CLIMATE CAPITAL FORUM

GETTING CLEAN ENERGY CAPITAL MOVING

March 2026

Executive Summary

In recent years, significant public funding has been committed to accelerating the energy transition. Initiatives such as the National Reconstruction Fund (NRF), the Future Made in Australia (FMIA) Act, and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) reflect a growing and serious commitment to mobilising capital toward net zero industries and the decarbonisation of the Australian economy.

Mobilising that capital demands government leadership to remove bottlenecks and create clear market signals. In the Climate Change Authority's recent annual report (December 2025), it stated that only $1.3 billion has been committed of the $47 billion of Future Made in Australia funds, with many funds announced over 4 years ago.

Our delegation is focused on these practical proposals to get capital moving:

- **Accelerate deployment of already announced funding**

Accelerate already announced clean energy and industry funding by increasing delivery speed, risk appetite, and co-investment flexibility across institutions like ARENA, CEFC and the National Reconstruction Fund, ensuring committed public capital unlocks projects and crowds in private investment.

- **Early-Stage Cleantech Funding**

Close the early-stage cleantech financing gap by expanding public co-investment and introducing more flexible matching requirements for grant programs, helping startups secure capital to commercialise breakthrough technologies and strengthen Australia's climate innovation pipeline.

Get committed funds out the door

What's the idea?

Australia has announced tens of billions of dollars in public financing for the clean energy transition through institutions and programs such as the **National Reconstruction Fund (NRF), Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC), ARENA and the Future Made in Australia (FMIA) agenda.**

However, the pace of capital deployment is lagging significantly behind policy ambition. In the Climate Change Authority's recent annual progress report (December 2025), it stated that only $1.3 billion has been committed of the $47 billion FMIA announced funds. Climate Energy Finance's internal analysis of all State and Federal cleantech funding allocation in 2025 is around $15 billion.

Many projects across renewable energy, grid infrastructure, clean manufacturing and critical minerals are reporting long delays in accessing committed funding.

The priority now is execution.

We are calling for the Government to accelerate the deployment of committed capital by:

- Establishing clear **deployment targets and timelines** for public financing institutions.
- Simplifying grant and investment processes to reduce delays and duplication.
- Prioritising **speed to market for commercially viable projects.**
- Creating demand for new technologies through **standard setting and market development via offtake agreements** to establish viable markets and pathways that unlock greater private investment across more projects.
- Addressing the non-financial barriers that slow project delivery, including planning and permitting delays, grid access constraints, market design limitations, and social licence challenges.
- Supporting **public-private co-investment vehicles** for climate technology.
- Encouraging participation from superannuation funds and institutional investors.

This is not about new announcements — it is about ensuring existing commitments translate into real projects, jobs and industrial capability.

Why it matters

1. A win for energy security

Speeding up the deployment of committed funds would:

- Accelerate renewable energy and grid investment
- Reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports
- Protect domestic manufacturing and households from international price shocks
- Strengthen energy security and productivity

2. A win for households

Faster deployment of public capital would:

- Lower energy costs by bringing more clean capacity online sooner
- Reduce electricity price volatility through greater supply diversity
- Create local jobs and economic activity in communities across Australia
- Deliver long-term energy affordability by accelerating the transition away from expensive fossil fuels

3. A win for investors and industry

Accelerating deployment of public funds would:

- Reduce uncertainty in project pipelines
- Crowd in institutional and global capital
- Improve Australia's competitiveness for investment.
- Enable projects to reach final investment decision faster
- Unlock supply chains and workforce development
- Prevent viable projects from relocating overseas

Even modest improvements in deployment speed could unlock billions in private co-investment.

Early-stage cleantech funding

What's the idea?

Australia has world-class clean technology research and a growing startup ecosystem. Yet many promising technologies struggle to reach commercialisation due to a **well-known early-stage financing gap**.

The government is signalling a more hands-on approach to industry policy through legislation like Future Made in Australia and the Net Zero Fund, which targets first-of-a-kind projects with modest return requirements — a step in the right direction. However, the **Net Zero Fund covers only around 8% of the government's total specialist investment vehicle (SIV) dollars** for Australia's net zero and Future Made in Australia goals, meaning the same logic needs to be applied across the entire investment portfolio.

The two main SIVs for new industry development — the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and the National Reconstruction Fund (NRF) — currently lean heavily on commercial debt rather than assets like concessional loans, guarantees and equity. This limits their ability to fund the riskier, early-stage technologies that new industries depend on. As the Centre for Policy Development has noted, these vehicles are meant to crowd in private finance and accelerate emerging technology, yet most money still goes to projects the market would fund anyway (Capital Brief, 3 Mar 2026).

Two key reforms are needed to enable more funding in early-stage clean-tech:

1. More funding needs to be available that targets earlier stages of innovation – either through expanding initiatives like ARENA or the Industry Growth Program or equipping funds like the CEFC and NRF to invest in more first-of-a-kind projects

2. Removing barriers for the private sector to invest in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Removing or relaxing matching requirements for early-stage funding would act as a **"growth hack" for accelerating innovation**, allowing promising technologies to progress more quickly from research to testing and demonstration.

Programs such as **EnergyLab**, which already undertake extensive due diligence on startups, often identify strong ventures but must send them back into the market to secure matching capital before funding can flow. This slows progress at precisely the stage where speed matters most.

International models demonstrate a more effective approach. **California's CalSEED and CalTestBed programs** provide early-stage grants and testing infrastructure without requiring matching capital, enabling rapid development and validation of new technologies.

