

PRESS CONFERENCE - BERKELEY VALE, NSW***TRANSCRIPT****21 Apr 2021**Prime Minister**E&OE*

LUCY WICKS MP, MEMBER FOR ROBERTSON: It's always great when I'm able to welcome the Prime Minister of Australia to the Central Coast, and this afternoon has been a really exciting opportunity. I'd like to welcome the Prime Minister, I'd like to welcome the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. I'd particularly like to thank Star Scientific for hosting us here today, to acknowledge the Chairman Andrew Horvath, but also to acknowledge the incredible work that a business based here on the Central Coast is doing in such an emerging industry such as hydrogen. This is really exciting technology, we are seeing investment like there's no tomorrow in an organisation like this. And one of the exciting things that I heard today was that this company is growing from 25 employees to close to another 200 employees by the end of the year. This is an exciting newsday for the Central Coast in terms of an announcement from the Federal Government. But what I'm really excited to see is that it's organisations and businesses here on the Central Coast that are really driving the innovation that is going to help us to deliver cleaner energy sources, more reliable, affordable energy and also making sure that we do continue to drive economic growth in terms of jobs here on the Central Coast, as well as of course ensuring that we do have a better environment tomorrow than what we have today. So this is exciting, it is wonderful to have the Prime Minister and the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reductions here today. And I'll invite the Prime Minister to make the formal announcement.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you very much, Lucy. It's good to be here with Angus and you, Andrew, and all of your team here. It was great to meet you. Lucy, I know you must be very excited to see what's happening here on the Central Coast. It's great to be here on the Central Coast. We are seeing people commuting to the Central Coast for the jobs that are being created in these wonderful businesses and these innovative businesses that are actually pioneering where energy is going into the future. Australia has always played a huge role in meeting the energy needs of our region. That's what Australia's economy has been known for, for a very, very long time. And we're committed to ensuring that Australia continues to be doing that into the future. The world is moving to a new energy economy. A net zero economy when it comes to energy. And Australia will play a huge part in that, and the way we're going to play a huge part in that is ensuring that we are backing in the best scientists, the best entrepreneurs, the best

pioneers and those who are doing that in our heaviest industries. See, there's a myth out there which says that you can't use the sorts of things that are being done in a business like this to power major industry. See this is the exciting challenge that we have in Australia, that we get to solve for the net zero energy future what that means for heavy industry, for manufacturing, for what's going to spin those massive turbines, for what's going to power those enormous resource trucks up in the Pilbara or in other places, what's going to fire up the recycling glass plants around the country, what's going to protect and support the jobs in Gladstone to Bell Bay, to over the Pilbara, up here in the Central Coast and the Hunter. All of those jobs are going to be supported and they're going to grow even more in the new energy economy because of the investments and because of the science and the technology, the energy technology, that is being delivered right here in Australia. And it's our Government's plan to ensure that we're meeting that challenge through technology, not taxes. We're not going to tax our way into the new energy economy, we are going to ensure that we achieve it through our investments, our smart investments in the energy technology that will power up Australian industry well into the future. And a huge part of that has been the technology roadmap which Angus Taylor has been leading, supported by Australia's best scientists, people like Alan Finkel, who used to be our Chief Scientist, and others, and Alan is now continually involved in this project going forward.

There are two elements of this energy technology that are so essential for Australia's future. One is the development of hydrogen. I want Australia and hydrogen technology to be synonymous around the world. And it's a key point I'll be making at the Climate Summit over the next few days, that Australia is really putting the flag right out there when it comes to ensuring that we lead the world in hydrogen technology. The hydrogen that can fire up furnaces that used to be done by other forms of fossil fuels, that can run those trucks, that can run long-distance transport, and do all of the things we need it to do, solving for these problems. So today we are announcing \$275 million thereabouts in additional investment in four new hubs for hydrogen hubs. And Angus will tell you a bit more about how that works but what it basically is is bringing together, in particular parts of the country where there's the ability to generate the hydrogen, to use the hydrogen, to innovate around the hydrogen and you create, and hydrogen it's, what it is it's zero emissions gas. That's what it is. Hydrogen is zero emissions gas. And ensuring that that, in those ecosystems as you might call them, those communities if you like, those industrial communities, whether it's in Gladstone or whether it's say in the Hunter or other places, that's what this does. It's creating that. You wonder how Silicon Valley started, it started by creating a community of people who are innovating in technology and using technology and changing the world. That's what these hubs are and we're investing in creating more of them, after the investments were made in the last Budget.

