



“We need to ensure the building blocks are put in place to secure the long-term success of WA’s clean energy plans

Japan and South Korea (pictured) are undertaking significant decarbonisation efforts using a mix of technologies. Photo: Yu Airu

## Clean energy shift offers opportunity

WA has the ingredients for a green hydrogen industry, but good intent needs to be combined with bold decisions, actions and policy making.



Isaac Hinton  
editorial@businessnews.com.au

**W**ESTERN Australia is ideally positioned to be the clean energy powerhouse envisioned by Premier Roger Cook, but it won’t happen on its own.

Realising WA’s decarbonisation and economic diversification goals will take a proactive, sustained and collaborative approach between industry and all levels of government.

If done right, emerging industries such as WA’s nascent green hydrogen sector have the potential to help position the state as a global leader in clean energy.

WA has the ingredients to develop a successful green hydrogen industry: sun, wind, large parcels of land, a stable regulatory environment and a political will to make projects happen. But good intent needs to be combined with bold decisions, actions and policy making.

The government’s planned reforms to the environmental approvals system announced last year were a welcome early step. The accompanying budget announcements in the mid-year economic review reinforced the government’s commitment to these reforms.

If implemented properly, the changes will help attract further investment by de-risking new projects that would previously have been subjected to an opaque system and lengthy delays.

It follows a suite of incentives announced by Mr Cook at the WA Clean Energy Forum in February, creating further opportunities in clean energy industries.

The next step is to ensure these opportunities don’t go to waste and that the announcements are followed up by actions and engagement with industry.

We need to ensure the building blocks are put in place to secure the long-term success of WA’s clean energy plans.

WA’s green hydrogen industry has the potential to be a key player, not only in assisting WA industries decarbonise, but also launching a new export economy by supporting the significant decarbonisation efforts in countries such as Japan and South Korea.

On the diversification front, a successful green hydrogen industry also has the potential to create new green resources jobs to replace those that will inevitably be lost as fossil fuel-driven industries shrink and the mining cycle cools over coming decades. There will be enormous opportunities in innovation, technology and diversifying the resources skills base our state relies on.

The potential size and longevity of green hydrogen projects is unique, and the staggered phasing in of construction and operation can offer multi-generational opportunities.

The giga-scale green hydrogen projects earmarked for WA, such as the Australian Renewable Energy Hub and Western Green Energy Hub, will be among the largest in the world.

This scale presents a huge opportunity to build local manufacturing capability, rather than relying on international suppliers to ship the enormous number of solar cells, wind turbines and electrolyzers that will be needed to produce green hydrogen.

WA has the opportunity to create a circular system, in which local manufacturers provide support for green hydrogen in construction

and are then powered from green hydrogen once operational.

Labour productivity is one of the major difficulties in enriching our local processing and manufacturing capabilities. However, by ensuring we leverage our abundant renewable energy and build common infrastructure to harness it, we could create a competitive advantage for WA.

As an emerging industry, green hydrogen projects also have the opportunity to take a new approach to engagement with traditional owners, ensuring they are an integral part of the project from the start and understanding their unique aspirations.

The industry has an opportunity to work in partnership with the communities it is operating in, rather than the transactional relationship the mining and petroleum industry has evolved from in the past.

This is an exciting time for WA, and with continued collaboration between industry, governments and communities, we can ensure industries such as green hydrogen achieve their potential to help position WA as a leader in clean energy.

• Isaac Hinton is Australian lead for InterContinental Energy