

Paving the way: Creating strong talent pathways for women in energy

Energy Group



CHAMPIONS OF
CHANGE COALITION



EY
Shape the future
with confidence

We recognise women in all their diversity

Efforts to advance gender equality have not lifted all women equally. By highlighting the specific demographics of people who experience exclusion, we increase their visibility and boost understanding of how exclusion is experienced within organisations and in society more generally.

Inclusive gender equality recognises that diversity, equity and inclusion strategies must consider and engage all genders in global efforts to achieve gender equality, with a particular focus on elevating and advancing currently underrepresented and marginalised groups.

At its core, the intent is to create respectful, safe and inclusive cultures of belonging for all.

Throughout this document, the terms 'women' and 'girls' includes both cis and trans women and girls.

When referring to diverse people, we mean the wealth and variety of people and aspects of identity that broadly make up Australia's population. We recognise that some women can experience intersecting inequalities as a result of structural inequalities and multiple, intersecting and compounding barriers to inclusion and progression including:

- Socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- First Nations backgrounds
- Ethnically and/or racially marginalised backgrounds
- Single parents and sole caregivers
- People with disabilities (visible or invisible)
- Neurodivergent people
- LGBTQIA+.



Foreword

The Australian energy sector stands at a pivotal moment, with the transition to net zero presenting both immense opportunities and significant challenges.

The Champions of Change Coalition Energy Group is taking on the challenge of the transformational leadership that will be required to achieve our decarbonisation goals. It's often said we can't solve new problems with old thinking. Similarly, our leaders must transform themselves so they can lead the transformation of our energy system and society.

One of our most urgent needs is ensuring we have the skilled workforce to drive this transformation.

The sector's significant gender imbalance is potentially the low-hanging fruit in this task: if we make energy roles more attractive to women, and improve our overall diversity and inclusiveness, we can substantially expand our available staffing pool and access the broad range of talent we need.

This report from the Champions of Change Coalition provides timely opportunities for how we can help resource the transition by increasing women's participation at all levels and pathways into the sector.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed the transformative power of diversity, nested within an inclusive culture. We need to find many, and more diverse women to contribute their expertise to our goals for net zero by 2050, while also ensuring they benefit equally from the transition.

Despite some progress, notably in renewables and government bodies, women remain significantly underrepresented across the energy sector. Addressing this imbalance is not just a matter of equity; it is a strategic imperative. We simply cannot scale at the pace required or solve the complex problems of our sector without tapping into the full breadth and diversity of the available talent pool.

This review lays out actionable opportunities that call for industry-wide and cross-sector collaboration underpinned by a commitment to systemic change. It focuses on overcoming barriers and creating opportunities for women across educational, vocational, lateral and international pathways into the sector. The initiatives outlined are practical, bold and necessary to ensure that our sector attracts and retains a skilled and multidisciplinary workforce.

As Chair of the Australian Energy Market Commission and a global energy equality ambassador, I am proud to lend my support to this important work. Together, we can build a more inclusive, innovative and resilient energy sector – one that truly reflects the diverse society it serves.



Anna Collyer
Chair
Australian Energy Market Commission
Australian Equality in Energy Transitions Ambassador



We simply cannot scale at the pace required or solve the complex problems of our sector without tapping into the **full breadth and diversity of the available talent pool.**



Anna Collyer
Chair
Australian Energy Market Commission
Australian Equality in Energy Transitions Ambassador

Acknowledgement of Country

Champions of Change Coalition acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and commit to building a brighter future together. Our head office is located on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. The 'Eora people' was the name given to the coastal Aboriginal peoples around Sydney. 'Eora' means 'here' or 'from this place'. The workplaces of our people and Champions of Change Coalition Members span the nation and the world. We extend our respects to the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we and our members work and live.

About the Champions of Change Energy Group

The Champions of Change Energy Group was established in June 2023. The Group includes representatives from the energy sector including energy generation and production, distribution, retail and resources businesses across Australia. Members have come together to work within and across their organisations to achieve inclusive gender equality and a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership.

The Energy Group's purpose is to ensure women's expertise, innovation and insights are harnessed as part of Australia's trillion-dollar energy transition.

The intent is that women will be equally represented, engaged in and benefiting from this once in a lifetime social, environmental and economic transformation.

The Energy Group's priorities include developing women leaders at every level; creating workplace cultures where everyone feels respected, valued and equal; and taking a more intentional and coordinated approach to enabling more women and girls to pursue careers in the sector.

Five CEO-led 'action groups' have been established to lead this work:

- ① Building the talent pipeline and pathways for women and girls into the energy
- ② Visible, inclusive and expansive views of leadership
- ③ Safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces
- ④ Tackling 'tough spots': recruitment and promotion of women in key roles and gender imbalanced job families and industries
- ⑤ Gender equal and inclusive design, including a focus on inclusive personal protective equipment.

This report focuses on Item 1: Building the talent pipeline and pathways for women and girls into the energy sector. We look forward to sharing progress and outcomes from other action groups in the future.

