The Australian Renewables Academy

New Energy Workforce National Action Plan 2024 - 2028

Delivering on Australia's renewables workforce challenge

Australian
Renewables Academy

Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work and live. We commit to collaborating with First Nations people to promote sustainable practice and protect ancient sites and culture with equitable access to the benefits of clean energy. Sovereignty has never been ceded. We acknowledge Elders, past and present, and their continuing culture and connection to Country.

Introduction

Australia is undergoing a major transformation in its transition to a new energy economy. Work required to deliver this transformation is accelerating.

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has said the most likely scenario for Australia is that 90% of the current 21 gigawatts of coal capacity would retire by 2034 – 35 and all by 2038.[1]

The workforce requirements for construction and ongoing maintenance of renewable energy projects are yet to be clearly quantified, with job creation estimates ranging from some tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of new jobs nationally. Construction jobs are typically estimated to be five times the number of ongoing maintenance jobs.

Australia's rural, remote, and regional areas will drive this transition, with major new energy developments and Renewable Energy Zones located outside urban and built-up areas in regions such as Gippsland (Victoria), Upper Spencer Gulf (South Australia), Hunter Valley (NSW), Townsville (Queensland) and Collie (Western Australia). Licenses have been granted for developments in numerous other regional areas, such as Middle Arm (Darwin) and Tennant Creek (Northern Territory).[2]

Whilst workers from traditional coal-fired power stations and oil and gas installations are expected to transition to new energy projects, this transition will not be evenly distributed nor be close to sufficient to address workforce demand.[3] Mobilising the right people with the right skills in the right place and at the right time to optimise the economic and social benefits of the new energy revolution will be one of Australia's biggest opportunities and challenges over the coming decade.

1. Australian Energy Market Operator

https://interactivemap.renewablesacademy.com.au/ '

2. The Australian Renewable Academy Renewables Map identifies the multitude of renewable energy pro-jects planned for Australia.

3. https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/system/files/2023-10/the_clean_energy_generation.pdf

The Australian Renewables Academy (ARA) Pty Ltd is at the forefront of driving collaborative action nationally between regional and rural communities, renewable energy industries, supply chains and all levels of government by bringing stakeholders together to identify key themes and actions relating to Australia's future new energy workforce.

In November 2023, key stakeholders convened at Lardner Park in Victoria's West Gippsland for ARA's *Empower Australia National Forum*. Participants considered opportunities and challenges, exchanged information on initiatives underway across Australia, shared ideas and identified opportunities to take action to deliver on the renewables workforce challenge whilst optimising regional and local benefits.

This National Action Plan is an outcome of both the Forum and broader strategic consultations undertaken by ARA throughout 2023, with input from over 800 stakeholders.

It recognises the substantial work being undertaken across Australia to prepare for the new energy revolution and the required workforce.

This Plan also contributes to an industry and community-led approach to workforce development and mobilisation in regional communities at the forefront of the new energy revolution.

Key Themes

1. Attracting, mobilising and supporting a new energy workforce

A preferred new energy future for Australia will feature:

- Three levels of government and industry working together to optimise workforce attraction and retention through the provision of regional infrastructure (roads and transport, hospitals, schools, housing), services (childcare, health, education, justice, sport and recreation, arts and entertainment) and learning and development opportunities.

- Clarity on the quantum of, and skills and timing for jobs in each region. Real-time skills mapping is available and sufficiently granular to support local pathways and careers for transition into new energy jobs.

- Coordinated developments that provide greater continuity and alignment in jobs for local people. Individuals and families will come, settle and reside in areas hosting new energy projects, including during construction periods.

- Communities are engaged in creating a preferred future for their local area and in directing community benefit scheme (CBS) resources to address priorities and issues.

- Australia's visa system aligning with local, new energy and supply chain workforce needs and gaps and enabling a migration process from places that face the impacts of climate change first.

