

Submission to the National Energy Transition Authority Bill 2022

The Tomorrow Movement welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the National Energy Transition Authority Bill 2022.

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 a National Energy Transition Authority.
2. The scale and urgency of the climate crisis demands a serious mobilisation of our economy towards the goal of decarbonisation and preparing regions and communities to survive the impacts we can no longer avoid.
3. This economic transformation is an opportunity to rebuild our public institutions, revitalise our communities and improve the lives of millions of people across the country. We can draw inspiration from the economic transformation overseen by the Department of Post War Reconstruction that created much of Australia's public infrastructure and coordinated a period of full-employment for 30 years, following World War II.
4. In order to take advantage of this opportunity and re-shape our economy for the better, the National Energy Transition Authority must centre the principles of climate justice and ensure members historically marginalised communities are given a seat at the table, and are able to co-create the visions for our regions and genuinely benefit from the transition.
5. In a 2021 survey of hundreds of young people we learned that young people are experiencing extremely high levels of unemployment, under-employment and job insecurity (65%). This trend is worse in regional areas (74%). To address these concerns young people are calling for transformational policy solutions like:
 - a. A Climate Jobs Guarantee to guarantee a good job to anyone who needs one, engaging them in the essential work of decarbonising our economy and caring for our communities.
 - b. Mass public investment to solve the urgent problems our communities face, including climate change, the housing crisis and staff shortages and poor outcomes in the aged care, childcare and healthcare sectors.
6. In imagining the role of the National Energy Transition Authority we urge the Senate Economics Legislation Committee to embrace a transformational approach for the authority, with a mandate that goes beyond overseeing transition of the energy system and instead focuses on visionary strategies that maximise public good and benefit the whole community. This will be critical to ensuring successful transition in energy regions and make it more possible to continue to advance climate justice policies during the critical decade.

Summary of Recommendations

1. We support the creation of a National Energy Transition Authority 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.
2. We recommend the Committee embrace a transformational vision for the National Energy Transition Authority, with a mandate that goes beyond overseeing transition of the energy system, instead aims towards delivering a fairer economy and society for all (Re: Clause 3 Objects)
3. Expand the scope of the National Energy Transition Authority to as many fossil fuel exposed workers and communities as possible (Re: Outline & noting gas is mentioned in Clause 11)
4. The National Energy Transition Authority should prioritise attracting public investment to transitioning economies, focusing on visionary strategies that maximise public good and benefit the whole community. (Re: Clause 9 Functions)
5. The National Energy Transition Authority must prioritise the principles of climate justice in ensuring all members of the community, particularly those who have faced historical injustices, are able to participate in and benefit from economic transformation.
6. The National Energy Transition Authority oversee a Climate Jobs Guarantee program that guarantees good jobs decarbonising the economy and caring for community (Re: Clause 9 functions)
7. Re-establish a publicly owned Commonwealth Employment Service to match people seeking work to jobs, training programs and projects needed to solve the climate crisis and care for communities. (Clause 11: Advice)

1. The Urgency and Opportunity of the Climate Transition

The urgency to cut emissions

Our air, water, homes and entire way of life is threatened by climate change. Every fraction of a degree of warming above 1.5 has the potential to irrevocably damage our communities, destroy the stability of our food production and ultimately cost lives.¹ No new coal, oil or gas project is compatible with a 2 degree target, much less a 1.5. Analysis of developed coal, oil and gas reserves by Oil Change International found that the carbon emissions of already

¹ Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5C, IPCC, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

developed reserves will exceed 2 degrees of warming.² To survive the climate crisis we must urgently phase fossil fuels out of our energy mix and economic activity.

We are facing down the climate crisis amidst a backdrop of rising wealth inequality.³ Without significant intervention, climate impacts and market driven changes will continue to disproportionately impact working people, while those with immense wealth are shielded from the crisis.

The next decade is critical. Addressing the climate crisis slowly is the same as not addressing it at all. Our climate is perilously close to a number of tipping points. The actions we take today matter much more than the ones we make in 2030 and far more than 2050.

The opportunity of a fairer & cleaner economy

The stakes and urgency of this crisis demand nothing less than 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 full economic mobilisation is an opportunity to rebuild our public institutions, revitalise our communities and improve the lives of millions of people across the country.

