

NZEA Energy Industry Jobs Plan Consultation

Yallourn Power Station

Joint Union Submission

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Overview

Workers in the Latrobe Valley's brown coal industry have powered Victoria and underpinned the state's economic wellbeing for generations. Power sector privatisations in the 1990s were devastating for the local community, with some 8000 workers employed in the power generation industry losing their jobs and full-time employment in the region dropping by 9 per cent.¹

The Latrobe Valley now faces fresh upheaval as the nation's electricity grid transitions away from coal power. Yallourn's 2028 closure follows the abrupt closure of Hazelwood in 2017, which displaced around 700 workers at the power station and mine. The future wellbeing of Latrobe Valley workers and communities rests on ensuring that the mistakes of the past, both in the 1990s and in 2017, are not repeated.

These experiences provided the impetus for unions to campaign for a federal statutory Authority to provide co-ordinated support to displaced energy workers and facilitate an orderly and successful transition for host communities.

An Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) is essential for ensuring that Yallourn workers are supported through the transition with training, career guidance, financial planning advice, and, most importantly, redeployment pathways into secure well-paid work.

An EIJP would ensure greater consistency in access to transition support for affected workers, who include 500-plus direct employees of the Yallourn Power Station and Mine and at least the same again across the supply chain. In an extremely challenging employment environment, an EIJP is critical for building relationships with potential receiving employers and facilitating incentivised job placement, while also ensuring the power station can operate at full capacity through to closure.

The coordinating role of the Net Zero Economy Authority, and its investment facilitation functions, must be sustained over an extended period to support the region's economic wellbeing through the energy transition.

The workers of Latrobe need a destination for their transition. The goal should not just be replacement jobs; it should be regional growth. Latrobe has been at the centre of Victoria's power generation since the 1920s and, as such, power generation has been the principal asset of the region for a century. With the right industrial supports, it could continue for the next century. To achieve that goal Yallourn's closure must be linked to guaranteed opening dates of new projects capable of delivering secure, well-paid employment. To date, attempts to decarbonise and reindustrialise the region have been insufficient and ineffective.

¹ Wiseman et al. 2020. 'After the Hazelwood coal fired power station closure: Latrobe Valley regional transition policies and outcomes 2017-2020', Centre for Climate Change and Energy Working Paper, Crawford School ANU.

Since the closure of Latrobe's Hazelwood Power Station in 2017 this crisis has been compounded. The Latrobe-Gippsland region has experienced alarming economic decline over the past decade.

It is clear a significant amount of regional coordination work is necessary to manage this transition. The establishment of an EIJF would provide greater certainty to Yallourn workers, and act as a much-needed support and accountability mechanism to ensure a smooth and successful transition for workers, their families, and the regional community.

Impacts of the closure

The closure of EnergyAustralia's Yallourn Power Station will affect over a thousand permanent and contractor employees at the power station and open-cut mine which supplies it. The closure will also be a major hit to economic activity in the Latrobe Valley.

Yallourn power station direct workforce

At the power station, there are over 300 workers employed directly by Energy Australia, including administrative, supervisory, operational and maintenance roles.

About 75 employees are principally involved in operating the power station and 150 are principally involved in maintaining the power station. Roles include: unit controllers and attendants, operators, engineers, electricians, fitters and boilermakers.

The MEU commissioned a report from RMIT University to map the directly employed power station workforce at Yallourn to assist in identifying transition support issues and priorities, included at Attachment A. It reviews data provided by EnergyAustralia to analyse the roles and skills profile of the workforce, length of service and residential location, outlining key characteristics of and challenges for the workforce. The report does not cover workers employed by dependent employers.

The report shows that, as at the scheduled closure date in June 2028, around 40% of the direct power station workforce will be aged over 55 and therefore potentially interested in retirement or early retirement supported by redundancy payment on closure. An MEU survey of Yallourn members found that a quarter of power station workers said they would retire if no suitable local employment could be found after closure.

While there is clearly a cohort of workers considering retirement upon site closure, a majority of workers will require transition support to assist them into new roles. Most workers at Yallourn can be considered as mid-career (age 30 to 44) – the largest group – or late career (age 45 to 54).

Although the Yallourn workforce is highly skilled and experienced in the operation and maintenance of the power station, most do not hold formal qualifications. Fewer than one in five hold a diploma qualification or above. The workforce is majority local, living in the Gippsland region, with strong ties to the community and the local energy industry.

The specific nature of transitioning workers' skills and experience, age and location in a region with few alternative employment opportunities means there will be a significant need for tailored transition support at Yallourn.

Yallourn mine workforce

Yallourn open cut mine supplies brown coal to the power station via a dedicated conveyor system. The mine is owned by EnergyAustralia and operated by contractors, primarily RTL Mining and Earthworks for mine operations and fire service (with Belle Banne engaged for conveyor belt operation and maintenance, and Ventia for mine machinery maintenance).

There were redundancies at the mine before Christmas due to the completion of overburden removal at the mine – with enough coal now exposed to fuel the power station until closure. Following 22 redundancies of RTL employees, there are currently 86 coal production workers at the site, who work in teams to operate mine machinery including bulldozers and haul trucks as well as operate the mine's control centre. The operation of dredgers and stackers long used to remove overburden at the mine is no longer required.

The mine production workforce is highly skilled but, in general, their qualifications to operate mine machinery such as dozers, dump trucks, front end loaders and excavators are site-specific and not nationally recognised.

Compared with the directly employed power station workforce, the workforce at the mine is younger, with fewer potential retirees. Workforce data supplied by RTL shows that the workforce is concentrated in the 'mid-career' age group (30-44), with the second largest cohort being late career (45-54) and just a handful aged over 60. The recent round of redundancies – which were mostly filled on a voluntary basis – means many of those at or close to retirement age have already left. Among surveyed MEU members at the mine, the proportion considering retirement at closure is just 5 per cent.

Indirect workforce – contractors and supply chain

In addition to the workers employed by closing employer Energy Australia and dependent employer RTL, a further three to four hundred contractor workers are regularly engaged to perform on-site services, scheduled maintenance and unscheduled breakdown maintenance work.