Champions of Change Energy Sector Members



Dennis Barnes
CEO & Managing
Director
Snowy Hydro



Ian Brooksbank
Former CEO
(2022-2024)
Hydro Tasmania



Frank Calabria
CEO & Managing
Director
Origin Energy



Guy Chalkley
CEO
Endeavour Energy



Lisa Chiba
Managing Director
Momentum Energy



John Cleland
CEO
Essential Energy



Mark Collette
Managing Director
EnergyAustralia



Phaedra Deckart
CEO
Solstice Energy



Jeff Dimery
CEO & Managing
Director
Alinta Energy



Marc England
CEO
Ausgrid*



Simon Emms
CEO
ElectraNet



David Gillespie
Managing Director
Jemena



Anthea Harris
CEO
Australian Energy
Regulator



Tony Keeling
CEO
Shell Energy Australia



Louisa Kinnear
CEO
Australian Energy
Council



Damien Nicks
CEO & Managing
Director
AGL



Michael O'Rourke
CEO
Stanwell Corporation



Brett Redman
CEO
Transgrid



Peter Scott
CEO
Energy Queensland



David Smales
CEO
AusNet Services



Kane Thornton
CEO
Clean Energy Council



Dominique van den Berg
CEO
Energy Networks
Australia



Erin van Maaren
Acting CEO
Hydro Tasmania



Adam Watson
CEO & Managing
Director
APA Group*



Daniel Westerman
CEO & Managing
Director
Australian Energy
Market Operator



Scott Wyatt
CEO
Viva Energy Australia*



James Fazzino
Group Co-Convenor
Independent Director
APA Group



Elizabeth Broderick AO
Group Co-Convenor
Founder
Champions of Change Coalition

*Members of Champions of Change Coalition 2017 Group

Introduction

Transforming Australia's energy workforce

Australia's race to net zero is accelerating, but a looming workforce crisis could slow the pace. The energy sector – spanning generation, distribution, transmission and retail – is facing severe skills shortages that threaten to derail progress. One of the biggest obstacles? The stark gender imbalance that prevents the sector from scaling.

Women remain significantly underrepresented across all levels of the energy workforce, particularly in high-skill, critical and leadership roles. According to the latest data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) for 2023/24, men hold the majority of roles in energy organisations with more than 250 employees (71% in electricity and 66% in gas). The gender gap is even more pronounced in specific areas of the clean energy sector.

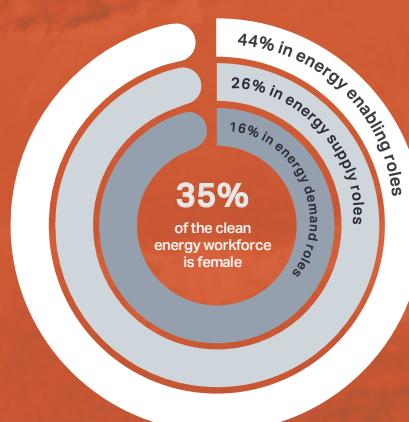
Jobs and Skills Australia has found that men account for 74% of roles in clean energy supply and an overwhelming 84% in clean energy demand.

To meet the challenges of the net zero transition, we need to attract and retain diverse talent.

This requires a dual approach: expanding the talent pipeline, while also fostering workplace cultures that are safe, respectful and inclusive, so all people – especially women in all their diversity – can build thriving careers.

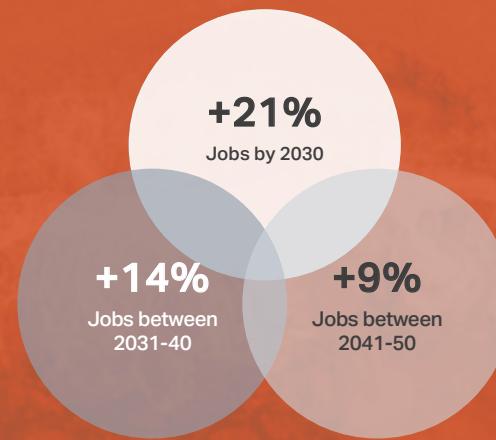
This report presents findings from the EY Energy Talent Pipeline Review, detailing the strategic importance of increasing female representation and summarising key insights alongside actionable opportunities which can be pursued by key stakeholders in the energy sector and wider eco-system.

Diversity in Australia's clean energy workforce



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, 2023.

Australia's net zero workforce of the future



Source: Powering Skills Organisation, 2024.

Transformative mindsets drive energy transformation

Transformational leadership, particularly through initiatives like the Champions of Change Coalition strategy, will be crucial in creating the workplace cultures necessary to tackle the challenges ahead. EY Australia is collaborating with Oxford University, Saïd Business School on a multi-year study that finds human-centred leadership is a critical success factor that improves the chance of a successful transformation by a factor of 2.6.

This research underscores the importance of 'transformational mindsets' in driving the necessary change. It shows that successful execution of transformation at the macro (systemic), meso (industry) and micro (organisational or individual) levels will require energy leaders with the following behaviours, skills and mindsets.

