



28 September, 2016

Office of the Clerk Assistant (Committees)
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via Email: jsct@aph.gov.au

To Whom it May Concern,

Re: Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) - Paris agreement inquiry

The AMWU has a long history of advocating for strong action on climate change and the adoption of low carbon technologies throughout the Australian economy. Starting with our 2008 Just Transition policy paper¹ on how best to adapt to a carbon constrained world, we have been active in every debate on climate change policy since and we welcome this opportunity to continue this proud tradition.

The AMWU sees climate change as an opportunity for industry modernisation, growth and new jobs creation as much as we see it as an environmental challenge. Today, there are over 9.4 million renewable energy jobs in the world,² yet in Australia renewable industry employment has been falling in every year since the Coalition Government took power, and we have seen over 5,000 renewable jobs lost since their peak.³

Rather than investment in new industries, we have seen an attack on the renewable energy industry through a reduced Renewable Energy Target, consistent attempts by the Government to abolish the Clean Energy Finance and Insurance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. Even when these attacks are not successful, they devastate industry and investor confidence and cause a heavy price in terms of lost investment and jobs.

¹ Australian Manufacturers Workers Union (AMWU) (2008), 'Making Our Future: Just Transitions for Climate Change Mitigation'

² <https://www.theclimategroup.org/news/renewable-energy-jobs-total-94-million-irena>

³ See ABS: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4631.02014-15?OpenDocument>

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While the AMWU is supportive of the Paris Agreement, we remain sceptical of the Government's ability to meet its obligations under the agreement. In particular, we note that the current Government has no credible policy to reduce emissions, especially post 2020 when the Emission Reduction Fund and the RET both effectively end.

Even under their current set of policies, the Government's own experts project that total Australian emissions will grow by 7.7% between now and 2020.⁴ The Government is not presenting any indication that it will replace these policies with anything sufficient to meet even the Government's own relatively weak emission reduction targets.

While this lack of effective policy generally permeates climate change issues, it is especially so with respect to Just Transition policies which aim to ensure heavily impacted workers and communities are afforded adequate opportunities to move into good replacement jobs and communities can find adequate new industries to support their continued growth and development.

A Just Transition is specifically mentioned in the Paris Agreement, and while specific policies are not proscribed, the agreement is clear that countries must take into account "*the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities*,"⁵ when implementing the broader agreement.

There is no evidence that the Australia Government is taking these obligations seriously. There have been no consultations with workers in heavily impacted industries, no proposed policy frameworks developed, not even lip service paid to workers and their communities. This is notwithstanding much community agitation (and some fear) attendant upon the possible early closure of the Hazelwood power station in Victoria along with the possible loss of upwards of 1,000 jobs.

While there have been media statements, these have not been translated into actions on the part of Government.

It is the AMWU's view that these issues of Just Transition should be at the front and centre of Government policymaking in this area, but are provided even less attention by this government than broader climate change policy, which we already know is woefully insufficient.

⁴ See: <https://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/greenhouse-gas-measurement/tracking-emissions>

⁵ Text of the Paris Agreement, page 21: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf>

We call on the JSCOT to recommend ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate change, but we also call on the Committee to explicitly demand that the Government take specific and urgent policy action to meet its obligations under the treaty, especially its obligations to workers and communities for a Just Transition to a low carbon economy, which it is currently failing to do.

Yours sincerely,

ANDREW DETTMER
NATIONAL PRESIDENT