



**Australian[®]
Nursing &
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Federation**
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**ANMF (Vic Branch)
Submission to the
Australian Senate
Committees on
Finance and Public
Administration**

**Net Zero Economy
Authority Bill 2024
and the Net Zero
Economy Authority
(Transitional
Provisions) Bill 2024**

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Midwifery Federation
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About ANMF (Vic Branch)

The ANMF (Victorian Branch) (ANMF) represents more than 100,000 nurses, midwives, and personal care workers (the latter predominantly in the private residential aged care sector). Our members are employed in a wide range of enterprises in urban, regional, rural and community care locations, within the public and private health and aged care sectors.

Our core business is the representation of the professional, occupational health and safety, continuous professional development programs and the industrial interests of our members and the broad professions of nursing and midwifery. We participate in the development of policy relating to nursing and midwifery practice, professionalism, regulation, education, training, workforce, and socio-economic welfare, health and aged care, community services, occupational health and safety, industrial relations, social justice, human rights, immigration, foreign affairs, and law reform.

Why ANMF (Vic Branch) supports The Net Zero Economy Authority Bill 2024 and Net Zero Economy Authority (Transitional Provisions) Bill 2024

Recent times have seen an increase in the public's knowledge of climate change and the devastating effects this is having on our communities. Victorian has experienced unprecedented floods in recent years as well as the ongoing threat and reality of fires. As nurses and midwives with a deep understanding of health, ANMF members understand the importance of a healthy environment.

Recently, ANMF (Vic Branch) delegates have asked ANMF to make representations on their behalf to government in relation climate change response, and environmental sustainability.

Leading the way through advocacy and membership.

ANMF ensures members interests are represented in a number of forums. This includes membership to the International Council of Nurse (ICN) and Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH) network. Both entities understand the relationship between climate change and health.

The ICN is a federation of over 130 national nursing associations, representing over 28 million nurses worldwide, which has called on governments to *“reduce the risks they are expected to face from climate change by making choices in how they advance technology and industry and make investments in infrastructure and public policies that have less environmental impact.”*¹ This statement aligns with GGHH ethos to deliver ‘health care without harm’, which includes supporting community workforce development and economic resilience.²

¹ International Council of Nurses Position Statement: Nurses, climate change and health, last accessed 23.3.2022

² https://noharm-uscanada.org/climate-resilience-for-health-care-and-communities?mc_cid=a52e977ff0&mc_eid=b00af9279f, Page 2

The impact of climate change will be felt disproportionately by future generations. ANMF supports young Australians to exercise their right to strike since 2019, endorsing the School Strike4Climate movement demands for:

1. Net zero by 2030 which means no new coal, oil or gas projects
2. 100% renewable energy generations and exports by 2030
3. Funding a just transition and job creation for all fossil-fuel workers and their communities

Union advocacy.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), the peak body representing 38 affiliated unions, has advocated for a decade for the formation of an independent Statutory Authority to ensure the transition to net zero is fair, just and equitable. ANMF (Vic Branch) has participated in this advocacy through our membership of the ACTU Climate Action Group.

The *Net Zero Economy Authority (Transitional Provisions) Bill 2024* enables the transition of the current interim Net Zero Economy Agency (NZEA) within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to a standalone statutory authority.

Without this safety net, transition risks poor coordination, and exposure to vested market interests with token or no regard for the devastation left behind. This devastation manifests in socio economic dislocation, which impacts all community members health and wellbeing.

The NZEA and Bill, has appropriately been developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including state governments, local governments, First Nations people, non-government organisations, industry, employers and unions. ANMF (Vic Branch) has participated through representation in ACTU-Climate Action Group.

We must transition into a clean energy future.

The use of fossil fuels not only has a detrimental impact on the environment, deemed the primary cause of current climate change, altering the Earth's ecosystem and causing human and environmental health problems.³ The consequences of climate change are also evident through the increasing occurrences of natural disasters. This in turn has consequences on health and health systems. Clinical practice is already adapting to these challenges, this includes increased presentations with a flow on effect of personnel, personal, and resource demand.

A transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy has a positive effect on clinical services. The shift to 100% renewable energy, such as has been committed to in Victoria's public hospitals, creates additional opportunity to lower the emissions profile within procurement. For example, Life Cycle Assessment has shown substantial reduction in the

³ <https://ugc.berkeley.edu/background-content/burning-of-fossil-fuels/>

carbon footprint of various reusable items such as anaesthetic equipment⁴, CVC trays⁵, and metal instruments⁶ when sterilised with renewable energy rather than brown coal energy. Increased reuse not only lowers emissions, but it is also consistent with waste reduction and resource preservation. This in turn, supports the United Nations Brundtland Commission definition of sustainability of “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”⁷

Transition is urgent, but it must be Just and ultimately, health centric. The time for transition is now. However, ANMF acknowledges there is also a risk in transition itself.

Without the independent statutory Authority of the NZEA, Australia risks creating new socio-economic problems with harmful impacts on health determinants. Legislating the NZEA, safeguards from immediate changes at the whim of government.

A Just Transition framework offers hope. But to be fully effective, it must integrate a health-centric perspective incorporating ecology, public health, and social justice. Health in All Policies (HIAP), recognises that policies in every sector of government can potentially affect health and inequities in health.

The Just Transition discourse and framework must include health considerations. This is the lens that ANMF (Vic Branch) adopts in support of the Net Zero Economy Authority Bill 2024.

Transition is already underway.

Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO)’s Draft [2024 Integrated System Plan](#), anticipates that Australia’s entire fleet of coal power stations will be closed by 2038 – five years earlier than previously expected.⁸ These stations currently employ thousands of workers and are crucial to the economy of surrounding communities. It has been said “Coal mine closures are inevitable, but economic hardship and social strife for workers is not.”⁹ These workers must not be Australia’s collateral damage. They must be comprehensively and appropriately supported to adapt to the changes of a post fossil fuel society.