The Champions of Change strategy aligns with these priorities:

- 1 **Lead with purpose:** Connect the transformation to what people believe in, creating a shared vision that inspires commitment.
- 2 **Make ethical decisions:** Draw on ethical frameworks to guide decision-making, ensuring integrity in every choice.
- 3 **Listen to learn:** Proactively build high-trust relationships to understand and address concerns long before problems arise.
- 4 **Shape the environment:** Create a culture that fosters high performance and deep learning, enabling individuals to thrive during transformation.
- 5 **Encourage open communication:** Leaders often unintentionally suppress open communication about challenges. Addressing this dynamic is mission-critical.
- 6 **Co-create to problem solve:** Facilitate collaboration by gathering all stakeholders in the same room, empowering them to address challenges collectively.
- 7 **Architect system shifts:** Begin the real work of making the transformation program the new normal. Many initiatives falter when new ways of working are not sustained beyond the initial implementation.



Members of the Champions of Change Energy Group believe that **women bring invaluable skills and capabilities** to lead and engage in this once-in-a-lifetime social, environmental and economic transformation. This report is a significant step towards realising this vision.



Daniel Westerman
CEO & Managing Director
Australian Energy Market Operator

The economic impact of advancing gender equality

\$128 billion
economic impact
per year across all
industries¹

+461,000 FTE
extra FTE per year
across all industries¹

11% GDP
increase in Australia
GDP²

Sources: 1. Deloitte 2022 and 2. Victorian Government 2023.

By identifying barriers and understanding key areas of opportunity, we can pinpoint the most impactful actions to create strong talent pathways for women in energy.

Breaking down barriers

Critical barriers prevent girls and women from embarking on successful career paths in Australia's energy sector. The obstacles outlined below are well known, and this review acknowledges that significant efforts are underway to remediate issues and remove barriers to retention of female talent in the energy industry.

- 1 The energy sector is male-dominated**

Women represent less than 40% of the clean energy workforce and around 20% of the entire energy sector. Energy is the third most male-dominated industry in Australia, after mining and construction (WGEA, 2023).
- 2 Societal norms create participation barriers**

When surveyed, 29% of women felt they were not good enough at science to pursue a degree or career in engineering, and 25% said the same about maths, despite self-reporting that they excelled at both subjects in school (Women in Energy, 2022).
- 3 Female participation in STEM falls at each education phase**

In Years 11-12, 25% of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) students are female, but this drops to 17% at the tertiary level and just 15% in STEM-qualified jobs (STEM Equity Monitor, 2023).
- 4 STEM curriculum and teaching in schools is not consistent**

Teacher gender bias in marking deters girls from pursuing STEM subjects, leading to gender inconsistencies in STEM education (Dr. Rigissa Megalokonomou, UQ School of Economics, 2021).
- 5 The VET and energy sectors are not aligned**

Women account for just 17% of vocational and educational training (VET) STEM enrolments (STEM Equity Monitor, 2023). Completion rates for trades and technicians languish at 60-65% (Powering Skills, 2023).
- 6 Women experience physical safety and psychosocial issues**

1 in 5 women in the energy sector report bullying or exclusion in their workplace (Women in Energy, 2022).
- 7 Programs to recruit and retain women are sporadic or ad hoc**

Only 1 in 5 leadership roles in the energy sector are held by women, leaving few female role models and mentors to inspire future generations (World Economic Forum, 2022).
- 8 Regional and remote working limits women's participation in energy**

Location of work is one of the top barriers preventing women from participating in the sector (Ai Group, 2023).
- 9 Visa processes are arduous**

The increasing costs and inconsistent processing times deter organisations from investing in international talent attraction programs. Most energy organisations do not have the capabilities, processes and controls to navigate the requirements.

Methodology

EY Energy Talent Pipeline Review

To gain a deeper understanding of the drivers and barriers affecting women's careers in the energy sector, EY Australia analysed the key talent pathways. We investigated tactical and systemic barriers that limit women's participation and identified practical, innovative and disruptive opportunities to enhance a gender equal talent pipeline. The opportunities for actions aim to boost essential skills and increase women's representation over the short, medium and long-term.

Desktop review

60+ resources

to inform our hypotheses and opportunities.

Qualitative interviews

40+ interviews and focused groups

including with energy sector CEOs and implementation leaders, DCCEEW Women in Energy, Equality in Energy Transition Ambassadors Program.

