WA Clean Energy, Jobs & Industry Plan

SUMMARY VERSION

Creating Jobs.
Powering Industry.
For a Clean Energy Future.

A practical roadmap to build the jobs, industries and affordable energy of the green energy transition here in Western Australia.

Executive Summary

Creating Jobs. Powering Industry. For a Clean Energy Future.

Western Australia is at a crossroads: lead the clean energy economy or watch investment, industries and jobs go elsewhere.

Governments and businesses worldwide are pouring money into clean energy, new manufacturing, and low-emissions supply chains. The places that land that investment will grow the jobs and export markets that come with it well into the future.

WA should be an obvious choice. The state has world-class renewable energy resources, significant mineral reserves, established industrial centres and a highly skilled workforce. With the right policy settings, WA can become a leading producer of renewable energy, green iron, and other future export commodities, creating thousands of secure local jobs along the way, and ensuring Country, water and communities are better off.

But investment follows certainty, and competing states and countries are moving fast to lock in renewable projects and skilled workers. Without a clear plan, WA risks losing that race.

This plan outlines how WA will lead the global energy transition. It rests on three goals:

1. Create and secure WA jobs

Solar and battery deployment alone could support up to 8,800 jobs by 2050. A green iron industry could support approximately 24,000 ongoing jobs and 11,000 construction jobs, while major industrial decarbonisation projects are already driving unprecedented demand for skilled workers, from electricians and apprentices to engineers, manufacturing workers, planners and environmental specialists. Fortescue alone expects to need around 1,800 electricians at the peak of its Pilbara program, roughly one in every 21 working in the state.

2. Keep WA industry globally competitive

Rising energy costs and tougher export standards are squeezing energy-intensive industries. Electrification, renewable energy and shared infrastructure can keep existing industries in business and open new export opportunities in green iron, green ammonia and renewable energy supply chains.

3. Lower energy costs and improve energy security

Renewable energy, storage, and modern transmission infrastructure can cut WA's exposure to volatile oil and gas prices while keeping the lights on.

And it focuses on four priorities:

- **Build the industries of the future:** Set clear renewable energy and industry development targets, support industrial electrification, build shared infrastructure and position WA as a leading exporter of green commodities.
- **Build the workforce to deliver them:** Develop a coordinated Clean Energy Jobs Plan, expand training in regional WA, support apprenticeships and attract the skilled workers major projects need.
- **Protect environmental, cultural and water resources:** Plan renewable energy and industry to avoid areas of high biodiversity and cultural value, protect scarce water resources, and hold large projects to the highest environmental standards.
- **Share the benefits:** Support First Nations groups with equity and employment opportunities and help households cut their bills through electrification and efficiency standards, ensuring the people most affected by the transition gain from it.

The jobs opportunity:

8,800
Potential solar and battery jobs

24,000
Potential ongoing green iron jobs

11,000
Potential green iron construction jobs

1,800
Electricians required by Fortescue

3
New regional training hubs proposed

1
Coordinated WA Clean Energy Jobs Plan

Major investments are underway, and the demand for cleaner commodities is growing. The question is where the jobs, investment and industries land. The four sections that follow set out what it will take to make sure they land in WA and stay here.

Photo: George Clerk

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PART ONE:

Build the industries

Western Australia has some of the best renewable energy resources on Earth, enough to build a whole new export industry in green iron, green ammonia, and other commodities, on top of decarbonising the industries it already has.

To seize that opportunity, the government needs to act on six fronts:

1. **Setting renewable energy targets**
2. **Keeping public energy assets working for the public**
3. **Helping existing industry electrify before it is priced out of the market**
4. **Turning WA's advantage into an export industry**
5. **Building the grid and shared infrastructure new green industries need**
6. **Winning export partners before competitors do**

1. A renewable energy target WA can bank on

- Legislate a Renewable Energy Target of at least 82% by 2030 for the South West Interconnected System (SWIS), the grid that powers Perth and the South West.
- Legislate a statewide Renewable Energy Target to encourage broader investment and position WA as a green commodity exporter.
- Maintain and expand existing state and federal incentives and rebates for solar and battery installation, for households and businesses.

