



Bush Summit

Legacy 100: Millions spent on pilot program to keep renewable transmission targets on track

Australia needs to triple the number of people working in renewable infrastructure, and a national-first regional program promises to put those up for the task in the top trades earners.



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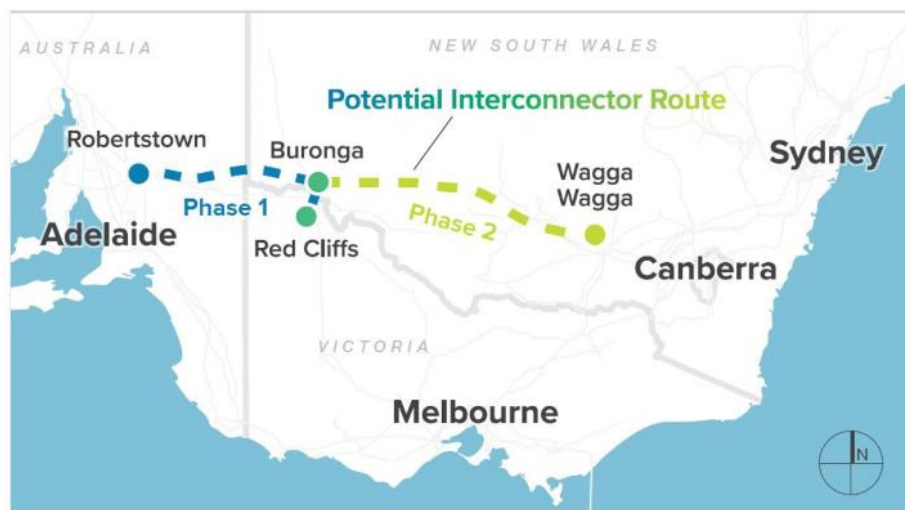
Australia's rocky road to an ambitious renewable energy future could be further hampered by a lack of regional workers, with the nation in a race against the clock to triple the number of jobs in infrastructure and installation.

In a bid to keep the biggest benefits in the bush, NSW's high-voltage grid operator Transgrid and construction partner SecureEnergy are spending millions of dollars training 100 new transmission linesmen to help build a 900km interconnector joining the energy grids of NSW, South Australia and Victoria.

The no-experience-necessary program, dubbed Legacy 100, will see successful applicants [housed and trained in worker camps near Wagga Wagga and Mildura](#) in three-week rotations, where they will be paid an above-award wage of \$43 per hour to work as riggers and doggers.

Dr Chris Briggs, a researcher at UTS's Institute for Sustainable Futures, said solar and wind storage and transmission currently employs an estimated 20,000 people in Australia, but the nation will need 60,000 workers in the sector by 2035.

"If we were to become (a) renewable energy superpower, then it could go as high as 250,000 over the next couple of decades," he said.



Proposed route of the EnergyConnect transmission line. The Legacy 100 program participants will be working on the interconnector from Wagga Wagga to the Victorian border. Picture: Supplied

“We will definitely need to import workers ... but we really need to get busy developing our own local workforce to make sure ... that the regions are benefiting from all the infrastructure has been built in their areas.”

SecureEnergy training manager Chris Jones said the 100 new power workers would be “absolutely critical” in a two-decade, 10,000km plan to eventually join Victoria and Tasmania, Canberra to Wollongong, Newcastle and Armidale to the network.



Transgrid's Legacy 100 workers will be rigging up new transmission towers and lines to connect the Victorian, NSW and South Australian energy grids. Picture: Supplied

“This is nearly a 32-year program. These jobs are for life,” he said.

“We really need it to succeed because there is a lot of investment in each person.

“If you're willing to give up 18 months (for it), you would be in the top 5 per cent of earners in trades in Australia.”

Transgrid's executive general manager of delivery Craig Stallan said the program is “just the start” of the company's skills investment.

“Australia is very well blessed with renewable resources, and we have this ability to be able to harness that and punch above our weight in the Asia-Pacific region.”

28-year-old Sydneysider Chris Spooner is set to be one of Legacy 100's first guinea pigs, leaving behind the city's leafy inner west for a post-Covid career shake-up. Formerly a sound engineer who worked on some of Adelaide's biggest gigs, including Elton John, Jon Bon Jovi, and the Adelaide Fringe, Mr Spooner is readying himself to relocate to the regions.

“I've been working as a removalist and doing piecework jobs since Covid hit, trying to figure out what I was going to do next, and essentially for the music industry to regain its footing – (which) it didn't do in enough time for my liking,” he said.

“(Legacy 100) is future-proofing my work life, gives me a bit of stability, and I can see that there’s going to be a lot more work afterwards.”



Sound engineer turned truck driver Chris Spooner from Haberfield is about to embark on yet another career change, applying for a Transgrid paid training program that will see 100 people qualified in transmission line construction. Picture: Jonathan Ng

However with controversy already surrounding the project he’ll be working on, he says he doesn’t “want to step on anybody’s toes”.

“I don’t want to go there and they go ‘these are the guys that have ruined the town’,” he said.

“I hope at some point that it benefits them to the point that they realise that it’s a good thing.”

To apply for the Legacy 100 program or find out more, email legacy100@elec.nsw.gov.au

or phone 1800 490 666.



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Our energy future is on the line

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energy grids of NSW, South Australia and Victoria.

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Chris Spooner will be one of Legacy 100's first guinea pigs, leaving behind the big city.

To apply legacy100@elec-nor.es or phone 1800 490 666.