

SENSIBLE POLICIES FOR THE NEXT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT



THE AUSSIE SOLAR DRIVE

A national bill-slashing initiative to double the number of rooftop solar systems on Australian homes and significantly increase household storage by the end of the decade - reaching 50 GW of reliable clean energy and 25 GW of supporting storage.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Roll out rooftop solar and storage for all social and community homes

- Replaces expensive, ongoing energy bill subsidies for households.
- Financing option through green bonds e.g. Singapore Housing and Development Board model.
- Potential for offtake agreements with local manufacturers under ARENA's Solar Sunshot.
- Can be networked into centrally-coordinated local Virtual Power Plants (VPPs) to augment grid stability.

Accelerate 'solar soaker' community batteries

- Dedicated new funding rounds for local governments and businesses.
- Fast and popular alternative to more transmission.
- Leverages lessons from national programs already rolling out to get on ground quickly.

Re-focus the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme to commercial solar and storage

- Renewable energy minimum requirements for big businesses - formalise voluntary corporate commitments.
- Can be met with direct installation or the purchase of certificates from other commercial businesses.



THE AUSTRALIAN ENERGY CORPS

Australia's clean energy transformation will create a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a skilled workforce that can power our future economy. The Federal Government should capitalise on this opportunity, and establish Australia's biggest-ever energy training initiative - the Australian Energy Corps - equipping young people and experienced energy workers with the skills to power up Australia in secure, well-paid jobs.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Free apprenticeship training and upskilling for workers in electrical, plumbing, gasfitting, large-scale renewable energy and relevant building trades

- Expand existing free TAFE initiatives under the current National Skills Agreement.
- Boost training facility capital grants for public, union and quality industry-led training providers.

Safe, supervised and high quality on-the-job training placements for workers

- Establish the Corps as a dedicated Australian Apprentice Support Network for energy workers.
- Place workers with union- and industry-run Group Training Organisations as employers.
- One-stop-shop for companies wanting to take on energy apprentices.
- Mandatory apprentice requirements for govt-funded energy generation and transmission projects.

Dedicated streams for new apprentices and upskilling or reskilling workers

- Full apprenticeships for workers at the start of their energy careers.
- Tailored training programs and supervised work placements for upskilling & reskilling energy workers.



RESILIENT, CHARGED UP SCHOOLS

Unnatural disasters driven by climate change, like extreme heat, fires and floods, are already disrupting schools and communities across Australia. That's why community-led investments in local schools and community facilities to deliver more clean energy, community storage and building improvements are a practical solution that will help keep our kids healthy and thriving in a changing climate.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Prioritise upgrades for schools and facilities in climate-vulnerable communities and regions

- Focus on regions already experiencing more extreme heat, cold and other climate impacts.
- Prioritise communities where kids have less access to other safe places during extreme weather.

Energy infrastructure and upgrades led by community needs

- Provide school communities with a choice between solar, storage and efficiency upgrades based on local school needs, priorities and existing facilities.
- Potential for networking solar and storage into centrally-coordinated Virtual Power Plants (VPPs) in cities and major regional centres.

Partner with local communities to create resilient hubs for heat and emergency shelter

- Engage local governments and emergency services coordinators so that upgraded schools and community facilities can become heat refuges and other types of community shelter during extreme weather events.



A NATIONAL HOME ELECTRIFICATION PLAN

After long-term periods of power price pain, Australian families are desperately seeking lasting relief from steep energy bills. To address this challenge, we need a national roadmap to electrify all Australian homes to cut bills and climate pollution, and wind down household gas infrastructure in a sensible way as families switch to cleaner, cheaper energy.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Prioritise electrification in updated national Whole of Home energy efficiency budgets