A legislated Renewable Energy Target is the strongest lever WA has to lower the cost of capital for renewable energy projects and get solar and wind built faster. Continued solar and battery deployment alone could support up to around 8,800 WA jobs by 2050, across installation, construction and operations.[1] And it's already working: WA's renewable and storage generation supplied 52.4% of the state's energy needs in a single quarter in late 2025.[2] Yet WA has no legislated target for its own grid, just an 80% government-operations emissions target by 2030 and an aspirational net zero goal for 2050. Victoria shows what's possible: lifting its legislated target to 50% by 2030 is projected to create around 24,000 jobs and $5.8 billion in economic activity.[3] But WA's grid (the SWIS and the North West Interconnected System NWIS, covering the Pilbara and North West) sits outside the National Electricity Market, so none of that confidence or capital flows here automatically. The state needs its own target to attract its own investment.

Supporting medium sized commercial and industrial businesses to adopt rooftop solar is a simple and effective way of ramping up renewable generation to meet a Renewable Energy Target. The commercial and industrial sector is one of the most under-utilised sources of potential solar generation and with relatively modest support this resource can quickly be unlocked.

2. Keep our energy companies working for the public

- Keep Synergy, Horizon Power and Western Power in full public ownership and strengthen their role across generation, long-term storage, transmission, distribution and retail.
- Commit to turning state-owned buildings and facilities, like schools, hospitals, and public housing, into solar and battery hubs.
- Invest in affordable electric vehicle (EV) charging at government facilities, particularly workplaces, to encourage daytime charging.

Public ownership is what currently funds WA's Uniform Tariff Policy, so regional and remote customers pay the same as Perth despite far higher supply costs, a cross-subsidy unlikely to survive privatisation. Schools and hospitals sit on some of the state's largest underused roof space. Victoria's Greener Government School Buildings program now covers 415 schools and is expected to reach 17,400 kilowatts (kW) of installed capacity. Funded upfront, it is repaid by the schools over five years.[4] The same model applies to public and social housing, where tenants cannot install solar because they do not own their home. In the Pilbara, private capital from Fortescue, Yara, Rio Tinto and Traditional Owner corporations is already funding most of the region's renewable and green-industry projects. The government's job there is to clear any coordination failures companies can't solve alone, such as shared corridors and land allocation.

Workplace charging matters because it lines up with daytime solar and gives employees without home parking a practical reason to go electric.[5]

3. Electrify existing industry before it's priced out

- Provide decarbonisation incentives and support for industry, scaled for business size, including grants or subsidies for heat pumps, solar and batteries so businesses can electrify heat-based processes and cut costs.
- Require large gas users to commit to clear, timely electrification timetables, backed by support and incentives for research and technology development.
- Establish a state entity to help large industry access cost competitive renewable energy, modelled on the Tomago financing scheme.
- Introduce a standardised WA commercial green lease framework to resolve landlord/tenant 'split incentives', where one party pays for an upgrade and the other gets the savings.

Industrial electrification is a competitiveness and supply-security measure as much as a climate one. WA's gas market faces shortfalls from as early as 2030,[6] and electricity and gas already eat up 30 to 40% of operating costs for energy-intensive manufacturers. Australian businesses pay around 165% of the global average electricity price, a cost gap that has already closed Qenos, Australia's last major polymers producer, and Oceania Glass, the country's only architectural glass manufacturer. Incitec Pivot has wound down domestic fertiliser manufacturing, and Orica and BlueScope have openly canvassed shifting investment to the US.[7]

Tomago Aluminium smelter in New South Wales, which produces 40% of Australia's aluminium and has more than 1,000 direct jobs, warned it had no path to keep operating past 2028. The government stepped in with concessional finance that cut its power costs by 42%. This plan asks WA to build the same kind of safety net here, before industry hits a crisis point.[8]

Applying the best available national benchmark of around eight jobs per $1 million transition-aligned public investment to the $153.3 million Made in WA Energy Affordability Investment Program suggests an illustrative 1,200 direct jobs. That is on top of the far larger number of existing manufacturing jobs that electrification protects rather than creates.[9]

4. Turn WA's advantage into an export industry

- Commit to hosting a decommissioning industry in WA, ensuring oil and gas companies clean up their operations and that the steel is processed and recycled locally.
- Invest in common-user infrastructure, shared by many projects, to attract green iron and other green commodity projects.
- Establish a Green Commodity Export Target via a tripartite oversight committee.

