

**MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF SINGLETON COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS QUEEN STREET SINGLETON ON TUESDAY 26 AUGUST 2025, COMMENCING AT 5.30PM.**

**PRESENT:**

Crs S Moore (Mayor and Chairperson), S George, P Thompson, H Jenkins, A McGowan, M McLachlan, P Watson, S Yeomans and D Thompson.

**APOLOGIES**

Nil.

Cr G Adamthwaite – approved leave of absence

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager; Dwight Graham, Director Corporate & Community Services; Melinda Curtis, Executive Director; Mark Wiblen, Manager Corporate and Commercial Services; Briony O'Hara, Coordinator Communications and Engagement and Rebecca Bailey, Governance Lead. There were representatives of the media and members of the public present in the gallery.

**CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

106/25 **MOVED** Cr M McLachlan **SECONDED** Cr P Watson that the minutes of Council Meeting of Singleton Council held on Tuesday 19 August 2025, be confirmed.

**CARRIED**

**MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

Nil.

**DISCLOSURES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil.

**WITHDRAWAL OF ITEMS AND LATE ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

Nil.

*Mayoral Minutes*

**MM7/25 Net Zero Economy Authority - Singleton Council  
Response to Review of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan FILE:19/00046**

In 2024 the Federal Government established the Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEa) under the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act, 2024* (NZEa Act). The NZEa Act establishes the NZEa with a CEO and a Board that oversees the objects of the Act and

perform the functions set out in the Act. The objects of the NZEA Act are to:

- Promote orderly and positive economic transformation as the world decarbonises.
- Facilitate Australia's greenhouse gas reduction targets.
- Ensure Australia's regions, communities and workers are supported to manage the impacts, and share in the benefits, of Australia's transition to a net zero economy.

In June 2025, the NZEA published the Hunter Regional Profile setting out the rationale for prioritising the Hunter Region for transition support under the NZEA Act. The Hunter Regional Profile identified that the Hunter Region was highly exposed to decarbonisation risks, with three (3) coal fired power stations in the region scheduled to close by 2033 and 18 high emitting coal mining operations contributing to over 79% of NSW's greenhouse gas emissions (**Attachment 1**). Of these, Bayswater Power Station sits partially within the Singleton Local Government Area and 12 of the 18 coal mines sit wholly within the LGA, accounting for over 49% of NSW's scope 1 greenhouse gas emissions and over 92,000 hectares of land.

One of the primary functions of the NZEA is to create Energy Industry Jobs Plans (EIJPs) when a power station is scheduled to close. Under the NZEA Act, Part 5 sets out the framework for preparing such plans. The rationale for planning for power station closures is to avoid historical issues such as those experienced in the energy market when the owners of the Hazelwood Power Station announced in November 2016 that the station would close in March 2017. This had significant impacts on workers, communities and the Australian electricity market. Power stations are now required to provide the Australian Energy Market Operator with 42 months advance notice of the intention to close.

For the NZEA, this provides the opportunity to develop EIJPs well in advance of power station closure.

However, the remit of the EIJPs is narrowly constrained to closing employers, dependent employers and receiving employers, alongside transition employees. Closing employers are the power stations and, where a coal mine is owned by the closing employer and supplies coal to that power station, the coal mine.

Dependent employers are those who hold a commercial relationship with a closing employer and will cease a substantial part of their business as a result of the power station closure. A dependent employer can also be a coal mine, where that mine supplies coal to the power station and, as a result of the power station closure, will cease a substantial part of its business.

Receiving employers are those who voluntarily nominate through an EOI process to the NZEA CEO as an employer interested in receiving employees from a closing or dependent employer, and can be any industry, including local government. Receiving employers must meet certain criteria under the Act.

As a result, no EIJPs will be created for coal mining operations that export thermal and/or metalliferous coal. This is a significant shortcoming of the current legislative

framework.

The urgency regarding transition lies with coal dependent communities reliant on a declining export market due to increased global focus on cleaner energy sources. The Office of the Chief Economist June 2025 Resources and Energy Quarterly Report suggests that with a reduced demand for thermal coal in traditional export markets, it is likely that thermal coal exports out of the Port of Newcastle will continue to decline over the next four years. This places significant downward pressure on margins driven by higher costs of production domestically and ultimately the commercial viability of coal mines in the Hunter region.

In July 2025 the NZEA undertook consultation on the development of a EIJP for the closure of the Eraring Power Station in Lake Macquarie, which is scheduled to close in 2027. Singleton Council was not notified of the consultation, as the scope was limited to a geographic area determined by the NZEA CEO.

However, during the consultation period on the EIJP for Eraring Power Station, the Hunter Joint Organisation made a submission on behalf of the ten Hunter region councils. This submission recommended:

1. Support for an expanded EIJP to cover all coal-dependent communities and supply chain workers across the Hunter;
2. Investment in skill mapping, retraining and redeployment across the region;
3. Utilising Net Zero Economy Authority's leadership role to encourage urgent action from the NSW Government to undertake planning reform of land release processes, unlocking post-mining and former coal-fired power station sites for future employment-generating uses;
4. Early social investment in community services, housing, education and mental health; and
5. Strong place-focused (regional) intergovernmental coordination aligned with existing national, state and regional strategies.

I support the recommendations made by the Hunter Joint Organisation.

In August 2025, the NZEA commissioned Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM to review the operation of Part 5 of the NZEA Act, including whether any amendments to Part 5 of the Act are required. Given the Act is relatively new and the framework for transition within it is also new, this is an opportune time to make a pointed submission on the need to expand the remit of the NZEA to include export coal mining operations in communities directly impacted by the transition.

The Consultation Paper on the Energy Industry Jobs Plan Statutory Review is included at **Attachment 2**.

