

2025 consultation

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Net Zero Commission 2025 Consultation

Submission from the Hunter Jobs Alliance (HJA)

Date - 10 July 2025

Submitted via - Parliament of NSW Website

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. The Hunter Jobs Alliance is a collaboration of unions and environmental organisations in the Hunter region, united by a shared commitment to securing a fair, sustainable, and prosperous future for our communities. We work to advance full employment, good union jobs, a thriving natural environment, an equitable society, and a stable climate powered by renewable energy. Our members and supporters include workers, conservationists, and local businesspeople, individuals with deep roots in the region and a common vision for an orderly transition in the Hunter.

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Hunter Jobs Alliance affiliate member organisations:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union NSW & ACT Branch (AMWU)• Electrical Trades Union NSW & ACT Branch (ETU)• United Workers Union (UWU)• Australian Municipal, Administrative, Clerical and Services Union NSW & ACT Services Branch (ASU)• Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)• National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New South Wales Teachers Federation (NSWTF)• Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch (IEU)• New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA)• Labor Environment Action Network (LEAN)• Lock the Gate Alliance (LTG)• Hunter Community Environment Centre (HCEC)• Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales (NCC) |
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Foreword

This submission focuses on accelerating emissions reductions in the electricity and energy sector, with particular emphasis on the importance of coordinated transition planning. The Hunter Jobs Alliance has long advocated for a fair and orderly transition that supports workers, communities, the environment, and industry as we shift to a clean energy future.

Question 6: The speed of deployment of electricity generation and infrastructure is a key risk to emissions reduction targets. What more could be done to fast-track deployment?

Fast-tracking electricity infrastructure deployment must be matched with coordinated regional transition planning, particularly in coal-affected regions like the Hunter. Without parallel investment in workforce development, local employment pathways, and community capacity, resistance to major projects, especially new transmission, will continue to grow. These delays threaten the very deployment needed to meet NSW's emissions reduction targets.

To address this, the NSW Government should urgently legislate and empower the **Future Jobs and Investment Authority (FJIA)** as a statutory, regionally anchored coordination body with the authority and resources to lead and deliver transition planning. The FJIA must focus on creating secure local jobs, supporting clear pathways for transitioning workers, and driving long-term economic resilience in regions impacted by coal closures. Only a well-resourced, place-based institution can deliver the level of trust, alignment, and capability needed to accelerate clean energy deployment at scale.

To ensure the FJIA enables fast, fair and publicly supported infrastructure deployment, the following elements must be embedded in its design:

- **Legislated Employer Obligations**
Coal companies must be required to share workforce data, plan early for transition impacts, and contribute to retraining and redeployment efforts. Clear and consistent rules across the region are critical for certainty and fairness.
- **Industry-Funded Transition Support**
Transition programs must be funded by employer contributions, not by substituting Royalties for Rejuvenation or other public funds intended for broader regional development.
- **Ring-Fence Royalties for Rejuvenation**
These funds must be preserved for long-term local economic transformation, job





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creation, and infrastructure readiness, not used to underwrite employer responsibilities.

- **Proactive Redeployment Services**

Displaced workers must be supported into new roles before closures occur, with early outreach, job-matching, career advice, and access to relevant retraining tied to real industry demand.

- **Alignment with REZ and Infrastructure Planning**

Transition and workforce strategies must be fully aligned with Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) timelines and major public infrastructure projects to ensure labour readiness, community support, and local content delivery.

- **Rehabilitation as Opportunity**

Land and environmental rehabilitation should be used to create jobs for displaced workers, delivering both ecological restoration and social licence for the transition.

- **Place-Based Delivery**

Regional Workforce Transition Officers must be embedded in local areas to drive delivery, build trusted relationships, and ensure that communities experience the tangible benefits of accelerated energy investment.

In short, accelerating deployment is not just about faster approvals, it requires enabling the workforce, supporting host communities, and building public trust. A legislated and empowered FJIA is essential infrastructure in itself: the coordination engine that can deliver energy transition outcomes on time and with community backing.

Question 7: Are the measures now in place sufficient to ensure community engagement and benefit sharing from the build-out of infrastructure for the energy transition?

While the NSW Renewable Energy Planning Framework and Benefit Sharing Guidelines are a welcome step, they are currently insufficient to guarantee meaningful and equitable participation in the transition.

To strengthen engagement and benefit-sharing:

- **Community engagement must begin early and extend beyond landowners**, ensuring renters, workers, First Nations peoples, and young people are included in consultation and benefit decisions.



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- **Benefit-sharing must be enforceable and consistent**, with clearer expectations for local job creation, skills investment, and reinvestment in community services and infrastructure.
- **Public funds like Royalties for Rejuvenation must be ring-fenced** for long-term community benefit, not used to underwrite employer obligations. These funds should be invested in initiatives that build regional resilience, create secure jobs, and establish clear pathways for transitioning workers into growing industries.
- **Transparent reporting requirements** must be established so that developers are accountable for the delivery of social, economic, and workforce benefits promised during approvals.