Offshore decommissioning faces a $60 billion problem nationally over the next 50 years, and almost half of it is off the WA coast.[10] About 60% of that material is highly valuable recyclable steel the state has no capacity to process. A WA decommissioning and green steel recycling hub would fill that gap.[11]

The bigger prize is green iron. WA could produce at least 4.5 million tonnes a year by 2030, supporting an estimated 24,000 ongoing jobs and 11,000 construction jobs for around $37.5 billion of investment.[12,13]

A Green Commodity Export Target would give investors the same certainty a Renewable Energy Target provides for electricity, and give government a benchmark to track whether WA is capturing its share of the global green commodity opportunity.

5. Build the grid to carry the power

- Bring forward phase three of the SWIS Transmission Plan and reform system processes for faster connection and assessment of renewable energy and transmission projects.
- Negotiate more federal funding for SWIS transmission and grid infrastructure.
- Establish a NWIS taskforce to coordinate common-user grid infrastructure, minimising cultural and environmental impacts and maximising benefits for First Nations communities.

None of this works without the grid capacity to carry the power. The Clean Energy Link North project is a $1.2 billion good first step, investment the government says will create more than 400 construction jobs and unlock 400 megawatts (MW) of existing stranded wind capacity and up to 1 gigawatt (GW) of new renewable generation by 2030.[14,15] The state has attached local content requirements to this pipeline, directing Western Power, Synergy and Horizon Power to design tenders so WA businesses can win the work.

In the Pilbara, no single mining company or Traditional Owner corporation can unify the grid alone. That is exactly the coordination gap a dedicated taskforce is designed to close.

6. Winning export partners before competitors do

- Direct Invest and Trade Western Australia to use its trade promotion network to build decarbonisation partnerships in green commodities.

Buyers make construction projects real. The $814 million Murchison Green Hydrogen Project and a proposed $10 billion Samsung-led hydrogen and ammonia plant near Geraldton show the pattern, but the window is closing.[16] The European Union's (EU) Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism starts charging importers for embedded carbon in traded iron, steel and fertilisers from 2026. Active trade deals now are what will turn WA's pipeline into jobs before competitors do.

Photo: Big Sister Program

PART TWO:

Build the workforce to deliver them

None of this works without the people to build it. Skills shortages are one of the biggest risks to delivery. Every year without action will increase project costs, delay investment and reduce job creation across the state. Done right, WA's economic diversification generates tens of thousands of secure, well-paid local jobs and new career paths for apprentices and trainees. Done wrong, skills shortages quietly become the biggest handbrake on this whole plan, already adding years and dollars to transmission projects before a single turbine goes up.

- Create a WA Government Clean Energy Jobs Plan to map workforce demand, training, job transition support and the industry attraction needed.
- Establish new regional training hubs in the Pilbara, the Mid West and the South West.
- Establish a WA Renewable Jobs Advocate to advise on future skills, opportunities and training pathways.
- Offer worker attraction and apprenticeship incentives to meet demand for key skills.
- Require large employers of trades to commit to apprentice targets, including sub-targets for under-represented groups.

The scale of the task

Nationally, 450,000 clean energy construction jobs are expected by 2030,[17] alongside a shortfall of 72,500 electricians. Close to 2 million builders and engineers will be needed nationally by 2050, a 40% increase on today.[18]

WA does not have its own modelling yet, but the gap is already visible: Fortescue alone expects to need around 1,800 electricians at the peak of its Pilbara decarbonisation program, equivalent to one in every 21 electricians currently working in the state.[19]