On 14 August 2025, at two separate meetings, the Hunter Joint Organisation and Singleton Council staff were briefed on the review of the EIJP and discussed the following insights into the issues facing our community:

- The Hunter Region is unique in that planning for transition requires a whole of region approach that covers all coal dependent communities and supply chains – taking an interconnected approach rather than an isolationist approach is required.

- Any jobs plan needs to create employee empowerment, providing skills mapping, retraining and redeployment at the individual level and taking a less passive approach.
- Governments must recognise that transition to net zero includes a range of benefiting and impacted industries, not just energy.
- Local council's need transparency around the inter-relationship with other agencies, including the State government's Future Jobs and Investment Authority, creating certainty around who is doing what in the transition space.
- Governments must acknowledge the timeframe pressures on coal mining operations and the urgency in planning for skills and jobs transition for a workforce that connects across the region, with significant flow on consequences should a planned transition not occur.
- The importance of in region government agency presence cannot be understated, to understand the needs of communities, workers and businesses impacted by the transition and to demonstrate to affected communities that the State and Federal governments are living the transition with us.

The impact of the transition requires immediate intervention for employers and employees affected by the changing global market for thermal coal. Coal mine closures are currently predicted, and managed, based on the life of the existing approval. However, the experience in Singleton is very different and there are live examples where mining operations are closing now, well ahead of their approved life:

- The Wambo Underground Coal Mine is scheduled to close in September 2025, bought forward from 2026. This is despite holding a development consent to 2042.
- The Liddell Coal Mine ceased mining operations in 2023, despite holding development consent to 2028.
- The Glendell Mine, unable to secure an extension to its mining approval, will cease operations in June 2026.
- Hunter Valley Operations, the LGAs largest coal mine, will cease operating in 2026, unless it obtains approval to continue operations.

Combined, these operations directly employ 2,470 workers and indirectly 1,300 workers. It is estimated that the loss of these jobs, without a structured plan for the future, will result in the regional loss of a further 4,693 jobs, resulting in a \$6.8B decrease in economic output for Singleton, with a further \$6.6B in lost output in the broader Hunter region. In NSW, the impact will be a further 10,531 jobs lost in the economy – all from the closure of four mining operations in the Singleton LGA.

The risk of further unplanned and premature closures is significant as the export thermal coal market continues to decline as global transition to alternative energy sources increases.

In his second reading speech on the NZEA Act to the Australian Parliament, the Hon Chris Bowen said, *the government wants to be a partner with communities in navigating the change, especially in regions where the changes will be more significant and with First Nations Australians, providing opportunities for economic advancement*

*by partnering with workers and communities, by building understanding and relationships.*

*We can ensure that no-one is left behind as we build the industries and jobs that underpin our future prosperity.*

Unfortunately, it appears that with the current drafting of the NZEA Act communities that rely on export coal mining operations will be left behind.

Submissions to the Energy Industry Jobs Plan Statutory Review are due on 5 September 2025.

Considering all the above I urge Council to support the following recommendation.

107/25 **MOVED** Cr S Moore, Mayor **SECONDED** Cr D Thompson that Council:

1. Supports a submission to the Energy Industry Jobs Plan Statutory Review, based on this Mayoral Minute and prior to the 5 September 2025 closing date;
2. Resolves to write to the CEO of the Net Zero Economy Authority seeking an urgent meeting to discuss the impacts of transition on the Singleton LGA and the importance of the inclusion of coal mining operations in the remit of the NZEA;
3. Resolves to write to the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy the Hon Chris Bowen MP, and the Minister for Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government Hon Catherine King MP to:
  - a. Raise the urgency of inclusion of coal mining operations within the remit of the NZEA;
  - b. Recognise that transition to net zero requires a whole of economy approach to benefiting and impacted industries, which must be included in the NZEA remit; and
  - c. seek support for regionally based offices and staff of the NZEA;
4. Resolves to write to the State Minister for Natural Resources the Hon. Courtney Houssos, MLC to:
  - a. Raise the urgency of transparent coordination between the State Future Jobs and Investment Authority and the Federal Net Zero Economy Authority, and the importance of collaboration with local government; and
  - b. Seek support for regionally based offices and staff of the Future Jobs and Investment Authority.
5. Resolves to write to the Federal Member for the Hunter, Mr Dan Rapacholi MP, the State Member for Upper Hunter Mr Dave Layzell MP and the Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Small Business, the Hon. Emily Jane Suvaal, BN MLC, to:
  - a. Highlight the issues raised in this Mayoral Minute; and
  - b. Seek their support for the outcomes required for communities in the Hunter impacted by the Net Zero Transition.

Cr P Watson requested an amendment to include Point 6:

6. That Council submit the following motion and relevant commentary to the 2025 Local Government NSW Annual Conference. That LGNSW advocates for the inclusion of coal mining operations in the remit of The Net Zero Economy Authority to support workers and their communities.

Cr S Moore, Mayor accepted the request to incorporate amendment.

**CARRIED**

*Corporate and Commercial Services Report (Items Requiring Decision)*

**DCCS31/25 2024/2025 Draft Financial Statements**

**FILE:24/00272**

The purpose of this report was to advise that the draft Annual Financial Statements for the period ended 30 June 2025 have been prepared and recommend these statements be referred for audit.

- 108/25 **MOVED** Cr S George, Deputy Mayor **SECONDED** Cr A McGowan that Council refer the draft 2024/2025 Annual Financial Statements for audit.

**CARRIED**

**The meeting closed at 5.38PM and the minutes pages 1 to 6 were confirmed on 16 September 2025 and are a full and accurate record of proceedings of the meeting held on 26 August 2025.**

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Mayor/Chairperson

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General Manager