These reforms must be matched by a coordinated strategy that aligns economic development with climate targets and ensures that no community is left behind, especially those like the Hunter that have powered the state for generations.

Question 8: Are First Nations communities adequately engaged and included in sharing the benefits of the transition? What more could be done, and by whom?

A just and inclusive energy transition must be founded on genuine partnership with First Nations communities. This means embedding free, prior and informed consent at the heart of all renewable energy and transmission project approvals. First Nations people must be active partners in the co-design of projects and policies, not consulted after decisions have already been made. Their knowledge, rights, and leadership must guide how the transition unfolds on Country.

Economic participation must also be a priority. First Nations communities should have clear and supported pathways into employment, training, procurement, and ownership opportunities across the clean energy sector. Self-determination must be central through the development and funding of First Nations-led clean energy projects, community energy plans, and long-term participation in the energy economy.

To support this, land councils, community organisations, and First Nations corporations must be properly resourced to engage meaningfully in policy development, land use planning, and benefit-sharing negotiations. These organisations must be able to represent their communities' interests from a position of strength, not scarcity.



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Achieving these outcomes requires committed action by the NSW Government in partnership with First Nations communities. Responsibilities must be clearly embedded across all relevant agencies, planning bodies, and regional transition authorities. Ensuring First Nations people are central to, and benefit from, the clean energy transition is not only a matter of justice and reconciliation, it is fundamental to building the trust, legitimacy and success of the transition itself.

Question 22: What should be included in a monitoring framework for NSW in the context of the transition to net zero, including any specific metrics and indicators?

To ensure NSW meets its climate goals in a fair and coordinated way, the Commission should recommend the creation of a robust transition monitoring framework that includes emissions and energy infrastructure metrics, but also incorporates social, economic, and environmental indicators. This framework must include clear, transparent, and enforceable metrics that track outcomes for workers, communities, and the environment, ensuring the electricity sector decarbonisation also delivers on the just transition principles embedded in the Net Zero Future Act.

Recommended Monitoring Framework for the Electricity and Energy Sector

Focus Area	Key Metrics
Emissions Reductions & Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Annual emissions reductions (total & % of 2005 baseline)- Installed renewable generation capacity (MW/year)- % electricity from renewables- Battery storage capacity deployed (MW/MWh)- Transmission infrastructure delivered vs planned (km & \$)- Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) milestones (planning, investment, construction)



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Workforce Transition

- Number of coal-related jobs lost vs. clean energy jobs created
- % of transitioning workers accessing support (retraining, redeployment, early retirement)
- Uptake of transition-linked TAFE/vocational programs
- Time between displacement and re-employment
- Employer compliance with obligations (e.g., data sharing, consultation)
- Local employment targets met in major public projects

Social & Economic Equity

- Unemployment & underemployment in impacted LGAs
- Change in household income and welfare reliance
- Investment in social infrastructure (health, education, housing)
- % of Royalties for Rejuvenation directed to diversification
- First Nations-led/partnered project count and employment outcomes

Environmental Rehabilitation

- Hectares of mine/power station land rehabilitated and repurposed
- Number of jobs created in rehabilitation projects
- Progress on biodiversity restoration in former industrial zones
- Integration of land reuse with clean energy or conservation initiatives



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Governance & Trust

- Establishment and empowerment of statutory transition authorities (e.g. FJIA)
- Frequency & inclusiveness of community consultation (with First Nations representation)
- Public reporting on Energy Industry Jobs Plan and REZ job outcomes
- Share of funding from industry vs. public sources

Conclusion: Embedding a Just Transition in NSW's Climate Strategy

The Hunter Jobs Alliance supports ambitious action on climate change, but emphasises that emissions reductions must go hand in hand with social and economic justice. Current legislative and policy frameworks contain critical gaps:

- The Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024 fails to protect the majority of workers in export-oriented coal mines, leaving thousands of Hunter region workers vulnerable to market-driven closures without adequate transitional support.
- The proposed NSW Future Jobs and Investment Authority must be urgently legislated and empowered as a regionally anchored statutory authority. It should have a clear mandate to lead transition planning, create secure local jobs, support defined pathways for transitioning workers, and drive long-term economic resilience in coal-affected regions.
- The Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023 rightly highlights the need to balance emissions reduction with economic and social concerns. However, implementation to date has not matched the urgency or scale of the challenge.

Without adequate protections, planning, and investment, the Hunter faces escalating risks of economic decline, social fragmentation, and failure to meet NSW's climate goals. The closure of Eraring—and the coal closures that follow—must be managed through legislated transition authorities and policy frameworks, underpinned by a coordinated, enforceable, inclusive, and properly resourced Energy Industry Jobs Plan.



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We urge the Commission to embed just transition principles across all aspects of NSW's climate strategy. Climate action does not require sacrificing economic security or social cohesion—if we plan and invest in a way that puts workers, communities, and fairness at the centre of change.

Thank you for considering this submission.



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