

Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

Supplementary question

QUESTION

(1) What is the progress on aligning TAFE/education sector planning with REZ workforce forecasts? How will the departments ensure that REZ-driven skill programs are targeted equitably across host communities, including youth and underemployed groups?

ANSWER

Net Zero and renewable energy is a Critical Skills Area in the NSW Skills Plan. Research and consultation include Jobs and Skills Australia's 2023 Clean Energy Capacity Study which identified 38 occupations that are critical to the clean energy workforce. For many, vocational education and training (VET) is the pathway. The Department of Education with EnergyCo have established a Skills Coordinator role for Central West Orana (CWO) REZ (as the most advanced REZ) to work closely with local employers to identify workforce needs and to coordinate education and training pathways to meet them across the region.

Skills Coordinators will ensure REZ-driven skills programs are targeted equitably across host communities by:

- Identifying issues and barriers for skills training and workforce participation and providing recommendations on how they could be addressed.
- Identifying opportunities to provide accredited training, mentoring and support programs for people that are long term unemployed and other traditionally underrepresented groups in trades occupations.
- Identifying opportunities to provide structured initiatives which support the employment of retrenched workers and people from down turning industries.
- Partnering with local schools and the Department of Education's Regional Industry Education Partnership (RIEP) Program and other agencies/community organisations to promote careers in the Renewable Energy industry.
- Working with relevant stakeholders to facilitate work experience programs in local secondary schools and initiatives targeting tertiary institutions.
- Facilitating pre-employment or pre-apprenticeship/traineeship programs to provide pathways for entry into the industry.
- Delivering presentations, facilitating meetings, and engaging with various working groups, meetings or forums to achieve desired outcomes including Aboriginal Working Groups and the Renewable Energy Employment Skills & Industry Participation (REESIP) advisory group.