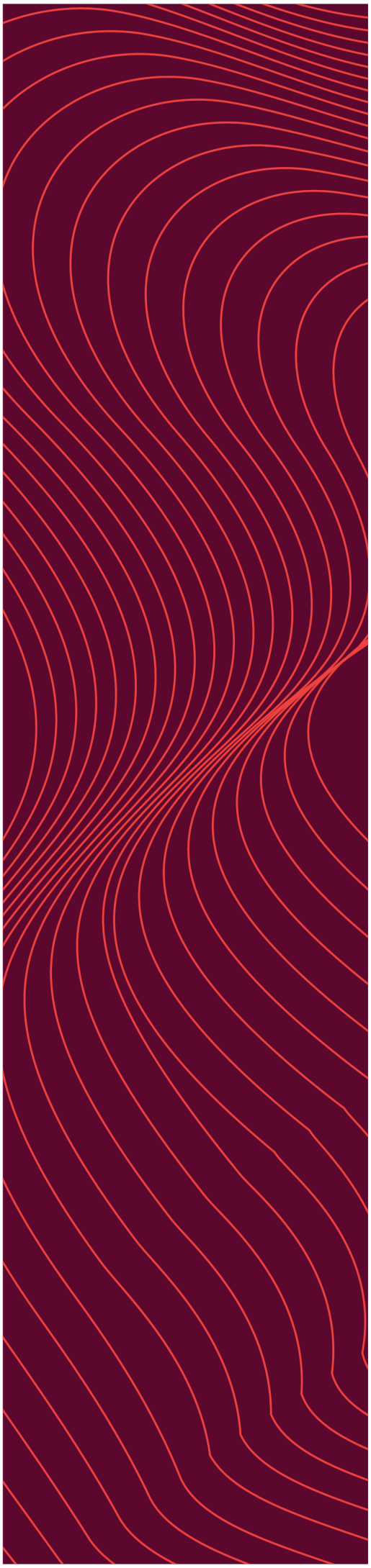
LATROBE CITY COUNCIL

Latrobe City Council's Submission to:

Clean Energy Worker Training Centres



Introduction

Latrobe City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Victorian State Government's request for information about the Clean Energy Worker Training Centres.

Latrobe City is located 135 kilometres east of Melbourne and has a population of **77,606**. This city contributes significantly to the Gippsland region's economy, with an annual economic output of **$13.7 billion** and a business landscape that supports **35,322 jobs**, which represents **30%** of the region's overall employment.

As one of Victora's four regional cities, Latrobe City offers an exceptional quality of life. With access to top-tier sporting facilities, a world-class performing arts centre, diverse retail opportunities, and educational institutions like TAFE Gippsland and Federation University.

Latrobe City is well connected by established public transportation via the Gippsland train line. Housing affordability stands out significantly compared to our neighbouring municipalities. Median house prices range from **$330K** to **$480K,** contrasting starkly with the **$665k** in adjacent areas. [1]

Latrobe City has been the cornerstone of Victoria's power generation for over a century. However, our region faces unprecedented changes with the upcoming mine and power stations closures at Yallourn in 2028 and Loy Yang A in 2035. These closures represent a critical juncture in our history, requiring careful planning and significant investment to ensure a fair and equitable transition for our community.

As Victoria's most heavily impacted and transitioning region, Council is concerned about the lack of clarity surrounding the future of our local workforce and economy.

With the local unemployment rate currently sitting at **5.3%,** significantly higher than other regional cities, Council calls on state and federal governments to provide greater certainty regarding the clean energy workforce and the opportunities it will bring to the local market. [2]

The economic and social challenges associated with this transition will require all levels of government to work together and invest in targeted measures that will support the Latrobe City community now and into the future.

With the closure of the local mines and power stations fast approach the time to plan and invest in Latrobe City’s future is now.

Submission

Council is supportive of the Australia and Victorian Governments commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2050, however our community is disproportionately affected by the associated economic and social impacts caused by industry transition.

The upcoming closures of the Yallourn and Loy Yang A power stations and mines will result in the loss of high-paying jobs that have supported our local economy for decades. Additionally, the recent closure of native timber harvesting is negatively impacting local industries, such as the papermill, worsening our economic challenges.

