



First Nations Clean Energy Network | Overview of notable Federal Government policy initiatives

About the First Nations Clean Energy Network

While renewable energy technology is rapidly being rolled out across Australia, and major renewable energy precincts are being planned and developed, particularly in regional areas, most First Nations communities are locked out from realising the benefits.

Launched in November 2021, the [First Nations Clean Energy Network](#) is made up of First Nations people, groups, community organisations, land councils, unions, academics, industry groups, technical advisors, legal experts, renewables companies and others - working in partnership to ensure that First Nations people, groups and communities are key participants in and share in the benefits of Australia's rapid transition to clean energy.

The Network is led by a Steering Group of First Nations leaders.

As a national, First Nations-led coalition, the Network aims to enable and empower First Nations to participate in, benefit from, respond to, and shape renewable energy projects that impact their communities, land, waters and Sea Country. Our [website](#) sets out the range of activities we've embarked on since being launched just over 12 months ago, including our work engaging with the Federal Government on the co-design of a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy (which can also be viewed [here](#)).

The First Nations Clean Energy Network's approach is built on three pillars:

- **Community** The Network supports First Nations communities to shape the design, development and implementation of clean energy projects at every scale
- **Industry partnerships** The Network acts as an innovation hub, promoting best practice standards and principles that companies should adopt and investors should require before committing capital to a clean energy project
- **Policy reform** The Network advocates to lift significant federal and state regulatory barriers and stoke government investment, removing regulatory barriers to energy security and clean energy generation

Summary of Commonwealth energy policy

The Australian Government's energy policy comprises a large number of energy strategies and frameworks, policies and programs, which are detailed further in [Attachment A](#). These are broadly

designed to underpin the supply of energy (reliable, secure and affordable), whilst also aiming to improve energy supply, efficiency, quality, performance and productivity, and reduce emissions.

Chief amongst the policies is the [Powering Australia](#) plan, which is said by the Australian Government to be designed to create jobs, cut power bills and reduce emissions by boosting renewable energy. The Powering Australia plan comprises a range of other elements including:

- establishing an emissions reduction target (43% emissions reduction target by 2030)
- net zero by 2050
- funding the Climate Change Authority
- committing the Australian Public Service to net zero by 2030
- reforming the Safeguard Mechanism
- supporting investments to reduce emissions in existing industries and fostering the development of new, clean energy industries and workforces
- a range of initiatives to decarbonise the transport sector.

In relation to electricity, the Powering Australia plan includes a list of funding commitments and other initiatives. See [here](#).

Relevantly, these include:

- support to help households and small businesses save on energy costs and improve energy efficiency
- funding for the Offshore Renewable Growth Strategy to invest in the offshore energy industry
- the National Energy Transformation Partnership
- funding for initial tenders under the Capacity Investment Scheme
- establishing Rewiring the Nation with \$20 billion in low-cost finance over 4 years to unlock investment in our electricity grid
- funding to deploy 400 Community Batteries across Australia
- funding for the Community Solar Banks
- the Powering the Regions Fund
- the Driving the Nation Fund and a National Electric Vehicle Strategy.

The [National Energy Transformation Partnership](#), mentioned above, is another key framework for First Nations Australians. This partnership secured a reset of relations across governments and importantly, established the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy as a priority action under the partnership.

Importantly for Gunaikurnai, the Australian Government is also responsible for regulating offshore wind has established a legislative framework to enable offshore infrastructure projects to be undertaken in Australian Commonwealth waters (generally, waters from 3 nautical miles (nm) from the coastline extending to the end of Australia's exclusive economic zone)). A key aspect of this framework is the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (OEI Act).

The OEI Act commenced in June 2022 and provides a regulatory framework, including licensing regime, for offshore renewable energy infrastructure and offshore electricity transmission infrastructure.

Another key policy is the [National Energy Performance Strategy](#), the aim of which is to provide a long-term framework for demand-side action (given that energy efficiency and performance will play a key role in enabling Australia to meet emissions reductions targets).

Attachment A: Federal Government - Key policy initiatives

Policy initiative	Description and detail
<p>Powering Australia</p>	<p>The Powering Australia plan is the Australian Labor Party's “<i>plan to create jobs, cut power bills and reduce emissions by boosting renewable energy</i>”.</p> <p>The plan includes a range of elements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● establishing an emissions reduction target (43% emissions reduction target by 2030) ● being net zero by 2050 ● funding the Climate Change Authority ● committing the Australian Public Service to net zero by 2030 ● reforming the Safeguard Mechanism ● supporting investments to reduce emissions in existing industries and fostering the development of new, clean energy industries and workforces ● a range of initiatives to decarbonise the transport sector <p>In relation to electricity, the plan includes a list of funding commitments and other initiatives. See here. Relevantly, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● support to help households and small businesses save on energy costs and improve energy efficiency ● funding for the Offshore Renewable Growth Strategy to invest in the offshore energy industry ● the National Energy Transformation Partnership ● funding for initial tenders under the Capacity Investment Scheme ● establishing Rewiring the Nation with \$20 billion in low-cost finance over 4 years to unlock investment in our electricity grid ● funding to deploy 400 Community Batteries across Australia ● funding for the Community Solar Banks ● the Powering the Regions Fund ● the Driving the Nation Fund and a National Electric Vehicle Strategy

