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National authority important progress for energy sector

The region's peak business group, **Business Hunter** has welcomed the announcement today of a National Net Zero Authority by Federal Climate Change and Energy Minister, Chris Bowen.

Business Hunter Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Sheena Martin said there was a lot at stake in the Hunter, and strong leadership and coordination harnessed through a national body would help the region navigate the complexities ahead.

"Our communities are at risk if we can't keep people employed, and a national authority will coordinate programs and policies to build a bridge for workers, contractors, and businesses working in emissions intensive industries," said Ms Martin.

"It has an important role to play in harnessing opportunities, so that regions like ours can continue to play a vital role in powering the nation, and in mitigating against the worst effects of such enormous structural change."

"We've seen the ability of regional transition authorities to accelerate and support change in other energy-intensive regions, such as LaTrobe in Victoria and Collie in WA. A national framework is an opportunity to convert these hard-won lessons for the benefit of communities right across the country."

Ms Martin said the Authority could be described as a vital backbone, providing connection, strength, stability and coordination for a rapidly evolving and intricate landscape.

"An orderly transition is what the business community is seeking, and at this stage we have our work cut out to deliver the next components of the energy transition in a timely manner. As our traditional energy assets are retired, renewables must arrive to take their place, or we risk further price increases and supply uncertainty. That's one part of the jigsaw," said Ms Martin.

"The task at hand is enormous and the clock is ticking, so we need all hands to the wheel. Facilitated collaboration between business, industry, the community, and all levels of government will be key to realising our ambitions."

Ms Martin said global interest in clean energy exports out of the region was high, and the Net Zero Authority could provide much needed facilitation.

“Investment attraction will be a vital part of the mix in ensuring positive economic transformation and enabling clean energy industries to emerge. The ability to demonstrate a cohesive and collaborative ecosystem is an immediate barrier we need to overcome. Overseas interest is high, and selling our national capability will ensure we capture it,” said Ms Martin.

Ms Martin said Business Hunter looked forward to working with the National Net Zero Authority to continue to drive the net zero agenda forward.

“The new energy economy is a top priority and longstanding policy area of focus for the business community. We welcome the support and the opportunity to continue to work with all levels of government, our members and the community on these nation shaping challenges and opportunities,” said Ms Martin.

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