



# GENDER ACTION PLAN

## BASELINE SURVEY REPORT | 2023



### THE SMART ENERGY COUNCIL

The Smart Energy Council (SEC) is the independent body for the Australian renewable energy industry that sees immense opportunities in pursuing a safe climate. Opportunities include new jobs in a reindustrialised economy; jobs that are secure, productive and meaningful.

The SEC advocates for socially just, economically prudent, sector-appropriate renewable energy policies and solutions aligned with Australia's greenhouse gas reduction ambitions.

With its 950+ members, the SEC is committed to growing the industry so it can help Australia deliver its energy sector ambition of 82% renewables by 2030 as well as becoming a renewable energy export superpower. Through the Gender Action Plan, SEC is playing a pivotal role in changing our industry's workforce context and environment to be more welcoming of all genders.

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

It is estimated that Australia needs 480,000 more workers to deliver the technology and services that will enable Australia's electricity network to be at least 82% renewables by 2030. According to industry sources, women are 39% of the smart energy industry and just 2% of solar installers.

The challenge is not just giving women opportunities, it is to help change our industry workforce context and environment to be more welcoming of people of all genders.

This project, supported by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation comprises a Gender Action Plan to address the enormous gap in gender participation. SEC shall direct the development and delivery of a pilot program, focused on addressing gender bias and unconscious behaviours. The ultimate aim is to help make workplaces more inclusive of people of all genders. Successful delivery of the project will deliver the following outcomes:

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**1. RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES:** A cultural shift towards viewing business decisions through a gender lens; delivering a more inclusive and respectful workforce that provides opportunities, skills/training and favourable working conditions for all.

**2. WOMEN'S DETERMINATION:** Quality employment outcomes and economic empowerment of women in new jobs that are meaningful and local.

**3. INDUSTRY CAPACITY:** An industry that is inclusive and fit for purpose, so it can attract and retain women, contributing to the 480,000 new jobs needed to deliver 82% renewables by 2030 and lead us towards a safer climate.

Research was undertaken to provide a baseline of where the industry sits currently with respect to the three goals that comprise this work.

## INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

To measure the success (or otherwise) of this pilot program, a baseline survey was conducted, to measure:

- Sentiment towards various workforce matters (attitudes); and
- Organisation characteristics, purpose, and sub-sectors.

Questions were designed based on the project's agreed outcomes (above) and the peculiar characteristics of the industry (for example, being heavily trades-based in some areas such as rooftop solar installations, and predominantly desk-based in others such as organisations developing and selling software as a solution for flexible load / demand management).

The future state that we wish to create through this project was also a consideration in the data we chose to collect and hence the framing of questions used. People:

- feel safe at work
- can see themselves on a career path in the smart energy sector
- are paid fairly
- can work locally and flexibly in meaningful jobs
- can participate with varying levels of skills knowing that there is workplace support for further development

## KEY FINDINGS FROM BASELINE SURVEY

**What follows are key findings arising from the data collected.**

### 1. Workplace gender diversity regarded a problem that needs addressing - but not by everyone

Nearly half the respondents (49%) regarded and/or acknowledged that their workplaces have gender challenges AND that **benefits may arise** from addressing these.

- Fairly blokey and could do with a fix-up (20%)
- Curious to learn more as it may help improve our ability to attract better employees (29%)

The other half of the respondents (51%) declared their workplaces already inclusive, and/or **gender diversity is not a problem.**

- Already inclusive; we don't need any further help (41%)
- Not gender diverse, but it works just fine as it is (10%)

### 2. Women more willing than men, to engage on workplace gender issues

People were asked how they feel about where they work; whether they feel respected, paid fairly etc. Over two-thirds (70%) of women who started the survey answered this question, compared to just 7% of men who started the survey.

#### SMART ENERGY INDUSTRY BASELINE SURVEY



Half of respondents say yes, and a further 10% are fine with that.

**IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH GENDER DIVERSITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE?**



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Gender is almost certainly a factor in whether people provided responses to all questions or not. The low completion rate by men reveals a story about the **commitment of men to engage** on the issue of gender diversity as a method for workplace betterment.

When quizzed about how they would like to stay engaged in the Gender Action Plan:

- a quarter (26%) of men compared to 61% of women respondents wanted to share stories and get engaged to help themselves and their teams learn more.
- 38% of men respondents and only 4% of women said they were not interested in participating in the Gender Action Plan.

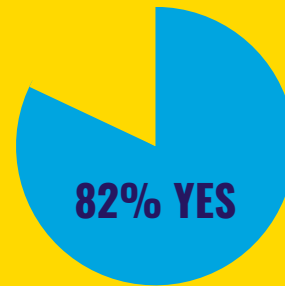
### 3. Men, more likely than women to think they are paid fairly

More than two-thirds (68%) of women **feel respected**, valued and supported at work.

