



Submission

to the

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees on Net Zero Economy Authority Bill; 2024

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AEU Statement

The Australian Education Union (AEU) makes this submission on behalf of its 190,000 members employed in public early childhood education and care centres; schools; and TAFEs as teachers, educational leaders, education assistants or support staff across Australia.

The AEU recognises the significant threat of the climate crisis to humanity and our planet.

It's time for Australian state, territory, and federal governments to take significant action to reduce Australia's carbon emissions and create the policy frameworks for a just transition away from fossil fuels for workers in carbon-intensive industries and their communities.

The AEU endorses the ACTU submission supporting the Net Zero Authority Bill, as part of its campaign for the creation of good, unionised jobs, reducing emissions and ensuring workers and communities are strengthened by responses to climate change.

The AEU supports the urgent passage of the Net Zero Authority Bill, as a key mechanism to ensure the workers and communities currently reliant on carbon intensive industries for employment and economic activity, are provided with a just transition as the Australian economy decarbonises. With tens of thousands of AEU members working in and supporting these communities in early childhood, schools, and TAFE, it is also necessary to ensure that the regions that have been powering Australia over many decades, continue to thrive and grow, and importantly avoid the severe impact of an unjust transition.

We know climate change impacts all workers, including education workers. AEU members have experienced the impacts of climate change, with climate-related disasters such as drought, floods, bushfires, and heatwaves. These events, which are becoming more frequent and intense, present a major threat to the health and safety of workers, their families and their communities, not to mention Australia's economic prosperity. Educational provision has been disrupted at times, with education staff also having to respond to the mental health impact on their students, whilst also dealing with direct impacts on their own personal and working lives.

Education plays a key role in forging a climate resilient society. The AEU are committed to ensuring that education is transformed to catalyse the fight against climate change and to support a just transition for a more sustainable world. Governments have a responsibility to ensure quality Climate Change Education (CCE) for all. Quality CCE is based on science, and addresses the ethical, cultural, political, social, and economic dimensions of climate change, and appropriately recognises Aboriginal knowledge and Torres Strait Islander knowledge. CCE is critical to ensure all students leave education climate-literate and equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to tackle climate change, adapt to uncertainties, and play their part in building a more sustainable future.