

Union tells Minns and Albanese to ‘put egos aside’ to save Tomago jobs

The Electrical Trades Union has urged Chris Minns and Anthony Albanese to “put their egos aside” and finalise a deal to save 1,200 Hunter jobs at the Tomago aluminium smelter.

James O'Doherty | August 9, 2026 - 7:41PM

Chris Minns and Anthony Albanese must “put their egos aside” and strike a deal to save 1200 construction jobs in the Hunter, the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) says.

Time is running out for the state and federal governments to announce a bailout to keep the Tomago aluminium smelter open beyond 2028. While both governments have committed to a support package, on Sunday, the NSW Premier said it was still too early to say when a deal would be announced.

The Albanese government is reportedly planning to use taxpayer-subsidised power from Snowy Hydro to prop up Tomago’s operations, which would keep the smelter running and protect more than 1000 jobs.



Up to 1,200 jobs are on the line at Tomago Aluminium smelter. Picture: NewsWire

The proposed support package would see the commonwealth supply cut-price power to the Rio Tinto-controlled Tomago to keep it running, with the taxpayer partly footing the bill.

On Sunday, Mr Minns said talks with the commonwealth were “continuing”. The state and federal governments are reportedly squabbling over who would subsidise the cost of the support package.



Aluminium in the yard at Tomago Aluminium Smelter. Picture: NewsWire / Damian Shaw

But ETU organiser Brad McDougall said Mr Minns and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese needed to sign an agreement “sooner rather than later”.

“They’ve got to put their egos aside and just and just sign the cheque,” he said.

“They need to sign a cheque and sort out this power contract. If they can’t come up with a contract to continue supplying power to the smelter, it can’t keep running, and it will just devastate the region.”

Clean Energy Finance director Tim Buckley said the federal government could use balance sheet to underwrite an agreement to supply Tomago with green energy cheaply. Taxpayers would be on the hook, but the government would get a cut if aluminium prices increase.



The state and federal governments are negotiating on a bailout package for Tomago Aluminium. Picture: NewsWire / Damian Shaw

June's state budget failed to outline a dollar cost for a Tomago bailout. However, Treasurer Daniel Mookhey said money to keep the smelter running would come from a \$1.1 billion contingency fund established for 2026-27.

A spokeswoman for Mr Ayres said the federal government "has been clear about its objective: securing a long-term future for Tomago, its workers, and the Hunter region".

"The Commonwealth, NSW government and Tomago Aluminium are focused on working through complex commercial and energy supply issues."

<https://www.cairnspost.com.au/news/nsw/union-tells-minns-and-albanese-to-put-egos-aside-to-save-tomago-jobs/news-story/b8d58cad139c01585f7cfec515f49165?btr=2c33114a9ea4003af8c3c0539ddfe443>