Adopting similar mechanisms in Australia would help accelerate early-TRL research, technology testing and commercialisation, strengthening Australia's position in emerging clean industries.

Comparisons between Australia and other jurisdictions

Country/ State	Program	Max Funding, (AUD)	Matching Status	Tech Readiness Level 1-9
CA, USA	**CalSEED**	$212,000	None	2-4
CA, USA	**CalTestBed**	$424,000	None (Voucher)	5-7
Australia	**Industry Growth Program- Early-Stage Commercialisation**	$250,000 (early stage)	Yes (1:1)	3-6
Australia	**Industry Growth Program – Commercialisation and Growth**	$100,000 to $5,000,000	Yes (1:1)	4-9

Our partners New Energy Nexus have set up AusTestBed (launched March 2026) to demonstrate that similar programs can be successfully run here, offering businesses up to $50,000 each in unmatched funding.

We are calling for policy settings that help close this early-stage financing gap by:

- Expanding early-stage clean-tech investment through institutions such as ARENA, the Industry Growth Program, enabling them to invest in projects at lower technology readiness levels.
- Equipping the CEFC and NRF to invest at earlier stages by updating investment mandates and benchmark rates of return, and strengthening institutional capacity to take more calculated risks.
- Removing or significantly relaxing matching capital requirements for early-stage grants to reduce barriers for emerging technologies and developers.
- Strengthening links between venture capital, superannuation, and public finance to crowd in private capital at the early stage.
- Establishing Australian equivalents of CalSEED and CalTestBed to accelerate technology testing and commercialisation.

Why it matters

1. A win for innovation

Many Australian cleantech startups receive international interest but struggle to raise domestic capital. Improving early-stage financing would:

- Retain intellectual property and economic value domestically
- Grow the next generation of climate technology companies.

2. A win for investors

Early-stage climate technologies represent a rapidly growing global investment opportunity. Closing the funding gap would:

- Enable more venture capital participation
- Improve the pipeline of investable companies
- Strengthen Australia's innovation ecosystem.

3. A win for the clean economy

Cleantech innovation underpins key industries including:

- energy storage
- hydrogen and electrolysers
- green metals and materials
- grid technologies
- climate data and digital platforms.

About the Climate Capital Forum

The **Climate Capital Forum** (CCF) is a network of investors, climate finance experts, decarbonising companies and philanthropists who came together to provide policy advice on how Australia can lead the world in decarbonising, renewable energy and cleantech innovation.

Established in December 2020, the CCF offers support to all levels of government on how to build a strong future economy and long-term job opportunities that will benefit Australia and uphold our commitments to our region and internationally as the world decarbonises.

Our members manage billions in assets and have firsthand experience naviating the barriers slowing down clean tech investment. We are here to share our lived experience of those barriers and propose practical, specific reforms that will unlock private capital, lift national capacity, and increase Australia's productivity.

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Delegates

March 2026 - Climate Capital Forum Canberra delegation

Tom Quinn, Springmount Advisory

Tom Quinn coordinates strategy and policy functions of the Climate Capital Forum, working across its members. Tom is the Founding CEO of the Future Business Council. He is a strategist, communicator and advocate for future business opportunities in Australia. He has a background in the green building industry, renewable energy sector, climate adaptation, business innovation, and international politics.
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George Knight, UEG Energy

George Knight leads a network battery developer startup, UEG Energy. UEG Energy is a pure-play owner of grid-scale urban batteries that unlock the most value for networks, markets and communities. UEG is deploying more than 3GWhs of battery storage into urban environments globally.
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Mark Richards, Energy Estates

Mark Richards leads on energy projects addressing commercial, risk, strategic development and implementation across infrastructure types including solar, wind, transmission, hydrogen, offshore wind installation vessels and biofuels. Mark is a dual qualified legal advisor with innovative hybrid-ppp infrastructure project experience.
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Monica Richter, Project Director, Materials and Embodied Carbon Leaders' Alliance; Industry Decarbonisation, WWF-Australia

Monica Richter is an Economist and Social Ecologist with over 20 years experience in corporate engagement, business development, environmental and climate policy and advocacy. MECLA represents over 200 organisations with a focus on low carbon building materials and a more sustainable built environment.
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Delegates

March 2026 - Climate Capital Forum Canberra delegation

Toby Phillips, Centre for Policy Development

Toby Phillips is the Centre for Policy Development's Economic Director, and directs the Australian-focussed work of CDP's Just Transition focus area. He leads work on policy ideas and partnerships to build a more environmentally and socially sustainable economy. This work encompasses climate policy, wellbeing-approaches to government decision-making, and structural challenges to Australia's economy. Toby holds a Master of Public Policy from Oxford University and a BSc(hons) in chemistry from Flinders University. He has previously served on the board of the Australian Republic Movement, and currently chairs the board of Scouts Australia.

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Mara Hammerle, Centre for Policy Development

Mara Hammerle is an economist and public policy analyst who specialises in energy and climate economics. She holds a PhD from the Crawford School of Public Policy at ANU where she worked with government and industry assessing the impacts of ACT energy policy on households.

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Miles Prosser, Centre for Policy Development

Miles Prosser is the Energy Transition Lead within the Centre for Policy Development's Just Transition team. Miles has extensive energy and climate policy experience with the aluminium industry in Australia and globally. Miles has a Bachelors Degree in Science and has many years experience working on the intersection of sustainability, energy and industry policy.

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