Now the other announcement we're making today is some \$267 million in carbon capture use and storage. In a net zero future, there will still be carbon emissions that come from particular industries. Planes will still fly, I don't know anyone yet who's going to get on a plane that is not being flown with fuel. And so there will be emissions in the future and there will be in 2050. And carbon capture use and storage is essential to ensure that that can be accommodated. Up there in the Gorgon Project, Angus can talk more about that, but that is one of the world's largest sites for carbon capture use and storage, with some four million tonnes, I think it is, already. A real project, actually happening. And so Australia has to pioneer both of these technologies and be right out there in front. That's how you get there, that's how we achieve what we're all trying to achieve. A lower emissions future, sure, but not at the price of taxing our heavy industries off the planet. Not at the price of taking away the jobs that I've seen right here. You know, in this very plant what we're seeing is people bringing all sorts of skills together. People who make things, people who research things, people who administer things, all making this happen in this amazingly innovative business, with some of the most amazing, innovative technology that is going to make a big difference. So I'm very proud Andrew of what you're achieving here, and our plan through the technology roadmap is to ensure that we get there through technology, not taxes. And I'll allow Angus to fill you in more.

THE HON. ANGUS TAYLOR MP, MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

REDUCTION: Thanks, PM. It's great to be with you here Lucy on the Central Coast with the Prime Minister and with Andrew and his team of world beaters, because that's what this organisation is, and like so many across Australia, we have world leaders in energy technology and we always have had. We always have had. We've built some of the greatest energy supply chains and industries, exports, in the world and we will continue to do that, exactly as we're seeing here today. Now, the face of bringing down emissions and delivering affordable, reliable energy in Australia, and around the world, is what we see here today. It's entrepreneurs, it's innovators, it's not tax collectors. And this is the key. It's not about imposing taxes, it's not about eliminating industries, it's about creating jobs and it's about harnessing the smarts, the capability, and the skills of Australians right across this great country. In the technology investment roadmap, we committed to five priority technologies and they include technologies where Australia has the potential, or is already a world beater. Whether it's soil carbon, or indeed in aluminium and steel, low emissions aluminium and steel stored energy. The two in particular that we're focused on today, investing \$539 million in total, of course are hydrogen and carbon capture and storage. And as the Prime Minister has said, hydrogen is a fuel that already is used today but has enormous potential in bringing down emissions and delivering that affordable reliable energy we need, and not just energy for production of electricity where it will play a huge role, as we've seen here today, but also in production of heat and as an industrial feedstock for critical products like fertiliser that puts food on our tables every day.

Low-cost, clean hydrogen is where Australia has the potential to be a world leader in energy, just as we have been and continue to be in LNG, in coal, in other crucial resource industries. That's where our future lies, alongside those fantastic industries that we've built over such a long period of time. This commitment will focus in particular on creating hydrogen hubs and carbon capture and storage hubs, and hubs are a collection of businesses that work with each other to bring down the costs, make those industries efficient, build those supply chains across the world and most importantly create jobs and drive investment. Whether it's in hydrogen hubs that collect together manufacturers using the energy from the hydrogen and the feedstock from the hydrogen, producers of the hydrogen, and producers of the heat from the hydrogen. Those collections of businesses are how we will build hubs and build competitive advantage in this industry, as not only a user in Australia of hydrogen but also as an exporter of hydrogen and related products to the world. And carbon capture and storage, as the Prime Minister has said, enormous opportunity for Australia. We have the biggest project in the world right here in Australia, 60 projects going across the world but we are a world leader. And across all of these technologies we're a world leader which gives us a privileged position, not just to bring down our own emissions but to help bring down emissions across our region and across the world. Australia has a special role to play in this, and in doing that we will create jobs and opportunities for great people like we see in this business here today. Thanks.

