

Renewable energy

Renewable energy jobs fall by 27% in four years

http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/15/renewable-energy-jobs-fall-27-four-years

Latest ABS figures show job decline in renewable energy industry, with consumer groups blaming government for the loss of 5,100 full-time jobs

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Tuesday 15 March 2016 03.30 GMT

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The recently completed Broken Hill solar plant – one of the largest in Australia. Solar power accounts for almost 60% of employment in renewable energy. Photograph: Australian Renewable Energy Agency

More than a quarter of the jobs in the renewable energy industry have disappeared since 2011, with a continued decline in the latest figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The clean energy industry, consumer groups and conservationists all blamed federal government actions, like reviewing the renewable energy target and maintaining the policy of axing the [Australian Renewable Energy Agency](#) and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, despite the bills axing them being blocked by the Senate.

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In the most recent data from the 2014-2015 financial year, 5,100 full-time equivalent jobs had gone from the sector since the 2011-2012 financial year, a drop of 27%, leaving 14,020 people working in the industry.

However, the ABS said that was still an increase from the 11,520 recorded for 2009-2010.

Mark Lound, ABS director of environmental statistics, said the [Employment in Renewable Energy Activities](#) publication examines levels of employment in renewable energy by state and territory and by type of renewable energy activities.

“Solar energy (including roof-top solar PV, solar hot water and large scale solar PV) is the most significant source of employment among renewable energy activities,” he said.

“In 2014-15 annual [full-time equivalent] employment in solar was 8,310 or 59% of total employment in renewable energy activities. Employment in solar energy peaked at 14,350 in 2011-12.”

South Australia saw the most significant drop as a proportion of their total jobs, with a 60% decrease over the four years. Western Australia was next, with a 51% decrease, followed by Queensland with a 36% drop.

The drops in those states were slightly offset by small increases in employment in the industry in New South Wales, the Northern Territory and the ACT. Employment in the industry remained roughly steady in Tasmania.

The figures were “disappointing but not surprising” said Kelly O’Shanassy, CEO of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

“The federal government sets the tone for the nation and this government has not been supportive of clean energy,” she said.

“The government dragged out negotiations over the renewable energy target while attempting to cut the target and has had Australia’s primary renewable energy agency, Arena, on the chopping block for this entire parliamentary term ... This is no way to instil confidence in the sector.

“Unfortunately the federal government continues to throw its weight behind last century’s energy sources, approving massive new coal mines like Adani’s Carmichael mine, proposed for the Galilee Basin in Queensland.”

Solar Citizens, a solar energy consumer group, said the figures showed Turnbull “must move from rhetoric to action”.

“The Australian renewable industry is still being held back by uncertainty over government policy and investment,” said the Solar Citizens national director, Claire O’Rourke.

Kane Thornton, CEO of the Clean Energy Council the peak body for the clean energy industry in Australia, said it was a tough period for the industry, during a [review of the renewable energy target](#) but said there’s been an uplift since the Paris agreement and since Malcolm Turnbull replaced Tony Abbott. Thornton said when the next set of figures comes out, they would show an increase in jobs in the sector.

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