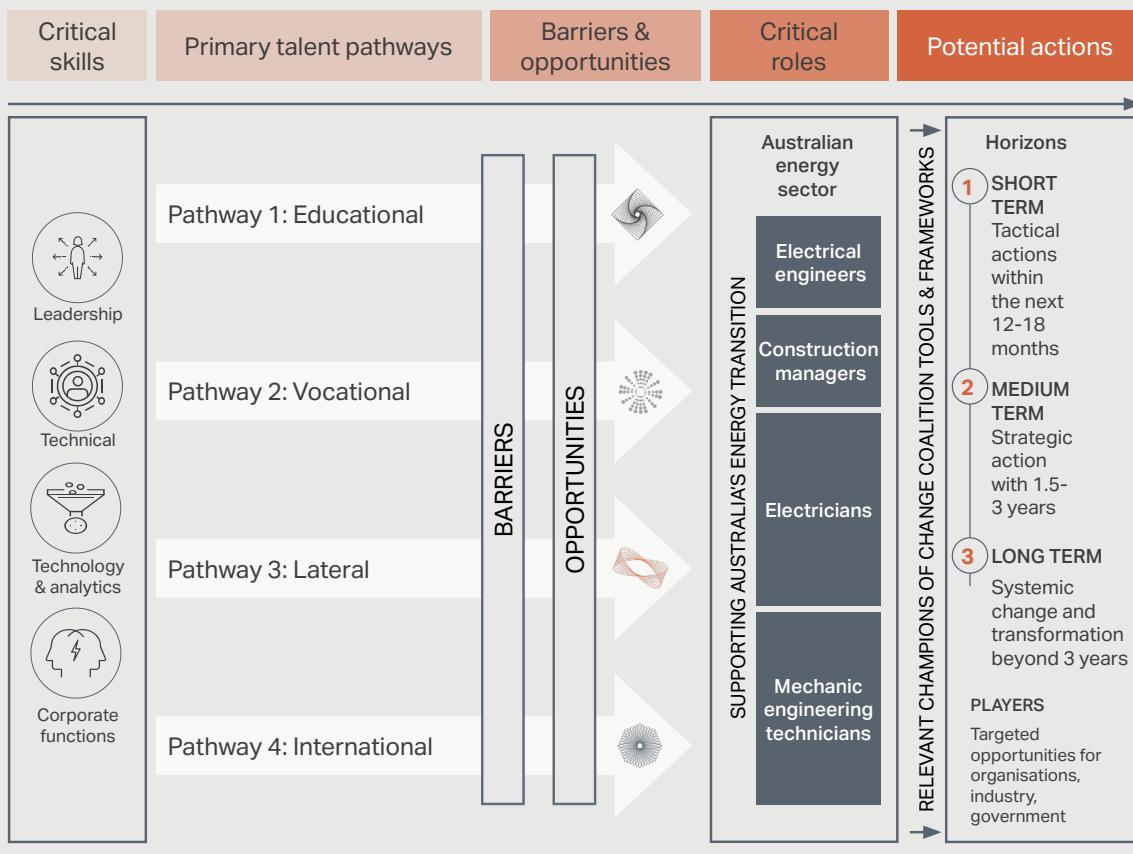
People and culture leaders
EY Wavespace™

Collaborative
problem-solving workshop

to deep dive into findings and opportunities.

Review framework

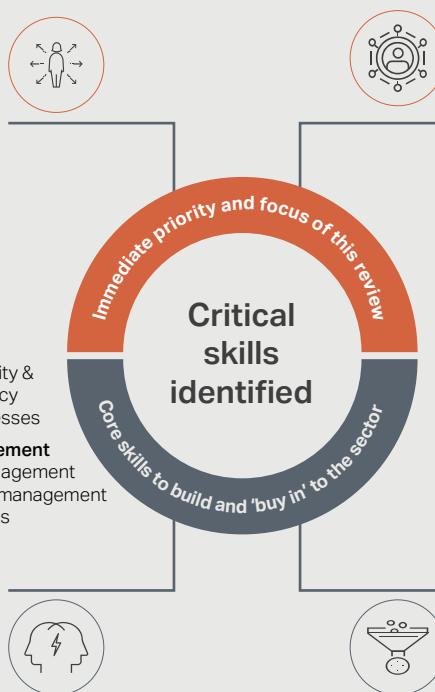
The following framework was used to guide the research and development of this report.



The review identified critical skills in the energy sector. While all skills are important, transformative leadership and technical skills emerged as the top priorities.

Transformative leadership

- Problem solving
- Innovation
- Influence
- People management
- Adaptive thinking
- Leading through ambiguity
- Interpersonal skills
- Lateral thinking



Technical

Engineering skills specifically in:

- Electrical
- Mechanical
- Renewable
- Environmental
- Chemical
- Structural
- Power system

Tradespeople and technicians skills specifically in:

- High voltage electricians
- Mechanics
- Electronic electrician
- Electrical distribution

Corporate functions

Financial analysis & investment

- Investment management

Regulatory & policy

- Regulatory analysis
- Policy interpretation
- Legal

Foundational skills

- Communication skills
- Numeracy & literacy
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving

Technology & analytics

Digital skills with the adoption of new technology

- Technical aptitude & adoption
- Information governance
- Systems design thinking
- Data management
- Data analytics

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- Generative AI
- Data literacy

Cybersecurity

- Energy grid cybersecurity

Four primary talent pathways were examined to understand their role in preparing girls and women for critical roles in the energy sector. This uncovered the key barriers (outlined on page 10 of this report), as well as best practice exemplars for each of the four talent pathways (see pages 19-21).