2. Work nationally and locally to build skills, expertise and capabilities for the new energy economy

A preferred new energy future for Australia will feature:

- Education and skills development aligned to project timeframes to ensure the right skills are available at the right time. Professionals are available to provide quality training and assistance.

- Schools, TAFEs, RTOs, universities and industry collaborating to develop and review, revise and improve new energy sector curricula.

- School transition and careers pathways supported to enable workers to progress from labouring jobs to apprenticeships to trades to team leaders to professional and technical roles and to executive leadership.

- New models of skilling, certification, and standardisation across Australia trialled to address shortages and ensure sufficient professional, technical and trades-qualified persons and labourers are available.

- National initiatives that translate into local opportunities and solutions.

3. Optimise social and economic futures by engaging an inclusive and diverse local workforce

A preferred new energy future for Australia will feature:

- A diverse, inclusive workforce successfully supported, including through scholarships, internships, industry placements and guarantees of employment, with a particular focus on local diversity and improving workforce participation rates.

- Businesses recognising, understanding and applying the 'return on investment' argument for a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

- First Nations peoples benefiting directly from sustainable employment and career opportunities and outcomes in local areas.

- People currently locked out of the labour market gaining the qualifications, essential skills and experience necessary to enter the renewable energy and supply chain workforce.

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Taking Action

ARA and its partners will take action over the coming decade to contribute to a shared preferred future, including through:

Leadership – by promoting the development of a skilled inclusive workforce for new energy projects across Australia, to ensure benefits accrue to local communities and workers, including people who are currently excluded from the labour market.

Advocacy and influencing – to assist local and regional stakeholders in securing the necessary infrastructure, resources and skills to enable equitable access to new energy, supply chain and multiplier jobs.

Delivery – working together, understanding and supporting existing initiatives, identifying areas where there are gaps, and harnessing the right resources and approaches to fill those gaps.

Facilitation – growing and nurturing partnerships, collaborations and relationships critical to optimising the use of resources in delivering workforce and community imperatives.
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Innovation – supporting innovative responses to emerging learning and skills development needs through research, action learning, smart use of technologies and piloting new ways of learning and working.

Inclusivity – promoting access and equity to learning and employment, monitoring uptake, and fostering opportunities to deepen learner engagement.

Highlighting Progress – measuring and celebrating the work done in rural, remote and regional areas to facilitate the new energy revolution.

Action Plan 2024 – 2028

Key Theme	Actions	2024	2025 - 2028
1. **Attract, mobilise and support local new energy workforce**	1.1 Raise awareness of opportunities and challenges in building local and regional workforce.	In partnership with local stakeholders, host regional forums across Australia. Conduct an annual National Forum to share updates, information, actions and issues.	Ongoing regional forums inform actions.
	1.2 Understand opportunities and advocate for government, industry and communities to work together on solving workforce-related problems.	Advocate for the right level of childcare provision in local and regional areas – early years, preschool and afterschool care and school holiday programs.	Review advocacy priorities such as health and education provision and liveability through the arts, sport and recreation.
	1.3 Explore models of industry coordination to provide for optimisation of local resources and benefit.	Investigate ROI on industry coordination models to develop a compelling coordination argument.	Trial coordination in selected regions where there are diverse proponent.
	1.4 Promote opportunities for regions to develop vision and goals for Community Benefit Schemes (CBS).	Explore and promulgate CBS Models.	Support trialling and embedding of CBS model. Measure and promote local social and economic impact.
2. **Work nationally to build skills, expertise and capabilities**	2.1 New energy careers embedded into post-school and school curricula.	Advocate for opportunities to develop new energy curricula, including in primary and secondary schools, VET and universities.	Scale Changemaker and STEM initiatives that focus on young women in schools.