ANDREW HORVATH, CEO, STAR SCIENTIFIC: I'm very, very proud to have the Prime Minister, the Minister and Lucy Wicks here today with us. On behalf of myself and my team it's been a pleasure to show them the next innovation in hydrogen. The HERO system produces a great deal of heat, and it's little-known but heat is about 60 per cent of the CO2 problem. It's not just power, it's heat in industry and HERO can cater for both. The announcements that have been made today are revolutionary because they place Australia at the cusp of having hydrogen hubs and hydrogen intensive communities that allow businesses like us to interact with other businesses, much like we do with the University of Newcastle now, and other businesses in the area. This is really important and I really back the Prime Minister and the Minister when they say this is technology driven. It really is technology driven. Hydrogen is now, hydrogen will be the future fuel. It's inexhaustible, it will dramatically drop in price and it will become the base fuel of the planet. So once again, very, very proud to have you all here. On behalf of myself and my team, thank you.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you. Happy to take some questions. Why don't we start with the announcement first and then move ...

JOURNALIST: Obviously what you've seen here today is on a smaller scale. Is there a timeframe that you would like to see hydrogen being used, as you said, to power heavy industry?

PRIME MINISTER: Of course, and this is already occurring. When I was up in the Pilbara last week they're already looking to have hydrogen powering their trucks as little as the next half of this year. So this is a reality, this is already occurring. It's already occurring in many places, but what's exciting about the technology here is, as Andrew was saying, you need heat to make things. You need heat to drive turbines because it needs to create the steam that drive the turbines. I mean, the technology that is being developed here means you can plug this in to what is currently a coal-fired power station and drive the same turbines, so just think about the implications of that. But you've got to get it to scale, and the way you get things to scale is you create these communities. The Central Coast hub could become like you have a Silicon Valley, you've got a hydrogen valley, in bringing together the expertise, the entrepreneurialism, the resource, and the use, significantly the use of the heavy industry. That's why it's so exciting for regions in Australia, because it sees their regions not just propelled, but transformed along the way. So, yeah, we want to see that happening as soon as possible, the whole world does, because it's a huge part of the solve, it's a huge part of the answer to the question we're all trying to ensure that we can address. That's what I'll be joining President Biden and many other world leaders over the next couple of days, and where I'm seeking to focus that conversation, it's now about the how, there has been enough conversations about the when, it's about the how, now. And Andrew and his team here, they're delivering on the how, and what we're delivering on is on the how, and that's the technology and scaling it up. The challenge is to scale it up, because when you scale it up, and you get the demand for that, then you can drive down the price. The more you drive down the price, that means in countries not far from here, whether it's in Indonesia or Malaysia or India or indeed China, if you want to deal with global emissions, then you need technology that's commercial, and that developing nations around the world will adopt, which means that they can get the same jobs, which is a fair ask on their part. They want the technology that enables them to create jobs in their economies and we want them to have that too, and the way you achieve that is by improving it, making it right, and that's what these hubs achieve.

JOURNALIST: [Inaudible] One of the issues still pending is the PEP-11 licence. I think the Central Coast community is really anxiously awaiting a decision. Can you have a bit of light on when that will be, and how you feel about that?

PRIME MINISTER: I think I made it pretty clear what my Government's view was about that. I mean that will go through processes, but I've made it absolutely crystal clear that that's not something I support, and you can expect my view on that to be rock solid.

JOURNALIST: And is there enough room now for a Central Coast University? You talked about research and development as very important. There's been a lot of growing interest in a Central Coast University. Have you heard about University of Newcastle, but it's Newcastle, we're not Newcastle.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, look, I'm going to ask Lucy to speak about that because the truth is Newcastle University is a regional university that is reaching right across this region, and not just in the areas we're talking about here in this ecosystem but also I know in the health space as well. Lucy has been doing amazing work here for years to create health hubs here, and health science hubs, in the work that she's been doing with the universities, but Lucy you might want to comment on that.

LUCY WICKS MP, MEMBER FOR ROBERTSON: Thanks PM. The University of Newcastle is strongly committed to the Central Coast region and has been for a number of years. But it's also strongly committed to the importance of the Central Coast having its own voice, and that's why our Central Coast Medical School is going to be called exactly that, Central Coast Medical School, with the first intake of students coming in in July of this year. A world-class medical institution, and medical research institution, right here in Gosford, available for students on the Central Coast, students around Australia, students to be able to come and study and gain access to the best possible education in terms of health care and the best possible opportunities for their future. We're not stopping there. The Prime Minister knows this, that, you know, we do have a dream to see university, university campus expand, a dream to see young people who choose to study an education degree of their choice, have the opportunity to do so right here where they live. Not to have to go to Sydney or Newcastle or London or New York or anywhere else they may wish to, that they may need to go, but to at least have the choice to be able to study where they live. For too long, people here on the Central Coast have not had that choice, but that is changing. It's changing not just in education can I say, it's also changing in terms of job opportunities and we are seeing that, a great example of that with Star Scientific here, a great example of an investment in hydrogen, in the technology around hydrogen, in the hydrogen economy, and this is great news for the Central Coast and Hunter region.

