



\$68.4m plant and new industrial area on way

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NSW Planning Minister Kristina Keneally has approved a \$68.4 million manufacturing plant and a concept plan for the Hunter Economic Zone, which developers believe could generate revenues of more than \$2 billion.

The Minister is expected to announce today that she will allow construction of a new wall and panel manufacturing plant that will create 85 new jobs.

Ms Keneally has also approved a concept plan for a major new 129-hectare industrial area to include 36 development lots, supporting infrastructure and conservation areas.

She said the manufacturing plant will occupy eight hectares and include 28,000 square metres of warehousing, machinery and office floor space.

The arrangement includes at least 10 hectares of biodiversity offsets. It also allows the Pelaw Main bypass and a 940 metre extension to Station Street to provide extra access to the site from the north.

More detailed development proposals will have to be lodged before the work begins.

HEZ general manager Jason Shepherd said the approval was a "significant milestone" for the estate.

"The Hunter Economic Zone is a fully integrated and master-planned industrial estate which, upon completion, will generate approximately 16,000 jobs and revenues in excess of \$2 billion," Mr Shepherd said yesterday.

"The concept and major project approval for the Hunter Economic Zone includes subdivision layout of approximately 100 hectares of employment lands and the development and use of a major wall and floor panel manufacturer, WIPS Management."

He said construction of the \$68.4 million WIPS plant would begin in the coming months.

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

"I have also prohibited development in a riparian corridor and required this land to be managed for conservation purposes in perpetuity," she said.