commerce.

Business Hunter supports sustainable economic development and infrastructure that enhances regional productivity and supports our essential industries. We acknowledge the importance of the Hunter Transmission Project in enabling the state's energy transition and welcome the NSW Government's commitment to engaging with communities and stakeholders throughout the assessment and delivery phases.

Strategic importance of the project

Business Hunter supports the Hunter Transmission Project as a critical enabler of energy reliability and security. By connecting new renewable energy projects in the Central-West Orana and Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zones (REZs), the project strengthens grid resilience and improves energy access across NSW.

The Hunter region is undergoing structural economic transformation. Transmission infrastructure is essential to attract new clean energy investment and support existing and future industries. The region is already witnessing considerable business and industry stress related to inability to source reliable, affordable energy from renewable sources and the Hunter Transmission Project will be a key component, when delivered, to ease the tension.

Employment opportunities

Direct and indirect employment will arise from the planning, construction and ongoing maintenance of this transmission corridor, contributing to regional prosperity and the Hunter's ongoing development as a renewable energy hub.

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We commend EnergyCo on taking a Hunter-first approach to procurement, which obliges tender applicants to address how they will prioritise local employment and engage local services, and for adopting a focus on providing employment, training and supply opportunities for First Nations businesses. Preferencing regional suppliers will ensure the Hunter derives maximum benefit from the project through local spending, job creation and capacity-building opportunities. It will also encourage investment into the region by potential suppliers, supporting the Hunter's economic transformation.

However, the Social Impact Statement notes feedback from communities and businesses that they do not fully understand the specifics and extent of economic and employment opportunities the project will bring, and suggests local businesses need 'ongoing engagement from the project to understand how they can benefit from supply and procurement opportunities'.

The statement indicates a 'Local Business and Employment Strategy' will be prepared and implemented, reflecting Energy Co's Hunter-First commitments to the local community' and Business Hunter looks forward to further engagement and information on that strategy.

Environmental and social considerations

We recognise the EIS has outlined a number of potential environmental, social, and cultural impacts, including:

- Biodiversity and vegetation clearance
- Visual and landscape impacts
- Effects on agricultural land and productivity
- Cultural heritage values
- Amenity impacts on nearby residents and landowners
- Acquisition of lands.

Business Hunter encourages EnergyCo to adopt best-practice approaches to minimising land-use conflicts, implementing effective mitigation measures to reduce ecological disturbance and protect biodiversity corridors, and ensuring comprehensive, constructive engagement with and equitable compensation for affected landholders.

Repurposing of temporary housing

Business Hunter notes there has been a call by the Mayor of Lake Macquarie for temporary worker accommodation constructed for the project to be built to a standard that will enable it to be repurposed as affordable housing. We support the Mayor's proposal and believe it is consistent with the principle of investing in and providing ongoing benefit to communities affected by the project.

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Conclusion

The Hunter Transmission Project represents a vital step toward a modern, decarbonised, and diversified economy in the Hunter region. Business Hunter supports its progression, conditional on the continued application and meeting of best practice environmental, economic and social safeguards. Where there are negative impacts, they should be either mitigated or minimised to an acceptable scale.

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 or on 02 9466 4665.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Hawes
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