As new clean energy industries such as hydrogen, batteries and critical minerals increase their market share we cannot assume transition will be just unless it is accommodated

⁴ <https://academic.oup.com/bja/article/118/6/862/3828038>

⁵ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223973614_A_Life_Cycle_Assessment_of_Reusable_and_Single-Use_Central_Venous_Catheter_Insertion_Kits

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9085686/>

⁷ United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1987

⁸ <https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2023/12/coal-will-be-all-but-gone-by-2034-under-australias-latest-energy>

⁹ **Dorothy Mei, Project Manager for the Global Coal Mine Tracker at Global Energy Monitor,** <https://globalenergymonitor.org/report/scraping-by-2023-global-coal-miners-and-the-urgency-of-a-just-transition/>

strategically and intentionally. There is a complex network of stakeholders, investment, divestment, opportunities, risks, and market interest to be navigated.

In Victoria, workers and communities from Hazelwood witnessed first-hand the social and economic damage that occurs when unjust, disorderly transitions of high-carbon facilities is allowed. One year after they lost their job, those workers had experienced an average 69% drop in earnings, and five years out still earned less than 50% of what they had previously. Sudden and widespread drop in employment, earnings, job security, and job quality has caused lasting economic damage and social dislocation.¹⁰

Energies industry intersection with health industry

Representing over 100,000 health care workers in Victoria, ANMF recognises that many factors combine to affect the health of individuals and communities. Determinants of health are broad, interconnected and constantly evolving. The World Health Organisation (WHO) singles out the social conditions in which people are born, live and work as the most important determinant of good health or ill health, providing the following list.¹¹

- Income and social protection
- Education
- Unemployment and job insecurity
- Working life conditions
- Food insecurity
- Housing, basic amenities and the environment
- Early childhood development
- Social inclusion and non-discrimination
- Structural conflict
- Access to affordable health services of decent quality.

This list is directly relevant to workers and communities who currently depend on carbon intensive industry for their income, employment, job security, food security, housing, and social inclusion.

The NZEA explicitly recognises that the right to health includes safe and healthy working conditions as an underlying determinant of health. There is commitment that the functions of the Authority, as set out in the NZEA Bill, would directly and indirectly promote the right

¹⁰ Dan Andrews, Elyse Dwyer, and Lachlan Vass. "At the coalface: What happens to workers displaced by decarbonisation." E61 Institute. October 2023; Also, the Latrobe City Council Submission to the Inquiry into the Closure of Hazelwood and Yallourn.

¹¹ https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/11ada76c-0572-4d01-93f4-d96ac6008a95/ah16-4-1-social-determinants-;https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1health.pdf.aspx#:~:text=The%20conditions%20in%20which%20people,good%20health%20or%20ill%20health.

to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health through both greenhouse gas reduction and supported employment transition.¹²

The transition to net zero in Australia is projected to create many new job opportunities. In fact, the demand is extreme. For example, Jobs & Skills Australia says we need an additional 32,000 electricians by the end of the decade.¹³ Skills shortages jeopardise Australia's emission targets and roll out of renewables. Additional measures are needed to assist the transition of people and skills into the new technology and future economy. The NZEA can play a role in driving and coordinating the industry and workforce planning, development, skills and training so that these shortages don't serve as a barrier.

Just Transition

The NZEA has role to ensure that Government climate industry policy and support ensures employment conditions (including wages) are safe and secure within the renewables sector.

ANMF (Vic Branch) is disturbed by reports of human rights abuses within both the minerals and solar supply chains. Australia must ensure the procurement contracts are upholding human rights.

“A strong framework must actively address societal injustices impacting planetary health, committing to end economic and social disparities during the transition. Rather than just shifting energy sources, it should intentionally dismantle prevalent economic, environmental, and social injustices.¹⁴”

Transition cannot be left to the goodwill of closing employers. The Bill recognises this by specifically addressing closing employer obligations. Under the Bill, closing employers are required to provide supports to workers, including training, financial and career advice, redeployment and paid time off to access these. It sets up pooled redundancy and deployment schemes. It establishes a process for the Fair Work Commission to make enforceable determinations regarding employer provisions. It facilitates investment in decarbonisation projects, particularly in energy regions. And it supports First Nations communities to benefit from the transition.

Communication is key

The Bill includes that the NZEA would also play a role in communicating the transition to the public to encourage their understanding and participation. This ongoing piece of work is critical as it can minimize fear, opposition and community conflict, and build support for even higher climate ambition.

¹² Net Zero Economy Authority Bill Explanatory memorandum p72-73

¹³ <https://reneweconomy.com.au/forget-coal-we-need-more-sparkies-to-keep-the-lights-on-tens-of-thousands-of-them/>

¹⁴ December 2022: Just Transition for a Healthy people on a healthy planet.

Again, there are learnings post closure of the Hazelwood Power Station and mine. Latrobe City Council reported limited consultation with Council and the local community, and lack of a measured, structured, and inclusive transition plan. The Council, as representatives of the local community, were not at the table when decisions about programs and funding were being made.¹⁵

In Summary

Climate change and the energy transition are both issues which impact the determinants of health, manifesting in presentations to the workplaces of nurses, midwives and carers. The NZEA is essential to providing oversight and coordination that supports a just transition – one where workers, communities and health outcomes are preserved, and even maximised. We encourage government to apply a Health in All Policies approach, and this be reflected in outworkings of the NZEA.

¹⁵ Latrobe City Council Submission to the Inquiry into the Closure of Hazelwood and Yallourn, p 3-4.