Workers at the following dependent employers will be affected by the Yallourn closure:

- Able On-Site Services – provide industrial cleaning services to the Power Station with an entirely casual workforce.
- Fire and Safety Australia Pty Ltd – on-site fire safety and emergency response services contractor at the Power Station.
- Ventia Pty Ltd (Power Station) – provide casuals for maintenance, breakdowns etc. Workforce numbers vary, but approximately 50-80.
- Insulmet Pty Ltd – are the insulation contractor at the Power Station, 15-50 workers if there are any big shutdowns, but mainly permanent maintenance at an estimated 15 workers.
- Gippsland NDT Services Pty Ltd – only occasional visitors doing NDT inspections, there are a few contractors doing this work in an ad hoc way.
- Hydro Australia – is a pump contractor with one workshop in Morwell and about 12 employees.
- Delfab Engineering Pty Ltd – is an engineering contractor, workshop in Moe with 15 employees, small project work onsite.
- Ventia Pty Ltd (Mine) – maintenance contractor, already losing numbers due to overburden removal ceasing. An estimated 20-30 workers likely to be impacted by the Yallourn closure.
- Primech Engineering Pty Ltd – have 4 workers onsite doing small project engineering work and have workshop in Morwell with another 6-10 employees.
- Belle Banne Conveyer Services (Fenner) – have Traralgon workshop with 4-6 employees providing conveyor spares and materials to site. They have an additional 6-10 site-based workers, but have just lost a couple of positions due to the overburden removal ceasing.
- Diamond Power Australia Pty Ltd – specialist soot blower company with workshop/store in Morwell providing spares and materials to site.
- Hiflow Integrated Services Group Pty Ltd – contractor for refrigeration service and maintenance, employing 15 refrigeration mechanics and electricians assigned to the power station and mine site.
- BMC Holdings (VIC) Pty Ltd – contractor for electrical and mechanical maintenance at Yallourn power station, including high-voltage maintenance. Workforce numbers vary, up to 25 electricians on site.
- O&M Pty Ltd – electrical compliance, operations and maintenance specialist, employing 15 electricians at the Yallourn Power Station.
- Independent Lifts – contractor for mechanical and electrical lift service and maintenance at the power station and mine.
- Waco Kwikform – scaffolding and industrial maintenance.
- RTL – excavating contractor.

- Veolia – maintenance services.
- Vincents Painting – commercial and industrial painting.
- Cleanaway Industrial Services – waste management.

Some of the listed contractors above engage a relatively small employee cohort at Yallourn. The size of the affected employee cohort should not weigh against naming those contractors as dependent employers. The impact of closure on those employees, in a community already demonstrating high rates of unemployment, will be just as significant as for any other Yallourn worker. Many will face redundancy, some who are engaged seasonally to perform maintenance during scheduled shutdowns will experience a significant reduction in their annual income and pressure to transition into new work. Naming these employers as dependent employers is critical to ensure that direct, contractor, and subcontractor employees working at Yallourn all receive the same high standard of enforceable transition support, and no worker is left behind to fall through the gaps.

Likewise, the power station and associated mine are privately owned, and business decisions to contract out work or roles should not be viewed as though these workers are not essential to effective and safe operations. The engagement of contractors to perform work, which in certain circumstances is done to avoid obligations under an enterprise agreement covering the direct workforce, should not be used as a means to disadvantage this cohort of workers in planning for a just transition.

Timing of impacts

The impending closure of Yallourn power station must be considered in the context of a series of power station closures expected over the medium term in the Gippsland region. Energy Australia has announced its expectation that Loy Yang A power station will close in 2035 pursuant to a Structured Transition Agreement (STA) with the Victorian Government.² While the expected closure year for Loy Yang B as submitted to AEMO remains 2047, that timeline will be substantially truncated if Victoria reaches its target of 95% renewable energy by 2035.³

Following announcement of closure, power station operators routinely revise maintenance schedules to reflect the shorter operating lifespan of the generation assets. This can involve restructure and in-housing of maintenance of operations, and reduction in the number of scheduled maintenance outages, directly reducing the work

² AGL, *Climate Transition Action Plan*, [Accessed 3 February 2026]:

<https://www.agl.com.au/content/dam/digital/agl/documents/about-agl/sustainability/ctap.pdf>;

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Victoria, *Media Release: Agreement Secures Transition for Loy Yang*, [Accessed 3 February 2026]:

<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/230821-Agreement-Secures-Transition-For-Loy-Yang-A.pdf>

³ *Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment Act) 2017* (VIC)

available to local maintenance contractors. As coal fired power stations in the Latrobe Valley approach closure, some have already engaged in significant workforce reductions. In October 2025, AGL Energy announced a cut to 300 jobs across its operations, including at Loy Yang A in the Latrobe Valley and Bayswater near Newcastle, adding to local competition for skilled work.⁴ Yallourn is expected to engage in a similar restructure of its maintenance operations as it approaches the closure date, such that some employees of dependent employers will face redundancy or significant reduction in the hours of work offered to them well before the closure.

Yallourn mine's cessation of overburden operations in November 2025 results in a reduced demand for maintenance. In ordinary operations, the Yallourn Mine Maintenance Alliance (Ventia, in partnership with RTL Mining and Earthworks) surges maintenance operations during scheduled shutdowns of the site's overburden system, doubling the number of maintenance workers over that period. It is unlikely that the same number of workers will be needed for shutdown maintenance moving forward.

Limited suitable alternative employment locally

A survey of MEU members at the mine and power station showed overall low confidence in finding suitable alternative employment in the region after Yallourn closes. About half (46 per cent) are not at all confident of finding suitable alternative employment in the region after Yallourn closes, compared to 15 per cent who are somewhat confident and just one individual respondent was very confident.

Many Yallourn workers are open to relocation, based on a sober assessment of the limited prospects for redeployment to a similar quality job within the Latrobe Valley, but the vast majority would prefer to remain in their community if they can. If these workers were to relocate because they are unable to find work, there is a real risk that this closure will be the catalyst for significant population outflow, exacerbating regional decline. Nearly three-quarters of surveyed MEU members at the power station and around sixty per cent at the mine wanted to remain in the region after closure.