JOURNALIST: Obviously the hubs that you mentioned that are going to be developed, a competitive process on that. Do you think that the Hunter or the Hunter Central Coast region is a frontrunner in that? You've heard the links with the university here, obviously we have the CSIRO in Newcastle, and the port. Are we a frontrunner?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I think you're a very, very strong contender. I mean, I don't want to, you know, intervene in the proper process that is going through, but what's exciting about, I think, the places that are obvious candidates, I mean the reason we are expanding is I think there's more than one, there's a lot more. Whether it's Bell Bay down in Tasmania or it's the Pilbara as I've said, or up around Gladstone, or here in the Hunter, or there are many other parts of the country which are well-suited to that, and what Angus has done in bringing this forward, and I will ask him to comment on this, is that he's enabling more of these hydrogen valleys, these carbon capture use and storage valleys, to be all around the country. But, Angus ...

THE HON. ANGUS TAYLOR MP, MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

REDUCTION: Thanks, PM. We announced some months ago the first hydrogen hub, [inaudible] what struck us very quickly is how much potential there is in Australia to build these hubs. On the back of a hydrogen industry that already exists, the Hunter Valley already uses hydrogen to produce fertiliser for instance, to help put food on the plate of Australians. So the potential there is enormous. That's why we expanded from a single hub out to five hubs, and in addition to that, carbon capture and storage hubs, where, indeed, the Hunter Valley and this region is playing a very significant role already developing technology for carbon capture use and storage, which are world leading, just like the technologies we have seen here today. In terms of the process, it will be a competitive grant process that will open in the coming months, and we are looking to make announcements in the first part of next year.

JOURNALIST: What's part of that process, what do they need to do to prove ...

THE HON. ANGUS TAYLOR MP, MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

REDUCTION: We very much want to see great projects brought forward, and great projects involve collections of organisations working together, the hydrogen producers, the hydrogen users, the energy generators, all of those different parts of the hub, as well as the potential for the right skills to be brought to bear, all of those components that make a successful hub, coming forward in the proposals. Ultimately it's a competitive process, but the fact that we are now going to award five, not just one, says to you, says to everybody, that Australia is a place where we can really lead the world on this, and Australia has technology, skills, and indeed the existing energy hubs which form the foundation of what will be, we think, fantastic hydrogen hubs for Australia and for the world.

JOURNALIST: Is there any specific announcement designated for the Central Coast or is it Australia wide?

PRIME MINISTER: It's Australia wide, and it goes to those hubs, the Central Coast, Hunter, we encourage them to be involved. I think it can be transformational here, and you've clearly got the base to do it from, so I think there's a very exciting opportunity there.

JOURNALIST: Do you believe that Australia can make hydrogen at a commercial international level without emitting greenhouse gases?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, yes I do. I do. We have got to do it at the right price. We have got to get hydrogen being able to be produced at \$2 per kilo. That is actually going to change things dramatically around the world. I know that with Fortescue Future Industries who I was with last week, Andrew Forrest, his organisation is working on those challenges, not just here but in other parts of the world. They have a similar target, in fact even more ambitious than that, which is very much like Andrew, so you have not only got to be able to master the science and the technology, which is what Andrew and the team here are demonstrating, you've then got to master the price. That is why those technology targets, those energy

technology targets, the hydrogen technology target, are the targets that actually bring about the change. That is what actually deals with the challenges around climate change, that is what actually deals with how that impacts on industries, particularly in regions, and that is why we are so focused on that. That is why we're talking about energy technologies all the time, because we know that is the ticket to the jobs, that is the ticket for the heavy industries that are so important to our regions, that is the ticket for Australia to be able to lead.

JOURNALIST: Just on another topic, Brittany Higgins has this afternoon tweeted saying that she has not heard from your office since they initially made contact on the 6th of April. Why hasn't a meeting been set?

PRIME MINISTER: That is in process, we heard from Brittany last week. It is an important meeting, I'm looking forward to having it, and we've been obviously following up on that now, and I look forward to having that meeting arranged soon.