Policy initiative	Description and detail
<p>National Energy Transformation Partnership and the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy</p>	<p>On 12 August 2022, Commonwealth, state and territory Energy Ministers agreed to establish a new National Energy Transformation Partnership. The partnership is a framework for national alignment and cooperative action by governments to support the smooth transformation of Australia’s energy sector.</p> <p>A priority for action under the partnership is a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy.</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water say that the strategy “will be co-designed with First Nations communities and organisations to ensure First Nations people have a say in energy policies and programs in the transition to net-zero. The strategy will also help identify priority reforms and areas for future investment.</p> <p>More detail about the strategy is also available on the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy website.</p>
<p>National Energy Performance Strategy</p>	<p>Many of the actions under Powering Australia and the National Energy Transformation Partnership are <i>supply-side actions</i> (i.e. changing the way energy is supplied to people).</p> <p>Meeting legislated emissions reduction targets by 43% by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050 will also be assisted by undertaking <i>demand-side actions</i>. Accordingly, energy efficiency and performance will play a key role in enabling Australia meet these targets.</p> <p>The aim of the National Energy Performance Strategy is to provide a long-term framework for demand-side action to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reduce pressure on energy bills ● improve energy reliability ● reduce emissions ● deliver a high energy performance economy.
<p>Regulating offshore wind and other offshore renewable energy technologies in Commonwealth waters</p>	<p>The Australian Government has established a legislative framework to enable offshore infrastructure projects to be undertaken in Australian Commonwealth waters (generally, waters from 3 nautical miles (nm) from the coastline</p>

Policy initiative	Description and detail
	<p>extending to the end of Australia’s exclusive economic zone)). A key aspect of this framework is the <i>Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021</i> (OEI Act).</p> <p>The OEI Act commenced in June 2022 and provides a regulatory framework, including licensing regime, for offshore renewable energy infrastructure and offshore electricity transmission infrastructure.</p> <p>The Australian Government also says that it is developing an Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy, however this appears to still be under development. A broad overview of offshore wind and the Australian Government’s role in establishing and regulating offshore wind is available at this link.</p>
<p>Capacity Investment Scheme</p>	<p>The Capacity Investment Scheme is intended to provide a national framework to encourage new investment in clean dispatchable capacity to support reliability and reduce the risk of price shocks.</p> <p>The scheme will involve competitive tenders seeking bids for clean renewable generation and storage projects to fill expected reliability gaps. Projects selected through open tenders will be offered long-term Commonwealth underwriting agreements for an agreed revenue ‘floor’ and ‘ceiling’.</p> <p>The scheme is intended to unlock at least \$10 billion of new investment and 6GW of dispatchable power by decreasing financial risks for investors and encouraging more investment in capacity when and where it is needed.</p>
<p>Rewiring the Nation</p>	<p>Rewiring the Nation is a \$20 billion funding centrepiece of the Australian Government’s Powering Australia plan. Essentially it involves the provision of low-cost finance to upgrade, expand and modernise Australia’s electricity grid.</p> <p>The initiative was funded in the October 2022-23 Federal Budget. Rewiring the Nation will be implemented through a partnership of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and a new Rewiring the Nation Office in the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.</p> <p>Agreements under Rewiring the Nation have been concluded for the VNI West (KerangLink) between Victoria and NSW and Marinus Link between Tasmania and Victoria. Marinus Link previously did not have agreement between governments on how project costs would be met in the event of a positive final investment decision.</p>
<p>Community Batteries for Household Solar program</p>	<p>The Community Batteries for Household Solar program is intended to help households and businesses to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lower electricity bills, and

Policy initiative	Description and detail
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce pressure on the electricity grid for the broader community. <p>The program is aiming to deploy 400 community-scale batteries for up to 100,000 households across Australia.</p>
<p>Community Solar Banks</p>	<p>A community solar bank is a shared solar system within a community that helps households who can't install their own rooftop solar system to share in the benefits of renewable energy (e.g. people who rent or live in apartments and people who can't afford to install their own system).</p> <p>The Australian Government is co-investing \$100 million to deploy shared solar across Australia.</p> <p>Additional information about the concept of solar banks is available here.</p>
<p>Powering the Regions Fund</p>	<p>The \$1.9 billion Powering the Regions Fund is intended to provide funding to help in the transition towards net zero emissions by focusing on four key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decarbonising Existing Industries 2. Developing New Clean Energy Industries 3. Workforce Development 4. Purchasing Carbon Credits <p>Grant guidelines under the fund's Safeguard Transformation Stream have just been released.</p>
<p>Driving the Nation Fund</p>	<p>The Driving The Nation Fund is intended to enable Australia's shift to electric vehicles by expanding the rollout of EV charging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure.</p>
<p>CEFC ARENA</p>	<p>The Commonwealth has established two institutions to facilitate flows of finance into the clean energy sector, being the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC).</p> <p>ARENA is allowed to invest in renewable energy projects that are in the early stages of research and development, while the CEFC is restricted to funding clean energy technologies that are in the commercial phase.</p>

Policy initiative	Description and detail
<p>Operation of energy markets in Australia</p>	<p>The operation of the Australian energy system is supported by 3 key market bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) develops the rules by which the market must operate. ● The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) handles the day-to-day operations of the electricity and gas markets. ● The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) enforces the national electricity market rules and makes judgements on the regulatory proposals of monopoly network operators.

*First Nations Clean Energy Network
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