



NEWS RELEASE
The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP
Member for Heffron
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo

Friday 15 May, 2009

APPROVAL FOR HUNTER ECONOMIC ZONE A BOOST FOR LOWER HUNTER

NSW Planning Minister, Kristina Keneally, today announced approval for a new manufacturing facility and concept plan for future infrastructure development in the Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ).

Minister for the Hunter Jodi McKay said the approval for the new manufacturing facility and concept plan was great news for the Hunter region.

“The approval of the new wall and panel manufacturing facility will create 85 new jobs and is a great boost for the Lower Hunter economy,” Ms McKay said.

Ms Keneally said the new manufacturing facility will be spread over eight hectares and include 28,000 square metres of warehousing, machinery and office floor space.

“Along with the manufacturing facility the approval of the concept plan provides a framework for future development and job creation for Lower Hunter residents,” Ms Keneally said.

The concept plan approval was granted for:

- The framework of a major new industrial area, Precinct 1, which will include 36 development lots, supporting infrastructure and conservation areas;
- The Pelaw Main Bypass; and
- A 940 metre extension to Station Street to provide an additional access to the site from the north.

More detailed development proposals would have to be lodged before the Pelaw Main Bypass and Station Street extension could begin construction or subdivision could take place within Precinct 1.

Ms Keneally said approval for both the concept plan and the new wall and panel manufacturing facility was only given after the proposal was reviewed by the independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC).

“My decision to send the proposal to the PAC for independent review and advice was due to donations made by entities with a financial interest in the project as well as the complex nature of the proposal,” Ms Keneally said.

“It is important the public and the proponent feel the assessment process had been both fair and transparent.

“Asking the PAC to provide independent advice to me prior to my determination has removed any perceived conflict of interest that may have arisen and provided me with expert advice to ensure the right decisions were made.

Page 1 of 3



NEWS RELEASE
The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP
Member for Heffron
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo

Friday 15 May, 2009

“The PAC’s review provided an additional level of independent expert scrutiny and found conditions imposed on the proposal would ensure conservation of the site’s important environmental assets.”

Ms Keneally said the Department of Planning and DECC should be congratulated on developing the innovative controls to protect the sites significant ecological attributes.

“The proponent has been prohibited from developing a 19 hectare parcel of land containing endangered forests and habitat for a number of threatened species.” Ms Keneally said.

“I have also prohibited development in a riparian corridor and required this land to be managed for conservation purposes in perpetuity.”

In response to public feedback a number of other strict conditions relating to biodiversity were placed on the approval of the subdivision and infrastructure projects, in particular requiring HEZ Nominees to:

- Provide a biodiversity offset of at least ten hectares;
- Develop a biodiversity offset strategy ecological values lost as a result of the Pelaw Main Bypass;
- Provide a monetary contribution of \$340,000 to assist in recovery actions for the endangered Regent Honeyeater;
- Implement a program monitoring compliance with the requirements of the approval and statement of commitments; and
- Complete road infrastructure projects servicing the HEZ in a staged process.

The proposal requires all proprietors to form a HEZ association which will guide the future development, planning and conservation matters of the HEZ site.

Media Contact: Karl Schubert – (02) 9228 5811 or 0429 904 937

IMPORTANT STATEMENT ABOUT POLITICAL DONATIONS

NSW political donation disclosure laws related to development proposals began last year. Under these laws, political donations of \$1,000 or more must be reported by companies who have a financial interest in development proposals lodged with the Department of Planning from October 2008 (if such donations were made in the two years prior to the application date).

See more at <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/assessingdev/donations.asp>

The Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) determines project applications where a reportable political donation has been made.

Page 2 of 3



NEWS RELEASE
The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP
Member for Heffron
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo

Friday 15 May, 2009

No such reportable political donations have been made by the proponent of the Hunter Economic Zone proposals, HEZ Nominees, or any other companies with a relevant financial interest, as the application was made before October 2008, therefore the Minister for Planning is the consent authority.

However, because Valad Property Group and Hardie Holdings (companies related to HEZ Nominees) have publicly declared political donations, the Minister referred the proposal to the PAC for independent review and advice.

These donations can be found at

http://www.efa.nsw.gov.au/state_government_elections/election_funding_reports/state_general_election_2007 and
http://www.efa.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/30370/heffron.pdf