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Federal Budget must deliver National Energy Transition Authority, says ACTU

In a speech at the National Press Club today, ACTU President Michele O’Neil says a National Energy Transition Authority (NETA) is the missing piece in Australia’s climate and energy policy, and must be delivered in the May budget.

A NETA would coordinate across governments, departments, industry and communities to make sure no worker or community is left behind in the nation’s energy transition to net zero.

An independent tripartite authority, it would support workers through comprehensive packages that include pooled redundancy and employment schemes, education, training, income replacement and retirement plans.

The NETA would also fund and coordinate regional economic diversification programs with good, secure jobs in new and emerging industries. It would plan for infrastructure, training and other requirements that make a ‘just transition’ a reality.

The ACTU today has also released a letter to the Prime Minister, signed by more than 70 prominent business peak bodies, unions, investors and climate organisations, including the Australian Industry Group, the Investor Group on Climate Change and the Australian Conservation Foundation, backing a National Energy Transition Authority.

So far more than 10 coal-fired power stations have closed with little or no transition planning for affected workers and their communities.

More will be phasing down in the near future. Yet countries like Spain and Germany have already put in place sound, well-funded transition plans that are supporting the people who powered their economies for so long.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“Climate change poses a profound material threat to the Australian way of life and workers want governments to take action.

But for many communities, the adjustment to net zero emissions risks being a disruptive and difficult one. In the years between 2013 and 2020, we saw 11 coal-fired power plants close, with an average notice time of just four months. At least seven more are due for closure between now and 2030. A just transition plan is urgent and critical.”

“Decarbonising our economy could generate hundreds of thousands of good jobs, healthier and more equitable communities, and a renewed national prosperity. We need to capture these opportunities, especially in communities where there are planned closures of facilities and businesses.

“An independent, statutory National Energy Transition Authority will ensure the shift to renewable energy happens with workers, not to workers, and delivers good jobs and economic opportunity.

“The Authority must be informed by the voices of workers and communities.

“We do not have to choose between climate action and jobs – it’s our responsibility to act on both.

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