

SEC Energy Jobs and Skills Forum Post-event Wrap up







A Message from the Minister

I would like to extend my thanks to all the speakers, exhibitors and attendees who attended the State Electricity Commission Energy Jobs and Skills Forum on 29 June.

It was a privilege to hear from employers, training organisations, universities, students, workers, unions, local governments, and First Nations representatives on the workforce challenges and opportunities they face as they embrace the energy transition.

On the day, we heard different perspectives on our key themes, including:

- How our renewable energy targets of 95% renewable energy by 2035 will drive workforce demand
- How industry, unions, training providers and governments can form proactive partnerships and coordinate across the state and across projects
- How we can ensure that jobs in renewables are good, safe and meaningful
- How skills and higher education models can respond to industry needs

There was a strong, collective interest in meeting opportunities that are being created in the growing energy workforce. The enthusiasm and commitment from each attendee to solve workforce challenges brought incredible insights and ideas that will be worked into the Victorian Energy Jobs Plan and SEC Centre of Training Excellence business case.

I hope that we can take this sense of shared commitment and partnership forward, and that the great conversations that took place at the Forum are just a starting point on the journey to our ultimate goal - a renewable energy workforce that delivers for all Victorians.

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Climate Action
Minister for Energy and Resources
Minister for the State Electricity Commission

Some highlights from the day...

300+ attendees

b breakout sessions

176 ideas

39 panelists

164 questions

20 interviews







Executive Summary

Participants at the SEC Energy Jobs and Skills Forum discussed how Victoria can build the renewable energy workforce it needs to meet our targets of 95 percent renewable energy by 2035, and net-zero by 2045. This document summarises insights from the day.

Why workforce and skills are so critical to the renewable energy transition

The energy transition will drive changes in the scale and nature of workforce demand

New build in renewables is set to skyrocket.

To reach 95% renewables by 2035, Victoria needs to build 25GW in new generation.

This will involve massive increases in large-scale solar, wind, transmission and storage capacity as well as small-scale community assets.

The nature of the market is also evolving.

New technologies and emerging consumer preferences will also change the nature of the energy market, creating a diverse asset pool and an increasingly decentralised grid

We don't have the workers we need to meet this demand, with current and projected shortages

The transition will escalate workforce demand.

The delivery of Victoria's renewable energy targets will create an estimated 59,000 jobs.

The profile of jobs will also change as the sector matures and new technologies emerge.

But we can't even fill the roles we have now.

There are already shortages being reported in key roles, such as electricians and engineers.

How do we move from here to the renewable energy workforce we need for the future?



Panellists at the Delivering quality skills and training discussion, facilitated by the Hon. Gayle Tierney MLC

A snapshot of what we heard on the day

Challenges

Opportunities

Plan

Workforce demand is uncoordinated across the sector, creating uncertainty

- Developers plan projects in isolation. This can create a 'stop-and-start' industry that is unattractive for workers.
- A lack of coordination also makes it more likely employers will need to compete for workers both within and beyond the industry.

Collaborative workforce planning could help 'smooth' workforce demand

• Greater collaboration between industry and government is needed to map and sequence the forward pipeline of projects to manage workforce impacts.

Place

Projects tend to be in regional areas with added workforce challenges

- Regional populations are smaller, so it is harder to find the workers and skills needed.
- It is hard to hire from outside regions. Commutes are long and people do not want to move.
- Some regions may face added liveability challenges such as housing shortages.

Workforce planning and place-based development can mitigate barriers

- Workforce planning can spread workers across projects and attract community investment.
- Employers and training providers can skill local workers to match their needs.
- Investments in local infrastructure and revitalisation may also help attraction.

& retain

Attract The sector currently struggles to attract and retain the workers it needs



- People have less awareness of renewable roles and pathways, including students.
- Attracting workers depends on offering competitive conditions, including stability, support for career progression and wages.
- The sector can do more to engage diverse cohorts and women.

The sector can work to build its profile, reputation and attractive roles

- Offering work experience and immersive school programs can help attract students.
- Employers could invest further in what makes roles attractive, including connection to purpose, competitive conditions and ongoing career development.
- Inclusion needs to be embedded, supported by targets, flexible working policies and leadership.