JOURNALIST: Vaccines, I'll move to another subject. Will the Government commit to ensuring there's a mRNA facility in Australia, and if so what is the earliest date that could happen?

PRIME MINISTER: This is exciting technology as well, and I welcome states and territories, as well as the Commonwealth also, will be moving in this area. mRNA, no one is going to be in a position to be able to manufacture through mRNA to deal with the needs we have this year. That is not the discussion. A year ago, mRNA vaccines were a theory, largely, around the world, but COVID and the vaccine of mRNA production has made that a reality now. And mRNA vaccines will be important for vaccine development in the future. And Australia's going to be part of that. And my Government's going to be part of that. State governments are going to be part of that. So we welcome that. This is about establishing that manufacturing capability here, not so much specifically to deal with COVID, although, because I think COVID will continue to be with us for some time, and there will be further evolutions of vaccines in that area, so we will move to do that, but more importantly, in terms of vaccine production, as a manufacturing capability in Australia, to be able to do what was only theory last year and to bring that into reality here in Australia, at present you can only do mRNA vaccines in the United States and certain parts of Europe, so it is a very new area of science when it comes to vaccines. So whether it is there, or the sorts of things we're talking about today, our modern manufacturing strategy is about ensuring that Australia has a lead in those core areas that we think we can be successful in, and in the medical area that is certainly one.

JOURNALIST: Do you support Victoria's decision to commit \$50 million to try and set up a local ...

PRIME MINISTER: Absolutely, I think it is great. I mean, I think it's great. That is not done in place of the Commonwealth, it is done, and I'm sure as other states will look to establish this capability as well, that's what state governments do, that is part of their job. Certainly the Commonwealth will be seeking to support what

we can do in this area as well. It was the Commonwealth who were able to ensure that CSL was able to produce and be one of the only countries in the world, only about 20 of us who actually can produce COVID-19 vaccines. We are one of a handful of countries that can do that. So I think that as a Commonwealth, as a Government, we have already demonstrated our capacity to move, we did that last August for an adenovirus vaccine. The mRNA is a much more complicated set up, and so we moved on the one that could be done most swiftly, and certainly with mRNA vaccines that is a competency and a capability that I want Australia to have.

JOURNALIST: A Central Coast woman passed away [inaudible] blood clot. What about the security and safety of these vaccines? [Inaudible]

PRIME MINISTER: This is the constant focus of our medical advisors and the TGA, and the many other expert groups that advise the Commonwealth Government, and of course state and territory governments. So we have been informed by the advice all the way through managing COVID-19. I have to, every time, we reflect on these things, Australia proceeded very carefully to go through the approval phases of our vaccines. This was important, whether it was Pfizer or AstraZeneca, there were others who were saying that we should rush, there were others who thought that we should just go into emergency type approvals of our vaccines, and we chose not to do that. We chose to stick with the very careful and tested process of approving vaccines in this country. We didn't cut any corners, we made sure we ticked every box. We made sure we got hold of the evidence and the information that enabled, I believe, the best regulators, if not the best regulators in the world to make their decisions on the vaccines that are being used in Australia.

Other countries were not able to do that. Other countries, like we see in the United States with 1,000 people dying every day, every single day, Australia, our relative success in ensuring that we suppress the virus meant we could get the process right, and we followed that advice and so therefore the vaccines that are available here in Australia, particularly those being administered to over 50s for AstraZeneca, and the most important population of those over 70s currently, and I'm pleased to see that the number of vaccinations each day staying well above north of 60,000 a day, and the general practitioners who are administering those doses are talking to their patients and giving them that confidence. I want to continue to encourage, particularly those aged over 70 at the moment, to make that appointment, go and see your GP and the GP practices that are administering the vaccine, and ensure you do that, because if there is a COVID outbreak in Australia, you're in those vulnerable groups and you are at great risk from COVID. We saw that with the second wave in Victoria. Over 600 Victorians died who were in those vulnerable groups when the second wave went through. I do not want to see that here in Australia again, and the protection against that is the vaccine, the AstraZeneca vaccine, which is safe and effective for those over 50. That is the clear medical advice that we have received, and particularly for those aged over

70, it is important for your public health, for your health, that you take those vaccines, so I encourage you to do that. Thank you all very much for your time today.

PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

The Hon Scott Morrison MP