In this submission, Council will outline why the Latrobe City area is a logical location to host the Clean Energy Worker Training Centres and how they can play an important role in supporting our city’s economic transition.

Strategic Advantages of Latrobe City

1: A History and a Future

Council is committed to advocating for a future within the evolving energy landscape.

[1] Latrobe City Economic Snapshot 2023/24
[2] Remplan - Latrobe Demographic and Community Insights

For over a century, our identity and economy have been shaped by traditional industries, including coal-powered energy generation and native timber harvesting. However, as the nation transitions to cleaner energy sources, this identity faces challenges.

The clean energy workforce presents a significant opportunity for the local community, boosting employment and driving economic output. In Latrobe City, this workforce will not only support our core identity but will also align with our historical role as Victoria's energy powerhouse, a legacy that has lasted over a century.

Establishing these training centres in Latrobe City will allow us to continue fulfilling this vital role. They will equip residents with essential skills for emerging industries, such as offshore wind and hydrogen production, ensuring that Latrobe City remains a key player in Victoria's new energy landscape and providing local jobs both now and in the future.

These training centres can significantly improve employment outcomes across the Latrobe City area. Currently, the unemployment rate sits at 5.3%, with youth unemployment at a concerning 14% which is significantly higher than other regional cities. The Victorian State Government has projected 59,000 new jobs in the renewable energy sector, and strategic investment in training centres could play a crucial role in addressing this issue. By establishing these centres in Latrobe City and implementing local job quotas within the renewable energy sector, the government can provide young people with clear pathways to future employment opportunities. This approach would encourage them to study, work, and ultimately build their careers in the region.

Recommendation:

- **Consider Latrobe City's long-standing history in coal-powered energy generation when selecting the site for the Clean Energy Worker Training Centres.**

2: Leaders of the Hydrogen Economy

Declaring the Latrobe City area as a Hydrogen Hub will stimulate job creation across the energy and supply chain sectors, ensuring that Latrobe City remains an essential part of Victoria's emerging energy landscape as the transition beyond coal intensifies.

Latrobe City is ideally positioned to lead the hydrogen economy with our skilled workforce, existing infrastructure, and several renewable energy projects planned for the region. Additionally, with access to brown coal reserves capable of sustaining blue hydrogen for 600 to 800 years the Latrobe City area can provide an immediate and practical entry into the hydrogen market well before green hydrogen becomes commercially viable in Australia.

The recent success of projects like the Hydrogen to Energy Supply Chain (HESC) pilot and the CarbonNet project demonstrates the regions readiness to advance the hydrogen economy.

Latrobe City already has innovative hydrogen projects that are well underway, including research projects at Federation University and the Aerospace Technology Precinct at Latrobe Regional Airport where in partnership with Dovetail Electric Aviation and Invest Victoria an aviation centre was launched, which aims to build regional aircraft with batteries and hydrogen propulsion to enable net-zero flights. [3]

Latrobe City has a proven success in the Hydrogen market and will continue to advocate for the commercialisation of hydrogen projects such as HESC.

Council encourages the Victorian State Government to use this opportunity to formally recognise the Latrobe City area as a future Hydrogen Hub, by locating the Clean Energy Worker Training Centres here, paving the way for a sustainable and innovative energy future and support economic diversification.

Recommendation:

- **Formally designate Latrobe City as a Hydrogen Hub, with the Clean Energy Training Centres as a key component.**

[3] Official launch of Dovetail Electric Aviation Development Centre.

3: Access to a skilled workforce

Latrobe City's workforce is a valuable asset that should be considered favourable as part of this process. With over 3,000 fossil fuel workers in the Gippsland region and two-thirds based in Latrobe City, the suitability and benefits of the Latrobe City area location is obvious.[4]

Many of these workers already have foundational skills in energy production that can be readily transitioned to the renewable energy sector. Additionally, with a local unemployment rate of 5.3%, these training centres can support employment opportunities on a broader level.

By investing in targeted training programs, the training centres can offer qualifications in wind turbine maintenance, hydrogen fuel production, and other renewable technologies. This will address the skills gap and support Australia's renewable energy goals while building on the existing offerings at Federation University and TAFE Gippsland, which are already leaders in the sector.

Furthermore, establishing these training centres in the Latrobe City area will enable the local workforce to transition their skills close to home, ensuring continued employment opportunities within the region.