Train

Training and skills offerings need to be responsive to market needs



- Not enough people are enrolling in the qualifications the sector needs.
- The sector requires flexible training to specialise and build on base skills like engineering, and support midcareer transition.
- Training will need to rapidly adapt as new technologies emerge.

Schooling and training work best when they are immersive, flexible and industry-informed

- Clarifying pathways from school to the workforce, including transferable options, will support enrolments and mobility of students.
- Providing real-world industry experiences will build student interest and skills. The TAFE and training system will need to invest in the latest facilities and capabilities.
- A culture of continuous learning will also help the sector to navigate changes and retain an engaged workforce.

Wrap up: Keynote panel

Interim CEO for the State Electricity Commission, Chris Miller, provided an overview of the role of the SEC. Panellists discussed opportunities and challenges for the renewable energy transition, and workforce development.

Key themes

Victoria needs to dramatically accelerate renewable energy construction to achieve its renewable targets. Victoria needs to grow its renewable generation and storage capacity quickly to meet its targets of 95% renewable capacity by 2035 and net zero by 2045. This will lead to a sharp rise in demand for renewable workers.

The nature of our energy market and the grid will change, with impacts for our workforce.

New technologies and changing consumer preferences will also be a driver. This includes the decentralisation of our grid as household renewables and batteries become more affordable and widespread. These developments require new professions and skills - not just construction and installations, but also roles in associated support services, such as smart energy outfitting and advice.

Partnerships and community engagement will be needed to find innovative solutions. We know the industry is already facing significant workforce challenges and competition. If we are not joined up in how we approach workforce, we risk having to compete for skills. Stakeholders need to work together to deliver solutions through planning, long-term engagement, investments in local communities and leveraging untapped workforces.

Inclusive employment, transitioning workers and international specialists present opportunities.

The industry can do more to attract a diversity of workers through inclusive recruitment and culture. Some transitioning workforces have highly transferable skills. Analysis by Star of the South estimates 70% of traditional energy workers and 90% of maritime workers already have the skills to work in renewable energy. Finally, where local capabilities don't yet exist, international specialists can not only fill short time gaps, but can also help upskill local workers.

Facilitator:

Elizabeth Molyneux, Deputy Secretary, Energy, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)

Speakers:

Chris Miller, Interim CEO, SEC

Erin Coldham, Chief Development Officer, Star of the South

Anna Collyer, Chair, AEMC

Danny Nielsen, Country Manager and Senior Vice President AU/NZ, Vestas

"The customer will be the hero on our journey to net-zero."

Anna Collyer, Australian Energy Market Commission

"If we don't invest the time and energy into developing our workforce now, we'll miss out on important economic opportunities."

Erin Coldham, Star of the South

Wrap up: Women in energy

At the Women in energy session, panellists and attendees discussed how inclusive employment initiatives can support employer efforts to grow their workforce and increase the workforce participation of women.

Key themes

Attracting women will be key to developing the renewable energy workforce. Panellists noted the industry would struggle to meet projected growth demand if they could not attract and retain more women.

Stereotypes and biases from school to career can deter women from the sector. Whether it is a school career counsellor, employer or co-worker, internalised misconceptions about women's ability to thrive in STEM or trades roles can lock women out of renewable roles. Inclusion needs to be championed across our schools, training providers and industry to stop this cycle.

The priority is to stamp out bad behaviour and build a strong sector reputation. Inclusive employment targets can only do so much if our workplaces are hostile. A 'no tolerance' approach is key. Consistent, repeated efforts to address bad behaviour can help drive change. Strong leadership and transparency about salary, progression and conditions will build the sector's reputation.

Targets and work experience can help to attract women. Policies and wraparound supports can help retain them. Engaging girls at school through careers nights and work experience programs can grow awareness and interest. Targets and inclusive recruitment processes can support effective hiring, but there is no substitute for genuine culture change. This can be supported by increased representation of women in leadership roles, and regular audits that evaluate inclusive policies.