Investment in the development of new industries in the Latrobe Valley since the 2017 Hazelwood closure has fallen far short, and many Yallourn workers who want to stay in their communities will instead need to relocate if they are to find suitable work. Surveyed members are well aware of this reality. When asked about the biggest challenges for finding suitable alternative employment, a lack of alternative employers in the area was the most frequent response, followed by competition for jobs, comparable pay rates, age, new industries not being ready, and the need to stay with Yallourn through to the closure date.

⁴ [Coal workers brace as AGL Energy says it will cut 300 jobs including at Bayswater station in the Hunter Valley and Loy Yang A plant in the Latrobe Valley](#)

An EIJP for Yallourn will need to reflect the circumstances of the region. Efforts towards local redeployment – especially to Loy Yang sites via early retirement incentives – must be coupled with the creation of pathways to jobs in other regions for those workers who are willing to relocate for similar roles in the energy and mining sectors. Indeed, despite a strongly expressed preference to stay local, relocation to find work was the top response (42 per cent) if suitable local employment could not be obtained.

Younger workers are most likely to opt for relocation – with about 60% of 25-34- and 35-44-year-olds saying they would relocate if they can't find a job.

Around one third overall would take 'unsuitable' employment (32 per cent) with a lower wage or not in a preferred sector/role – with higher rates among older workers, who are less inclined to relocate. Just six percent said they would retrain or study if suitable local employment were not available, reflecting an overall sentiment that workers are reluctant to train for jobs they don't see existing or being created.

“Lack of opportunities in the valley, no real future job prospects. Lack of government support for our region.” - Power station worker

Existing support for workers

- Do you think workers currently have enough support to prepare for and transition into new jobs? Why or why not?
- If you think more support is required, what would you like to see?

Transition support for workers affected by Yallourn's closure is currently inadequate and described by workers as tiered – with different levels of support for direct EnergyAustralia employees, 'Alliance Partners', and other contractors.

Direct EnergyAustralia employees at the power station have access to some transition support. While EnergyAustralia's transition program has been extended to RTL workers, access is uneven and enforceability is not universal across all elements of the program. Workers at other dependent employers, including contractors and supply chain workers, have missed out on support altogether. Furthermore, there are currently no efforts being made to link Yallourn workers with future potential employers to begin the process of orderly redeployment.

EnergyAustralia offers a transition program for Yallourn employees which emerged out of hard-fought union-won clauses in the *EnergyAustralia Yallourn Enterprise Agreement 2020* and *EnergyAustralia Yallourn Enterprise Agreement 2023*. Under the 2023 agreement, these clauses provide for tuition fee reimbursement of up to \$5,000 per year, capped at \$15,000, for approved study leading to recognised qualifications. Under the terms of the agreement, tuition fee reimbursement ceases after the conclusion of

the semester underway at the time of redundancy due to power station closure. This would raise serious concerns given the difficulty aligning training and closure timelines, and evidence that redundant workers' need for transition support materially increases after the closure date.^{5,6} Additionally, the 2023 agreement provides for reimbursement of independent financial advice sessions (up to a limit of \$300 set by policy), distinct from a \$4500 Financial Planning package offered in policy and sitting outside the terms of the EBA.⁷

Certain elements of the EnergyAustralia Transition Program, which implements the baseline support provided for in the Enterprise Agreement, exist only in policy and therefore lack enforceability under an industrial instrument. These elements include personalised transition guidance (the '1:1 Transition Planning Session'), the enhanced \$4500 Financial Planning package, the ability to train during work hours (subject to 'Leader' approval), and 10 days of study leave (the enterprise agreement lacks a study leave clause altogether). Additionally, workers have received inconsistent advice from EnergyAustralia management about whether ongoing retraining support could be extended beyond the semester of closure, as provided for in the enterprise agreement.

Workers at EnergyAustralia have expressed frustration at the lack of progress made on securing redeployment pathways for employees with AGL at Loy Yang A or elsewhere within the EnergyAustralia business – such as at Newport, Mt Piper, or Tallawarra. Given the dearth of suitable blue-collar opportunities within the Latrobe Valley, EnergyAustralia workers would appreciate the certainty and security of knowing a job in their industry is available to them upon Yallourn's closure, even if that means having to relocate. Yet, whether an option of internal redeployment within EnergyAustralia will be made available to workers still remains unclear and subject to speculation two years out from closure. It has long been open to EnergyAustralia to create these opportunities for workers open to relocation, and it is now beyond time for concrete redeployment plans that workers plan their lives around.

“No alternative suitable jobs have been identified for anyone on site after closure of Yallourn.” – Power station worker

In the absence of planned redeployment, around a dozen EnergyAustralia Yallourn operators have successfully applied for roles at Loy Yang A and Loy Yang B on their own accord over the last five years. However, this pathway is limited by the vacancies that arise at the neighbouring power stations and, crucially, require workers in essential operational roles to leave Yallourn prior to its closure. Inherently, such a pathway can only ever apply to a small minority of the transitioning workforce. The NZEA's oversight

⁵ Beale, G (2022), *Recalibrated Expectations: A Qualitative longitudinal Investigation into Precarious Work and Industry Closure*, Flinders University.

⁶ Clause 7.3.2 Education and Retraining Assistance, *EnergyAustralia Yallourn Enterprise Agreement 2023*.

⁷ Clause 7.3.3 Financial Advice/Planning, *EnergyAustralia Yallourn Enterprise Agreement 2023*.

of redeployment schemes through an EIJP, including the incentivising of early retirements, can improve the situation for Yallourn workers seeking redeployment and ensure that suitable redeployment opportunities are identified quickly, coordinated fairly, and timed to align with Yallourn's operational needs up to closure.

Only permanent EnergyAustralia employees can access EnergyAustralia's support with any level of enforceability in an enterprise agreement. For RTL workers, access to EnergyAustralia's transition program supports is, ultimately, at the discretion of EnergyAustralia and, therefore, subject to change without recourse. The *RTL Mining and Earthworks Pty Ltd/CFMMEU Yallourn Mine Enterprise Agreement 2022*, which applies to Yallourn miners working for RTL, is wholly silent on issues of site closure and does not provide for any transition-related support. Nonetheless, RTL workers have reported mostly fair access to EnergyAustralia's programs, aside from two important differences: RTL workers are not eligible for study leave and must access training in their own time, and RTL workers have a significantly lower cap of \$850 for financial planning advice.