There is so much work that needs to be done to solve this crisis: everything from building renewable energy generation and infrastructure, building new energy efficient homes and retrofitting old ones, public transport, greening our cities and towns to reduce heat and building flood levees and seawalls. There is a huge opportunity to build up the care economy as our health and community systems face increasing pressure.

Tomorrow Movement has been building a testing public support for a Climate Jobs Guarantee and found that 94% of young people support the proposal to guarantee stable public jobs for everyone who needs one in areas that serve the community's needs, from renewable energy to housing and health services.⁴ Climate policy that addresses people's immediate economic needs has the potential to be hugely popular and to enable greater scope for climate action over time.

We've transformed our economy on this scale before

Following World War II, the Department of Post War Reconstruction was created and tasked with the responsibility for nationwide economic development, and coordinating post-war planning across a range of government agencies.⁵ With the aim of achieving full employment and rebuilding prosperity in Australia, it oversaw a huge program of work that changed our society for the better. These programs built thousands of homes and created thousands of

² The Sky's Limit, Oil Change International, <https://priceofoil.org/2016/09/22/the-skys-limit-report/>

³ Davidson, P. & Bradbury, B., (2022) The wealth inequality pandemic: COVID and wealth inequality ACOSS/UNSW Sydney Poverty and Inequality Partnership, Build Back Fairer Series Report No. 4, Sydney.

⁴ Tomorrow Movement (2021), "Youth Jobs: Crisis and Solutions". Available at: <https://tomorrowmovement.com/youth-jobs-survey/>

⁵ Powell, G.T. and Macintyre, S. (2015) *Land of opportunity : Australia's post-war reconstruction*. National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

good jobs in new industries, supported by dozens of government-run, nation building infrastructure projects like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric scheme. The Post-War Reconstruction program successfully trained thousands of people for vital roles in the workforce, and improved the standard of living for all by building homes for working people, making improvements to the social welfare system and creating the pharmaceutical benefits scheme.

The government-run Commonwealth Employment Service matched thousands of workers to jobs and training opportunities. As a result, Australia enjoyed a prolonged period of ‘full employment’.⁶

However, the benefits of these programs were not enjoyed by everyone. Politically and economically marginalised groups, including First Nations peoples, women and non-white migrants were predominantly shut out of the workforce. In visioning a new green economy, this time around, centering justice in design, implementation and access is vital.

In this critical decade, we cannot afford to miss this opportunity to work together to rebuild and reshape our society for the better.

Recommendation 1: We support the creation of a National Energy Transition Authority 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.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Committee embrace a transformational vision for the National Energy Transition Authority, with a mandate that goes beyond overseeing transition of the energy system, instead aims towards delivering a fairer economy and society for all (Re: Clause 3 Objects)

2. The Role of The National Energy Transition Authority

We support the creation of a National Energy Transition Authority 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.

Core Functions: (Clause 9- General)

We support the goals of helping communities and workers to attract new public and private investment in job-creating industries and social infrastructure to affected areas, and ensuring ongoing equivalent employment or social services are provided.

We recommend that the scope be expanded beyond workers affected by “coal closure” (see Bill Outline, page 1) to workers in all fossil fuel exposed industries including gas mining and generation, coal and gas exports and oil extraction and refineries. (Noting that gas is

⁶ Hail, S. (2021) The Return of Full Employment. *Australian Fabians Review*, no. 2. Available at: https://www.fabians.org.au/afr2_steven_hail.

mentioned in Clause 11) This is necessary in order to appropriately recognise the scope of transition required to keep warming below 1.5 degrees and to protect and support workers in those industries from abrupt market driven changes.

We want to strongly emphasise the need for public investment in these regions 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 transition authority can protect communities from market shocks, and put power back in the hands of the people, the better.