Facilitators:

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State **Electricity Commission**

The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, Minister for Education, Minister for Women

Moderator

Anh Mai, Executive Director, Offshore Wind Energy Victoria, DEECA

Speakers:

Leonie Walsh, Independent Director, Raygen Resources

Amanda White, Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion, RES (Renewable Energy Systems) Group

Christine Kennedy, Founding Member of Australian Women in Solar Energy and Managing Director of Total Solar Solutions

Wil Stracke, Assistant Secretary, Victorian Trades Hall Council

"There are already more women in the renewable energy industry compared to oil, gas and coal. Women are already making the choice, but we can still do more."

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Wrap up: Best & brightest - Offering attractive careers

Panellists and attendees discussed what prospective renewable energy workers are looking for, challenges for the sector in attracting workers and how employers can offer secure, inclusive and meaningful jobs.

Key themes

The renewable energy sector is struggling to secure the workers it needs – and it will get harder as demand rises. Panellists noted current workforce challenges and shortages. For example, engineers are critical for all parts of the transition, with national demand expected to exceed 50,000 roles in the next few years.

A key challenge for the sector in attracting workers is uncertainty - for individual roles and the industry's future. Renewable energy development can be very 'stop-start', creating instability for workers. There is also a sense of uncertainty about the sector's future. What will the opportunities look like as new technologies come online? Or when the energy transition is complete, and focus shifts from construction to maintenance? Workers want clarity on their long-term career pathway before they commit.

Employers can attract workers by providing this clarity and investing in what motivates people.

Things workers are looking for include competitive remuneration, clarity on long-term career paths and investment in continuous learning to support career progression. This may involve a shift away from traditional linear vocations to an approach focusing on clusters of transferable skills. Another motivator that is a strength for the sector is connection to purpose – how workers can make a positive impact.

Attracting more diverse workers will be critical to meet workforce demand. This requires building trust and relationships with communities, such as through embedding First Nations ownership of renewable energy projects. At an individual level, employers need to be mindful of different barriers workers might face and adopt flexible policies and supports to enable their participation. Examples include childcare options for parents, or functionality to easily translate policies and intellectual property to support workers that might not speak English fluently.

Facilitators:

Stan Krpan, CEO, Solar Victoria

Speakers:

Karina Davis, CEO, JobsBank

Jonathan Kneebone, Director Policy and Engagement, First Nations Clean Energy Network

Peter Campbell, Chief of Staff and Corporate Strategy, Iberdrola

Alex Newman, CEO, Centre for U

Paul Williams, Managing Director of Mining & **Energy at WSP**

"In all sorts of dimensions, diverse workplaces make commercial sense. We need to use recruitment processes that delve into communities and uncover where those hidden strengths are."

Karina Davis, JobsBank

Wrap up: School pathways into renewable energy

Attendees discussed the status of secondary school pathways into the sector, as well as challenges and opportunities to engage students to support the next generation of workers.

Key themes

Industry needs to engage young people to grow its future workforce. Tomorrow's renewable energy workers are today's students. Most students decide the career type they want by age 14. Young people are motivated – with panellists noting more than 60% of Australia's young people are concerned about climate change – but they need industry exposure and sound guidance to understand how they can pursue a career in renewable energy.

Reforms to secondary education and vocational pathways will support renewable workforce objectives. Reforms such as Victoria's new VCE Vocational Major, Victorian Pathways Certificate and expansion of the Head Start school-based apprenticeship and traineeship program are supporting more students to include vocational education and training into their studies. The introduction of priority VET pathways available to students includes renewable energy and engineering and will lay a future pathway for renewable energy courses, providing more students the skills they need to enter the sector early.

There are remaining challenges around building awareness and interest in roles and pathways, particularly in VET. Many students are not aware of all the possible careers. For every well-known role, like engineers, there are lesser-known roles like project managers or system designers. Panellists noted that for trades, stigma around vocational education may be a deterrent and some students don't receive adequate information about VET pathways. Students need to understand how to use their studies to enter renewable energy pathways and school staff, including career counsellors, need clear information about the benefits of these pathways so they can help students make informed decisions.

Industry, TAFEs, universities and schools can partner to strengthen training pathways into renewable energy. Industry can work with schools and training providers to engage students through school visits, workplace tours and work experience placements, raising awareness and interest. Educators also play a role in shaping student choices by providing immersive learning experiences.

