

21 October 2024

Hon. Madeline King MP
Minister for Northern Australia
Commonwealth Government
Lodged online via the [submission portal](#)

Dear Minister,

Response to Commonwealth Government's review of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act Review

The Clean Energy Investor Group (CEIG) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Commonwealth Government's review of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) Act which commenced in August 2024.

CEIG represents domestic and global renewable energy developers and investors, with more than 16GW of installed renewable energy capacity across more than 76 power stations and a combined portfolio value of around \$38 billion. CEIG members' project pipeline is estimated to be more than 46GW across Australia. CEIG strongly advocates for an efficient transition to a clean energy future on behalf of the investors who will provide the low-cost capital required for this transition.

Key Points

- **CEIG supports extending the NAIF investment window beyond 30 June 2026, provided that the extension prioritises clean energy investments.**
- **CEIG strongly urges the Government to ensure that infrastructure investment in Northern Australia aligns with Australia's clean energy transition and broader policy objectives**, including the Critical Minerals Strategy, Net Zero Plan and FMIA agenda.
- To further enhance the effectiveness of the NAIF and ensure it maximises growth opportunities in North Australia, **CEIG proposes the following recommendations:**
 - **Prioritise clean energy investments.**

- **Update the NAIF's eligibility criteria to ensure alignment with Australia's net-zero targets.**
- **Promote First Nations-led clean energy projects,** and support greater First Nations participation in procurement, employment, and ownership structures within the renewable energy sector.

GENERAL COMMENTS

CEIG understands that Commonwealth Government is conducting an independent review of the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act 2016*. We recognise that the Review will make recommendations on whether the NAIF investment window should be extended beyond 30 June 2026, as well as outline appropriate governance requirements following this date.

We commend the NAIF for the important role it has played in supporting economic infrastructure development across Northern Australia. However, as the energy landscape evolves and Australia works towards its targets of 43% emissions reduction by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050, it is crucial that the NAIF's future priorities and governance reflect this transition.

CEIG strongly urges the Government to ensure that infrastructure investment in Northern Australia aligns with Australia's clean energy transition and broader policy objectives, including the Critical Minerals Strategy, Net Zero Plan and the Future Made in Australia (FMIA) agenda.

Thus, CEIG supports extending the NAIF investment window beyond 30 June 2026, provided that the extension prioritises clean energy investments. By extending this window, the NAIF can continue playing a key role in financing critical clean energy infrastructure, fostering economic growth in Northern Australia, and supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy.

CEIG recommendations to better align NAIF with the clean energy transition

In order to further enhance the effectiveness of the NAIF and ensure it maximises growth opportunities in North Australia, CEIG proposes the following recommendations:

Focus on clean energy investments

We recommend that the NAIF prioritises financial assistance for clean energy projects. Specifically, the NAIF should support clean energy investors, particularly in sectors such as renewable energy generation, energy storage, green hydrogen production, and critical minerals mining (where it aligns with clean energy supply chains). This focus will ensure that publicly funded concessional finance is directed towards projects that align with Australia's climate goals and the global push towards decarbonisation.

CEIG believes that focusing on clean energy investments will help unlock new areas of economic growth while future-proofing Northern Australia's infrastructure. Clean energy projects, particularly large-scale renewable energy, can attract further private investment

and create lasting economic benefits, including job creation and regional development.

Improve clean energy criteria

The NAIF's eligibility criteria should be updated to ensure alignment with Australia's emissions reduction targets. This could include introducing a requirement for funded projects to demonstrate a significant contribution to emissions reductions or the development of clean energy infrastructure, consistent with the principles of the FMIA agenda. By doing so, the NAIF would further enhance its role as a catalyst for sustainable, long-term economic growth in Northern Australia.

Strengthening First Nations engagement through clean energy projects

CEIG supports the Review's focus on increasing the engagement and inclusion of First Nations people in NAIF-supported projects. Clean energy investments present unique opportunities to foster meaningful partnerships with First Nations communities. CEIG encourages the NAIF to actively promote First Nations-led clean energy projects, and support greater First Nations participation in procurement, employment, and ownership structures within the renewable energy sector.

CEIG thanks the Commonwealth Government for the opportunity to provide feedback on its review of the NAIF Act and looks forward to continued engagement on those issues. Our Head of Policy and Advocacy can be contacted at marilyne.crestias@ceig.org.au if you would like to further discuss any elements of this submission.

Yours sincerely,



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