



MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Renewable Industry Alliance calls on State and Federal governments to deliver long-term solution to secure Tomago's future

Thursday 20 November: A coalition of unions, environment and industry groups has called on state and federal governments to deliver a long-term, structural solution using renewable energy to secure the future of Tomago Aluminium — the Hunter's largest employer and one of Australia's most important industrial assets.

The call comes as consultation with Tomago workers about the future of the smelter closes on 21 November, and as the Tomago board lead by Rio Tinto are locked in negotiations with the NSW and Federal governments.

Reports suggest the Federal government is considering potential interventions including using Snowy Hydro to write offtake agreements with renewable energy projects and deliver long-term electricity supply to the smelter at an affordable price.

"It is essential that state and federal governments play a strong, proactive role in delivering cheap renewable energy to industry. Governments should use every tool at their disposal — including their balance sheet — to drive rapid investment in transmission, storage and generation" the joint statement from the Australian Renewable Industry Alliance reads.

"Rather than relying on short-term cash handouts or bailouts, state and federal governments should focus on long-term structural solutions that secure cheap, clean power for facilities like Tomago"

Paddy Crumlin, National Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia said:

"The loss of the Tomago smelter would result in a significant loss of work in the Port of Newcastle, where wharfies and other supply chain workers handle alumina and aluminium ingots. As the world's largest coal port, the Port of Newcastle needs more diversification, not the loss of yet another industry.

We expect the government to take every possible step to secure the future of the Tomago smelter and ensure that it has access to cheap renewable power long into the future.

A Future Made in Australia is framed to integrate Australian resources, energy and industrial capability to include the value adding from refining and smelting Australian bauxite into aluminium for use in shipbuilding, wind and solar components, and in many other industries."

David McElreia, Chief Advocacy Officer, Smart Energy Council:

“There’s a strong pipeline of renewable projects in NSW ready to go. With the right offtake arrangements, these projects can deliver cheap, clean power to the Tomago smelter — helping to keep the Hunter strong and positioning NSW as a leader in renewable-powered industry. Unlocking this pipeline will not only secure Tomago’s future but also drive billions in regional investment and create thousands of clean energy jobs across the state.

Meanwhile the federal Opposition appears more interested in using Tomago as a political football than actually finding solutions. Climate wars are not an energy policy, and certainly will not deliver the affordable and reliable renewable energy that Rio Tinto confirms is needed to repower Tomago, and its aluminum operations in Gladstone.

Ideology cannot power Australian businesses, particularly in regions like the Hunter, where coal is closing and expensive gas is crushing the ability of manufacturing to remain globally competitive. Renewable energy can and will, because it is the cheapest and rapidly deployable.”

Tim Buckley, Director, Clean Energy Finance said:

“With China playing strategically to win in all zero emissions industries of the future - and putting margin pressure on Australia's refineries and smelters - Australia must act differently if we want to protect our industrial assets.

A public private collaboration is needed. Leveraging our exceptionally strong Federal balance sheet to lower the cost of capital on renewables infrastructure can deliver low priced zero emissions firmed electricity sufficient to keep facilities like Tomago competitive.”

Annika Reynolds, National Climate Policy Advisor, Australian Conservation Foundation (they/them) said:

“The NSW and federal governments have a once in a generation opportunity to secure a renewable future for Australia’s critical aluminium sector, starting with Tomago. Around 5% of national emissions (23 million tonnes of CO2-e) are emitted by Australia’s aluminium smelters, repowering them with low-cost and readily available renewables is vital to maintaining a competitive manufacturing base and positioning Australia to grow our green aluminium export potential.”

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**Australian Renewable Industry Alliance
Public Statement - 19 November 2025**

Australia’s renewable energy transformation must deliver cheap, clean power for industry

renewable electricity. Australia has some of the world's best renewable energy resources - but it is critical that they are brought online quickly and affordably.

Around the world, heavy industries like aluminium are anchored by low-cost power; without it, they simply can't stay viable.

It is therefore essential that state and federal governments play a strong, proactive role in delivering cheap renewable energy to industry. Governments should use every tool at their disposal - including their balance sheet - to drive rapid investment in transmission, storage, and generation.

Protecting and strengthening Australia's industrial base must be a national priority - with Tomago Aluminium a prime example. The smelter:

- Directly supports over 1,000 jobs, with a further 4,000 indirect jobs across the Hunter and regional NSW, and contributes billions in export value each year
- Provides important stability and services to the electricity grid, acting as a flexible and responsive energy user
- Provides a critical example of how Australia can lead the world in producing clean, competitive commodities that strengthen our sovereign industrial base and deliver long-term economic security.

Rather than relying on short-term cash handouts or bailouts, state and federal governments should focus on long-term structural solutions that secure cheap, clean power for facilities like Tomago.

Strong government leadership - working with unions, communities and industry - will ensure Australia becomes a renewable energy superpower with thriving regional economies.

Transitioning our industrial base to clean, affordable renewable energy is one of the most important things Australia can do to help address climate change. Our country has abundant renewable resources, a culture of innovation, and technical know-how to build a renewable future that is good for communities, good for the economy, and good for our natural environment.

New polling from Renew Australia for All shows high levels of public support for a strong role for government with 71% of people agreeing with the statement "the government should invest to help Australian manufacturing facilities access cheaper renewable energy"

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