Facilitator:

Natalie Garcia de Heer, A/Assistant Deputy Secretary, Senior Secondary Reform Pathways, Department of Education

Speakers:

Helen Silvester, Director, Casey Tech School

David Burt, Latrobe Valley Communications and Community Relations Lead, Energy Australia

Ben Jenkinson, Associate Director -Education, Chisholm Institute

Daniel Dew, Principal, Patterson River Secondary College

Billy, VicSRC Student Executive Advisory Committee member

"We have a vision for an education system which is student-led and student-focused, and that includes vocational pathways."

Billy, Year 10 Student

Wrap up: Workforce demand

Panellists and attendees discussed the workforce that will be needed for the energy transition, including what types of jobs are needed and when.

Key themes

Competition for workers on renewable projects is high – over time this will transition to operational roles. We know there are already shortages for certain roles, including engineers. As the energy transition progresses, development of new assets will slow and ongoing maintenance roles will grow to 50% of the workforce by 2035.

New market and consumer needs are creating immediate emerging workforce priorities. More gaps will emerge as demand grows and evolves. This is a risk for trades, which panellists reflected were slower to adapt to changing market needs than degree pathways. New storage capacity is critical to the transition, which will create new roles. More offshore wind projects mean we need more maritime workers- however there is only one training provider that offers these skills. Transmission has never been built at the scale we need, but there is only one training provider that offers these skills. Increasing renewable development means it will make sense to locally manufacture parts. Finally, growth in household renewable energy assets will increase demand for installers and advisory services.

Victoria already has a strong existing skills base, that can be accessed with targeted reskilling. Many existing technical and managerial roles have strong overlaps with renewable energy roles. The planned closure of Yallourn power station also presents an opportunity for targeted reskilling to draw this workforce to renewable energy roles.

Mapping out the project pipeline and workforce needs will be key to maintaining a workforce. Workforce planning will be necessary to build the workforce we need and provide certainty for workers. Currently the ABS do not capture data in a way that we can reliably measure employment in the renewable energy sector. Planning will require joining up existing datasets at an industry, occupation and state level.

Facilitator:

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State **Electricity Commission**

Moderator:

Chris Miller, Interim CEO, SEC

Speakers:

Stuart van Heerden, Lead Recruiter Pacific, Tesla

Lisa Gooding, Yallourn Transition Leader, **Energy Australia**

Dr Anita Talberg, Director Workforce Development, Clean Energy Council

Michael Watson, Industrial Officer, **Electrical Trades Union**

"We need place-based snapshots of all the renewable projects happening in a region, to enable a pipeline of jobs for the community."

Dr. Anita Talberg, Clean Energy Council

Wrap up: Delivering quality training and skills

Panellists and attendees discussed how skills and training models can build the pipeline of skilled renewable energy workers, including how industry, unions, TAFE and higher education sectors can work together.

Key themes

Skill shortages are a major bottleneck for renewable energy developments. The sector is currently experiencing shortages across trade, technical and professional roles. For some critical roles, employers have had to bring in talent from overseas to fill this gap.

Challenges include gaps in tailored training for renewables, thin regional markets and trainer **shortages.** The renewables sector depends on skills and qualifications that are not targeted to the specific needs of the industry. Training delivery of specialised skills is hard in regional areas where renewable projects are based because enrolments are lower. Attracting teachers is also a challenge.

Continuous partnership between industry and **TAFEs supports quality training.** The Victorian Skills Authority is helping to make sure course content is informed by industry need. Employers can also take an active role in workforce development through apprenticeships, graduate programs, and mentoring. 'Two-way partnerships' such as existing Centres of Excellence, are also proving successful in bringing industry knowledge directly to students.

Community and place-based training models should be at the forefront of Victoria's response. Regional skills mapping can support knowledge sharing on gaps and priorities between industry, communities and the training sector. Initiatives like regional skills networks and mobile information buses can also help engage regional students with training and job opportunities.

Incentives and flexible employment arrangements may help overcome trainer shortages. Where supply is limited, blended delivery models on work sites or part-time trainer contracts can help give students industry exposure.

