

Submission to Net Zero Economy Authority Bill 2024

Executive Summary

The Tomorrow Movement welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Net Zero Economy Authority Bill 2024.

This submission highlights the following:

1. We stand with workers, unions and communities in affirming the importance of national coordination of the clean energy transition and support the passage of the Net Zero Economy Authority Bill 2024.
2. The scope of the Authority should be extended to include other regions impacted by the transition.
3. The economic transformation of building a net-zero economy is an opportunity to rebuild our public institutions, revitalise our communities and improve the lives of millions of people across the country. We present a vision for the Authority that ensures jobs created in energy regions are good jobs, public services are rebuilt and our communities are cared for.

We stand with workers and support the passage of the Bill.

We support the creation of a Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEA) to oversee the important work of coordinating the transition to clean energy and supporting workers and communities to maximise the economic and social benefits of the climate transformation and recommend the passage of the Net Zero Economy Authority Bill 2024.

Workers and communities in energy regions bear the brunt of the impacts when private industry closes facilities like coal- and gas-fired power stations. We have seen time and time again in communities like Morwell, Collie and Queenstown the ripple effect of private industry leaving towns across the country. Clearly **private industry is not truly invested in the futures of the communities in which they make their profits and there is a need for active government intervention** to ensure workers in carbon-intensive industries are cared for through the inevitable decarbonisation transformation. The solutions to the climate crisis cannot continue to perpetuate existing inequality in our society.

The role of the NZEA in facilitating investment in decarbonisation projects is also critical to addressing the climate crisis at the speed necessary. Leaving the decarbonisation of Australia's grid and industry to the private market has not worked, and government-facilitated investment is critical to building a strong net-zero economy. **The identification of critical projects that won't happen without public investment is a crucial step in building a net-zero future** and we support the NZEA to play this role and advocate for these projects to be

funded by the federal government. There is a need for government to guide the transition so workers and communities don't continue to get left behind. The NZEA can play a critical role in this.

Given the complexities of policy in this area - across departments and jurisdictions - **there is a need for a body to coordinate activity across government**. We support the Net Zero Economy Authority to play this role.

Traditional Owners and First Nations People must be appropriately consulted and involved in the function of the Authority and the local projects it oversees. **The Authority must ensure real benefits must flow to First Nations peoples in regions where transformation is taking place** as outlined in the Bill.

The scope of the Authority should be extended to include other regions impacted by the transition.

We recognise the urgent need for the NZEA to act in the identified energy regions. However, **we recommend the Authority is extended in scope to cover other regions that are being impacted by the decarbonisation of industry**.

Jack Simmons is a young person and Tomorrow Movement member who has lived in Wollongong since he was five:

“My family moved to Wollongong so my dad could work at the Port Kembla Steelworks. He was made redundant among 500 others in 2015. Earlier this year the Russell Vale Colliery which is just a few kilometres away from my house closed, putting over 100 local workers out of work. In both these cases big carbon-intensive industries left our community reeling. It's obvious in towns like Wollongong that there is a need for government intervention as our industry transforms to ensure the future of communities like mine are secure, and to ensure that the skilled and experienced workers at the frontline of this transformation are valued and tangibly supported.”

Jack's story demonstrates the need for the Authority to have a presence outside the four identified energy regions.

The decarbonisation of our grid and industry is an opportunity for transformative change.

The stakes and urgency of the climate crisis demand a full mobilisation of our economy towards the goal of decarbonisation as well as adaptation measures to prepare our cities, towns and regional communities to survive and thrive in a warming world. **This mobilisation is an opportunity to rebuild our public institutions, revitalise our communities and improve the lives of millions of people across the country**. The young people who we work with are facing an uncertain future, looking down the barrel of the climate crisis and economic insecurity as the cost of living crisis continues. Young people are looking for ambitious government leadership in the climate transition.

Genuine community leadership will be central to ensuring justice in this process. Foregrounding worker and community leadership into the work of the Authority will be vital to ensuring the opportunities and investments it secures are appropriate for the communities they are being created in. This will ensure the jobs the Authority facilitates creating will be good jobs.

We want to strongly emphasise the need for public investment in regions where the transformation is taking place and the strong popular support for publicly owned renewable energy infrastructure projects. Our communities have been harmed by privatisation and repeatedly abandoned by private companies. The more the NZEA can protect communities from market shocks and put power back in the hands of the people, the better. The NZEA could advocate that public money is spent for public good, and that essential services like energy end up in the hands of the public.

About Tomorrow Movement

Tomorrow Movement is a national movement of thousands of young people fighting for good jobs, great public services and a safe climate for all. We are organising in communities all around the country to build a tomorrow that works for everyone.

Contact

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