

Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

# Green Skills Agreement

An Agreement between the Australian Government and the state and territory governments

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- the Australian Government
- the state and territory governments

## 1. Purpose of this Agreement

The Australian and state and territory governments understand that decisive action is needed to support Australia's transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy. Australia can continue to prosper while making the changes required to reduce the impact of climate change. However, the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy will involve changes to how we do things individually and collectively, the ways we live, work and do business, and the mix of what we do in our economy. These changes will require new skills, the application of existing skills to new technologies and practices, and new ways of thinking, working and doing business across all areas of the economy and society. These changes will also require strategies to support disadvantaged workers and job seekers to take advantage of the job and training opportunities presented by Australia's transition to a low-carbon economy.

The Green Skills Agreement seeks to build the capacity of the vocational education and training (VET) sector to deliver the skills for sustainability required in the workplace and to enable individuals, businesses and communities to adjust to and prosper in a sustainable, low-carbon economy. The VET sector has a vital role in supporting the continuing global competitiveness and future prosperity of the Australian economy and driving comprehensive and innovative change towards a low-carbon economy. More than 1.7 million Australians participate in VET each year through a national network of over 4000 public and private registered training providers.<sup>1</sup>

This Agreement is a statement of the commitment of the Australian and state and territory governments to work collaboratively with employer and employee representatives, the VET sector and community organisations to ensure that training in, and the

delivery of, skills for sustainability are an integral part of all vocational education and training and are relevant to the needs of industry.

## 2. Definition

Skills for sustainability, also known as green skills, are the technical skills, knowledge, values and attitudes needed in the workforce to develop and support sustainable social, economic and environmental outcomes in business, industry and the community.

## 3. Background—the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy

Australia faces a time of challenge and transition as we respond to the impacts of climate change. The Australian Government is committed to introducing a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by up to 25 per cent below 2000 levels by the end of 2020. Australia must play its full and fair part in reducing global carbon pollution levels. The transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy will create opportunities as well as challenges. The practices that individuals, businesses and communities are increasingly adopting to address the challenges of climate change, for example, through investing in renewable energy, sustainable water technologies and innovative ways of designing buildings and products, have generated economic activity and jobs and will continue to do so in the future.

This transition will have implications for training providers and workplaces across the Australian economy. In many instances, existing jobs will need to be redesigned through upskilling or re-skilling, to meet the skills needs of individual firms and entire industries in the move towards a more sustainable future.

<sup>1</sup> NCVET, Australian vocational education and training statistics, 2008.

Australia's future productivity will depend heavily on the knowledge and skills of its workforce. The VET sector will play a significant role in providing the skills and training for workers and business, and it needs to be even more prepared and responsive to emerging needs of industry for skills for sustainability.

The Australian, state and territory governments have developed a national training system that provides the basis for high-quality, industry-developed training and nationally recognised qualifications. Although some important new skills and occupations are emerging, the challenge lies mainly in ensuring that the skills required in existing occupations are adapted to meet the requirements of a low-carbon, sustainable economy, for both existing and entering workers. It is therefore critical for skills for sustainability to be integrated into and articulate with existing national industry qualifications.

This Agreement will complement and build on existing agreements including the National VET Sector Sustainability Policy and Action Plan, the National Agreement on Skills and Workforce Development and the skills and training components of the National Partnership Agreement on Energy Efficiency and the National Strategy on Energy Efficiency. This Agreement also complements and builds on existing skills for sustainability initiatives at the national, state and territory levels, including those of the National Quality Council.

#### 4. Principles

The principles underlining this Agreement are to:

- deliver a nationally consistent and coordinated approach, while recognising the need for flexible and innovative approaches across jurisdictions, industries and workplaces
- collaborate with employer and employee representatives, the VET sector and community organisations
- complement and leverage existing national agreements, policies, programs and initiatives at jurisdictional levels
- utilise the best available evidence to inform implementation
- demonstrate transparency and accountability
- align with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)
- seek to achieve international best practice.

#### 5. Objectives

Through this Agreement, the Australian and state and territory governments will work collaboratively with employer and employee representatives, the VET sector and community organisations to ensure that Australia's VET system delivers the skills for sustainability that will enable individuals and businesses to contribute to a sustainable, low-carbon economy in their workplaces and communities, and the provision of sustainable jobs, services products and advice. This will be achieved by:

- embedding skills for sustainability practice and teaching in vocational education and training, within the requirements of the national regulatory framework
- the upskilling of VET instructors and teachers to deliver skills for sustainability
- the strategic review of Training Packages (sets of nationally endorsed standards and qualifications for recognising and assessing people's skills) to embed sustainability knowledge, skills and principles
- implementing a transition strategy to re-skill vulnerable workers.