	2.2 Skills mapping for new energy jobs with education and capability development supported locally to deliver on required skills in required timeframes.	Investigate current initiatives focussed on mapping, aggregating and updating information. Scope for real-time skills mapping for local areas.	Support trials with Schools, VET and Universities delivering on local skills plans.
	2.3 Pursue opportunities for standardisation of licenses, certification and qualifications across Australia.	Map state-by-state requirements and identify opportunities for harmonisation.	Advocate for standardisation
3. Engaging an inclusive and diverse local workforce	3.1 Grow the capability of local, regional, national and international businesses to support a diverse, inclusive workforce successfully.	Identify and share success strategies for engaging vulnerable cohorts in employment. Identify ROI for industry and community.	Evaluate and support the scaling of success strategies
	3.2 Support First Nations and Traditional Owner organisations to engage with new energy transformation.	Engage with First Nations organisations on workforce and supply chain opportunities.	Support ongoing initiatives to grow sustainable employment for First Nations people.
	3.3 Support initiatives to target girls and women with skills, learning and opportunities for new energy careers.	Year 1: Support Changemakers Programs where young women in rural and regional schools lead the discussion on new energy career opportunities.	Year 2 and beyond: Support ongoing initiatives to grow uptake of women in new energy careers.
4.0 Measuring Success	4.1 Implement evaluation framework and data collection across all actions,	Year 1: Establish evaluation framework and process for gathering meaningful measures of success	Year 2 and beyond – Reports on progress and learnings.

The following individuals and organisations have committed to working with the Australian Renewables Academy on progressing action:

Luke Arber, Employment Facilitator, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	Actions 1.1, 1.2,1.3,1.4 Actions 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.1. 3.2, 3.3
Angela Hewitt, Employment Facilitator, Workforce Australia Local Jobs	Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 Actions 2.1, 2.2 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Natalie McArlein, Support Officer, Workforce Australia, Local Jobs	Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.4 Actions 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Lucy Geraghty, Senior Manager, Industry Engagement, Powering Skills Organisation	Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 Actions 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Darren McCubbin, CEO, Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN)	Actions 1.1, 1.4 Actions 3.1
Lou Conway, Director, University of New England	Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 Actions 2.2, 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Saad Mekhilef, Distinguished Professor, Swinburne University of Technology	Actions 2.1
Mehdi Seyedmahmoudian, Professor - Director of a Research Centre (Energy Transition), Swinburne University of Technology	Actions 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 Actions 1.1, 2.2
Jen Perkins, Director Skills Excellence Network - Construction & Energy, TAFE NSW	Actions 1.1, 1.2 Actions 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.2, 3.3

Bill Mundy, Associate Director Partnerships and Growth, Federation University	Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 Actions 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Jess O'Farrell, Producer of video, animation, VR, & interactive websites, Studio Kettle	Actions 1.1, 1.2 Actions 2.1, 2.2 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Georgina Legoe, Partner, Iceni	Actions 1.1, 1.3, 1.4 Actions 2.1, 2.2 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Jonathon Jones, Senior Workforce and Skills Officer, Industry Skills Advisory Council NT	Actions 1.1, 1.2 Actions 2.1, 2.2
Jules Cole, Director Regional Strengths and Stakeholder Engagement, Latrobe Valley Authority	Actions 1.1 Actions 2.1 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Shannon Egan, Business Partner New Energy, TAFE Gippsland	Actions 1.1 Actions 2.1, 2.2,
Erin Lord, Stakeholder Engagement Lead, Flotation Energy	Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 Actions 2.1 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Adam Fletcher, Hycel Program Manager, Deakin University	Actions 1.1 Actions 2.2, 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.2, 3.3
Brett Millsom, Communications and Engagement Lead, Ausnet Services	Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 Actions 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Jessica Piesse, Partnerships Operations Manager, Australian Catholic University	Actions 1.2, 1.4 Actions 2.1, 2.2
Tracy Jefferies, Employment Facilitator, Workforce Australia	Actions 1.1, 1.2 Actions 2.2 Actions 3.1
Bernadette O'Connor, Executive Director, Management Governance Australia Group	Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 Actions 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 Actions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 Actions 4.1