Facilitator:

The Hon. Gayle Tierney MLC, Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Agriculture

Moderator:

Craig Robertson, CEO, Victorian Skills Authority

Speakers:

Laura Macpherson, CEO, TAFE Gippsland

Dr Roger Dargaville, Deputy Director, Monash Energy Institute

Sanjie Gamagedara, Talent Acquisition Partner, Vestas

Bill Mundy, Associate Director Partnerships and Growth, Federation TAFE

"Recognising the importance of climate change and transition, there is no longer a technological or economic barrier - the only bottleneck now is skills."

Dr. Roger Dargaville, Monash University

Wrap up: Right jobs, right places

Panellists and attendees discussed the challenges and opportunities for attracting a skilled workforce and connecting them to jobs in regional Victoria.

Key themes

The majority of renewable energy projects are regional, making it difficult to source workers.

Regional areas have lower populations, and lower numbers of workers with the right skills. As flagged in Best and Brightest (p. 7), the stop and start nature of workforce demand makes it challenging to maintain regional workforces. As much as projects create benefits for communities, the risk of a downturn post-construction is real and perceived can undermine trust over time. Crossindustry partnerships to build a pipeline of projects in the region can help retain staff in the industry.

Systemic issues, such as housing and infrastructure, still affect regional areas.

Participants noted low housing supply and poor local infrastructure made it challenging to attract workers from cities. This becomes a chicken-andegg problem – regions can't attract new people without new infrastructure, but new infrastructure is dependent on population. Panellists reflected that industry, government and communities share responsibility for investments.

Industry is working with regions to build community support and local workforces. Panellists stressed the importance of engaging communities to build enduring local workforces. Engaging councils early about upcoming projects will allow stronger partnerships and identification of opportunities to build a project-ready workforce. Trusted community organisations that have a strong presence in the community can also be pivotal in influencing families and students by promoting careers in renewable energy.

Supporting worker mobility, including between projects, and for international skills, is critical to **fill current gaps.** Fly-in-fly-out roles will always form a part of the workforce but balancing these with a strong local presence will benefit communities and employers. This depends on recognition of existing skills between different employers, between different states, and for international qualifications.

Facilitator:

Beth Jones, Deputy Secretary, Rural and Regional Victoria, Department of Jobs, Skills, **Industry and Regions**

Speakers:

Martine Holberton, Senior Stakeholder Engagement Advisor, Tilt Renewables

Linda Austin, Director Educational Delivery, TAFE Gippsland

Alastair Smith, Head of Project Development, Squadron Energy

Ethan Solomon, Talent Acquisition Lead, Worley

"We have the ability to grow our own and retain our own here in Gippsland."

Linda Austin, TAFE Gippsland

Case Studies: Inspiring initiatives we heard about on the day

Centre for U: Supporting women in electrical trade pre-apprenticeships

We heard about the Centre for U's Women in Apprenticeships Victoria Electrical (WAVE) Project, which aims to increase the number of women entering the electrical trade and support them as they transition from their electrical pre-apprenticeship to full time employment.

The program aims to attract, recruit and retain women to the trade through information days, mentoring, and wrap-around supports, and is delivered in partnership with Holmesglen Futuretech and the Victorian Trades Hall Council.

We heard that the success of the program has been driven by the creation of a strong network of peers, who support each other and have been able to advocate for wider cultural change in the industry.



Patterson River Secondary College: Integrating renewables into the curriculum

We heard about the great work happening at Patterson River Secondary College as part of the PRSC Solar System project, which integrates the school's existing solar PV and battery into the science curriculum. With support from C4NET, the project has allowed students to use real-time data to analyse electrical generation and usage and predict the changes in solar generation for different times of day.

We heard that many schools already invest in solar panels and batteries for financial reasons, creating significant opportunities for this initiative to be replicated across Victoria.



Iberdrola: Embedding sustainability and purpose

We heard examples of Iberdrola's environmental and social commitments, including their annual International Volunteer Week, and immersion programs where staff can get involved in reforestation and biodiversity projects.

We heard that in addition to the sustainable and environmental benefits, these programs created a strong sense of purpose within the workforce, and that this connection supported retention within the industry.