	Pathway 1 – Educational		Pathway 2 – Vocational		Pathway 3 – Lateral		Pathway 4 – International
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to formal education in the primary, secondary and university sectors Focused on STEM participation and teaching methods and links with industry to promote attraction to STEM Influenced by parents, teachers and key roles models at each phase Focused on awareness and understanding of links between chosen subjects and future career prospects 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to formal education in the vocational sector which lead to certifications or diplomas Emphasis on industry-focused trades programs and apprenticeships Impacted by hands-on, practical learning in the workplace, direct mentorship and real-world experience and skills development 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on recruitment of talent from other sectors e.g. public service, agriculture, mining, finance, insurance, and legal Emphasis on adaptability and transferable skills Critical for innovation and sustainability in the energy sector 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on recruitment of overseas talent into the Australian energy sector and contributes to a diverse and skilled workforce Aims to utilise incentives to attract international professionals Driven by domestic skills shortages and essential for filling short term skill gaps 	

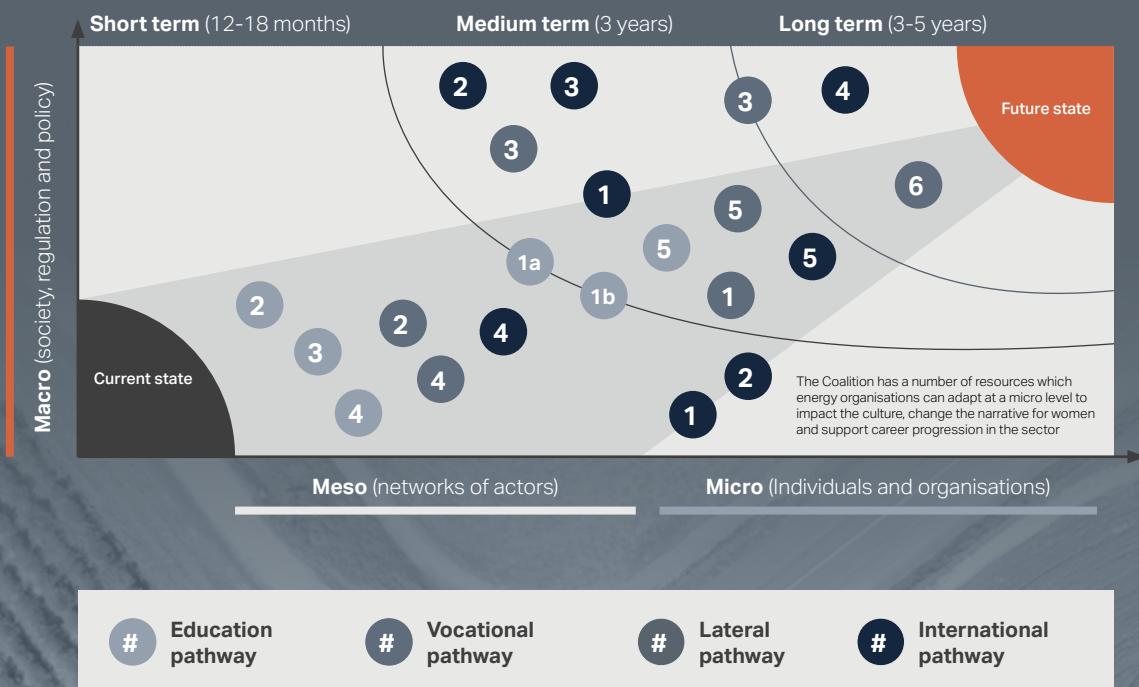
We prioritised technical and trade roles where boosting the participation of women will deliver the greatest positive impact on the energy sector.

	Technical		Draftspeople and technicians
1	Electrical engineers (31,600 projected growth by 2033)	1	Electricians (projected 27,500 growth by 2033)
2	Construction managers (projected 159,800 growth by 2034)	2	Electrical engineering drafts- persons and technicians (e.g. electricians) (projected 11,400 growth by 2033)
3	Power engineers	3	Electrical distribution trades workers (projected 9,900 growth by 2033)
4	Mechanical engineers	4	Mechanical engineering drafts- persons and technicians (e.g. mechanical trades) (projected 6,900 growth by 2033)

Opportunities for action were assessed with the 'Triple M' framework:



Opportunities for action were then categorised by responsibility and prioritised based on importance and difficulty.



Opportunities

The following section outlines suggested opportunities for action across the four talent pathways. All actions are encouraged but not mandatory and we recognise some opportunities may cross over with existing programs of work or not be applicable to all Champions of Change Coalition Energy Group.

Education pathway

To arrest the drop off in girls studying STEM-related curricula, we will invest in building closer relationships between the energy industry and educational organisations. This seeks to build more widespread capabilities in STEM and better educate parents, girls, teachers and career counsellors of the opportunities a career in the energy sector presents for women.

Actions	Category	Horizon
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. a) Partner with the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) to scale the STELR Program<li>b) Partner with Engineers Australia and ATSE STELR evidence-based Program Renewable Energy Pilot to deliver resources and teacher training, supported by role models from the energy sector.	Meso	Short-medium term
2. Partner with The Orbispace Initiative to invest in industry-wide partnerships with primary and secondary schools to develop energy industry-specific STEM modules and content.	Meso	Short term
3. Establish and invest in a multi-year, cross-organisation Energy Industry Internship Program. This program would provide employment and work experience to first year, female students in core STEM degrees.	Meso	Short term
4. In collaboration with Champions of Change Coalition, advocate for changes in primary and secondary school curriculums to introduce STEM into the classroom earlier during primary school and increase the depth of STEM learning.	Meso	Short term
5. Create stronger and more systematic organisational connections with schools and universities. Create industry-wide work experience and mentorship programs for young girls, and platforms to profile women role models in the energy sector.	Meso	Medium term

Opportunities

Vocational pathway

Champions of Change Energy Group members are committed to boosting the awareness and attractiveness of trade-based energy careers for women, by examining the suitability of traditional apprentice models and skills development programs. This includes prioritising engagement with unions, the VET sector, government training organisations and registered training organisations, while also continuing to evolve on-the-job training and experiences.