Recommendations 3: Expand the scope of the National Energy Transition Authority to as many fossil fuel exposed workers and communities as possible (Re: Outline & noting gas is mentioned in Clause 11)

Recommendations 4: The National Energy Transition Authority should prioritise attracting public investment to transitioning economies, focusing on visionary strategies that maximise public good and benefit the whole community. (Re: Clause 9 Functions)

3. Centring Climate Justice and Community-led Change

The solutions to the climate crisis cannot continue to perpetuate existing inequality in our society. Responding to the climate crisis presents a unique opportunity to restructure our economy to be more equitable, sustainable and caring. In tackling this whole-of-society challenge, it will require transformative systemic change that addresses historic injustices that face marginalised and frontline communities, who will disproportionately face the worst impacts of a changing climate and economy.

Centring justice means that opportunities and resources provided through the National Energy Transition Authority, including jobs, housing and services, must go to historically marginalised and frontline communities first.

Genuine community leadership will be central to ensuring justice in this process. While federal and state government coordination is essential, embedding the role of community leadership into the design of the Authority will be vital to ensuring the opportunities and investments it secures are appropriate and successful for the region. Crucially, the sovereignty of First Nations peoples and Traditional Owners must be respected. Traditional Owners and First Nations People must be appropriately consulted and involved in the design of the Authority and the local projects it oversees.

While the traditional mechanisms of Local, State and Federal level governments should be utilised in order to consult and co-create the work of the Authority and regional development plans, it should be acknowledged that these mechanisms often exclude people who face structural barriers to participation; including First Nations People, young people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, people on temporary visas, queer and trans people and other historically excluded communities. Specific work and resourcing must be prioritised by the National

Energy Transition Authority to ensure that the most vulnerable members of our communities are able to be active participants in shaping the economic future of our regions.

Recommendation 5: The National Energy Transition Authority must prioritise the principles of climate justice in ensuring all members of the community, particularly those who have faced historical injustices, are able to participate in and benefit from economic transformation.

4. Guaranteeing good jobs and supporting young workers

Youth underemployment

In May 2022, there were over 1.3 million people actively looking for work or struggling to find enough hours. Young people aged 15-29 years old make up 47% of the total number of people unemployed in Australia.⁷ The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated issues already prevalent across the labour market: casualisation, insecurity and exploitation. In 2021, young people aged 15-24 suffered 55% of job losses, despite representing only 14% of workers.⁸ Yet our current employment and job finding services are failing to help people move into secure work.⁹

In 2021 we surveyed over 750 young people and found that:¹⁰

- 65% were experiencing employment stress (unemployed or insecure work).
- This trend was worse for rural and regional respondents, with 74% either unemployed or in insecure work.
- 60% of respondents reported that a jobs guarantee, similar to the Youth Jobs Guarantee in Europe, would solve the employment issues that they had personally experienced.

“I didn’t have the ability to go and do training when I was younger and am only now able to afford to train and upskill in my industry at the age of 25 due to hardships. This program would have significantly decreased the time it took to get here.” - 25 y/o respondent from Launceston TAS.

“If I had been able to work a stable job in public service through something like a youth jobs guarantee I would be less concerned today about becoming homeless and could think about having a family.” -30-35 y/o respondent from Adelaide SA¹¹

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, August 2022*, cat. no. 6291.0.55.001, ABS, Canberra.

⁸ Littleton, E. and Campbell, R. (2022) *Australian Youth Job Guarantee Needed to Repair Pandemic Devastation: New Report*. The Australia Institute. Available at: <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/australian-youth-job-guarantee-needed-to-repair-pandemic-devastation-new-report/>.

⁹ Casey, S., et al. (2022) *Voices 2: results of a survey of people who used jobactive*. The Australian Council of Social Service.

¹⁰ *Tomorrow Movement* (2021), “Youth Jobs: Crisis and Solutions”.

¹¹ Ibid.

A Jobs Guarantee

Bringing good quality jobs to regions must be a primary function of the National Energy Transition Authority. It is very important that workers directly affected by mine and power station closures be guaranteed jobs of equivalent quality in the clean economy.

It is also important that employment opportunities are prioritised for young people hoping to gain a foothold in the job market and continue working in the region.

A jobs guarantee offers a way for the government to ensure there are good quality jobs, doing meaningful necessary work for everyone who needs one.