Wrap up: Your questions and ideas via Slido

What were some of the common questions, and what ideas did we hear on the day?

How can we create attractive renewable jobs?

Challenges

Opportunities

- Low awareness
- Perception of poor conditions compared to other industries
- Difficult to secure ongoing work
- Engage and raise awareness
- Invest in good wages and flexible conditions
- Highlight social value in renewable jobs

What can be done to accelerate sector improvement in inclusive employment?

Challenges

- · Biases and stereotypes impact hiring
- Workplace cultures can be hostile to diverse workers
- Individual barriers to work, e.g. caring responsibilities

Opportunities

- · Recruitment targets and processes
- No tolerance for discrimination
- Representation in leadership
- Flexible policies and supports

How can we retain the workforce once we attract them?

Challenges

Opportunities

- Stop-and-start projects and shift work create uncertainty
- may deter women and other cohorts
- Smooth workforce demand by planning projects
- Culture and conditions Invest in long-term career planning and development

How can we leverage and support transitioning workforces?

Challenges

Opportunities

- Workers might not have the exact right skills
- Workers might not realise they are suitable
- Workers might not be interested in new roles
- Map and promote transferable skills
- Upskilling and courses with transferable skills
- Proactively engage and design roles for these workers

How can we attract more students into A) trades B) STEM C) renewable energy?

Challenges

- Bias against trades and VET pathways
- Maths and other technical subjects are less engaging
- Renewable energy pathways are unclear

Opportunities

- Train school staff on VET pathways and benefits
- Build interesting, immersive content into STEM courses
- Industry can engage students through visits and work experience

How can industries, government and different regions coordinate on workforce?

Challenges

- No coordinated planning of projects and workforce needs
- Some challenges require cross-sector solutions, delivered in parallel, such as regional shortages

Opportunities

- Joined up data and workforce planning
- Avenues to agree shared priority 'wicked problems'
- Joined up solutions across Government, industry and skills

How can our training system support the development of renewable workforces?

Challenges

Opportunities

- Not much training is specialised for renewables
- Thin regional markets impact local skills
- Hard to secure trainers
- Industry informed and blended training models
- Place-based training models
- Improve incentives for trainers

How can we maximise opportunities for local communities and build social license?

Challenges

Opportunities

- Low populations and brain drain in regions
- Low trust or social license for some communities
- Proactive engagement with communities
- Regional training and upskilling
- Investments in liveability and infrastructure

Thank you for sharing your ideas:



Recognition of overseas qualifications

What is the strategy to attract trainers and assessors to meet the demand for clean energy skills?

Co-designing content

How do we support small and medium businesses to attract

and retain more women?

Industry taster events and expos

How can we best create jobs that support broader economic development in the regions?

Directly involve the students who will be engaging with these pathways We need workforce data

How can people in regional areas best be supported to access training?

Reduce stigma against trades and TAFE qualifications

Better coordination between training organisations

Place-based skills planning

What are the new and emerging skills needed?

Work licences specific to renewable energy projects

> How do we use our training system to enable workers to quickly get accreditation our skills needs evolve?

The clean energy transition is a shift in how we do things in our every day

How do we ensure just transition pathways for workers in the Latrobe Valley?

Promote roles in renewable energy

Better utilising qualified engineers

Working actively with regional universities, TAFEs and local governments

Marketing campaign for the regions

How do we ensure the latest technology is available in tertiary and vocational training programs?

Flexible work for all

How can industry support secondary work experience placements in priority industries?

"

Next steps

The issues, opportunities and policy settings covered in this wrap-up will continue to be refined and explored across key activities, both within the SEC and at the wider Victorian Government level.

This includes the development of:

- the Victorian Energy Jobs Plan, which is planned for release in mid-2024.
- the business case for the SEC Centre of Training Excellence.

Stakeholder engagement on both the Victorian Energy Jobs Plan and the business case for the SEC Centre of Training Excellence will continue, to ensure feedback and ideas are well-reflected. We will work to coordinate engagement across the skills and renewable energy sectors. As we work towards achieving Victoria's renewable energy targets, we will maintain an ongoing dialogue on skills and workforce issues across industry, training providers, unions and Traditional Owners.





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