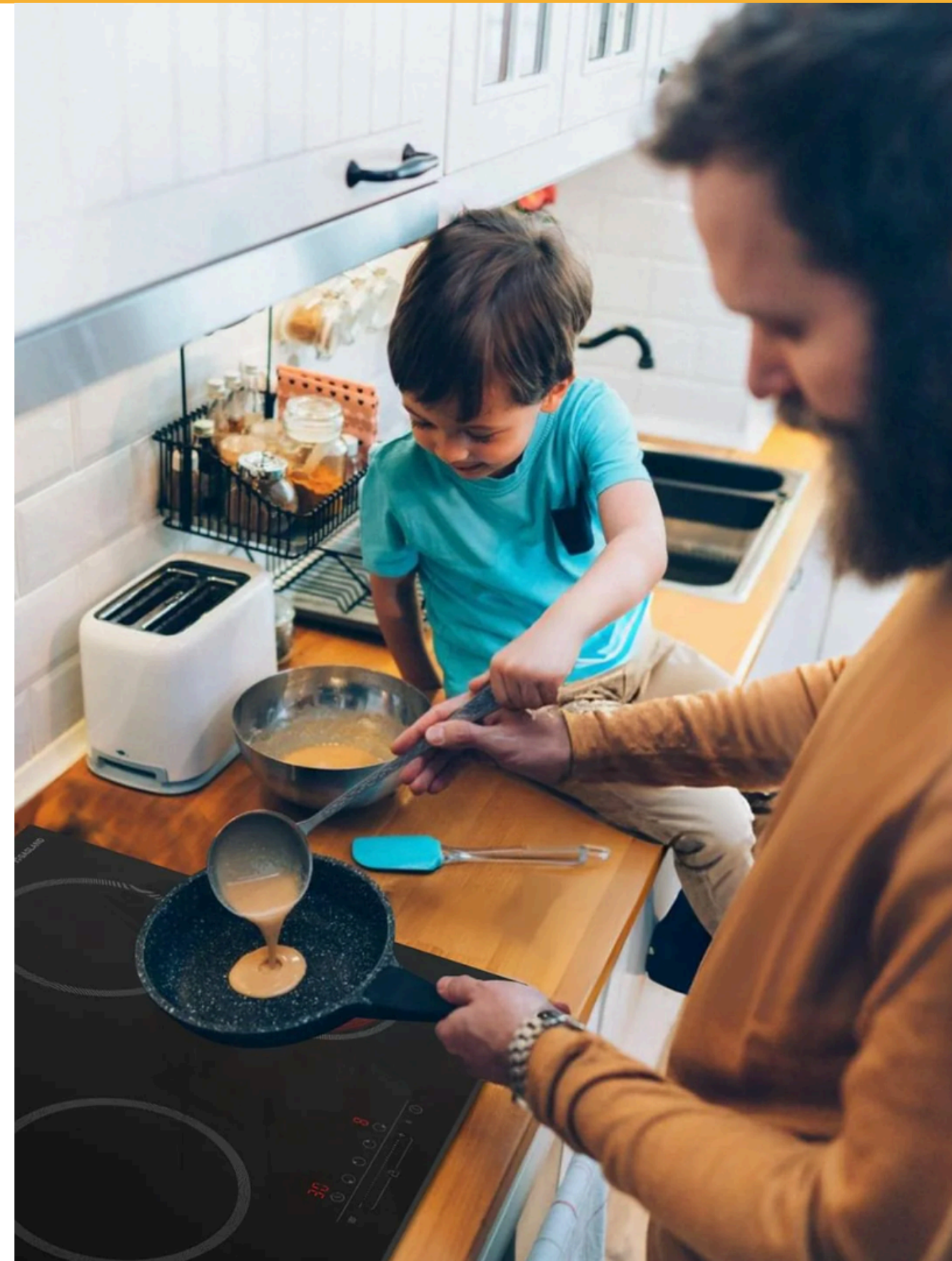
- Work with states and territories through the next update to the National Construction Code to strengthen requirements for energy efficiency in new homes and weight them towards the use of electric appliances.

Set an end date for the sale of replacement gas appliances

- Identify a future date beyond which all gas appliances need to be replaced with efficient electric alternatives when they reach end of life, giving households certainty and industry clear timelines to work towards in ramping up local workforce, supply chains and capability for all-electric homes.

Bring stakeholders together to map the path for winding down household gas distribution networks

- Resource a dedicated team within the Australian Energy Regulator to work collaboratively with asset owners, utilities, consumer representatives, state governments and other stakeholders to identify the key steps in winding down household gas distribution networks and develop actionable, staged plans to deliver these.



CLIMATE POSITIVE MAJOR PROJECTS

Improvements to Australia's national environment law to say a clear 'yes' to responsibly-delivered clean energy and industry projects, and a decisive 'no' to projects that will cause more climate harm.

This would provide clean energy and industry proponents with a clear and efficient pathway for project approvals, while protecting Australia's irreplaceable species, habitats and natural places through avoided damage and harm.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Define climate impacts and their causes in national environment law

- Acknowledge that protecting nature from climate change is a core priority in environmental assessments.
- Expand how the law identifies impacts to encompass the harm to nature caused by climate pollution.
- Recognise that climate impacts can arise through the cumulative impact of multiple actions over time.

Embed climate impacts in project assessments - on both sides of the ledger

- Allow decision-makers to take account of the positive impacts of clean energy and industry projects in helping to cut climate pollution.
- Require project proponents to disclose their climate pollution impacts, and decision-makers to consider this as part of project assessments.

