

16 April 2024

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

Submission to *Net Zero Economy Authority Bill 2024* inquiry

The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) is a Learned Academy of independent, non-political experts helping Australians understand and use technology to solve complex problems. Bringing together 900 of Australia's leading thinkers in applied science, technology and engineering, ATSE provides impartial, practical and evidence-based advice on how to achieve sustainable solutions and advance prosperity.

ATSE thanks the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission to its inquiry into the Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEA) Bill 2024.

ATSE notes the need for more concerted action for reaching net zero emissions, in line with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees, including by rolling out existing leading low carbon technologies to make deep cuts this decade to high emitting sectors.

ATSE has long advocated the need for coordination and leadership in decarbonisation policy. ATSE is supportive of the establishment of the NZEA, replacing the Net Zero Economy Agency, to coordinate decarbonisation of the economy by 2050 as committed by the Australian Government.

Implementing the energy transition and capitalising on our green energy future will require robust partnerships and coordination between the public and private sector. ATSE is in favour of the NZEA Board's inclusion of industry or business representatives, as outlined in the Bill, as well as leaders in research. ATSE also agrees with the NZEA's mandate to manage impacts of coal power station closures, and support workers in emissions-intensive industries to retrain and seek alternative employment.

ATSE recommends that the Bill be amended to enable the NZEA to consider and support circular economy development. Circular supply chains reduce waste and remove emissions, and can be designed across high-emitting sectors such as health, infrastructure and transport. Establishing a

circular economy requires cooperation between governments and industry to achieve optimal policy settings, create infrastructure and develop technologies. Embedding a circular economy approach alongside the energy transition will support sustainability and the develop of new domestic industries.

ATSE emphasises the role of research to underpin the energy transition. The Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) [Australian Energy Transition Research Plan](#) outlines the crucial role that research will play in ensuring the most effective pathway options are available. This includes – most importantly – research in the social and human sciences, as this will enable the key technologies to be taken up most effectively, justly and rapidly.

Secure and sufficient research funding is therefore critical to leading and delivering the energy transition. The Australian Energy Transition Plan's report on [Australia's Funding of Energy Research](#) finds that Australia's investment in research for the energy transition lags behind that of peer nations. Over the past decade Australia's public investment in energy research and development has fallen in absolute terms, as well as relative to comparable economies – despite its increasing importance for delivering the energy transition. ATSE recommends boosting government expenditure on the technological and social science research needed for the energy transition as a matter of urgency.

Given the importance of evidence-based decisions during the net zero transition across all sectors of the Australian economy ATSE looks forward to engaging with the new Net Zero Economy Authority. ATSE and the other Learned Academies convene Australia's leading experts in all areas associated with the net zero transition, who stand ready to support the Net Zero Economy Authority's mission.

If you would like any further information from ATSE, please contact academypolicyteam@atse.org.au.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Katherine Woodthorpe AO FTSE FAICD
President

Kylie Walker
Chief Executive Officer