

Penny Sharpe

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council



Media Release

\$70 Million in first round for Central-West Orana Communities

Monday, 15 July 2024

The Minns Labor Government is accelerating benefits for communities in the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) who will be able to apply for \$70 million worth of grants as part of the Community and Employment Benefit program.

This is the first tranche of funding for the region out of a pool of \$128.4 million and will be available to local community groups, councils and First Nations organisations.

The program ensures that communities across the REZ will see direct benefits from the energy transition well before construction begins. The NSW Government has been working closely with the community to ensure funding reflect priority areas and needs. The four grant streams identified are:

- **Local Community Small Grants:** \$500,000 for small-scale projects that deliver tangible benefits for local communities. Applicants can apply for up to \$50,000.
- **First Nations Fund:** \$10 million for projects that empower local Aboriginal organisations, create employment and participation opportunities, and enhance outcomes for Aboriginal people. Applicants can apply for up to \$1,000,000.
- **Local Community Fund:** \$15 million to improve local amenities and foster stronger community connections. Applicants can apply for up to \$1,000,000.
- **Legacy Infrastructure Fund:** \$45 million for eligible councils to work with communities to deliver infrastructure projects that boost liveability and drive regional economic development.

To support applicants, grant writing workshops will be held across the Central-West Orana, with dedicated support for First Nation applicants. More information about the grants and application support is on the [EnergyCo website](#). Further funding rounds will be progressively rolled out.

The Central-West Orana REZ is a key initiative under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap to deliver clean, affordable and reliable energy to households and businesses across the state. The project will deliver at least 4.5 gigawatts of transmitted electricity, which is equivalent to powering 1.8 million homes. It is the first REZ in Australia to achieve planning approval.

The Central-West Orana REZ offers significant opportunities for the region and will:

- drive economic growth through substantial private investment;
- create local jobs in construction and ongoing maintenance; and
- integrate regional communities into the development of NSW's sustainable energy future.

Quote attributable to Minister for Climate Change and Energy Penny Sharpe:

“The Central West Orana is playing a leading role in our state’s renewable energy transition.

“These grants are a key part of the NSW Government’s commitment to ensure the community can share in the benefits the renewable energy zone will bring, creating job opportunities and infrastructure for the future.

“We are committed to the long-term prosperity of the regions and will continue to work closely with all REZ communities as we transform our state’s energy system.”

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