Clean energy job opportunities for WA

JOB CATEGORY	NATURE OF WORK	DURATION
Construction (renewables build)	Civil works, transmission lines, panel and turbine installation, electrical connection	Temporary, 2 to 4 years per project
Operations and maintenance	Ongoing electrical, mechanical and technical roles	Long-term, ongoing
Trades and apprenticeships	Electricians, battery-EV technicians, fitters	Multi-year training, then career-length
Downstream manufacturing	Process operators, chemical and process engineers for green iron and ammonia	Long-term, plant-operating
First Nations equity, contracting and employment	Equity stakes, preferred contracting, dedicated training pathways	Ongoing, plus construction and operations

The skills pipeline is leaking

The national shortfall is set to rise to 72,500 electricians by 2030,[20] and that assumes apprentices who start actually finish. One in three Australian secondary students fail to meet minimum literacy and numeracy benchmarks, while Certificate III in Electrotechnology, the qualification behind most apprentice electricians, requires a higher standard.[21] As a result, 85% of electrotechnology apprenticeship cancellations happen within the first two years of training, right when numeracy demands increase. Apprentices who start after completing Year 12 have a 75% completion rate, the highest of any pathway, while low training wages and cost-of-living pressure are well-documented reasons they leave for better paid.[22] The plan's regional training hubs and Renewable Jobs Advocate should build early numeracy benchmarking and embedded bridging support into WA apprenticeship pathways as standard.

Opening the door to women and under-represented workers

Only 2% of electricians nationally are women. New pathways for under-represented workers aren't just fair, they're essential to closing the skills gap.[23] As one electrician who retrained through an all-female pre-apprenticeship program after years of insecure work put it:

"I went from not being able to pay bills, skipping meals to feed my kids and not being able to afford nappies to a career with promotions. I have continued to excel in my electrical career and never could have guessed where this opportunity could have taken me. The mental load of trying to find money for bills and food no longer exists."

– Female electrician, Electrical Trades Union, 2026

From skills shortage to higher prices

Shortages don't just cost jobs, they cost money. Electricians are being pulled simultaneously toward renewable energy infrastructure, WA's housing pipeline, and an emerging data centre construction sector that can go from approval to operation in 18 to 24 months.[24,25] The Australian Energy Market Operator's (AEMO) own modelling already blames part of a two-year delay in the national transmission build on workforce shortages.[26] and delay means relying longer on more expensive existing generation.[27] The workforce delivery risk should be tracked as an energy price and investment risk, not filed separately. That is a job for the Renewable Job Advocate proposed in this plan.

PART THREE:

Protect what the economy depends on

WA's environmental, cultural and water resources are economic assets as well as environmental ones. Protecting them is what keeps communities on side, as well as projects moving instead of stuck in dispute. A renewable-powered WA economy can deliver globally significant emissions reductions, but not at the cost of the fragile ecosystems, water systems and cultural values it depends on. Emissions targets must align with national and global commitments, backed by clear planning and assessment processes to protect what matters.

- Legislate a statewide net zero target with five-yearly interim targets aligned to a 1.5°C pathway.
- Take a strategic regional planning approach that identifies and avoids high biodiversity and cultural value, embedded in a State Planning Policy so the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) applies clear, consistent zoning.
- Fund biodiversity management and mapping tools, and hold large energy and renewable projects to the highest biodiversity protection standards that are reasonably achievable.
- Require new data centres to be fully powered by new renewable energy.
- Ensure new large energy-using projects do not draw from or affect fresh or ground water sources.

Government is fast-tracking renewable energy approvals through a single assessment pathway from October 2026.[28] This makes getting the upfront map right more important, not less. Clear rules mean fewer unnecessary environmental impacts, greater public trust and faster approvals for projects to proceed.

Biodiversity protection is a jobs measure too. WA's Aboriginal Ranger Program already employs rangers to manage Country, and nationally, a $1.3 billion investment is set to double the ranger workforce by 2030.[29] Delivering ambitious offset and rehabilitation commitments consistently means more of this employment, including environmental scientists, offset site managers and monitoring technicians, happens in WA.[30]

Without a genuinely new-capacity requirement, a data centre could absorb renewable electricity that would otherwise go to WA businesses or households, creating no new construction jobs and worsening competition for scarce trades.[31] The federal government has moved to legislate a renewables requirement for large data centres,[32] but the rule change runs through the National Electricity Market, which doesn't cover the SWIS.