Recommendation:

- **Consider the region's skilled workforce as an advantage when selecting a site for the Clean Energy Training Centres**

4: Education and Economic Diversification

Increasing educational attainment and attracting new residents are key priorities for the Council, as research shows that population growth is one of the most effective ways to support a transitioning economy. [5] Approximately 70% of individuals who study locally tend to remain in the area after completing their education. [6]Therefore, Council encourages the Victorian State Government to consider the potential population growth these training centres could bring to Latrobe City when choosing a location.

These training centres will boost the local economy by supporting sectors such as accommodation, retail, and hospitality, as apprentices and workers travel to the area for training. By positioning Latrobe City as a leader in clean energy training within the southern hemisphere, the region can attract international wind and hydrogen workers seeking specialised skills. This initiative will strengthen the regional economy and reinforce Latrobe City's status as a hub for energy education and innovation.

Furthermore, these training centres will play a vital role in economic diversification as the Latrobe City area transitions away from traditional industries. Establishing them locally will not only provide economic benefits but also help build a stronger community identity, encourage local education and employment, and attract new residents and investment, promoting sustainable economic growth.

Recommendation:

- **Consider the benefits of educational attainment and economic diversification that locating the Clean Energy Worker Training Centres in Latrobe City will bring to the region.**

5: Strategic Location and Infrastructure

Latrobe City is strategically situated near over 32 major renewable energy projects, including solar, the Gippsland Offshore Wind Zone, battery, biomass, and hydrogen, making it an ideal location for these training centres.

As significant investments continue to flow into renewable energy projects, the demand for a skilled workforce is rapidly increasing, and Latrobe City is well-positioned to meet this need. The region already boasts established training programs at TAFE Gippsland and Federation University, both

[4] TAFE Gippsland (2024), Powering the Energy Transition
[5] (Li et al., 2022; Mahmoudinia et al., 2020).
[6] Federation University (2023) Campus vision 2023-2023

conveniently located near renewable energy initiatives. By situating training facilities close to the job market, future workers can gain valuable hands-on experience, internships, and work placements that are essential for developing practical skills in real-world environments.

Moreover, Latrobe City offers excellent infrastructure, including a well-connected train line, alongside high liveability factors such as top-tier sporting facilities, a world-class performing arts centre, and affordable housing. These attributes make it an attractive place to live and raise a family, further enhancing its suitability for the training centres.

Additionally, TAFE Gippsland has made significant investments in new buildings and infrastructure to support the emerging energy workforce, with a state-of-the-art Clean Energy Centre set to open in 2026 and as the leader of the new Offshore Wind Skills Lab for the Victorian TAFE Network, Latrobe City in partnership with TAFE Gippsland and Federation University is a logical choice for expanding and enhancing these existing resources.

Recommendation:

- **Prioritise the Latrobe City's proximity to established infrastructure and market access when selecting a site for the Clean Energy Worker Training Centres.**

Conclusion

Latrobe City Council calls on the Victorian State Government to recognise the strategic advantages of establishing Clean Energy Worker Training Centres in Latrobe City.

With a rich history in energy production, an existing skilled workforce, and robust infrastructure, Latrobe City is ideally positioned to lead the transition to a renewable energy future.

These training centres will play a crucial role in providing essential skills for emerging industries, such as offshore wind and hydrogen production. By doing so, they will ensure that the community remains at the forefront of Victoria's clean energy landscape and support local employment, economic diversification, and create a pathway for a sustainable future for the Latrobe City area.

Council remains committed to advocating for a fair and equitable transition for the community. Establishing these training centres will secure long-term employment opportunities, attract new investment, and bolster Latrobe City's status as a leader in clean energy innovation.

We look forward to partnering with the Victorian State Government, our community and industry to realise this vision and to ensure that the Latrobe City benefits from the new energy economy.

We thank the Victorian State Government for consulting on this matter. Should you require further information about this submission, Council's Transition Plan or Advocacy Agenda which I enclose with this submission for your information, please do not hesitate to get in contact with She Hansen our Senior Strategy and Advocacy Advisor on 0459 847 411 or Shae.Hansen@latrobe.vic.gov.au.

Your Sincerely,



Steven Piasente
Chief Executive Officer