Notice of decision – Hunter Transmission Project

Section 2.22 and clause 20 of Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*

Application type	Critical State significant infrastructure
Application number and project name	SSI-70610456 Hunter Transmission Project
Proponent	Energy Corporation of NSW
Approval Authority	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Decision

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has, under section 5.19 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (**the Act**) approved the infrastructure application subject to conditions.

The key components of the development involve:
- development of 110 km of new 500 kV double circuit transmission lines on steel lattice towers up to 85 m high and associated infrastructure between the proposed Bayswater South and Olney switching stations;
- adjustments and upgrades to existing 500 kV and 330 kV lines at Eraring, Bayswater, Cedar Brush Creek, Martinsville, Newcastle, Ravensdale and Tomago;
- development of new switching stations at Bayswater South and Olney;
- augmentation of the existing Bayswater and Eraring substations;
- ancillary infrastructure such as site offices, laydown areas, temporary workforce accommodation; and
- upgrade of existing access roads, upgrade and creation of new tracks, and public road upgrades.

Construction of the development would take approximately 30 months, and once operational would unlock the supply of electricity from the Central-West Orana and New England Renewable Energy Zones (CWO and NE REZ) to the National Electricity Market.

A copy of the Department's assessment report and Minister's infrastructure approval are available here.

Date of decision
27 July 2026

Reasons for decision

The following matters were taken into consideration in making this decision:
- the relevant matters required under the Act, including the objects of the Act;
- relevant Commonwealth and NSW legislation, policies and guidelines;
- all information submitted to the Department during the assessment of the application;
- the findings and recommendations in the Planning Secretary's assessment report; and
- the views of the community about the project (see **Attachment 1**).

The findings and recommendations set out in the Department's assessment report were accepted and adopted as the reasons for making this decision.

The key reasons for approving the application are as follows:
- the project would play an essential role in supporting the shift from a long-standing reliance on coal-fired power stations to a reliance on renewable energy, and deliver economic benefits to NSW, including the creation of approximately 830 construction jobs;
- the project would enable increased output from the CWO and NE REZ to reach customers in NSW;
- the Project is consistent with relevant NSW Government policies and guidelines, including the *Transmission Infrastructure Strategy* (2018), the *Electricity Strategy* (2019), and more broadly the *Climate Change Policy Framework* (2016) and *Net Zero Stage 1: 2020 – 2030* (2020) and *Implementation update* (2022);
- the impacts on the community and the environment can be appropriately minimised, managed or offset to an acceptable level, in accordance with applicable NSW Government policies and standards;
- the issues raised by the community during consultation and in submissions have been considered and adequately addressed through changes to the project and the conditions of approval. Engagement on the project is considered to be in line with the *Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects*, including the participation objectives outlined in these guidelines (where applicable); and
- weighing all relevant considerations, the project is in the public interest.

Attachment 1 – Consideration of Community Views

The Department exhibited the application from 27 August 2025 until 24 September 2025 (28 days) and received 128 unique public submissions (93 in objection, 25 commented and 10 in support) and 35 submissions from special interest groups (15 in objection, 18 commented and 2 in support).

The Department also visited the site from 3 to 4 November 2025.

A summary of how the key issues raised by the community were taken into consideration is provided in the table below. Other issues are addressed in detail in the Planning Secretary's assessment report.

Issue	***Consideration***
Biodiversity • Preservation of the natural environment • Impacts to threatened fauna species and entities at risk of Serious and Irreversible Impacts	*Assessment* • EnergyCo has strategically designed the project to avoid and minimise biodiversity impacts by prioritising co-location with existing disturbed corridors, including mining sites and cleared land. Of the approximately 945 ha of native vegetation to be impacted, around 44% of this is in varying degrees of disturbance, including derived grasslands, thinned/poor/plantation woodlands associated with previous clearing, mine rehabilitation and hardwood forestry plantations. • The Department has carefully considered the five assessment provisions in sections 9.1.1 and 9.1.2 of the Biodiversity Assessment Method 2020, and the Guidance to assist a decision-maker to determine a serious and irreversible impact, 2019, and the advice provided by CPHR. The Department and CPHR are satisfied that the project's impacts would not contribute significantly to the risk of extinction of any species or community and would not constitute SAII. • Approximately 210 ha (22%) of native vegetation would be subject to partial clearing, retaining vegetation under 2 m within certain sections of the transmission line easement. *Conditions* • Minimise the clearing of native vegetation and key fauna habitat including hollow bearing trees, within the project footprint and protect native vegetation and key fauna habitat outside the project footprint in accordance with limits in the recommended conditions. • Prepare and implement a biodiversity management plan, including details of measures to avoid and minimise impacts, a Threatened Frogs management sub-plan, and a program to monitor and report on the effectiveness of the measures. • Retire the relevant biodiversity credits in accordance with the NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme prior to carrying out any development that could directly or indirectly impact biodiversity values requiring offset.
Aviation • Concerns regarding the safe operation of aircraft in the vicinity of the project, particularly impacts to the operation of the Warkworth Aerodrome.	*Assessment* • Warkworth Aerodrome is the closest airstrip, located approximately 2.5 km to the west of the project. • Following the exhibition of the EIS, EnergyCo engaged a separate aviation expert, To70, to peer review the Aviation Impact Assessment. A subsequent Aviation Risk Assessment of the project in relation to gliding and aviation operations at Warkworth Aerodrome was prepared by To70 in consultation with Gliding Australia and Hunter Valley Gliding Club. • Based on the findings of the Aviation Risk Assessment, while the project would introduce a new obstacle for aerial activities, with the implementation of mitigation measures, the risks to aerial operations at Warkworth Aerodrome would be reduced from extreme to be consistent with the existing high risk when considered against the Gliding Australia Safety Management System. *Conditions* • Verify and implement or fund reasonable mitigation measures or negotiate an agreement with Warkworth Aerodrome commensurate with the impact on aerial activities affected
Socio-economic • Perceived loss of access to public recreation areas within State Forest lands.	*Assessment* • The project would deliver economic benefits to NSW, with generation of approximately 830 construction jobs. • Submitters were concerned about Millfield Public Schools access and the safety of increased construction traffic in proximity to the school. EnergyCo has committed to investigate and implement measures for the Millfield

