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Senate Estimates October 2025 – Net Zero Economy Authority – Opening Statement from CEO David Shankey

Chair, Senators - thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

The Net Zero Economy Authority exists because the Parliament asked us to tackle one of the most complex challenges in Australia's history - how we move to a net zero while providing a better future for industrial regions, their communities and workers.

We have three core missions that guide our efforts across the organisation:

1. Help workers in coal and gas facilities affected by the transition to prepare for and find new well paid, safe and secure jobs.
2. Support communities significantly affected by the transition to net zero to prosper, including through economic development and investment.
3. Be a trusted and influential voice to build understanding of, and shape policy on, the regional net zero transition.

Our purpose is to make sure the people and communities who have powered Australia for generations are supported as our energy system evolves.

We are guided by three core principles:

- Act where we have levers - delivering programs and frameworks that drive real outcomes.
- Partner in regions - working with local leaders, councils, unions, and industry so the solutions are shaped by the people most affected.
- Influence nationally - providing trusted advice, aligning policy, and ensuring investment flows where it's needed most.

These are complex problems with no shortcuts. But in less than a year since our establishment in December 2024, we've built the foundation to deliver. We've recruited specialist teams, stood up our core programs, built an evidence base through our *Regional Identification Framework*, and we're now operating priority regions.

In the Hunter, we've been meeting with workers at the Eraring Power Station ahead of its closure. These communities have been the backbone of Australia's industry for decades. Through the Energy Industry Jobs Plan, we're consulting directly with them and their unions to design the support they need: personalised pathways, retraining options, and access to secure, well-paid jobs in the industries emerging around them.

In Central Queensland, the scale is enormous - four coal-fired stations, 24 safeguard facilities, and more than half the State's safeguard emissions. We're working throughout Central Queensland to understand community needs and harness the region's industrial strength.

In Collie, we're walking alongside a community where every household is touched by the closure of its coal mines. The Western Australian Government has made the call to exit coal by 2030. We're working closely with state and local communities to prepare for the closure of Collie Power Station to ensure local workers are supported.

In Latrobe Gippsland, three coal stations - Yallourn, Loy Yang A, and Loy Yang B - together emit more than 38 million tonnes of CO₂ each year, 75 percent of Victoria's safeguard emissions. Closers of these power stations will impact the local workers and community. We are here to ensure these closures are well-managed and workers are prepared.

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In the Upper Spencer Gulf, where Whyalla, Port Pirie and Port Augusta together produce a third of South Australia's safeguard emissions, we're working with industry and the state on major transformation projects.

And in the Pilbara, one of the world's largest industrial regions, 68 percent of WA's safeguard emissions come from heavy industry. But it's also where over \$60 billion in clean energy projects proposed, we are taking a 'project-based' approach to encourage investment in the region, ensuring economic opportunities continue to arise in the Pilbara.

On the delivery front, we've already rolled out the Energy Industry Jobs Plan consultations in the Hunter and Torrens Island, completed the first Regional Identification Framework, initiated investment partnerships with state and international stakeholders, and stood up our corporate systems.

We are only at the start, but we have been in power stations, in town halls, in union rooms, and in council chambers - listening, planning, and acting with the people who've built this country's energy system.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.