



AUSTRALIAN PARENTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Australian Parents for Climate Action
Submission to Senate Standing Committees on Economics

National Energy Transition Authority Bill 2022

25 November 2022

Australian Parents for Climate Action
c/o Environmental Leadership Australia
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Australian Parents for Climate Action represents over 17,000 parents, grandparents and carers from across Australia. We are Australia's leading organisation for parents advocating for a safe climate. Our supporters are from across the political spectrum, across all Australian electorates, and from varied socio-economic positions. We seek non-partisan responses to climate change and its impacts.

We advocate for Australian governments and businesses to take urgent action to cut Australia's carbon emissions to net zero as quickly as possible. We encourage Australia to take a leadership role on the world stage, leading by example and calling for other nations to take the necessary action to protect our children's futures.

For more information, visit www.ap4ca.org

This submission was prepared by volunteer Siobhain O'Leary and has been approved by Nic Seton, Chief Executive Officer of Australian Parents for Climate Action.

Submission

Australian Parents for Climate Action welcomes the opportunity to comment on the National Energy Transition Authority Bill 2022.

Action on climate change in Australia, including the transition to a clean energy network, can and must go hand in hand with retaining secure jobs and maintaining and building thriving communities.

We are committed to the principles of climate justice. We believe workers and impacted communities should be consulted and supported during transition to a zero emissions Australia, necessary for the safe future of our children.

We welcome policy and the introduction of legislation that supports workers and communities to quickly and effectively transition away from high emissions industries in a way that supports workers and leaves communities resilient and able to adapt to changing opportunities and circumstances.

A just transition for workers and communities is possible within a national transition plan with a leading organisation to ensure delivery as quickly and fairly as possible.

We support the establishment of a National Transition Authority (NETA) to guide the energy transition adhering to climate justice principles including the core functions outlined in the bill:

- support communities and workers affected by the closure of coal-fired power stations and coal mines;
- help attract new public and private investment in job-creating industries to ensure ongoing fair and equivalent employment opportunities in the regions;
- develop social infrastructure to affected areas, and ensure social services are provided;
- provide guidance to employers and industry to enable workers to shift between employers where skills are transferable;
- planning with workers, represented by unions in some instances, and relevant agencies to assist workers nearing retirement age to transition to a voluntary, financially secure retirement.

Broaden Scope & A Whole of Government Approach

The National Energy Transition Authority (NETA) will have the important role of steering and overseeing the rapid transition of energy supply in Australia away from fossil fuels toward a stable and reliable renewable energy network.

The necessary transition to a low emissions energy sector will cause significant workforce and community disruption for regions involved in the production of fossil fuels and power generation.

The transition will, in part, deliver the government's commitment to the target of 43% emissions reduction below 2005 levels by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050. We note however that current emissions reduction targets set by the government are not sufficient to address and mitigate climate risk, in line with the science, to deliver a stable climate and remain within the Paris Climate commitment to stay below 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

To stabilise the climate and limit warming we need deep cuts across all sectors of the economy this decade to safeguard the future or we risk triggering climate tipping points leading to runaway climate

change. This means a 75% emissions reduction target by 2030 and net zero as soon as possible, no later than 2035.¹

We note under the Bill NETA's core functions relate to supporting communities & workers affected by the closure of coal-fired power stations and coal mines, but we wish to highlight that the emissions cuts and transition needed is far broader than just coal mining, coal power, gas extraction and mining. The Authority will be tasked with maximising the opportunities and benefits stemming for a zero carbon economy. But to truly achieve this aim the Authority should have the ability to look **economy wide** and work to break down barriers to transition in ALL sectors.

The United Nations advocates for a six-sector solution to the climate crisis in the Emissions Gap Report.²

“Ensuring a safe future below the 1.5°C mark requires the world to cut 30 gigatonnes greenhouse gas emissions annually by 2030. Transport and industry are not enough. We need to cut carbon emissions by managing our land and resources more efficiently, including building smart cities and curbing deforestation and food waste. The UNEP has identified six sectors with the potential to reduce emissions enough to keep the world below the 1.5°C mark.”

The six identified sectors already have the solutions needed for rapid emissions reductions. They require a cohesive plan, clear policy and a guiding authority to deliver the emissions cuts needed.