Empower decision-makers to say no to projects that will cause climate harm

- Establish climate impacts as a basis for rejecting projects which will produce significant additional climate pollution.



CALLING TIME ON OFFSHORE EXPLORATION

A responsible step in Australia - and the world's - move to clean energy, ending new exploration for offshore oil and gas which will be surplus to our needs and cause more climate harm.

This would create increased policy certainty for local and international investors, clarity for Traditional Owners and First Nations communities about the future of sea country, and better access to investment, workforce and development capability for growth industries with a long-term future in Australia.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

End the release of new acreage and licences for offshore oil and gas exploration

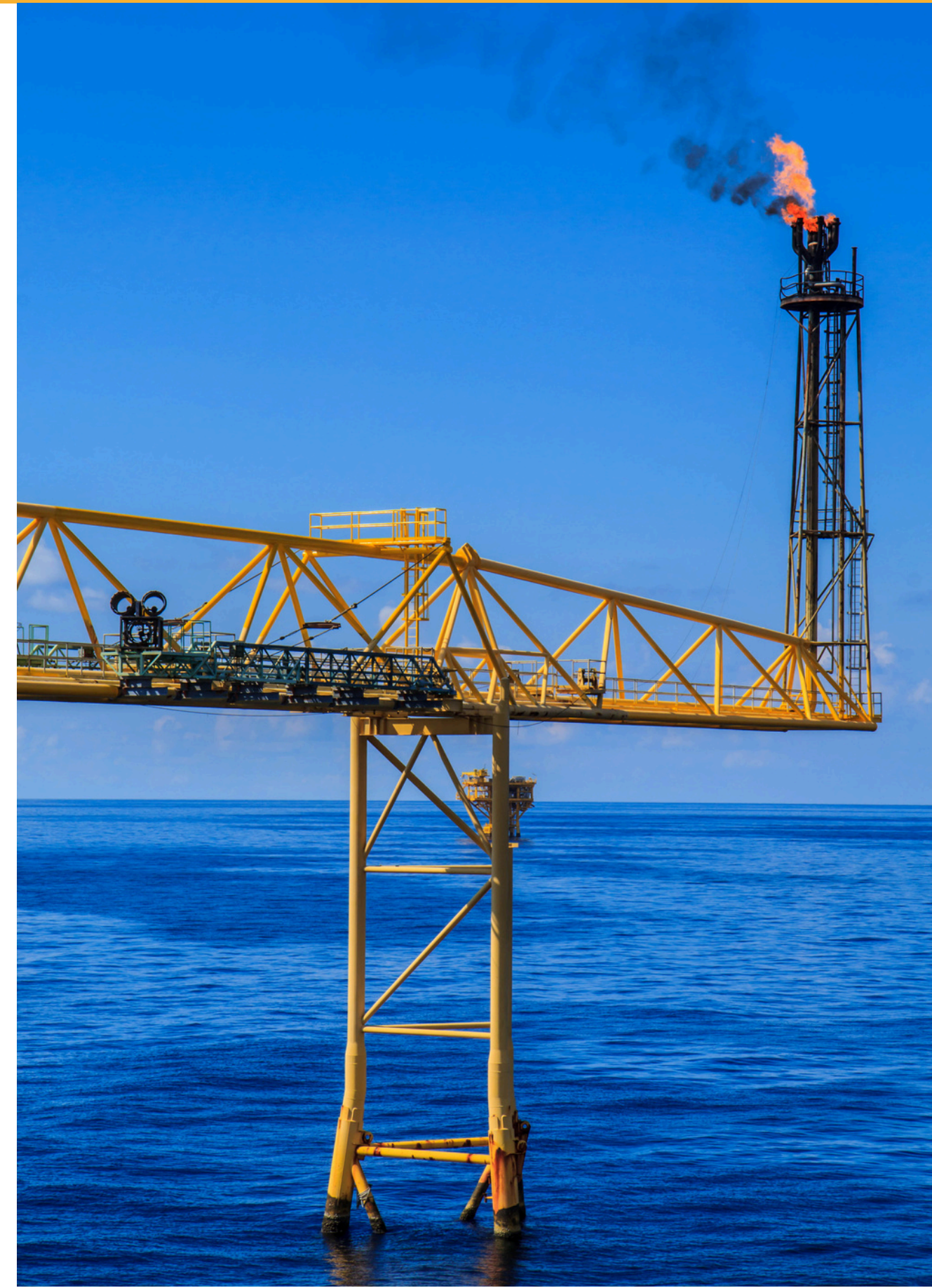
- Cease regular releases of new acreage for oil and gas exploration in Commonwealth waters.
- Close the industry-led exploration acreage release nominations process.

