

**27 February, 2009****DOING GREEN BUSINESS IN NSW MADE EASIER**

NSW Premier Nathan Rees today announced a new plan to make it easier to establish clean, renewable energy projects, in a major step to attract green investment and create green jobs in NSW.

Speaking at day two of the NSW Jobs Summit, Mr Rees announced a three-point plan to help promote investment in renewable energy in NSW.

“The expansion of the Commonwealth’s Renewable Energy Target to 20 per cent of Australia’s electricity supply by 2020 will drive major new investment in the generation of renewable energy.

“NSW is doing the work now to ensure we are well-placed to capture a significant share of this investment, representing a huge economic opportunity for the State, particularly in regional areas.”

Mr Rees said a key part of the plan is the creation of new **Renewable Energy Precincts** for wind energy.

“These precincts will be the locations for the State’s future wind power investment.

“Development proposals within these precincts will be subject to streamlined planning and approvals processes, including faster approval times.”

The NSW Government has identified five areas of NSW with the greatest potential for generating wind power:

- The NSW/ACT Cross Border Region;
- The Central Tableland;
- The New England Tableland;
- The Upper Hunter; and
- The South Coast.

Mr Rees also announced that renewable energy projects generating more than 30 megawatts of power will benefit from “**critical infrastructure**” status, meaning less time between when they enter the planning process and when they are built.

At the moment, wind farms are treated as any other kind of power generation, and have to generate more than 250 megawatts to be considered critical infrastructure.

“We will lower the threshold for “critical infrastructure” under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* from 250 megawatts to 30 megawatts for renewable energy generation facilities within identified renewable energy precincts.

“This means that green, renewable energy projects will benefit from the same priority planning consideration as other important infrastructure, vital to the state, such as major road or hospital upgrades.”

We will also improve the relationship between Government and industry by creating **dedicated green go-to people to assist renewable energy investors.**

“Working in the Department of Planning, these dedicated project managers will work side-by-side with renewable energy investors from concept stage to commissioning and generation.”

Mr Rees said that the Planning Department project managers will also co-ordinate agencies to work and consult with local communities to gain support for investments in the development and operation of wind energy projects.

“We know there are community sensitivities to be considered in projects such as these. I want to support our regional communities through difficult times.

“Working more closely on these important projects is about local buy-in and ownership – getting the strong local input to the process.”

Mr Rees said the measures announced today aim to unlock investment opportunities – unblocking bottlenecks to see investment flow and jobs created.

“With natural resources to generate wind, solar and hydro energy in abundance, we are well placed to drive investment in a sustainable, renewable energy future and to drive investment in green jobs.”

Mr Rees said he was very pleased with the response and ideas generated from the first day of the NSW Jobs Summit and promised the Government would act swiftly to respond.

Day two will be attended by some of the State’s leading education and training representatives, environmental groups, sustainability advisers and apprentices and green-skilled workers.

“Some of the best minds in NSW have come together today to make sure our businesses and our communities are in the box seat to deal with the challenges of the green economy.

“This is about investing in a more sustainable future for NSW.

“We are investing in jobs and investing in the environment.”