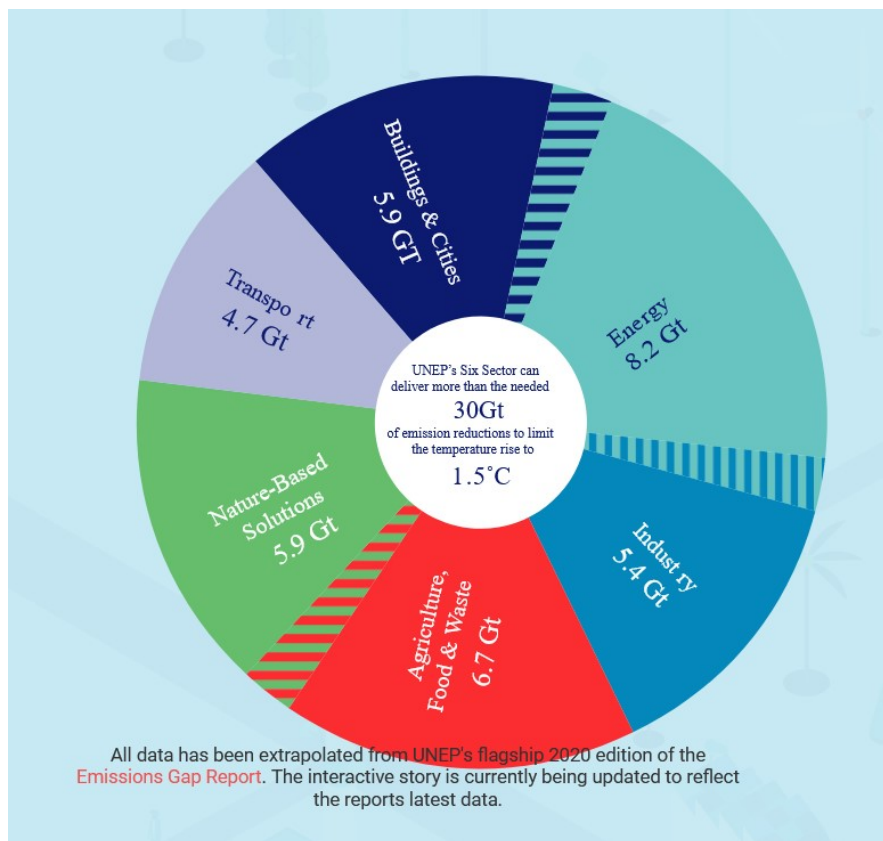


Fig 1 [The six-sector solution to the climate crisis \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report)

¹ [Climate Targets Panel Report - March 2021.pdf \(unimelb.edu.au\)](#)

² [The six-sector solution to the climate crisis \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report)

Along with energy, identified sectors include Industry (more broadly), Agriculture (including, land use and food waste), Nature based solutions (protecting biodiversity including land and marine ecosystems, ending deforestation), Cities and Building development.

In order to mitigate climate risk and halt temperatures increases there will necessarily be workforce disruptions, re-design and rapid change across all these sectors. The transition in each sector will need to be carefully managed to ensure reliable and stable employment, predictable investment environments and to ensure no worker or community is left behind.

The transition of workers from harmful high emitting enterprises will necessarily be economy wide and will impact many sectors not just miners and mining communities. NETA's scope should be broadened to assist with transitions that support affected workers and associated communities in any and all industries that produce high emissions or contributes significantly to climate change including:

1. Animal agriculture;
2. Transport (eg service stations and mechanics, including transitioning to EV charger networks and repairs, truck drivers, train workers and port workers involved in the transportation of fossil fuels);
3. Gas network operators and appliance manufacturers (economy wide transitioning to all electric homes and business, retraining and deployment of plumbers and gas fitters for safe disconnections as an example);
4. Forestry and logging. Government should aim to set a firm date for the ceasing of all native forest logging and establish plans for affected workers and communities supported by this industry;
5. Establish a Plan for emergent industries in renewables, clean manufacturing, battery technology, electric vehicle manufacturing (including public vehicles, small vehicles);
6. The airline sector and associated workers, in the context of decarbonisation and switching to high speed rail or other low emissions transport substitutes.

A broadened remit to assist with the transition in all high emitting industries is the most equitable approach and will enable the Transition Authority to take a more holistic approach to regional job creation and industry capacity building.

The Transition Authority should play a leading and guiding role in the economy-wide transition. It will need to work with and guide other government agencies in a whole of government response.