#### 6. Outcomes

This Agreement will deliver the following outcomes:

- excellence in skills for sustainability practice and training
- stronger collaboration and coordination between governments, employer and employee representatives, the VET sector, universities and community organisations to improve integration and leveraging of effort
- VET practitioners skilled in the effective delivery of skills for sustainability
- graduates and learners understand and promote business practices and innovation that support the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy
- increased business and community awareness of the VET sector's capacity to support Australia's transition to a sustainable, low-carbon future by delivering the required skills and sharing knowledge about sustainable ways of working
- improved linkages and collaboration across schools, VET and higher education to ensure an integrated sustainability pathway for learners and trainees and to support careers and jobs pathways for the Australian workforce
- clear pathways and supportive networks for vulnerable workers and communities to re-skill and to participate in the opportunities created by a low-carbon economy
- upskilling or re-skilling of the existing workforce in skills for sustainability.

## 7. Implementation and evaluation

Through this Agreement, all skills for sustainability gaps in Training Packages will be identified by the end of March 2010, and the revision of the suite of Training Packages, including the necessary industry consultation and validation processes, will be substantially completed by December 2010.

Further, the implementation and evaluation strategy for this Agreement will be articulated in the Green Skills Action Plan, to be finalised in June 2010. The action plan will be developed in consultation with employer and employee representatives, the VET sector and community organisations. The action plan will:

- support a comprehensive, coordinated approach to research and modelling of skills needs, deficits and gaps for trades and professions to meet emission reduction targets and to secure jobs and industries into the future, including through the examination of green jobs pathways
- ensure that the actions arising from this Agreement complement and are integrated with:
  - existing labour market, training and industry development programs and initiatives
  - existing and developing initiatives and programs designed to achieve COAG qualifications targets
  - existing and developing initiatives to promote carbon pollution reduction and industry and workforce adjustment to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.
- fast-track the review of Training Packages in targeted industry sectors and ensure the timely, structured and ongoing review of all Training Packages to embed skills for sustainability in key competencies or through inclusion of core sustainability competencies
- actively support the timely implementation and uptake of revised Training Packages
- engage with the higher education sector to encourage and promote an integrated and complementary approach to skills for sustainability across the tertiary sector
- ensure that all trade apprentices enrolling from 2010 graduate with a core level of industry-relevant skills for sustainability and that over the next two years 30 000 apprentices will graduate from targeted, carbon-exposed industries
- identify the barriers to participation by businesses and existing workers in training to acquire skills for sustainability and the strategies to overcome these and the opportunities to develop effective industry and workforce champions and facilitators
- support the upskilling and re-skilling of the existing workforce in skills for sustainability

- ensure that the national training system can effectively respond to and stimulate the demand from business and industry for skills for sustainability
- identify nationally agreed targets and timeframes for the upskilling of VET trainers to deliver skills for sustainability in all jurisdictions
- work with vulnerable workers, sectors and communities and provide them with a transition strategy (involving governments, industries, employment services and educators) to enable re-skilling and employment participation in the low-carbon economy
- identify, monitor and resolve barriers including resourcing to achieving agreed actions
- monitor achievements against agreed actions.

In addition, the Australian Government and state and territory governments in collaboration with key stakeholders commit to ensuring that the scheduled review of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) in 2010 will consider the addition of specific criteria or the adjustment of current standards to reflect sustainability practice and teaching in vocational education.

## 8. Governance

The Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) will report to COAG annually on the progress of the action plan implementation.

## 9. Acknowledgements

This Agreement acknowledges the following organisations and jurisdictions involved in the development of the Agreement through their participation in the Working Group:

- ACT Department of Education and Training
- Australia Workers' Union
- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Australian Government Department of Climate Change
- Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Australian Industry Group
- Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union
- Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association
- Business Council of Australia
- Communications, Electrical, Electronic, Energy, Information, Postal, Plumbing & Allied Services Union of Australia
- Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council

- Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union
- EE-Oz Training Standards
- Green Building Council of Australia
- Manufacturing Skills Australia
- Master Builders Australia
- Minerals Council of Australia
- NT Department of Education and Training
- NSW Department of Education and Training
- Qld Department of Education and Training
- SA Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology
- Skills Tasmania
- Skills Victoria
- TAFE Directors Australia (represented by Swinburne University of Technology)
- Universities Australia (represented by University of Western Sydney)
- WA Government (represented by Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA).