

Illawarra showing the way in embracing new clean energy job opportunities

A new action plan for the Illawarra could create thousands of jobs and provides a template for how carbon-intensive regions around Australia can win a stake of the global clean energy economy, says the ACTU.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said the *Green Jobs Illawarra Action Plan* showed how a regional economy traditionally dependent on “brown” industries could be transformed by co-operative action on climate change.

Green Jobs Illawarra has released Australia’s first regional green industry plan transformation, with 20 projects and strategies to kick-start the area’s green transformation.

Its centrepiece is a \$1 billion co-generation power plant at the Port Kembla steelworks, which would be the largest carbon abatement project in Australia, off-setting a million tonnes of greenhouse gases and creating up to 2000 construction jobs. Other key projects include a “green street” of 100% self-sufficient houses, and establishing the Illawarra as a centre of excellence in wave power technology.

“The people of Wollongong and the Illawarra are not sitting idly by waiting for events to overtake them,” Ms Burrow said. “They are not allowing their region’s historic dependence on coal, steel and heavy industry to hold it back from participating in the emerging economy of environmentally sustainable industries.

“They are actively planning for a clean energy future that will potentially create thousands of jobs in the area. Unions are big supporters of the proposal for co-generation power plant at the Bluescope steelworks, which would create jobs and significantly reduce carbon pollution.

“Unions believe more than 850,000 new clean energy jobs could be created in Australia.

“But it is so distressing sitting on the sidelines and watching Australia being held back from taking part in the global clean energy economy by the Liberal Party’s infighting and opposition to the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.”

The Secretary of the South Coast Labour Council and chairperson of Green Jobs Illawarra, Arthur Rorris, said the plan had been put together by industry, unions, business, academic, and local government representatives.

“This action plan turns conventional wisdom on its head: it demonstrates that our steel and heavy industries are actually the ones that should give us a competitive advantage in the green economy,” Mr Rorris said.

“Just take a look at the renewable energy sector, whether it’s wind turbines, wave power and solar thermal plants – we are talking thousands of tonnes of steel and the fabrication, engineering, design and logistics that go with it.”

Copies of the Green Jobs Illawarra Action Plan are available from the South Coast Labour Council at www.sclc.com.au

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