Actions	Category	Horizon
1. Partner with the federal government's Powering Skills Organisation (or related organisations) to develop a Women in Energy Vocational Strategy, focusing on training, micro-learning and industry wide trade-based skills development.	Meso	Medium term
2. Amplify women in energy trade-based careers by developing industry-wide templates for recruitment (role requirements), learning and training programs. Partner with organisations such as Tradeswomen Australia and leverage proven Champions of Change member models (such as Viva Energy).	Meso	Short term
3. Partner with the VET sector to expand programs and resources to support women obtain VET teacher training, emphasising skill enhancement in energy-related trade topics. Educate the industry on its role to support women participating in these programs.	Macro	Medium term
4. Invest in industry-wide energy career trade fairs for regional and metropolitan areas. Initial efforts may be targeted at regional areas.	Meso	Short term
5. Commit to industry-wide internships and graduate programs for women in critical roles (for example, electricians) to quickly build critical mass. There is potential to amplify in partnership with organisations like Tradeswomen Australia.	Meso	Medium term

Opportunities

Lateral pathway

To attract women from adjacent industries and grow the talent pool, develop a differentiated Industry Employee Value Proposition for women. This includes identifying ways to promote our purpose-led essential industry and increase the transferability of skills and experiences from adjacent industries.

While this report primarily addresses attracting women to critical STEM and leadership roles, there is also significant potential to attract women from other sectors. Skills and expertise in areas such as customer service, community engagement, legal and regulatory affairs, human resources and sustainability can be readily transferred into the energy sector, enriching it with diverse perspectives and knowledge essential for immediate and long-term innovation.

Actions	Category	Horizon
1. Invest in the development of an energy Industry Employee Value Proposition (IEVP) to attract women to energy careers. Emphasis will be on technical and related roles. Implement Champions of Change 'Test the Messages' resources across member organisations as a 'micro' initiative. Leverage advertising and marketing relationships to develop an IEVP at the 'meso' level.	Micro and meso	Short term
2. Invest in targeted programs to attract talent from adjacent sectors. Note: this would specifically focus on areas like customer service, community engagement, legal and regulatory affairs, human resources and sustainability.	Micro and meso	Short term
3. Advocate, in collaboration with the Champions of Change Coalition, for broader regional development plans that integrate social, educational, health and other infrastructure to support greater female participation in regional energy industry roles. This opportunity also applies to the International Pathway.	Macro	Medium-long term
4. Create an energy careers portal with tailored pathways for girls and women based on their interests and skills. Leverage or partner with Year13 online careers portal and Careers for Net Zero. This opportunity also applies to the Educational Pathway.	Meso	Short term
5. Create a gender equality industry procurement standard to encourage inclusion of women in all recruitment and procurement decisions (e.g. female targets for all contractor workforces).	Meso	Medium term
6. Invest in an industry-wide Energy Sector Skills Passport. Include credentials of key skills gained within the energy and adjacent sectors to encourage lateral movement.	Meso	Long term

Opportunities

International pathway

Leverage and scale up skilled migration with a focus on women to help close the skills and gender pay gap. Involves leading and supporting efforts to make relevant processes more affordable and accessible for women in key skill areas. Success will depend on close collaboration and support from the sector and key partners.

Actions	Category	Horizon
1. Help to streamline registration processes by engaging with mandatory engineering registration bodies in Australia, such as the Registry of Professional Engineers in Queensland and Engineers Australia.	Micro and meso	Medium term
2. In collaboration with the broader Champions of Change Coalition, support and advocate for the reforms that were outlined in the Review of Migration System Final Report.	Macro	Medium term
3. Consider options to develop targeted international mobility programs and benefits that encourage women to specific relocation opportunities. This opportunity also applies to the Vocational Pathway.	Macro	Medium term
4. Work with relevant government departments for inclusion of existing and emerging engineering occupations on the ANZSCO and approved lists, including Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) which will underpin eligibility for the new Skills in Demand visa program.	Macro	Long term

Amplifying energy exemplars

Talent pathways best practice examples

Many Australian energy companies are already making progress in building pathways for women in energy. There are also valuable examples from other countries, industries and

organisations that can guide the energy sector in strengthening relationships with key players across talent pipelines.

Pathway 1: Educational

Engineer the Future Program, Denmark

- **Challenge:** The Engineer the Future program was created to address Denmark's forecast shortage of 13,000 engineering, IT and science graduates in 2030.
- **Action:** 200 volunteer role models joined classrooms to talk honestly about their pathways into the profession, including their struggles; bespoke engineering teacher support materials and 'gender-aware' science teaching programs were developed to challenge unconscious bias.
- **Result:** Interest in engineering degrees has increased, with 22.1% of all higher education applications for STEM programs. Ongoing government funding will establish and expand the program in primary and secondary schools from 2024 to 2027.