"It's offered but rarely taken up due to no support to allow employees off work"- Yallourn mine worker

"The main issue is Alliance partners only being able to access training attendance subject to business requirements. As a shift operator I have small, sporadic windows of opportunity to attend off site training in my own time, none of which has been suitable to the point I could not book anything in. We need a leave provision from rostered days to attend training offsite." Yallourn mine worker

Uptake of EnergyAustralia's Transition Program has been mixed, according to our survey of MEU members at EnergyAustralia and RTL. While around 90 per cent of EnergyAustralia respondents reported having been offered transition support by their employer, only 50 per cent had gone on to access the support. Meanwhile, 78 per cent of RTL workers surveyed had been offered transition support, with an uptake of just 37 per cent. The relatively low uptake reported in our survey reflects barriers identified by members, including a lack of guidance about what to train for, difficulty in being released for study leave, and, for RTL workers, having to train in their own time due to the absence of a study leave policy altogether.

"Some workers aren't sure about what's available and others are unsure about what their options would be so haven't accessed additional training" – Yallourn Power Station employee

Additionally, some RTL workers are expecting to access support for the first time in the near future, with workers waiting on their employer to book on-site delivery of training for a number of tickets. These tickets would assist the workers in gaining nationally recognised qualifications where previously their competencies had been site-based only.

A Community of Interest Determination must capture EnergyAustralia and RTL as, despite the existence of some transition support, the EnergyAustralia program is not *fully* enforceable, lacks concrete redeployment pathways into new roles, and has not been implemented fairly, with large cohorts of workers missing out on study leave or struggling to be released from work for training.

No transition support available to most contracted workers

Aside from RTL, EnergyAustralia's supports have, in general, not been extended to workers at dependent employers. Indeed, EnergyAustralia's Transition Program intranet site still suggests 'non-regular' Yallourn workers seek support from the Latrobe Valley Authority, a body that ceased to exist in 2024. And, were EnergyAustralia to extend its transition program to more contractors, it would still lack enterprise agreement or any other enforceability mechanisms for those workers. An EIJP would act as an accountability mechanism to ensure that companies honour their commitments

“As contractors we weren't given the same access to it even though we all work only here, most 5 days a week.” (Power station contractor)

In early conversations EnergyAustralia implied they would cover supply chain workers in their 'world-leading' worker transition program. As their worker transition program has developed, EnergyAustralia has since clarified it only provides support to Yallourn's "Alliance Partners", which include RTL Mining but not all contractors on site. It is our understanding that access to transition support by employees of other contracting companies is limited to non-existent. In effect, most workers employed by contracting companies have no access to transition support. The need for additional supports for workers employed by dependent contractors is pressing.

As we have consistently advocated through COI processes in other regions, the exclusion of the supply chain workforce is at odds with the objects of the NZEA as set out in the Act. Contractors have the same requirement for transition support as directly employed workers. Employees of dependent electrical and mechanical maintenance contractors who are working at the Power Station or Coal Mine have the same need for assistance to access employment opportunities with receiving employers as direct employees.

Given the extent of the support offered by EnergyAustralia *and* what we know about the quality of transition outcomes for supply chain workers historically, the inclusion of the identified contractors in a Community of Interest Determination would ensure reasonable access to support for these vulnerable workers. Recognising also that those employed by dependent employers are less likely to have generous redundancy entitlements that they could rely on during a period of unemployment.

We have also consistently argued that the NZEA must cast a wide net when including dependent employers in its Community of Interest (COI) application. All dependent

employers that cannot confirm that they will redeploy all affected employees to other roles in their business after the closure must be included in the NZEA's COI application. It is substantially preferable for the COI to capture some workers who may not end up requiring the EIJIP supports, than for it to exclude any workers who may meet the definition of 'transition employee' under the NZEA Act.

The relative size and resources of the dependent employer should bear little weight on the NZEA's determination to name a contractor as a dependent employer in its application for a Community of Interest Determination, as the drafting of the NZEA Act provides for responsiveness to individual employers' circumstances. Section 59(1) allows for the operational requirements of closing and dependent employers to be taken into consideration when determining the extent to which taking certain actions in Section 59 may be unreasonable for that employer.

Maintenance contractors risk falling through the gaps

We are concerned that the exclusion of contractors as a result of business size, or rotating rosters (as in the case of shutdown workers) will mean these workers miss out on further training and upskilling vital to securing work in a net zero future. If workers are excluded from every successive EIJIP in their region on the basis that they have short-term contracts, we worry it sets a precedent wherein shutdown and maintenance contractors fall through the gaps of national transition support as these closures progress.

A whole-of-community approach requires that the definition of dependent employer be expanded to include maintenance contractors, in recognition of the reduced scope of contracts held by each maintenance contractor because of the closure and the reduced work available to workers who service those contracts – essentially, that this closure will impact workers employed by contracted companies who do not work on-site year-round.

Where any number of roles are expected to be impacted by the closure or by restructuring of the closing employer's operations in preparation for the closure, that should weigh in favour of naming the contractor as a dependent employer in a Section 56 application for a Community of Interest Determination.

Employees of maintenance contractors to the power station and supplying coal mine are transition employees notwithstanding that their work at the power station or supplying coal mine may be:

- of a casual, seasonal or part-time nature;
- shared among multiple employees according to a rotating roster; or
- provided on an as-needed basis.

The workers of the Latrobe Valley need a destination for their transition. The lack of clarity around what the most promising sources of new work in the region will be and the skills that it will require is the central barrier for transitioning workers. Workers are motivated to develop their skillsets but consistently report that they do not know what industries or roles they should be retraining for.

Yallourn workers have further noticed the disparity between the extensive state government funding made available for the Hazelwood closure and the \$10 million which EnergyAustralia has devoted to its Transition Program.⁸ As members of the Latrobe Valley's energy sector, they are familiar with the union and state government-backed Hazelwood Worker Transfer Scheme and its creation of redeployment pathways. EnergyAustralia on its own is not capable of building redeployment pathways – with an EIJP, workers would benefit from the NZEA's redeployment coordination functions and the power of government backing.

