

# LOOKING AFTER COAL WORKERS

## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO BUILD THEIR OWN FUTURE

As the world moves quickly away from coal, people need secure jobs and coal communities need to attract new industries to sustain them. Late last year Australia's energy market operator said that half of the existing coal fleet will close by 2030, and coal plants are bringing forward their closure dates at a rapid rate, yet there is still no plan for workers and communities.

Coal workers know they are being lied to by Liberal and Labor politicians who say coal will stay in the system for decades. They know they are going to get screwed over by coal corporations; they just want a clear pathway that will ensure their financial security and keep their communities in place.

The climate crisis is caused by coal corporations, not coal workers. We are running out of time to tackle the climate crisis, meaning a large-scale, rapid transition is looming, so we need a big plan that looks after workers and communities.

As society makes this big switch, the Greens' plan supports workers to shift out of coal into new industries by guaranteeing them employment at the same pay, while also lifting income support for those unable to find a new job.

The Greens will empower local communities to manage the change by developing and financing plans to diversify away from coal and create new jobs and industries as we act on global warming.

### THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ **Enact a *Job-for-Job Guarantee*** that will guarantee new employment at existing pay rates for ten years where workers shift out of the coal industry.
- ▲ **Empower coal communities** to develop tailored local transition plans that attract the jobs and industries they need so that their communities continue to thrive.
- ▲ **Establish a \$2.8 billion *Diversifying Coal Communities Fund*** to award and fund the plans that are developed and put forward by local communities.
- ▲ **Enable** workforce pooling so that workers closer to retirement can continue working across to other coal employers while younger workers will be paid to reskill and shift to new opportunities.

## PAYING FOR OUR PLAN

By making mining billionaires and big coal and gas corporations pay their fair share of tax, we will be able to support coal workers and their communities through the energy transition. The Greens' proposal to end public handouts to coal, oil and gas companies will raise \$98b over the decade, more than covering the cost of this transition plan.

## OUR PLAN

The Australian Energy Market Operator that plans and operates our electricity system has said the most likely scenario is that 14 gigawatts - half the current coal fleet - will close in the next eight years.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the government's own forecasts show another 1-2 coal plants on top of all the recently announced coal closures will occur before 2030. But the government won't tell those coal communities which coal plants they are.

Right now there is no plan from Liberal or Labor parties to manage the change. They are lying to coal communities, saying burning coal has a long future. These communities will collapse unless plans are put in place now.

The Greens plan, costing \$19 billion over the decade, will have three core components:

- 1) Establish a job-for-job guarantee with workforce pooling to ensure stable and

well paid employment continues into Australia's pollution-free future.

- 2) Create local authorities that bring each coal community together to develop their plans for new employment; and
- 3) Finance those locally developed plans through an independent *National Coal Communities Commission*.

## JOB-FOR-JOB GUARANTEE

Coal workers haven't caused the climate crisis. Workers are doing what they can to support themselves and their family. The Greens want to preserve the contributions they have made into their communities over decades.

Previous industry collapses like steel in Newcastle and automotive manufacturing in Geelong and Adelaide have given us important insights of what we have to avoid.

Without transition plans in place at the time corporations announce plant closures, only a third of workers are able to find full time employment again. Another third can only find insecure work while the final third remain

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<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-12-09/early-coal-exit-national-electricity-market-renewables/100687644>

permanently unemployed.<sup>2</sup> We can't leave communities to face this alone.

A job-for-job guarantee would help those workers find new employment in non-polluting industries without losing pay.

Employers outside of the coal, oil and gas sector would be eligible for a wage subsidy equal to 50 per cent of a full time worker in the coal mining sector. The employee must receive a wage at least equal to the amount they received in their previous coal job for the employer to be eligible for the wage subsidy.

The guarantee would operate for ten years from leaving employment, but for workers over 55, it would be available for up to 12 years, until they reach retirement age.

If an employee is unable to find a job that attracts the wage guarantee, they can claim the amount directly, in addition to any Austudy or JobSeeker payments they are eligible for as they access free TAFE or University under the Greens platform.

## FIVE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Without a plan, communities whose economies are dependent on coal will face mass disruption when big corporations can no longer sell their destructive products.

The Greens will establish local authorities in four regions and boost financing for the existing LaTrobe Valley Authority:

- The Hunter Valley Authority in NSW,

- The Collie Authority in South West WA
- Bowen Basin Authority and Gladstone Authority in Queensland

These five authorities will be supported by a full time secretariat team with part time funding for up to 12 local representatives who will be drawn from across unions, business, academia, First Nations and government. They will be tasked with developing local plans to secure their economic transition.

These authorities will create localised plans of how to attract the jobs and industries that these local communities want and submit them to the *National Coal Communities Commission* for funding approval.

## THE DIVERSIFYING COAL COMMUNITIES FUND

The Fund administered by the *National Coal Communities Commission* will be initially credited with \$2.8 billion to provide grants, loans and direct employment so that coal dependent regions can turn their plans into reality.

The fund can be used for attracting small businesses, co-investment for new industry start-ups, encouraging clean heavy industry that want to adapt the existing infrastructure or funding the new physical or social infrastructure that will encourage new jobs to the region.

In addition to the *Diversifying Coal Communities Fund*, the investment mandates of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility and the Export Finance Australia will be amended to prioritise

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the Senate Select Committee into Jobs for the Future in Regional Areas page 35

the financing of the plans developed by local authorities.

The Greens have already announced a jobs-rich \$40bn plan to convert Snowy Hydro into a massive renewables generator, with a big build of solar, wind and storage, creating over 110,000 jobs, many of which will be in current coal and gas areas. The Greens will also announce further plans to grow new industries in coal and gas areas, including in manufacturing, steel and energy.

## WORKFORCE POOLING

Workers need more power to be able to find a well paid secure job in an alternative industry. Coal and gas corporations have too much power, get too much special treatment and their avoidance of tax is given a wink and a nod.

In line with the agreed phase out timelines of 2030 for thermal coal and 2040 for steel-making coal, industry wide pooling of the workforce will occur. This allows workers with the necessary skills to shift between employers and ensure the stability of employment.

This has worked with great success in Germany and Spain as those industries are actively phasing out their coal fleet.

Younger workers will also be paid to reskill and retrain for new jobs through the Greens policies for free TAFE and University. Middle-aged or skilled workers will be transferred between sites and employers, while older workers will be assured of job stability until retirement.

**FIND ALL OUR POLICIES:**

[greens.org.au/platform](https://greens.org.au/platform)