

SUBMISSION REGARDING AUSTRALIA'S TRANSITION
TO A GREEN ENERGY SUPERPOWER

To the Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth,

I am making this submission as an Australian citizen concerned with the future of energy production both locally and globally, and keen to ensure that the methods of production remain above-board, above corruption, Australian-owned and operated and with as low an impact as possible on natural environments, ecosystems, sacred lands and rural communities. I do believe this is possible, but am equally sure that if we ride rough-shod over vulnerable communities, valuable farming land and precious ecosystems in order to achieve a goal of becoming a green superpower, we will have made a mockery of that green goal and done irreparable damage to our nation in the process.

I believe that the emerging global trends to harness natural methods of power production can be viable options for Australia on a large scale, but more research needs to be done into the most environmentally-friendly ways to construct and operate solar farms and wind farms, in particular, so that the monetary and the environmental cost of manufacture and location does not counteract the benefits of the green energy they are to produce. Key commonwealth agencies must take responsibility for ensuring that widespread community consultation, rigorous environmental impact studies and ongoing R&D for best-practice technology in these areas is implemented.

Crucially, these agencies must also take responsibility for ensuring that the preparation for such developments, the construction and the management of these facilities, remains in Australian hands, as it is only thus that the benefits or detriment to the surrounding areas will truly be assessed and taken into account, and only thus that we can keep the profitability and security of this form of power production as an Australian asset. Existing trade agreements between Australia and other countries as regards our energy industry must be reassessed in light of the greening of our industry, and the motivations behind overseas investment rigorously interrogated and challenged. Part of this responsibility-taking with trade agreements also involves sourcing ethically-produced components of green energy production, whether they be manufactured locally (which is the ideal) or overseas, so that our green energy facilities are not built on the backs of slave labour or manufacturing processes fuelled by dirty energy.

To be a truly green superpower we must also be willing to deal locally with the consequences of local green energy production, particularly as regards disposal of expired PV panels, batteries, wind turbine components and any and all by-products of nuclear power generation, should nuclear power form a part of the green energy transition.

As evidenced in other countries transitioning to green superpowers (such as Germany and Denmark), this transition comes at a considerable cost, and the Australian government needs to be prepared to face the consequences of rising

energy prices associated with the greening of our power production, rather than trying to keep costs down by cutting corners in legislation, consultation, research and development. Considerable investment in Australian scientific research into green energy production will mean that we are more likely to find methods that are best suited to our circumstances, which, combined with learnings from other OECD countries that have transitioned ahead of us, will mean Australia is well placed to be a green superpower in terms of best practice and efficient, low-impact production, if not in size or output comparative to the rest of the world.

I hope all effort will be taken by the committee to ensure that the growth of Australia's green energy capabilities will be able to benefit Australians in the long term rather than just the short term, without doing irreparable damage to farm land, sacred sites and vulnerable ecosystems that are at least as vital as green energy production to our future survival and status as any kind of 'superpower'.