

NSW Government Response to Recommendations

Electricity Infrastructure Jobs Advocate's Second Report

We are grateful to the Jobs Advocate, Dr Mark Apthorpe, for his Second Report and his ongoing contribution to whole of government efforts to address the skills needs for renewable energy in NSW.

Growing a pipeline of skilled workers in NSW, including in the Renewable Energy Zones (REZs), is an urgent and critical issue, and we acknowledge the Jobs Advocate's efforts in identifying meaningful solutions.

We support all six of the Jobs Advocate's recommendations, many of which reflect current or planned initiatives related to addressing the workforce needed to successfully deliver the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. The timing and scale of implementation will be considered by the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap Steering Committee.

The NSW Jobs First Commission is being established in line with the Government's commitment to grow domestic manufacturing. Once established, the Commission will investigate the development of local content targets and the provision of support to tendering organisations. It will also work with the Electricity Infrastructure Jobs Advocate and other relevant organisations, such as the Regional Future Jobs and Investment Authorities, to identify opportunities to collaboratively support local content delivery for REZs. The NSW Consumer Trustee, AEMO Services, and the Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) will continue to provide monitoring and oversight to ensure their contracted proponents meet their commitments to local content.

The Department of Education is leading the Government's efforts to support the education, training and pathways that are key to addressing the Roadmap's skills needs. To develop the Government's approach, the Department is considering a broad range of options aligned with the Jobs Advocate's recommendations, including options to:

- Strengthen coordination and collaboration between employers, training providers and regional workforces and communities, leveraging the Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program model, as mentioned by the Jobs Advocate, to meet the skills needs of the REZs and deliver positive training and employment outcomes for regional NSW.
- Implement an Apprenticeship & Traineeship (A&T) Roadmap 2024-2026 that aims to increase the responsiveness of A&Ts in NSW to meet current and emerging skills needs. Key to this Roadmap is strengthening the quality of trade qualifications and raising the profile of A&T pathways in new and emerging industries. The Department will develop targeted initiatives in consultation with key stakeholders for implementation over the next three years.
- Increase engagement between employers and schools to deliver opportunities for local school students to learn about, get a taste of, and undertake training pathways and long-term careers in the renewable energy sector, including in the REZs.
- Improve access to Group Training Organisations in the Renewable Energy Zones.

The NSW Government is committed to improving the information resources available to stakeholders and the broader public about the Roadmap and the electricity system transition; this will include raising awareness of careers and employment opportunities. Providing support for jobseekers, particularly those from REZ communities and under-represented cohorts, is an essential part of the Government's response to developing workforces in the REZs.

EnergyCo is building a dedicated First Nations Coordination Team. The team will work alongside local Aboriginal communities, building and coordinating relationships with renewable energy project developers and supporting opportunities in the REZs. The team will take a partnership approach with Aboriginal organisations, including Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and Local Aboriginal Land Councils. This will help support economic, social, environmental and community projects and partnerships, that focus on the delivery of real opportunities for Aboriginal employment, capacity building, and training.

The Department of Education also delivers a range of existing initiatives aligned with the Jobs Advocate's recommendations:

- The Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program helps address skills shortages and increase diversity in the construction sector through mandatory skills and diversity targets for major government infrastructure projects. The program has mandatory Procurement Board Direction and Training Management Guidelines to support industry and agencies to implement training, employment, and retention strategies, improve the culture within the industry to make it more inclusive for everyone, and report on progress against the targets, including initiatives, barriers, critical success factors and case studies.
- OCHRE Opportunity Hubs support Aboriginal young people to undertake clear education and training pathways to employment by partnering schools with local employers and training providers, supporting students to access local learning opportunities, and providing mentoring and other supports.
- The Barranggirra – Skilling for Employment Initiative provides end to end support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners through culturally appropriate mentoring to ensure successful retention and completion of training and improved post-training employment outcomes.
- The Women in Construction-focused Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program aims to increase the number of women working in construction by trialling minimum targets across a portfolio of government infrastructure projects. The targets are 4% of the trades workforce to be women, and 7% of the project workforce being women in non-traditional roles. This pilot initiative has embedded project officers in industry to report on issues and barriers to women participating in construction, mitigation strategies to address these, and progress against the targets (including data to inform future targets).
- The Women in Trades Strategy 2021-2024 addresses the underrepresentation of women in non-traditional trades and trades experiencing skills shortages, assisting women to undertake trade training and pursue career opportunities in trades. The Strategy responds to the gender imbalance across trade industries caused by a range of systemic issues and unconscious biases, including training pathways and workplaces that are unsuitable for many women. The Women in Trades Behavioural Insights Research Project has developed interventions to increase the participation of women in trade training and employment. The

project explores enablers and barriers, offering tangible interventions that can be adopted by employers, parents and career advisors. Three reports will be published in 2024: Women in Trades Promising Practice Review, Employer's Toolkit – Best Practice Guide, and the Life Stages Report.

- The Regional Industry Education Partnerships program connects employers with schools to deliver bespoke learning and work experience opportunities for students. The program includes the Renewables Ready Program which provides students with hands-on and workplace-embedded experience of the sector, and the Net Zero Career Explorer program, which informs students about the skills and attributes needed to work in the sector and training pathways that support them.
- Workforce Development teams provide support for key industry sectors by introducing them to training providers and specialists, providing targeted funding to address existing and emerging skills gaps, and developing tailored workforce solutions. These teams have supported Transport for NSW's Zero Emission Buses program by working with TAFE NSW and private training organisations to fund, develop and deliver training in zero emission bus technology.
- The Trade Pathways for Experienced Workers initiative supports workers to obtain trade qualifications based on their existing skills through recognition of prior learning and gap training. Independent evaluation results confirm that 75% of participants have successfully completed all required units to be eligible for a qualification.

The NSW Government is committed to supporting a strong and sustainable TAFE NSW, with the delivery of a NSW VET Review and the establishment of TAFE Centres of Excellence, starting with Western Sydney, the Hunter and the Illawarra. TAFE NSW is working with the Department of Education to improve access to VET qualifications, including through Recognition of Prior Learning and apprenticeships and traineeships. Building the vocational trainer workforce is also a priority of TAFE NSW, through their Paid to Learn Program.

We thank Dr Mark Apthorpe for his report and recommendations, which reflect a deep understanding of the challenges in developing the workforce and delivering renewable energy infrastructure. We look forward to further collaboration between NSW Government agencies and the Jobs Advocate to drive positive outcomes for jobs and the energy transition in NSW.