Views on the EIJP

- Do you think establishing the EIJP for Yallourn would improve the transition process for workers? Why or why not?

An EIJP must be established for the Yallourn closure. Indeed, the experience of workers in the Latrobe Valley after the Hazelwood closure was a driving force behind union advocacy for the NZEA's establishment and for government coordination of transition support for displaced energy workers. The Yallourn closure is an ideal candidate for an EIJP, with a workforce of hundreds facing redundancy and extremely limited local job opportunities. While some permanent EnergyAustralia employees have benefitted from transition support provisions in their enterprise agreement, policies including study leave are not protected by the agreement, and workers at dependent employers have not enjoyed the same standard or enforceability of support – indeed, many have received no support at all. An EIJP is needed to bring a uniform standard to transition support across all affected workers. Additionally, an EIJP is essential to ensure that Yallourn workers, at both EnergyAustralia and dependent employers, are given fair access to redeployment pathways secured by the NZEA at receiving employers.

The unions are in unanimous agreement that workers at Yallourn need coordinated support. Over 90 per cent of surveyed MEU members agreed that coordinated

⁸ In addition to funding the Latrobe Valley Authority, Victorian Government support included \$20 million towards a Worker Transfer Scheme, with the funding enabling early retirement packages at neighbouring power stations. This Scheme was partially successful, creating approximately 90 vacancies for displaced Hazelwood workers.

government support was important to ensure appropriate transition support and pathways into suitable new employment. A similar number agreed that the establishment of an Energy Industry Jobs Plan which places enforceable obligations on employers would be helpful – and none thought it would be unhelpful.

An EIJP will give Yallourn workers more certainty about securing work in the future. Without the pathways set up by an EIJP, workers face the prospect of accepting significantly lower quality employment (i.e., low paid, insecure, temporary) in the region or extended periods of unemployment. While important, training support and the career and financial guidance offered by transition programs are only effective where there are jobs lined up for workers to move into. Indeed, evidence from previous industrial closures in Australia suggests that one third of workers made redundant will suffer a serious reduction in quality of employment, and a further third will experience unemployment.⁹ Regions, like the Latrobe Valley, that are highly dependent on a single industry are at greater risk of extended, even generational, periods of unemployment.¹⁰

In contrast to some other power station closures where closure dates seem to be pushed forward only to later be pushed back and rumours of extensions abound, the mid-2028 closure date at Yallourn has been firm for almost five years, having been announced in 2021. Despite this rare certainty around closure, investment in new industries has been far too slow to build redeployment pathways for Yallourn workers within the local region, with no jobs in the pipeline. With a stronger commitment to investment and economic diversification in the Latrobe Valley, new industries and job opportunities may be created by the time Loy Yang A moves to closure in 2035, but it is imperative that long-promised investment and projects come to fruition urgently.

The best transition support in the world is useless without good jobs to transition into. It is vital that Yallourn's closure timeline is linked to guaranteed opening dates of new, unionised manufacturing plants in the region. It is vital that the NZEA be empowered to direct reindustrialisation agencies (FMIA, NRF, ARENA, et al.) into the region as a matter of urgency.

We recognise that coordinating the timing of a closure, so that the power station can continue to operate safely, and workers can retrain and/or find new employment at a suitable time, is a major logistical challenge. And, as such, a genuine just transition in single-industry towns like the Latrobe Valley, needs to consider and align several equally complex and interrelated timelines.

⁹ Beer, A., et al. (2006), *An evaluation of the impact of retrenchment at Mitsubishi focussing on affected workers, their families and communities: implications for human services policies and practices.*

¹⁰ Spoehr, J. (2014). Foundations for Industrial Rejuvenation: Lessons from International and National Experience. In G. r. Roos & N. Kennedy (Eds.), *Global perspectives on achieving success in high and low cost operating environments* (pp. 72 - 110): Hershey, PA : Business Science Reference, an imprint of IGI Global.

As it currently stands, Loy Yang offers the only clear equivalent employment opportunities in the region. Without clarity about future employment, it is impossible for the impacted workers to make the most of the transition support made available or plan for the future.

Redeploying Yallourn workers into quality new jobs from 2028 will be a complex task requiring sustained effort to engage with AGL Loy Yang A and Alinta Loy Yang B as a receiving employer, coordination of early retirements at other power stations, and serious consideration of intra- and interstate relocation opportunities within energy and mining industries (for power station workers and miners respectively). NZEA-coordinated redeployment schemes implemented via an EIJP will be essential for executing this challenging task in a comprehensive and fair way.

The NZEA should aim to engage as broad a Community of Interest in the Section 56 application as the Act permits. Transition supports prescribed by Section 59 should be equally available to transition employees of closing *and* of dependent contractors, most of whom have not had the benefit of any transition supports to date, and many of whom will face redundancy before the scheduled closure date.

Opportunities for impacted employees

- In your view, which businesses might be best placed to hire transitioning workers from the Yallourn Power Station and coal mine?

As we have argued, suitable new job opportunities for transitioning Yallourn workers in the Latrobe Valley are extremely limited and the region requires urgent industrial development. Nonetheless, the remaining worksites in the local brown coal industry should be the first port of call for participation as receiving employers in an EIJP. Members have consistently proposed Loy Yang A (AGL), Loy Yang B (Alinta), and Loy Yang Mine (AGL, with earthworks contracted to RTL) as the most appropriate receiving employers for them to go to. Redeployment of a meaningful number of Yallourn workers into these sites will require the creation of vacancies through early retirement packages. We understand that there may be a decent amount of interest among Loy Yang workers in taking early retirement, particular among those that will reach retirement age well before the scheduled closure of Loy Yang A in 2035. Nonetheless, the size and tax treatment of early retirement packages would factor into the individual decisions of workers who would otherwise stand to receive substantial redundancy payments in 2035.

Transitioning Yallourn workers must be prioritised for employment in any site decommissioning, demolition, and rehabilitation roles at both the power station and mine. We urge the NZEA to intervene to ensure this, and to hold companies accountable

for commitments made. Union members in the Latrobe Valley recall that site decommissioning works, for which displaced Hazelwood workers were suitably skilled, ended up being carried out by contractors engaged from out of town to the detriment of the local energy sector workforce.