The Orbispace Initiative, Australia

- **Challenge:** In 2021, 23% of Australian girls aged 12-17 aspired to STEM careers, compared with 47% of boys (STEM Equity Monitor, 2022).
- **Action:** The Orbispace Initiative, in collaboration with the UNSW Digital Grid Futures Institute, equips Year 8 girls with skills, industry experiences, networks and mentorship, and encourages application of STEM skills to solve for 'real world' challenges.
- **Result:** Participants in the program are 50% more likely to continue STEM subjects. More than 90% of students who participate report an uplift in confidence, communication and engagement with STEM learning.

Australian Academy of Technology, Sciences and Engineering STELR Program, Australia

- **Challenge:** Australia faces a shortfall of 50,000 engineers over the next few years (Engineers Australia, 2023).
- **Action:** ATSE's STELR Program is a hands-on, inquiry-based, in-curriculum program designed for secondary schools. It features 12 curriculum modules, 280 lessons and 100 hands-on equipment kits that support energy related topics, including electricity, solar cars and wind energy.
- **Result:** STELR resources are in a third of Australian schools, increasing STEM literacy, teacher awareness and engagement, and profiling career opportunities in the energy sector.



Pathway 2: Vocational

Energy Queensland Limited (EQL) — Growing representation of women in trades

- **Challenge:** Significantly increase women in apprenticeships and trades to improve gender diversity at an organisational and industry level.
- **Action:** EQL has worked to improve approaches to attraction, recruitment and retention to strengthen the pipeline of girls and women pursuing trades. EQL's multifaceted approach to attraction includes deliberate engagement of girls through careers fairs and the Girl Power program run in schools, where trade-qualified women join apprentice leaders to share with high school girls what a trade career can offer, and encourage work experience. This engagement is complemented by dedicated, overt social media campaigns, utilising demographic targeting to promote apprenticeships as a great opportunity for women. The focus on attraction is supported by considered recruitment processes and a dedicated retention program to drive and maintain strong results.
- **Result:** In 2024, more than 1,100 women applied for apprenticeships with Energy Queensland. The apprentice program boasts a successful completion rate of more than 95%.

Ausgrid, Transgrid, Essential and Endeavour pre-employment program, Australia

- **Challenge:** Real and perceived barriers prevent women from gaining trade experience in the energy sector, including: inflexibility in working hours, locations and practices; inadequate technical training; and misconceptions about the physical demands of trade-based careers.
- **Action:** A six-week pre-employment program for trade-based roles provides nationally-recognised accredited training, work experience, personal and professional development, and support for apprentice applications was developed to build a cross-organisation talent funnel.
- **Result:** Increased pipeline of women into trade-based apprenticeships and roles, and the program continues to grow.



Pathway 4: International

Engineers Australia, Global Engineering Talent program, Australia

- **Challenge:** Around 47% of migrant engineers actively seeking an engineering job are unemployed (Engineers Australia, 2021), but the Temporary Skills Shortage (subclass 482) visa program imposes stringent and inflexible labour market testing, and extensive pre-qualification, experience and licensing requirements.
- **Action:** The Global Engineering Talent (GET) program includes a six-week training course and 12-week paid work placement. Each engineer has a mentor to help them make connections in their new local community.
- **Result:** After Surendran Rajindram completed an internship program through GET, he was offered a job with his employer of choice, Hydro Tasmania. "The GET program has definitely elevated my engineering skills and knowledge," Surendran has said.

Accelerating progress together

Adapting Champions of Coalition resources for impact

Champions of Change Coalition has several resources that organisations in the energy sector can adapt to influence the culture, change the narrative for women and support career progression in the sector.

- ① **Test the Messages:** With high-impact actions drawn from 25-plus case studies, this resource helps companies to build a gender-balanced and inclusive presence through language, symbols and images.
- ② **Everyday Respect:** A resource to learn about exclusionary behaviour and how to foster everyday respect in the workplace.
- ③ **Disrupting the System:** A guide to more effective organisational approaches to preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment.
- ④ **Shifting Expectations:** Lessons learnt from achieving flexibility in frontline, shift and site-based roles, including case studies from male-dominated industries.
- ⑤ **Sponsorship Track:** Practical guidance on how to establish a sponsorship initiative, with tips for both sponsors and sponsorship recipients, and powerful case studies.
- ⑥ **40:40:20 for Gender Balance:** Practical, high-impact actions to prevent gender bias at all stages of the talent process.
- ⑦ **7 Switches — A Guide for Inclusive Gender Equality by Design:** This initiative aims to embed inclusive gender equality at the heart of all decision-making and design processes, across everything we do and deliver.

Next steps

Research from EY Australia and the Oxford University, Saïd Business School has found leaders who transform themselves alongside their organisations are 2.6 times more likely to succeed. As the energy sector faces unprecedented change, the role of leaders in driving transformation has never been more crucial.

To set the conditions for success, leaders must develop new transformational 'muscle' as they grow the pipeline of women. This will ensure they are equipped to foster diversity and inclusion and attract top talent, while cultivating an organisation that can embrace and lead on innovation at every level.

The Champions of Change Energy Group members will lead on a number of actions outlined in this report.

