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H2 Networks All About Information & Collaboration

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HYDROGEN WILL REQUIRE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE APPRENTICES.

As Australia moves toward a zero-emission future, our education sector needs to move with it. This will result in a greater emphasis on the sciences, especially within the plumbing, gas fitting and electrical trades. A hydrogen future means a sound understanding of chemistry and other sciences will play larger roles in those trades. If the federal government's plans for Australia to become a hydrogen powerhouse are to come true, then students wanting to enter one of these trades will need to be graduating with higher skills in chemistry and other sciences. Robert Edwards, Chair of the H2 Networks which is based in the ACT says, "Gone are the days when teachers and careers advisors can say to underperforming students that they should get a trade."

Whilst it may still be another three to five years before courses are ready for trade-based hydrogen workers, schools should be preparing their students now. The good thing about hydrogen is that it is the simplest element to teach and understand. Meaning that once students understand hydrogen, it will make understanding the more complex elements of chemistry and electrical forces easier. Who knows, maybe preparing students for a future in a trade will help to foster a stronger work ethos in those students for other sciences.

Given the hydrogen nexus of water, gas, and electricity, it is highly likely that more cross-skilling between the trades will be required. This means electrical apprentices will need specialised training to work with water and gas, and more plumbing and gas fitting apprentices will require specialised electrical training too. And it is still too early to predict if this cross training will have an effect on the length of apprenticeships as the skills and type of training required to work safely with hydrogen are still to be decided. It is also too early to say whether there will one day be a specific hydrogen trade.

Preparing high school students to work in hydrogen-related trades and training them during their apprenticeships will make Australia's transition to a hydrogen powerhouse easier. However, there will still be difficulties in this transformation especially within the plumbing, gas fitting and electrical industries as there are many reservations about what this cross training will entail.

A lot of the reservations are fueled by the debate about whether fuel cells and electrolyzers are gas or electrical appliances or both.

To have competent hydrogen workers, state regulators and industry associations will need to get on board to help resolve numerous inconsistencies within the existing training regimes and how apprentices will be licenced when they finish their hydrogen training.

There are numerous issues, and they will take time to resolve, but anyone considering plumbing, gas fitting or electrical apprenticeships should consider that those trades will be technically more complex in the future.

About H2 Networks

H2 Networks / Energy & Sustainability Committee was formed by Master Plumbers ACT to help the ACT government transition away from natural gas to a 100% zero-emissions future. Robert Edwards is also a member of a Technical Advisory Committee whos' purpose it is to develop hydrogen skills in Australia's gas industry.

For More Information

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