Surveyed power station members also expressed an interest in moving to other EnergyAustralia sites in Victoria, including Newport gas-fired power station in Melbourne. Similarly, some workers would be interested in moving to EnergyAustralia's Mt Piper Power Station in Lithgow, NSW. Some would also consider relocating for roles with coal-fired power stations in Queensland, where operating timeframes remain longer than elsewhere in the country. Similarly, younger workers at Yallourn Mine may consider FIFO work at interstate mines.

Other potential receiving employers could include:

- EnergyAustralia's proposed Yallourn Energy Security Precinct, including gas, solar, and battery generation
- Esso's Gippsland Basin and Kipper Unit offshore gas joint ventures
- Latrobe Magnesium demonstration plant
- Opal Maryvale Energy from Waste facility
- Viva Energy Geelong Refinery
- Gippsland Water
- Marinus Link transmission project
- AusNet Services
- Offshore wind, including the Star of the South project
- Offshore gas decommissioning
- Critical minerals and rare earth mining projects in Victoria, for example, the proposed Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project near Bairnsdale

The local Opal Paper mill is another prominent local employer, although the roles and nature of employment make it a less suitable receiving employer, noting the site has also been subject to job cuts in recent years.

Many of the potential receiving employers we have listed – including the Yallourn Energy Security Precinct, Latrobe Magnesium demonstration plant, the Maryvale Energy from Waste facility, offshore wind, and the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project – pertain to projects in their infancy. Some will take a number of years before operating at scale, or even entering a construction phase. These projects will need the skilled local labour that Yallourn workers can offer – but faced with closure of the power station in mid-2028, workers at Yallourn cannot wait years for projects to come on-line. Yallourn workers will require support to:

- transition into alternate work that bridges the gap between closure of Yallourn and full-scale operation of the new projects, and enables their skills to remain up-to-date; and
- retrain as necessary to be ready to transition into the new projects.

There have been numerous suggestions for potential future industries in the Latrobe Valley, including CCUS projects and synchronous condensers. Government support has been lacking for some proposals, such as the HESC hydrogen project, which has been extremely disappointing for Latrobe Valley workers concerned about their futures. Political will and funding support would facilitate more local job opportunities. We encourage the NZEA to engage with all project proponents who emerge in the Latrobe Valley during the transition period.

EnergyAustralia enforcing unfair redeployment restrictions

We are deeply concerned by reports of an EnergyAustralia policy that requires their 'Alliance Partner' RTL to repay to EnergyAustralia the redundancy paid for any employee rehired by an RTL-related entity within a period of 12 months. In effect, this severely restricts the redeployment opportunities available to RTL workers at Yallourn Mine, with RTL being jointly owned by two large national companies with a strong presence in mining and other blue collar industries – Thiess and Linfox. This policy has already directly prevented workers affected by a recent round of redundancies from being hired in suitable roles which they were highly qualified for. If allowed to continue, this policy would be a barrier to a successful EIJR redeployment scheme, with detrimental impacts on individual RTL workers.

Proposed geographic area

- Does the proposed geographic area accurately capture the expected labour market impacts of the closure of Yallourn, including impacts to business operations and opportunities to employ workers impacted by the closure?

The proposed geographic area broadly captures the expected labour market impacts of Yallourn's closure, based on the location of dependent employers and the areas where Yallourn workers reside. However, we do not expect that potential receiving employers within the proposed geographic region can offer sufficient suitable redeployment pathways for all transition employees. While we understand that the defined geographic area for an EIJR does not limit the inclusion of receiving employers from further afield, we would support a more expansive geographic area for the operation of the Yallourn EIJR in recognition of the uniquely challenging job market circumstances in the Latrobe Valley. Extending the geographic area to Melbourne, for example, would ensure that some of

the most suitable redeployment opportunities are not deprioritised for EIJP participation.

We understand that the NZEA needs to define a firm geographic area reflective of the local impacts of the closure, making it impractical to extend the defined area for the EIJP any further beyond Melbourne. Nonetheless, as we have argued, the NZEA must expand its search for suitable receiving employers interstate, unbounded by the defined geographic area.

Boundary drawing in the Latrobe Valley / Gippsland region has a complicated history and it is vital that the NZEA is attuned to the nuance of the region. Following the closure of the Hazelwood Power Plant the Victorian Government re-territorialised and extended the focus of regional development from three local governments to the whole of Gippsland.¹¹ However, because Gippsland is a large agricultural region the impact of changes to the comparatively industrial Latrobe Valley can sometimes be diluted. Developing a sustainable reindustrialisation plan for the Valley is a different proposition to the transition of the broader region as a whole.¹²

Likewise, recent analysis from Associate Professor Sally Weller of the Victorian Government's \$270 million investment in the region following Hazelwood's closure shows that much of the investment was spent on upgrading the road and rail network to decrease commute times for lower income workers who relocated from the Melbourne CBD.¹³ Importantly, beyond initial construction work this kind of investment did not bring new employment to the region. This is a familiar story and one the unions are particularly concerned about. It is essential that all transition programs are prioritising the *creation of new, well-paid secure work in the region*.

Regional unemployment

The unemployment statistics in the region tells a worrying story. The latest data from Jobs and Skills Australia shows the Latrobe Local Government Area has the highest unemployment rate in the state, with East Gippsland close behind. And the trending data shows persistently high unemployment in the region over the last 12 months.