Issue	Consideration
• Concerns about the increased reliance on local amenities such as health facilities and accommodation. • Unclear how the local community would benefit from the project.	Public School, including improvements to the school car park and fencing, and deploying traffic control measures for pedestrian safety during school pick-up and drop-off times. • Additionally, concerns were expressed about the public's access to recreational areas of the state forests. EnergyCo has committed to establishing and implementing a Hunter Central Coast Community and Employment Benefits Program in consultation with relevant councils and impacted communities and in accordance with the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Regulation 2021*. *Conditions* • Prepare an accommodation and employment strategy in consultation with the council, with consideration to prioritising the employment of local workers. • Maintain the public's access to State forest public recreation areas by ensuring there are adequate pull-over bays to share the roads with all users.
Traffic • Construction traffic impacts from increased traffic volumes	*Assessment* • Upgrades are proposed to seven local roads, 11 Forestry roads, five Crown roads, one NPWS road and 32 new or existing intersections. • While the additional traffic movements would bring a noticeable increase to the local road environment, all roads would continue to operate within the existing capacity throughout the construction period. Potential impacts on narrow local and Forestry roads and near sensitive receivers can be effectively managed through the proposed mitigation measures, including completing necessary road upgrades prior to commencing construction, restricting construction traffic during peak periods, and implementing other traffic management controls. *Conditions* • All necessary road upgrades are to be completed to the satisfaction of the relevant road authority. • Dilapidation surveys would be regularly undertaken to identify and inform the need to repair any damage to the road network caused by project-related traffic • Prepare a traffic and transport management plan in consultation with the relevant road authority to detail the implementation of mitigation measures.
Bushfire • Hazards from transmission lines • Potential impacts to aerial firefighting	*Assessment* • The majority of the project footprint is mapped as bushfire prone land. EnergyCo would be required to maintain APZs around switching stations and construction compounds with temporary buildings or where combustible goods are stored. • The Department notes that evidence provided to the Select Committee on the Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for Renewable Energy Projects (2023) in relation to bushfire risk associated with overhead transmission lines was that high voltage transmission lines over 220 kV were unlikely to act as an ignition source. • The Department considers that the bushfire risks can be suitably managed through the implementation of standard fire management plans and procedures during construction and throughout operations. *Conditions* • Require the project complies with relevant *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019* (or equivalent) and Australian Standard AS3959- 2018. • Provide suitable equipment to respond to fires on site, including a 20,000 litre water tank at each construction compound. • Prepare and implement an emergency plan and detailed emergency procedures.
Water and soils • potential erosion and sedimentation impacts to waterways such as the Hunter River	*Assessment* • Construction impacts to riparian corridors would be associated with clearing of vegetation within the transmission line alignment, construction of watercourse crossings for access tracks and the construction of the Olney switching station. The clearing and earthworks associated with construction of the Olney switching station would occur across the riparian

Issue	*Consideration*
	corridors of two minor watercourses upstream of sensitive receiving environments. • EnergyCo's assessment concluded the waterway crossings would result in negligible impacts to streamflow or hydrology within the Hunter River or associated tributaries • Construction activities associated with several transmission structures would be located within the riparian zones of the Hunter River and its tributaries. *Conditions* • Comply with legislation to prevent pollution of waters. • All works on waterfront land and within watercourses must comply with the relevant policies and guidelines. • Minimise erosion and control sediment generation. • Require the development not materially alter the flood storage capacity, flows or characteristics. • Prepare and implement an emergency plan which includes response measures in the case of a flood. • Prepare and implement a soil and water management plan.