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Hazelwood closure highlights the need for a Federal Government intervention in a Just Transition plan

Australian Unions call on the Turnbull Government to step up and play a proper role in the transition of coal fired power stations in the wake of the Paris Agreement. Releasing a national blueprint for a Just Transition today, the ACTU highlights the fact that the country is dealing with a major cross jurisdictional issue that is crying out for a national plan.

The ACTU policy is a response to the challenge of delivering a Just Transition for coal-fired power station electricity workers and their communities, a plan that needs to be implemented as a matter of urgency. The need to support workers in this changing environment is an issue that has been heightened by the announcement last week that the Hazelwood Power Station in Victoria's Latrobe Valley will close in March 2017.

The policy paper, *Sharing the challenges and opportunities of a clean energy economy: A Just Transition for coal-fired electricity sector workers and communities*, lays out a detailed set of policies that together create the circumstances for a Just Transition for workers in the coal-fired electricity sector.

Long-term planning is needed to prevent the kind of last-minute, reactive assistance that has been cobbled together for workers in the automotive and power industries in recent years and instead ensure affected communities are given the opportunity and support they need to flourish.

The policy paper proposes the following:

1. The framework of a national plan to be implemented by the Federal Government that ensures workers and their communities have a sound future with secure livelihoods. This is a sector wide, multi-jurisdictional challenge that can only be met with a national response.
2. The urgent need for an independent statutory authority, not bound by the electoral cycle, to navigate the transition to a clean energy economy. This authority would ensure a secure future for workers by managing an industry-wide multi-employer job pooling and worker redeployment scheme, and oversee a package of measures to help workers - including pre-closure retraining or access to early retirement.
3. The authority would develop specific plans to encourage new industries to be established in affected communities, support the established businesses already up and running and help create new, secure jobs.

Quote attributable to Tony Maher, General President of the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division:

"A national plan for a Just Transition simply means putting people and communities first. We know how to do it, all it requires is the political will to deliver it."

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

"In order to deliver a Just Transition for workers and their communities in the electricity sector, Australian unions demand the costs of transitioning to a low carbon economy be shared equitably across society and not borne solely by working people and regional communities."

“Our plan would ensure Australia’s transition to a low carbon future can be structured by the government to occur in a fair and equitable way that creates new secure employment opportunities for workers, and encourages investment and growth of new industries in regional communities.”

“Either we leave it to the moguls of the market to make decisions about people’s lives when closing existing emissions intensive plants, or the Turnbull Government can step up to ensure that the challenges and opportunities of transitioning the industry are shared equally across the nation and managed in a planned and orderly way.”

“A proactive, multipartite approach between Federal and State Governments, industry and unions can deliver a Just Transition for workers and their communities which allows them to take advantage of the opportunities presented by technological and economic change, rather than be negatively impacted by it.”

ENDS

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Media contact: Peter Green 0400 764 200 or ACTU Media 03 9664 7315

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