¹¹ Weller, S. (2024). *Transforming Carbon Regions in Australia: A Geographical Political Economy*. Victoria, Australia: VURRN Press.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

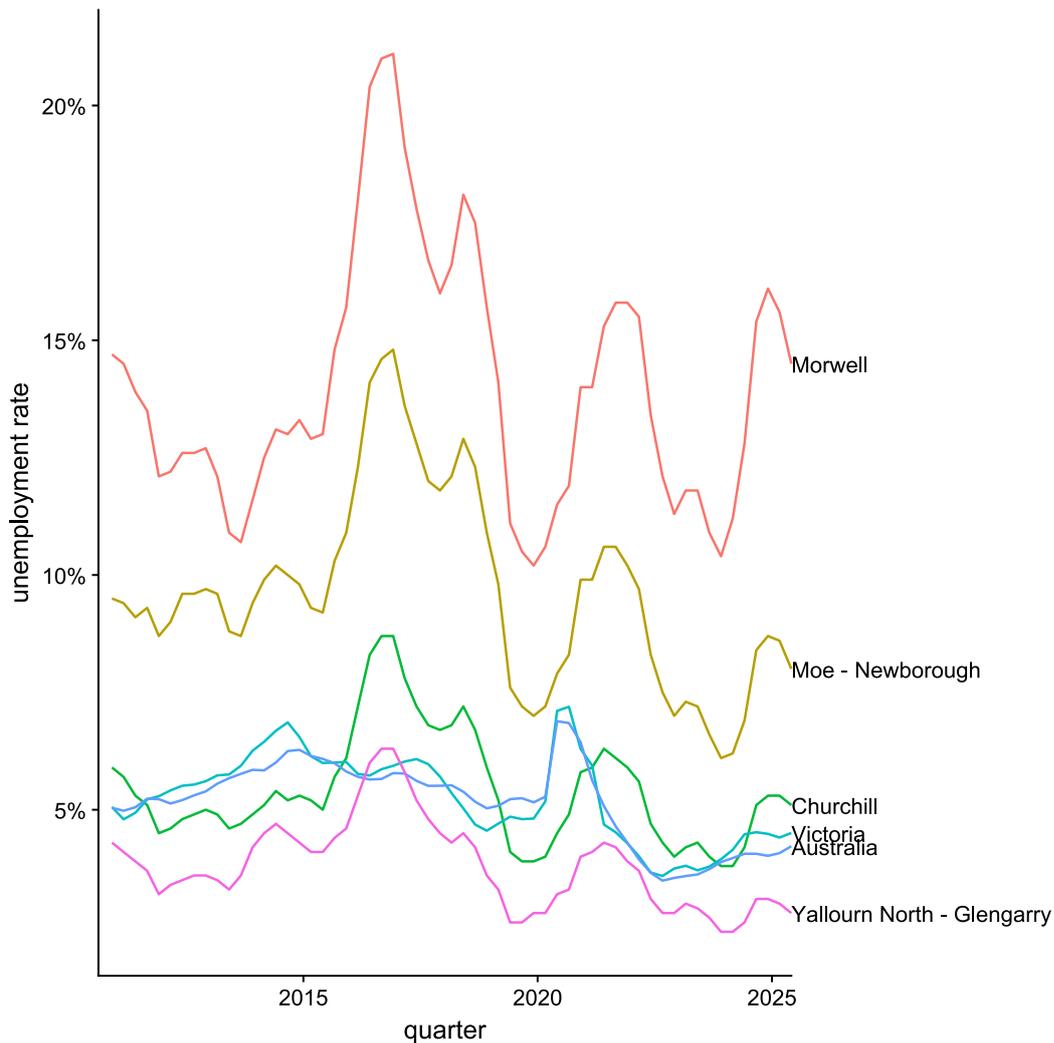
LGAs with highest unemployment rates (%)		
Local Government Area (LGA)	Sep-25	Sep-24
Latrobe (Vic.)	6.3	7.1
East Gippsland	5.1	5.9
Wellington	4.2	4.5
Bass Coast	3.3	3.8
Baw Baw	2.8	3.0

For more insights, access SALM data via dewr.gov.au. Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Small Area Labour Markets, smoothed data, September-25 quarter

As of December 2025, the Gippsland unemployment rate stands at 4.0%¹⁴. However, a closer look at the region tells a different story. Although they follow a similar pattern there is a significant disparity between the localised regions. The unemployment rate in Yallourn North - Glengarry is well below the Australian and Victorian average at 2.8%, while the unemployment rate in Morwell is 14.5%. This shows there are pockets of serious and exacerbated disadvantage in the region. Such large regional variations require a considered and targeted approach to regional transition, as opposed to aggregating all statistics into the broader SA4 region. The unemployment rate in the SA2 regions which make up the Latrobe Valley, as well as Victoria and Australia are shown below.

¹⁴ Jobs and Skills Australia, Gippsland Employment Region, Labour Market Dashboard, January 2026, https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-02/Labour%20Market%20Dashboard%20Gippsland_0.pdf

Figure 1: Unemployment rate (%), Latrobe Valley SA2 regions, Victoria, Australia¹⁵



It is clear a significant amount of regional coordination work, outside the scope of EnergyAustralia’s transition program, is necessary to manage this transition.

Regional prosperity in decline

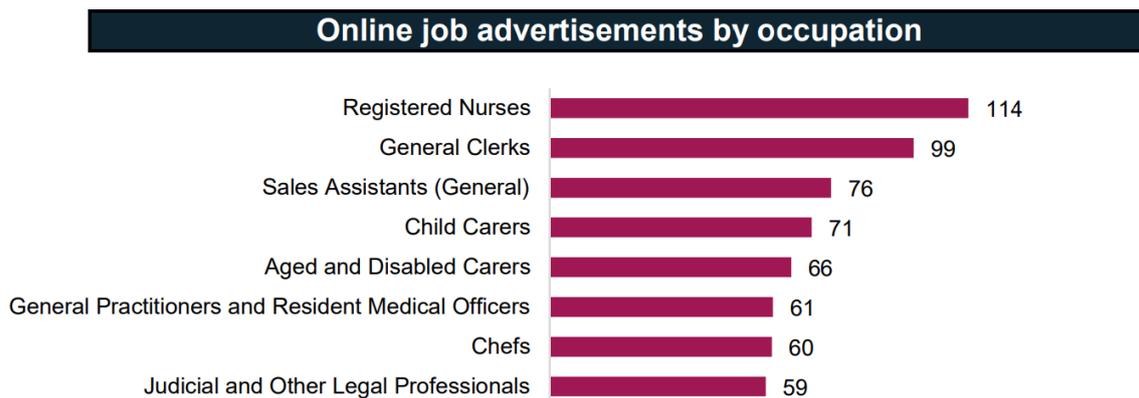
The economic activity of a region can be estimated using a measure called Gross Regional Product. While these estimates are experimental and should be used with caution, they show a decline in the level of economic activity occurring in the Latrobe - Gippsland region between 2015 and 2021. While the nominal level of activity in the region increased, considering the impact of inflation, the average annual change of economic activity in the region was -1.1%. This is a significant finding - of the 88 regions

¹⁵ SALM Smoothed SA2 Datafiles (ASGS 2021) – September quarter 2025, <https://www.dewr.gov.au/employment-research/resources/salm-smoothed-sa2-datafiles-asgs-2021>

analysed nationally, only 9 experienced a decline in economic activity over this period, and the decline in the Latrobe - Gippsland region was the third worst recorded.

