



Climate Change Authority 2025 Annual Progress Report

Response to Issues paper
September 2025

Skills Insight acknowledges that First Nations peoples have been living on and caring for country for thousands of years. This is respected in our values and the way we work.



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Response to Issues paper

Introduction to Skills Insight Jobs and Skills Council

Skills Insight is a not-for-profit, government funded, industry-led organisation and one of ten Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs).

We work with stakeholders who share a passion for improving skills and training across the agribusiness, fibre, furnishing, food, animal and environment care industries.

We support industry leadership and engagement in the Australian skills and VET systems.

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Scope of response

This response is limited to addressing Question 2 of the Issues paper:

“What changes could the Australian Government make to improve the effectiveness of existing policies or address gaps in supporting Australia’s transition to a low-emissions, climate-resilient, and prosperous economy?”

The response is based on industry engagement and intelligence, research and workforce planning undertaken by Skills Insight.

Improving Policies and Addressing Gaps

Stakeholders across the agribusiness, fibre, furnishing, food, animal and environment care industries are concerned that their industries are not being adequately considered in policy approaches, particularly given the focus on the energy industries and emissions reporting.

The general view is that policy development has focused on specific solutions to move Australia towards Net Zero, and not considered more integrated and considered approaches that could achieve more effective results.

Agribusiness, fibre, furnishing, food, animal and environment care stakeholders believe that there needs to be far more acknowledgement of the critical role that has been and is being played by these industries in the drive to Net Zero. While the sectors covered by Skills Insight do contribute significantly to emissions, they are also major industries in emissions mitigation, through carbon sequestration, capture and farming, and lead research and innovation efforts to reduce emissions.

As central players in Australia's climate change mitigation efforts, as industries whose practices and survival are critically dependent on climate conditions, and as residents of Australia's Regional, Rural and Remote communities most impacted by significant natural disasters and climate change related events, they believe that they should have a more central role in the implementation of Australia's climate smart approaches.

Emissions Reporting

Australia is establishing Emissions Reporting for major emitters and is looking at voluntary reporting schemes for agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

Large companies currently undertaking ESG Reporting are required to report on downstream emissions, and this is leading to businesses within our sectors being required to undertake reporting, without any additional financial or practical support.

This reporting is designed to meet various benchmarks and reporting requirements for the Government, both locally and internationally, and may also assist in some scientific research. However, more thoughtful design of the scheme could have made the data much more valuable for on country operations, particularly for agriculture, fisheries, forestry, conservation and ecosystem management, and animal care.

Nobody is more directly aware of the actual current impacts of climate than people in these industries, especially those in regional, rural and remote Australia. Their economic growth, productivity, culture, lifestyles and communities are dependent on climate in ways that many others don't get to experience.

Given the direct impacts of climate change on these industries, and stakeholder awareness of those impacts, why wouldn't the design of reporting schemes be based around providing analysis that would help improve operations, rather than just providing reporting data with limited practical application outside of international benchmark reporting and scientific research (which is critical).

Those responsible for current reporting, and those who may be covered by future schemes and requirements, are struggling to understand the nature of the skills needed to properly undertake the reporting. It makes it difficult to train staff or obtain external services, when there is no clear understanding of what services are required, and whether skills are auditing, accounting, scientific, agricultural or ecosystem management skills.

It is likely that consultation with agronomists and agricultural scientists working with industry stakeholders would be able to design systems that meet reporting requirements, but which also provide valuable planning data for land and water usage, crop and stock options, maintaining nature positivity within environments and supporting research and innovation.

Net Zero is not just Clean Energy

The energy sector debate has become a major political and societal issue. With the rise of technology, it is likely that energy usage will also rise (even with greater efficiencies) over coming decades. The energy system debate is not just about achieving emissions goals by target dates, but also meeting Australian's longer term energy needs.

Increasingly, the debate over the energy system and options for production of clean energy are overwhelming considerations of the other elements of Net Zero, in particular conservation and ecosystem management, land and water usage and supporting infrastructure.

For example, in working on the need to transmit clean energy, there have been plans developed for overhead high voltage power lines across agricultural, parks and culturally significant lands. While this might be a short-term economically affordable solution for the clean energy industry, it carries very significant risks in both medium and long-term for the industries covered by Skills Insight. It impacts on land use, ecosystem management, nature positivity and the potential for major bushfire events, which are increasing in intensity due to climate change. Given the major roles of transmission lines in causing or exacerbating natural disaster damage over decades, which have cost dozens of lives and billions of dollars as identified by Commissions of Inquiries and coronial investigations, this is an important issue for our stakeholders requiring much greater depth of consideration. This is just one of many examples.

Agribusiness, conservation and ecosystem management, forestry and First Nations land and water rights all play critical roles in achieving Net Zero, not just through reduction of their own emissions, but also through climate mitigation, environmental protection and nature positivity.

More integrated policy development which includes the broader scope of Net Zero (which will also include other industries outside of Skills Insight coverage) is going to be required if action plans that provide mutual benefits across stakeholders are to be realised.

Closing the Gap

Skills Insight has a responsibility under the Jobs and Skills Program to assist with the achievement of Closing the Gap targets.

First Nations people hold traditional and cultural knowledge of Country, and have much knowledge that can be shared and utilised in scientific, research and implementation endeavours to help steer Australia towards Net Zero. This knowledge and skill needs to be recognised, and, where agreed to through free, prior and informed consent by First Nations knowledge holders, shared with appropriate recognition and compensation. In the industries covered by Skills Insight, this knowledge is beginning to be considered by and shared with Rural Research and Development Corporations, CSIRO and other bodies producing greater impacts and better innovation than has been achieved without this knowledge and experience.

We have become increasingly concerned at the number of requests that we get directly, and others report to us, for the Indigenous Rangers to be trained to deliver more and more services. While the Indigenous Ranger program has been highly successful, it is a job role designed to allow First Nations people to actively live on, connect to and care for Country as a primary purpose, for the benefit of Australia as a whole.

We have received requests to incorporate training in roles such as public health, mobile satellite repair, connectivity support and compliance enforcement, to name a few. The Rangers have been tasked with undertaking biosecurity roles as part of their advanced functions.

There are other members of communities who could be trained for these roles, but there seems to be a strong desire to be able to implement services using this well-trained workforce, saving both time and money for proposers of these schemes. First Nations Rangers will be critical to Australia's achievement of Net Zero and it should be made clear that those employed in the existing program should have choices about their futures and roles. Given the importance of utilising Indigenous knowledge for ecosystem management to achieve Net Zero, a close watch should be kept on any

attempts to expand the roles of the Rangers, and proposals would need to be approved and supported by Ranger Groups.

There also needs to be more effective recognition that in achieving Net Zero, and especially in clean energy, First Nations people and communities are not just participants to be engaged with. They can and should be economic leaders and partners and the approaches of the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance should be central to reviews and development of policy. Respect should be paid to the rights of First Nations people recognised by Title and by the Courts over land and water, taking a principles approach to building relationships, rather than an apparently participatory or legalistic approach.

Skills for Net Zero

Skills Insight has been working for some time on identifying whether there are skills gaps within the available training that need to be closed to address Net Zero. Within the industries we cover, our current view is that the needed skills training exists. However, in some cases, there is a need for greater knowledge to allow those skills to be used contextually.

We acknowledge that there is a lack of delivery of Vocational Education and Training, especially in regional, rural and remote Australia, as well as a lack of available workforce in many instances. This has an impact on the ability to deliver place-based solutions that may accelerate Australia's move towards Net Zero.