All government agencies should have rapid emissions reduction and sector wide transition as a primary policy objective and be working to support and enable the transition as rapidly as possible. The authority cannot and should not work in isolation. Transitioning to zero emissions across sectors, will require a whole of government approach to policy and a shared vision.

A circumstance cannot exist, for example, where the transition authority is seeking to support a community or region to move away from harmful fossil fuel mining while another government agency is encouraging or subsidising the expansion of fossil fuel and related industries in other communities. This would be counter intuitive, counter productive and creates market uncertainty through mixed messaging.

Across all sectors government subsidies and incentives for high emissions industries should be immediately ended and re-deployed to industries demonstrating genuine zero emissions operations. Doing so not only makes objective sense but also provides certainty for business seeking to invest.

Creating Jobs

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions necessarily requires the shutting down of whole industries. This will lead to workforce disruption and uncertainty for workers and communities. The Transition Authority will be tasked with national planning, coordination and funding for the transition that seeks to enable and support secure employment opportunities for affected workers while simultaneously ensuring the energy sector is transitioned to 100% renewables with minimal disruption to a stable and reliable energy grid.

In moving the energy network from fossil fuel dependency to renewables, Australia is well positioned to embrace the low emission future. We have an abundance of solar and wind energy potential, as well as significant deposits of many of the metals and minerals required in low emissions technologies.

The expansion of the renewable energy industry and the mining of metals and minerals to support new low emissions technologies represent obvious opportunities for new job creation.

Mine workers in the fossil fuel sector currently benefit from high wages and good working conditions, often won over many decades of collective bargaining and negotiating. It is important that NETA use its regulatory authority to ensure jobs in the new sectors also deliver quality secure jobs with fair pay and conditions with as close to possible equivalence or seek to compensate workers in some way where this is not practically possible.

The Transition Authority would use its regulatory power to regulate all areas of the energy sector, those exiting and winding down their operations and those scaling up and expanding. There are risks to workers in both cases that need to be carefully managed. The cost of transitioning should not sit solely with the workers and the communities most impacted. A just transition means nobody left behind.

While workers need support and the renewable energy network needs to be built rapidly, the incentivising of renewable energy projects, mineral extraction and associated jobs must not be done at the expense of climate justice principles that recognize the rights of First Nations people to land and culture or at the expense of biodiversity and ecosystems. All care should be taken and regulations put in place to promote renewable energy and mineral mining opportunities in ways that preserve native title, provide co-benefits to communities and protect country.

As already mentioned, a broader sector, more holistic approach to transition the whole economy would be advantageous, both in terms of rapidly reducing emissions and in recognising and developing industry and job opportunities.

There has already been significant work done looking at employment and industry opportunities in the transition by, among others, Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE). BZE's Million Jobs plan³ looks at transitioning to a zero emissions energy network, but also has a broader scope addressing climate change and other environmental issues such as biodiversity loss. Plans outlined include an approach similar to that of the United Nations 6 sector emissions reduction approach to the climate crisis, including the outlining of job opportunities in all of the following sectors making up the million new jobs:

³ [BZE-The-Million-Jobs-Plan-Full-Report-2020.pdf](#)

- Renewable energy (Expanding electricity transmission network, large-scale wind turbine manufacturing, battery manufacturing);
- Better buildings (Home energy retrofits, net-zero social housing, solar + batteries for schools);
- Better transport (public transport expansion including buses and faster rail, cycling and active transport infrastructure);
- Manufacturing (Electrifying industry, hydrogen, green steel, green aluminium, new energy metals, decarbonising mining);
- Land use and regeneration (Land regeneration, Environmental managers, Indigenous land and water rangers, Coastal catchment and land care groups);
- Recycling;
- Education, training & research.

Australian Parents for Climate Actions' own proposal, Solar Our Schools⁴, would see the roll out of solar and batteries to all schools and early childhood centres in Australia creating at least 6,870 regional jobs. Jobs would be local where the schools and early childhood centres are, so local economies would benefit.

AP4CA recently welcomed the NSW government's announcement it would be opening all 2,200 NSW state schools to installers of solar and battery systems in what amounts to the largest solar tendering of sites and rooftop capacity in Australia's history.⁵

The Transition Authority should draw on the work already done, especially by organisations with local knowledge, where shovel ready solutions have been identified and knowledge is already gained. They should engage key stakeholders and tap into expertise.

The need for stable regional job creation has existed for a long time and goes well beyond just transitioning the fossil fuel mining and associated industries.

Targeting high regional youth unemployment should be a priority. This can and should include the reestablishment of quality regional vocational training facilities that are publicly funded and accredited.

There will be significant work, for example, in electrification, readying transmission and distribution networks for a massive expansion of distributed energy resources and two way flows of electrons; gearing up for new loads associated with charging at electrified bus depots as examples of the increased need for electricians in the transition.

To support this increase, apprenticeship incentive programs that are well resourced and supported so young people can earn a liveable wage while earning a trade and have clear paths to ongoing regional employment should be encouraged.

Another priority for the Authority should be lifting rates of indigenous employment in line with the Closing the Gap objectives should be priorities for the Authority. Programs to achieve this aim should be embedded in community consultation and co-design so job creation is culturally appropriate and led by communities.

It is important for the Transition Authority not to have too narrow a focus when seeking to incentivise low-carbon job creation. What a low-carbon industry constitutes has a much broader definition than just renewable energy and associated manufacturing.

⁴ [AP4CA Solar Our Schools](#)

⁵ [NSW plans massive solar and battery virtual power plant across 2,200 public schools | RenewEconomy](#)

Low-carbon work is simply work that has transitioned away from extractive, high-emitting and destructive industries, such as fossil fuel mining, to work that is producing zero, or net zero emissions while not adversely harming the environment and ecosystems that we need intact to mitigate climate change.

To this end the care industry, as one example, is inherently low-carbon. Part of transitioning to a low-carbon economy should include government agencies being committed to raising standards and wages for care workers, as they meet the needs of the community and an ageing population. There is significant work opportunity in the care sector and it demonstrates another way to embrace opportunities of a low-carbon economy where jobs are needed and the work fulfils an essential role in the community.⁶

The Transition Authority should have a broad strategy to integrate the work and workers needed for Australia, with labour movements behind them, and climate solutions. The vision should be one of a low carbon economy that works for everyone including commitments to fair wages and conditions.

Where the Transition Authority does not have the authority to take a more sector wide approach it should guide and work closely with other government agencies to broaden the scope of support needed for all sectors in transition to a zero emissions economy.

Attracting Industry

Lack of certainty and regulatory inconsistency are key deterrents of industry investment. The government, through the NETA, can provide clear signals to markets, which gives clear timeframes for the end of fossil fuel extractive industries. Doing so will align policy with climate targets and give companies involved clarity and timeframes to transition their business model to a truly net zero operation or wind up operations.

The goal is to transition to a low emissions economy in line with the government's commitment to the aims of the Paris Climate agreement. As per the International Energy Agencies 2020 report Net Zero by 2050, A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector⁷ “Beyond projects already committed as of 2021, there are no new oil and gas fields approved for development in our pathway, and no new coal mines or mine extensions are required.” Setting a date for an end to new fossil fuel approvals aligns government policy with its targets and objectives and provides a clear signal for industry to move investments in line with this.

A condition of any policy or financial assistance to industry, such as grants programs, for any transition program the NETA rolls out, should be for parties to clearly demonstrate how they will support workers with fair wages and conditions and how they plan to run a truly zero emissions business operation with minimal biodiversity impact within the next decade. Net zero plans for businesses should be genuine and transparent and not dependent on unreliable technology such as carbon capture and storage, which has been failing to deliver on emission reduction promises⁸. Additionally conditions should be placed on operations heavily reliant on carbon or biodiversity credits as these should be reserved for very limited use in socially essential business with difficult to abate operations.

Facilitating development in regional areas as part of attracting industry will require a review of Infrastructure and services to determine barriers including telecommunications coverage, road, rail

⁶ [A Low-Carbon Economy Will Be Built By Nannies, Caregivers and House Cleaners - In These Times](#)

⁷ [Net Zero by 2050 – Analysis - IEA](#)

⁸ [Gas giant's \\$3.2b effort to bury carbon pollution is failing \(smh.com.au\)](#)

and other transport networks and infrastructure. Working with other agencies the Transition Authority should be guiding the development of infrastructure that is low carbon from construction through to use. Infrastructure should enable and facilitate low carbon operations and lifestyles, for example adequate electrical vehicle charging capacity, expanded regional public transport.

Independence, funding, board composition

The National Energy Transition Authority should operate independently of the government as outlined in the Bill.

The funding model, where funds the Authority seeks to administer is tied to budgetary processes could have the potential to undermine this independence. Long term secure funding approved at the outset would lessen the chances for political interference. It would offer the Authority greater opportunity to invest in communities in a way that assures communities their needs and ambitions will be met through the transition into the future regardless of changes to government or circumstances.

The Bill proposes the administering board for the Authority include people with substantial expertise drawn from and having significant credibility and standing in the following sectors; energy technologies; engineering; economics; workplace planning; industry transition planning; government funding programs or bodies; zero carbon industry or economy; industrial relations; financial accounting; work in coal and/or gas mining. We propose that board positions should also be reserved for experts in community development, drawing from the social sciences not just from business, who can best facilitate a community voice in the transition processes. The board should include a designated First Nations position, a designated position for youth representation and seek balance and diverse representation in appointments.

Consultation

Unions

Unions have long fought for better pay and conditions for workers. The benefits that workers in the mining and energy sector enjoy have been fought for and negotiated by unions. Unions should be given a strong voice in discussions around transition and suitable new job opportunities to ensure workers rights are well represented.

Community

It is not just workers who are impacted by the closure of industries. The consultation processes of the Authority should be broad and deep and embedded within the communities impacted.

Job creation efforts and community support should be regionally appropriate. Communities need to be given a voice and opportunities within the decision making process through arrangements such as local citizens assemblies and public forums. Industries being attracted and jobs being created should address local needs identified by and for the community. They should draw on local knowledge and be established to maximise benefits remaining local.

Beyond the creation of jobs and incentivising businesses communities should be supported and facilitated in building a vision for what their community might look like 'after-transition'. Transition should not be something that happens to a place, even though the need for change itself is shaped by external forces, but should be something a community can build and shape for themselves.

In regional areas large industries and employers often make up the entire economic and social ecosystem of a region. More than employment and financial stability the industry is associated with a towns identity, often supporting social connections beyond the workplace such as sponsorship of clubs and other community organisations. There is often a reciprocal relationship at play. Recognising and planning for broader social and financial impacts, beyond employment, need to be considered also.

With the ending of an industry the community will have concerns over the potential for decline in other services such as health, education, childcare, hospitality. The Authority needs to work with other government agencies to ensure investment in the continuity, and improvement where needed, of these border social services and infrastructure. This is not just important for community well-being but will help new industries attract and retain workers if their needs are met regionally.

Experts

Experts should be employed across multiple disciplines, not just industry and business. This should include people with experience in community development, health care, including mental and social health workers, people skilled in entrepreneurship as well as training and education.

Alternative Models

If the Authority were to widen its scope to look at the transition for all sectors to a low emissions economy there is significant need and opportunity to develop a regionally focussed job centre and business incubator.

The jobs centre would have genuinely local focus, informed by and employing local knowledge. This would ensure job-creation activity was addressing local needs and working within local skill sets and contexts. This would ensure the best long term success.

Mining towns have experienced greater environmental and biodiversity degradation than most, which means there is greater scope and need for regeneration. Ecosystems need to be restored and maintained to mitigate climate change and related disaster risks. This restorative work opportunities could especially be led by First Nations people who have the knowledge and could take a guiding role in the much needed work to preserve and restore country.

There will also be ongoing maintenance and monitoring requirements to ensure the safety of decommissioned mines. They will require monitoring into the future to ensure they are not emitting methane, for example. The people working in the industry now have the skills to meet this need. The need for that work should be planned for and funded now by mining companies contributing to a fund to support the work into the future so the cost of maintenance and monitoring of mines after closure does not fall to the public.

The government, through the Authority, should establish regional jobs guarantee programs. This could work for young people as well as those transitioning to retirement. Extending existing volunteer programs that currently enable persons over 55 to volunteer their time in return for government payments should be made to enable greater participation in the regeneration work needed. The

financial return for these services provided to the community should be paid at a liveable wage that enables a life of dignity and security. This should be the case for all government payments, not just retiring mine workers.

A jobs guarantee program with a climate focus would mobilise workers transitioning out of high emissions industries but would also mobilise under-utilised workers across the board who are currently unemployed or underemployed. A Job Guarantee program would seek to provide employment for everyone who wanted it for the time needed. The jobs created under the program would be aligned with national social and environmental goals but specifically with a local focus, determined within the community. This includes the urgent work needed to transition the economy and restore ecosystems to mitigate and adapt to climate change, work such as land rehabilitation, natural disaster readiness and response, ecological monitoring and community resilience.^{9 10}

Beyond attracting established businesses to the regions the Authority should be equipped to encourage, support and incentivise different forms of entrepreneurship.