Case Study: European Union Youth Jobs Guarantee

Since 2013 the European Union (EU) has deployed a Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative as an ambitious strategy to reduce youth unemployment. The program has seen all Member States commit to giving every young person (under 30) a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.¹²

A report conducted 3 years after the program launched found that there are 1.4 million fewer young people experiencing unemployment in the EU.¹³ Over 24 million young people who have been registered in Youth Guarantee schemes started an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeships and traineeships.¹⁴

Job Guarantee programs have been implemented in many other jurisdictions, including Argentina, India, Sweden and the United States, in most cases for a short period of time in response to a crisis.¹⁵ In Australia we had something very close to a jobs guarantee operating from 1945 to 1974 when the federal government maintained a commitment to full employment and the public service acted as the employer of last resort.¹⁶

Our proposal for A Climate Jobs Guarantee would guarantee a good job to anyone who needs one, engaging them in the essential work of decarbonising our economy and caring for our communities.

Crucially, jobs provided through the Climate Jobs Guarantee must pay a living wage; be offered as ongoing and direct employment; provide adequate and appropriate leave and super entitlements; provide access to concurrent education and training opportunities with clear career progression pathways. By ensuring good working conditions, the Climate Jobs Guarantee offers economic benefits not only for program participants, but has the potential to

¹² European Commission (2021) *The reinforced youth guarantee*, European Commission. Viewed 17 September 2021, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>.

¹³ European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2016) *The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on*, Communication from the commission to the European parliament, the European council, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions, Brussels.

¹⁴ European Commission (2021) *The reinforced youth guarantee*, European Commission.

¹⁵ Sustainable Prosperity Action Group (2022) *The case for a Job Guarantee*, Sustainable Prosperity Action Group.

¹⁶ Hail, S. (2021) The Return of Full Employment, *Australian Fabians Review*, no. 2. Available at: https://www.fabians.org.au/afr2_steven_hail.

raise standards for all workers, by ensuring decent work is the default and treating unemployment as a policy failure rather than a personal one.

Recommendation 6: The National Energy Transition Authority oversee a Climate Jobs Guarantee program that guarantees good jobs decarbonising the economy and caring for community (Re: Clause 9 functions)

Redesigning Failing Unemployment Programs

Australia's current privatised employment service system isn't helping people find work. This highly profitable, punitive system is incapable of matching unemployed workers with secure career pathways, even before we factor in the rapidly changing needs of regional economies that are decarbonising and responding to climate change.

For many years the publicly owned Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) enabled Australia to achieve full employment.¹⁷ Set up after John Curtin's 1945 White Paper on Full Employment, it operated as "a real-time labour-market intelligence network spanning the entire continent, collecting information on the ground, and transmitting it to state and federal offices".¹⁸ This kind of national coordination will be essential to unlocking the capacity of Australia's workforce to solve the climate crisis and care for our communities.

Matching Australian workers with suitable employment, and appropriately paid training and education opportunities will be better done by a publicly owned service that is incentivised to help people find good quality work, especially opportunities that enable them to meaningfully contribute to their communities.

Recommendation 7: Re-establish a publicly owned Commonwealth Employment Service to match people seeking work to jobs, training programs and projects needed to solve the climate crisis and care for communities. (Clause 11: Advice)

5. A Bold Vision for Publicly Owned Climate Jobs

Tomorrow Movement's 2021 Youth Survey found that most young people want to see the government prioritising creating jobs in Renewable Energy and the Care Economy including Education, Health & Age Care (see Figure 1).