One quarter (25%) believe they get **paid less** than their male counterparts for the same job. 28% of those that believe they are paid less, will be soon looking for new employment to be paid equally.

All male respondents (100%) felt they were **paid fairly** for the work that they do, compared with less than one-third (30%) of women respondents. Slightly more than one-third (37%) of women felt they weren't paid fairly and one third (33%) didn't know whether they were or not.

### SMART ENERGY INDUSTRY BASELINE SURVEY



### ARE YOU EXCITED TO WORK IN A MEANINGFUL INDUSTRY?



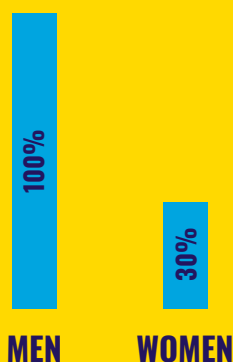
### 4. Workers find meaning, but not security in smart energy jobs

When asked about how they feel about working in smart energy, 82% of respondents said they felt excited by the opportunity to work in an industry that makes a **meaningful contribution**.

Fewer than half (48%) noted feeling **proud** about their industry's level of inclusiveness of women.

Only a third (38%) felt their role provided them with the **security** they seek from a career.

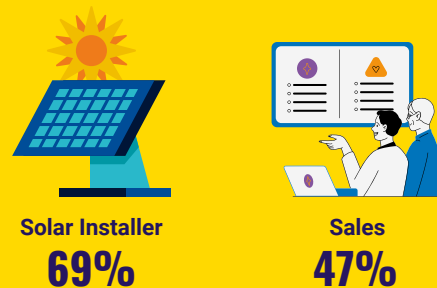
### SMART ENERGY INDUSTRY BASELINE SURVEY



### ARE YOU PAID FAIRLY FOR YOUR WORK?



### SMART ENERGY INDUSTRY BASELINE SURVEY



### WHAT SMART ENERGY OCCUPATION WILL WOMEN AVOID?





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### 5. There are certain jobs that people are not interested in doing - but gender doesn't factor

Over a third (37%) of women respondents work in 'technical areas' that require formal training, qualifications, and certifications, compared with two-thirds of male respondents.

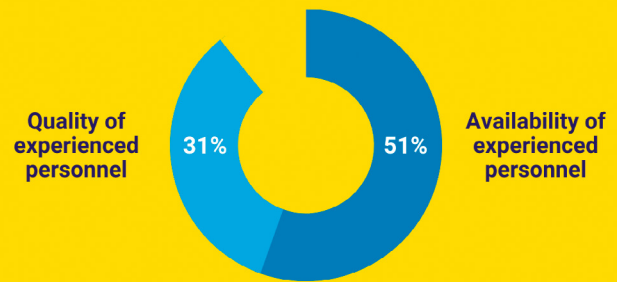
Over two-thirds (69%) of women respondents put 'installing solar panels' at the top of their "I will never do" list. Nearly half (47%) said that they would never do 'sales'. Both these responses were **evenly split by gender**.

The reasons provided for not installing solar panels included 'not interested' and 'too much like hard work'.

### 6. A dearth of experience is constraining workforce growth

The most cited constraints on attracting and retaining workers are the:

#### SMART ENERGY INDUSTRY BASELINE SURVEY



#### WHAT'S STOPPING SMART ENERGY WORKFORCE GROWTH?



- **availability** of suitably experienced personnel (51%)
- **quality** of suitably qualified and experienced personnel (31%).

Availability of **quality managers** to help retain quality personnel (12%) was the least cited constraint.

We asked which skills are necessary in respondents' workplaces: above all was technical skills (63%) followed by systems design and finance (both 49%) and legal skills (22%).

## METHODOLOGY

### Timing and distribution

In May 2023, the SEC developed a questionnaire that was distributed to more than 8,500 contacts in the SEC database over May and June.

### Sample and data limitations

Key characteristics of the sample:

- 104 responses received.
- 60 respondents (59%) identified as men, 40 (39%) as women, and the balance trans and neutral
- 52% were SEC members.

It is important to note that not all 104 respondents completed all 25 questions, with a large proportion of women completing all, to most, questions and only some (7%) men, completing the entire questionnaire. Accordingly, the analysis provided is nearly always cross-tabulated with gender such that reporting of data isn't unintentionally mis-represented.

*"There are so many aspects to the renewables industry. Not every task is lifting heavy equipment. Not all politicians are prime ministers, not all teachers are headmasters."*