An example of an alternative model of entrepreneurship is cooperatives. Cooperatives often have greater local return in terms of contributions to the local economy, developing and retaining local skills and giving local people a sense of ownership. Cooperatives have 'voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training, and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community. In addition, "Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others"¹¹

This sense of ownership that cooperatives foster could benefit members of the community who may lose a sense of control and identity in the transition away from the traditional industry and allow them to harness and group their skills on their own terms in a way that benefits them and their communities.

There are already over 1700 cooperatives in Australia in diverse industries from: agriculture, arts, child care, health care, clubs, community services, education, energy, finance, hardware, housing, radio broadcasting, fishing, manufacturing, produce marketing, recycling, respite care, retail, superannuation, communications, transport, wholesale, wine sales and utilities¹². The economies of scale that usually benefit a larger multinational corporation could be achieved by networking cooperatives across communities to enhance their buying power and reduce administrative burdens.

An example of a successful model is the Hepburn Wind in Leonards Hill, Victoria, the first energy cooperative in Australia. It is a community-owned cooperative wind farm but is in the process of expanding to the first hybrid wind, solar and battery co-operative.¹³ The cooperative is playing a significant part in the region's ambition to reach zero-net energy by 2025 and zero-net emissions by

⁹ [Job Guarantee Report \(sustainable-prosperity.net.au\)](https://sustainable-prosperity.net.au)

¹⁰ [Climate Jobs Guarantee - Tomorrow Movement](#)

¹¹ [Cooperative identity, values & principles | ICA](#)

¹² [What types of co-operatives are there in Australia? – The Co-op Federation](#)

¹³ [Hepburn Energy | Home - Hepburn Energy](#)

2030 while it supports other local business and the community in their own efforts to move to net-zero through the Hepburn Z-ENT initiative.¹⁴

There are currently around 130 other community energy and decarbonisation projects in Australia.¹⁵ These draw on local skills, leverage local knowledge help communities transition to zero emissions economies on their terms.

The advantage of cooperatives is established knowledge internationally, the community energy movement is much more established in Europe than in Australia. *“The global energy landscape is changing. Local, decentralized and community-driven renewable energy projects are increasingly playing an important role in a traditionally centralized energy market”*

“The involvement of local citizens leads to more popularity and acceptance of community projects, decentralized energy production and an opportunity to develop (niche) innovations. It is also able to accelerate the local energy transition under certain conditions..... There is a possibility to compensate residents for the disadvantages associated with energy projects (e.g. noise from wind turbines) through democratic participation in renewable energy and other infrastructure.”¹⁶

There existing local support packages and resources that can be leveraged such as the NSW governments ‘Regional community energy fund’ that provides *“grants to community energy projects that create innovative and/or dispatchable renewable energy and benefit the local community.”¹⁷* and the Victorian government’s policy documents ‘Renewable Energy Roadmap and Action Plan’ and ‘Guide to Community-Owned Renewable Energy for Victorians’¹⁸, which seek to guide communities and remove regulatory barriers to enhance community energy opportunities.

Conclusion

A Transition Authority should be established and tasked with transitioning Australia to a net zero emissions economy that protects workers, communities and ecosystems.

The authority should play a guiding and leading role in a whole of government approach that looks holistically at the need for rapid emissions reduction across all sectors this decade.

The Transition Authority should have much broader scope and be reframed as the New Economy Transition Authority, taking in the need for the transition to be comprehensive, with all workers, communities and industries supported and guided in this hugely important and urgent process.

If the National Transition Authority was established and its remit was to remain narrowly focussed on supporting the transition of workers and communities tied to fossil fuel extraction and power generation the government should set the goal of establishing similar and linked authorities in other high-emitting sectors, which also require rapid transition to low carbon operations this decade.

The work needed for transition is far-reaching and urgent. There should not be a delay in establishing the best possible version of a National Transition Authority.

¹⁴ [Hepburn Shire hits 42% renewables, paving way to zero-net energy Hepburn Shire Council](#)

¹⁵ [Clean community energy – 100 Climate Conversations](#)

¹⁶ [Success factors of citizen energy cooperatives in north western Germany: a conceptual and empirical review](#)

¹⁷ [Regional community energy fund | NSW Climate and Energy Action](#)

¹⁸ [Community-Energy-Projects-Guidelines-Booklet-A4_-WEB.pdf](#)