We also recognise that achieving this workforce transformation will require strong partnerships amongst all stakeholders in the energy transition. Industry collaboration and investment are essential to enhance and expand pathways for women in energy, aligning national policy frameworks with industry initiatives. Together, the energy sector can drive targeted programs, policy incentives, and supportive infrastructure that remove barriers and promote gender equality. This collaborative approach ensures we can meet our workforce needs and realise the full potential of a diverse, skilled talent pool, supporting the innovation and resilience required to achieve net zero targets.

Report authors



Emma Hawthorne
EY Regional Energy Leader,
Oceania



Stephen Davie
Partner, People Consulting,
EY Australia

About EY

In the midst of an industry undergoing fundamental change, we offer insights to help you reshape your business for the future.

The disruption sweeping the energy and resources industry brings more opportunities than challenges — for companies that get ahead of change.

Decarbonisation, digitisation, cost pressures and geopolitical uncertainty are just some of the forces transforming the energy and resources industry. Mining and metals, oil and gas, and power and

utilities companies face a common challenge: how to marry short-term commercial pressures with the need to reshape their businesses for the future.

EY helps energy and resource companies tackle this challenge. Our teams help you reshape your business by focusing on the structure, services, technologies and capabilities needed to meet commercial objectives today and create long-term value tomorrow. Together, we can unlock the opportunities of an uncertain future — and build a better working world.

This communication provides general information which is current at the time of production. The information contained in this communication does not constitute advice and should not be relied on as such. Professional advice should be sought prior to any action being taken in reliance on any of the information. Ernst & Young disclaims all responsibility and liability (including, without limitation, for any direct or indirect or consequential costs, loss or damage or loss of profits) arising from anything done or omitted to be done by any party in reliance, whether wholly or partially, on any of the information. Any party that relies on the information does so at its own risk. Ernst & Young's liability is limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation.

Resources and references

AiGroup, Women in Renewables and Energy (WiRE) Queensland, Insights from the Ai Group WiRE QLD Survey, 2023, www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/836be062-0ed2-4b0b-bcf9-73bc4236ba6f/wire_qld_survey_insights_2023.pdf?ETag=a82e9f74bfd575b8aec4632812ae8254

Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, Review of the Migration System: Final report 2023, March 2023, www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-migration-system-final-report.pdf

Careers for Net Zero, 2024, <https://careersfornetzero.org.au/>

Champions of Change Coalition, Building a Gender-Balanced and Inclusive Presence: Test the Messages You Project, 23 November 2017, <https://championsofchangecoalition.org/resource/building-a-gender-balanced-and-inclusive-presence-test-the-messages-you-project>

Champions of Change Consult Australia Group, Everyday Respect, August 2022, <https://championsofchangecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Champions-of-Change-Consult-Australia-Everyday-Respect-Report.pdf>

Champions of Change Coalition, Shifting Expectations: Flexibility for frontline, shift and site-based roles, June 2022, <https://championsofchangecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Shifting-Expectations-Flexibility-for-frontline-shift-and-site-based-roles.pdf>

Champions of Change Coalition, Sponsorship Track, June 2024, <https://championsofchangecoalition.org/resource/sponsorship-track/>

Champions of Change Coalition, 40:40:20 for Gender Balance: Interrupting bias in your talent processes, 2019, <https://championsofchangecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/40.40.20-For-gender-balance-2024.pdf>

Champions of Change Coalition, Disrupting the System – Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, 2020, <https://championsofchangecoalition.org/resource/disrupting-the-system/>

Champions of Change Coalition, 7 Switches: A Guide for Inclusive Gender Equality by Design, 2024, <https://championsofchangecoalition.org/resource/7-switches-a-guide-for-inclusive-gender-equality-by-design/>

Deloitte, Breaking the norm: Unleashing Australia's economic potential, 16 November 2022, www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/financial-advisory/blogs/breaking-the-norm-unleashing-australias-economic-potential.html

Engineers Australia, Clean energy workforce capacity study submission, May 2023, www.engineersaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/clean-energy-workforce-capacity-study-submission-may-23.pdf

Engineers Australia, Barriers to employment for migrant engineers, 2021, www.engineersaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2021-10/barriers-employment-migrant-engineers.pdf

Engineers Australia, Overseas-born engineer participates in new work placement program, 19 April 2024, www.engineersaustralia.org.au/news-and-media/2024/04/overseas-born-engineer-participates-new-work-placement-program

Jobs and Skills Australia, The Clean Energy Generation: Workforce needs for a net zero economy, 3 October 2023, www.jobsandskills.gov.au/publications/the-clean-energy-generation

Newall, C., Gonsalkorale, K., Walker, E., Forbes, G. A., Highfield, K., & Sweller, N. (2018). Science education: adult biases because of the child's gender and gender stereotypicality. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 55, 30-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2018.08.003>

Powering Skills, The New Power Generation, August 2024, https://poweringskills.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Workforce-Plan-Report_2024_Version-14-August-2024.pdf

Victorian Government, The benefits of gender equality, 4 October 2023, www.vic.gov.au/benefits-gender-equality

Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Industry Data Explorer 2023-24, www.wgea.gov.au/Data-Explorer/Industry