¹⁹

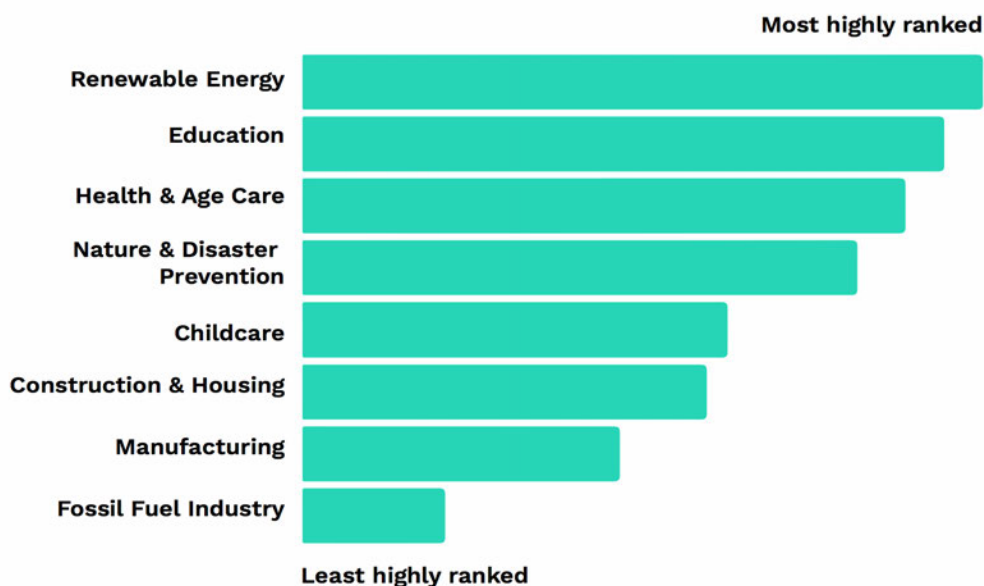
Young people from regional areas were more likely to rank renewable energy as a first priority for job creation (32% regional/rural vs 29% all respondents), and the fossil fuel industry last (81% regional/rural vs 65% all respondents).

¹⁷ Hail, S. (2021) The Return of Full Employment. *Australian Fabians Review*, no. 2.

¹⁸ Coonan, J. (2020) 'Australia's Commonwealth Employment Service Showed How a Welfare System Can Actually Help the Unemployed', *Jacobin*. Available at: <https://jacobin.com/2020/12/australia-employment-services-welfare-system>.

¹⁹

Figure 1 - Young People's Employment Investment Priorities



Source: Tomorrow Movement (2021), "Youth Jobs: Crisis and Solutions". Available at: https://tomorrowmovement.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/YouthJobs_SurveyReport_TmrwMvmt_Sept21.pdf

This reflects the importance to young people in attracting investment in areas that address the challenges our communities face, from climate change to homelessness and healthcare.

We found strong support among young people for ambitious publicly owned renewable energy and clean industry projects as well as for creating more and better paid jobs in the care economy.

"Our population as a whole is growing older at the moment, and I think we are in desperate need of more people in healthcare. We also need to focus on education, as too many kids get left behind. We definitely don't need any focus on fossil fuels."
- 30-35 y/o respondent from Newcastle NSW

"Being involved in the response to the bushfires of 19-20 and flood events in northern NSW it's clear to me additional workers are required in natural disaster management and resilience." - 22-25 y/o respondent from Goulburn NSW

"I feel like social services are badly neglected and we could use more man power in our hospitals, child care centres and aged care facilities. Behind that to conditions our future we absolutely need to invest in renewable energy and we should be supporting gas giants and fossil fuel corps the absolute least. They've done enough damage already." - 26-29 y/o respondent from regional QLD

It's critically important that the communities and workforces that have powered our nation for decades are supported to successfully transition to a prosperous clean economy. If these transitions go poorly it will make it harder for other communities and sectors to make necessary changes.

The National Energy Transition Authority, together with other government agencies, should invest in transition policies that can maximise the public good and make climate action universally popular.

We recommend embracing visionary publicly owned strategies that can benefit the whole community, including:

- Publicly owned renewable energy generation, transmission, manufacturing and export
- Public housing and projects that make housing affordable and accessible to more people
- Strong investment in the care economy, including public health care, aged care and childcare - ensuring that these jobs are well paid and good quality
- High speed, accessible public transport
- Restoring TAFE funding to pre-2013 levels and prioritising investing in technical training in key sectors needed to solve the climate crisis
- Support for the arts and music
- First Nations led projects to protect country and restore biodiversity

The list goes on! The imagination of our communities is the limit.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to contribute to the development of the National Energy Transition Authority Bill 2022.

About Tomorrow Movement

Tomorrow Movement is a movement of young people organising for a tomorrow that works for everyone, with good jobs, great public services and a safe climate for all. Our 5000 youth members (under 35) are based in urban and regional areas around the country.

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