Employment in the region

The most recent Jobs and Skills Australia data¹⁶ from December 2025 detailing the top occupations being advertised in the region shows limited-to-no overlap with the skills profile of the impacted workers at Yallourn.



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, Internet Vacancy Index, 3MA of original data, December-25

Job similarity analysis shows that it is difficult to transition to other industries in the region from jobs in the mining and energy industries. As the coal industry declines, reducing access to, and increasing competition for, familiar and transferable employment, the region will dwindle.

Deep concern about future of the community

Power station workers tend to work at the same site for the duration of their careers due to the specialist nature of their skills and the length of time taken to be fully qualified in their roles. Yallourn workers in general live locally and have deep ties to the community due to the long-term nature of their employment.

Unsurprisingly, workers expressed strong concern about the impact of Yallourn's closure on the future of the community. Among all surveyed union members, over 85%

¹⁶ Jobs and Skills Australia, Gippsland Employment Region, Labour Market Dashboard, January 2026, https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-02/Labour%20Market%20Dashboard%20Gippsland_0.pdf

reported being worried about the future prospect of their community – with over half (52%) being very worried.

This concern is backed up by research that shows closures in single-industry towns, like those in the Latrobe Valley, have significant and lasting flow-on impacts for local socio-economic well-being,¹⁷ further supporting our call for an EIJP to ensure a successful regional transition.

About the Unions

The Mining and Energy Union (MEU) is the principal union in the coal industry, including mines, power stations and ports. The MEU is the majority union at both Yallourn Power Station and Mine. In power stations, the MEU's members are responsible for the safe operation of units during normal operation and for the permitting of any tasks involved in scheduled and unplanned maintenance, with a wide variety of roles including power station operator and unit controller. We have members performing all roles necessary to the operation of the Yallourn Mine. The MEU also covers iron ore train drivers and shares coverage of workers in metalliferous mining, oil, gas, electricity and the coke industry, with over 25,000 members nationally. MEU members are significantly impacted by decarbonisation and highly represented among workers displaced by coal closures. The MEU has long advocated for co-ordinated national support for workers displaced by emissions reduction policies, to ensure workers and communities don't pay an unfair price for action to address climate change.

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) is the primary union representing Australian manufacturing workers. We are 60,000 members strong, and we live and work in every region and city of the country. We represent workers across the Latrobe-Gippsland region, and we are especially concerned about the exclusion of contractors from any transition support to date. The workers of Latrobe need a destination for their transition, and we have long advocated that to achieve a just transition closure dates must be linked to guaranteed opening dates of new, unionised manufacturing plants in the regions, as a matter of urgency.

The Electrical Trades Union of Australia (ETU), a division of the CEPU, is the principal union for electrical and electrotechnology tradespeople and apprentices in Australia, representing well over seventy-thousand workers around the country. The ETU advocated for the creation of the NZEA to ensure that our members in fossil fuel industries, who have powered our country to become what it is today, are assured needed certainty from government and the energy sector to allow them to plan for their

¹⁷ Chapain, C., & Murie, A. (2008). *The impact of factory closure on local communities and economies: the case of the MG Rover Longbridge closure in Birmingham*. *Policy Studies*, 29(3), 305-317. doi:10.1080/01442870802159962

futures. ETU members are engaged in work that is integral to the electrical maintenance of plant and equipment, instrumentation, fire alarm and fire-retardant systems, electrical supply, and electrical isolation and safety at Yallourn Power Station and Mine. Local retention of those skills is critical for the realisation of Latrobe as a renewable energy hub, and the development of new industry leveraging that transition. To deliver much needed certainty and achieve a just transition for Yallourn workers, an EIJP must be supported by coordination of planning and investment for a consistent pipeline of work in the region.

The Construction, Forestry, Maritime, and Employees Union Construction and General Division Vic-Tas Divisional Branch (CFMEU) is one of the largest trade unions operating across Victoria, and represents over 37,000 workers in the Victorian Construction Industry. Our union is dedicated to fighting for the rights and safety of our members, which includes securing better pay and working conditions and ensuring greater health and safety. Hundreds of CFMEU members work at on site at Yallourn everyday as riggers, scaffolders, crane operators, industrial cleaners, refractory workers, storemen, peggys, painters and carpenters. These workers are employed by subcontractors but must be considered part of the Yallourn workforce. Previous transition processes have seen sub-contractors excluded from the process, despite facing the same challenges as directly employed workers when a site is closed. We strongly support a just transition process for all workers directly impacted by the closure of Yallourn and the need for government investment to bring new unionised jobs to the region.

The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) is Australia's most diverse blue-collar union, and one of its largest. At Yallourn Power Station, its members work in civil construction and trades. The AWU also shares coverage of Australia's metalliferous mining workforce with the Mining and Energy Union - supporting thousands of workers in mines across the country. With members throughout the energy and industry sectors, and especially as the principal union in gas and heavy industry, tens of thousands of AWU members are acutely exposed to the energy transition. The AWU strongly advocates government assistance to support vulnerable facilities to navigate this transition wherever possible, and for displaced workers and communities where it is not.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) is one of Australia's largest unions, representing approximately 135,000 members from a range of sectors including the social, community and disability sectors, local government, public sector, private sector, administrative, IT, travel call centres, airlines, and the energy sectors, all around the country. ASU energy members work in a variety of classifications across electricity generation, distribution, retail and transmission. We join with unions at Yallourn to call for a fair process for energy workers.