Set an end date for existing exploration licences

- Advise existing licence holders that renewals will no longer be granted for acreage permits as the initial terms of these expire.

Create an accelerated process for voluntary surrender of exploration licences

- Give industry partners the option to surrender licences they have previously been granted through an expedited administrative process, and proactively engage with current licence holders to invite surrenders.



ENABLING OFFSHORE WIND WITH LOCAL SHIPBUILDING

Developing a strong offshore wind industry nationally is key to Australia's renewable-powered economic opportunities. A boost to local shipbuilding through direct investment in common-user equipment is essential for accelerating the development of the industry and would create quality, long-term job opportunities locally.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Invest in essential offshore wind installation equipment

- Commission one or more wind turbine installation vessels for dedicated deployment in delivering the 20+ year pipeline of Australian offshore wind projects.
- Address the major shortfall of these vessels globally, to accelerate deployment of steady, round-the-clock renewable energy for Australia and neighbours in the S.E. Asian region.

Require local manufacturing and content

- Partner with a shipbuilding provider able to deliver via existing shipbuilding hubs in WA, SA or VIC.
- Prioritise use of local content from domestic producers.

Grow domestic industry capability with a long-term operations partner

- Contract an operations partner with global expertise in offshore wind deployment to operate the vessel/s, with local workforce development and capacity-building requirements built into the terms of partnership.



SALARY BOOST FOR CLEANER TRANSPORT

Putting shared and active transport on the same footing as electric vehicles under tax law so that employers can offer workers salary benefits for a wider range of low-pollution transport options that suit people's needs and choices.

This would benefit working families through cheaper transport costs and more choice, and Aussie businesses, who can offer workers a more affordable and sustainable range of employee benefits.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Extend the Fringe Benefits Tax exemption to shared and active transport

- Allow employers to provide benefits to workers for the use of shared transport up to \$50 a week (the Australian average for a commuter travelling to and from work), exempt from FBT.
- Allow employers to provide e-bikes, e-scooters, cargo bikes and other active transport equipment to workers for their personal use, exempt from FBT.

Increase the FBT rate payable for car parking benefits

- Apply an additional FBT loading where salary benefits are provided for car parking.
- Fully offset the cost of the exemption for shared and active transport.

Promote the availability of FBT exemptions for shared and active transport to businesses

- Leverage the Australian Taxation Office's business engagement and communication channels to raise awareness of the additional tax-free benefits employers can offer their workers for choosing shared and active transport.



MORE TRANSPORT CHOICES IN OUR CITIES

A major national boost to the infrastructure that enables quality shared and active transport, so that more Australians living in our cities have real alternatives to the private car.

More transport choices will allow Aussie families to save on petrol bills, and improve our cities through reduced congestion and safer streets.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Put shared and active transport at the heart of the national transport agenda

- Make boosting uptake of shared and active transport an explicit objective of national transport policy - including through the new Net Zero Transport and Infrastructure Roadmap.

Deliver targeted capital investments that improve access to shared transport

- Prioritise projects which support state and local governments to improve and expand public transport services - like new and upgraded bus depots, road conversion projects and rail enabling works.

Create ongoing Commonwealth funding streams for active transport initiatives

- Refocus and make permanent the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program to support community-led active transport projects - with an initial focus on fixing missing links that increase access and coverage in existing active transport networks.
- Incorporate requirements for active transport infrastructure into Commonwealth funded road projects delivered in Australian cities.



FASTER RAIL FOR CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Practical and affordable upgrades to strategic national rail routes connecting Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra, for a real alternative to flying and driving. This will provide regional communities along key routes with better connections to major cities, and provide Aussie travellers with affordable, low pollution travel alternatives.

How the next Federal Government can deliver it:

Invest in rolling stock and track upgrades to deliver 'faster' rail on the existing network

- Prioritise improvements that can cut travel times and improve the service experience on the existing rail network, starting with the highest frequency air route between Sydney and Melbourne.
- Seek to align service timetables and frequencies to the needs of commuters.

Deliver upgrades in stages to build workforce and supply chain capacity

- Stand up a dedicated project delivery agency to coordinate delivery with all major federal, state and local government partners.
- Take a phased approach to planning, procuring and delivering upgrades to build up industry delivery capacity so that local companies and workers can fully share in the benefits.
- Prioritise local content in steel, rolling stock and other essential components to minimise supply chain risks.

Build for resilience in a changing climate

- Incorporate track upgrades which proactively address safety and service delivery risks in a changing climate - including extreme heat and flooding.

