

## 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

# Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone powers ahead

Friday, 31 January 2025

Minister for Climate Change and Energy Penny Sharpe has visited an electrical substation slated for upgrades under the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) as Ausgrid kicks off community consultation in the region.

Work is underway after the NSW Government appointed Ausgrid as the preferred network operator for the Hunter-Central Coast REZ, to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the network infrastructure.

This will be the first REZ in Australia to upgrade existing distribution poles and wires, to minimise impact on surrounding communities and the environment. The proposed upgrades will facilitate more than 1 gigawatt of energy into the grid.

Ausgrid is holding drop-in sessions in Singleton, Muswellbrook and online to discuss the project and hear feedback from community members, with more opportunities for engagement to come.

Ausgrid has also begun early works for the project in the Upper Hunter to finalise its design for regulatory and environmental planning approvals.

Construction will create an estimated 175 jobs including roles for engineers, electricians and labourers.

By fast-tracking the connection of new renewable energy projects, the Hunter-Central Coast REZ will play a critical role in ensuring a reliable supply of power to homes and businesses and putting downward pressure on bills. It will also help NSW meet its 2030 renewable energy and Net Zero targets.

The Minns Labor Government is delivering on our energy plan, including supporting enough renewable projects to get us more than halfway towards our 2030 generation target and a quarter of the way there on our long-duration storage target.

Already around 35% of NSW electricity comes from renewable energy.

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

"The Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone is powering ahead.

"This will be the first renewable energy zone to replace lower-capacity power lines with higher-capacity ones – we're essentially putting fatter lines on the poles – which will reduce the impact on the community and the environment.

"The start of community consultation is another milestone in the transformation of the state's energy system. It's great to be in the region to see how this project will deliver critical energy for NSW households and businesses."

**Quote attributable to Ausgrid's Group Executive Transmission Development and Growth, Kelly Wood:**

"Ausgrid is committed to working with landholders and EnergyCo to finalise details of the design, with the aim of minimising impacts and maximising benefits for the local communities.

"We are proud to see our people bringing this project to life, supporting the communities they and their families live in."

**Further information:**

For community consultation dates and information, visit <https://yoursay.ausgrid.com.au/hccrez>

What is a renewable energy zone?

Renewable energy zones (REZs) will group new wind and solar power generation into locations where it can be efficiently stored and transmitted across NSW. Five zones have been identified and will keep NSW electricity reliable as coal-fired power stations retire, delivering large amounts of new energy to power our regions and cities.

REZs will help deliver lower wholesale electricity costs and place downward pressure on customer bills through increased competition, while supporting local jobs and business opportunities during construction and operation.

What is the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone?

EnergyCo is in the early stages of developing a REZ in the Hunter and Central Coast regions. This REZ encompasses key cities and towns including Newcastle, Maitland, Cessnock, Singleton and Muswellbrook.

The region has excellent renewable energy resources and can utilise existing power stations, rehabilitated mining land, electricity network infrastructure, port and transport infrastructure and a skilled workforce.

The Hunter-Central Coast REZ is Australia's first REZ to utilise the distribution network to provide the REZ infrastructure. It will allow more to low-cost renewables to connect within the existing network. This innovative approach will minimise impacts on surrounding communities and the environment.

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