Water protection is a live issue, not a general precaution. Mining alone uses close to half of WA's total water, drawn largely free of charge from groundwater already under stress in the Pilbara. Well-planned desalination, like the Yindjibarndi owned Dampier plant, shows a jobs-positive alternative to further groundwater extraction.[33]

Photos: Donna Chapman

PART FOUR:

Share the benefits

Economic benefits only count if they reach everyone, including the people most affected by the transition. First Nations communities, low-income households, renters and regional communities need real protection and a genuine stake, not just the risks of hosting new projects.

- Embed community benefit requirements and environmental protections in renewable energy and green commodity projects, including for First Nations groups.
- Provide incentives and support for households to convert to electric appliances.
- Legislate minimum rental energy efficiency requirements.
- Properly fund the Community Disaster Resilience Strategy and emergency services preparedness.
- Support projects that include First Nations groups in ownership structures and prioritise employment opportunities.

WA Government already has a Community Benefits Guideline for large-scale Renewable Energy Projects, but it's voluntary and only covers large SWIS-connected projects over 10 megawatts.[34,35] This plan asks for it to cover the full range of renewable energy and green commodity projects statewide, and to ensure proponents are held to it in practice.[36]

The WA Residential Battery Scheme offers rebates and no-interest loans, but the loan can currently only be used for a battery, or for solar installed alongside one. It cannot fund a standalone heat pump, induction cooktop or hot water system.[37]

Electrifying residential gas appliances could create approximately 1,661 full-time electrician and plumber jobs in WA over ten years,[38] alongside the health benefit of removing gas cooktops, which the National Asthma Council links to worsened asthma symptoms.[39]

Unlike Victoria and the ACT, WA has no minimum energy efficiency standards for rental homes, leaving renters who can't invest in upgrades to a home they don't own paying the highest bills for the least efficient housing.[40]

WA's Community Disaster Resilience Strategy, released in December 2023, responds to a real and growing risk, with cyclones, floods and bushfires all hitting local communities in recent years. State resilience grant funding remains modest, with most meaningful funding coming from federal co-contribution rather than dedicated WA investment. This plan asks the state to properly resource its own strategy as core recurrent funding, and to ensure fire, emergency, rescue and health workers have the workforce and resources they need to meet the growing climate risk.[41]

And on First Nations equity: partnerships like the Yindjibarndi Energy Corporation's stake in Pilbara renewables and the Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation's proposed Green Energy Parks show what is possible. But Australia still lags behind comparable countries like Canada, where around 20% of renewable projects have a strong Indigenous ownership element.[42] This plan asks WA to support First Nations groups with equity and employment opportunities, and not leave it to individual companies goodwill.

Conclusion

The opportunity in front of Western Australia won't wait. Other states and countries are already legislating targets, funding training and locking in investment to win the jobs this plan is preparing for. Every year Western Australia delays is another year that investment and industry go elsewhere.

WA has the resources, skills and industrial capacity to become a clean energy superpower. This plan's four priorities make that real: growing the industries of the future, training the workforce to build them, protecting the resources the state depends on, and sharing the benefits, so the investment stays here, not somewhere else.

The economics point the same way. As the world's trading partners decarbonise and move away from volatile oil and gas, they will be looking for partners who can guarantee an affordable and reliable supply of clean energy and green exports. WA has everything it needs to be one of them: sun, wind, minerals, ports and a skilled workforce. The only thing missing is the policy certainty government is yet to provide.

Give investors that certainty and the rest follows. Construction starts, apprentices train for long-term, stable careers, energy costs come down, and WA's export industries stay competitive for decades to come.

This plan is the starting point, built by nine organisations representing workers, industry, conservation and community. We're ready. It's time for the WA and federal governments to build with us.

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A condensed public edition of the plan from nine WA organisations; unions, industry, conservation and community groups, prepared for policymakers and media. The full plan is available on request.

Front cover photo of group: Big Sister Program