

# Australian PM vows to create 50,000 'green' jobs

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(AP) -- Australia's prime minister promised Thursday to create 50,000 "green" jobs and apprenticeships to combat climate change and unemployment simultaneously.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has prioritized environmental legislation this year even as his government forecast that Australian unemployment would rise to 8.5 percent next year from the current 5.8 percent because of the global downturn.

"The government I lead will not stand idly by while thousands of young Australians have their hopes crushed by a [global recession](#) not of their own making," Rudd told a conference of his Labor Party.

The "green" jobs package includes 30,000 apprentice positions that offer training in environment-friendly building practices, such as installing solar energy panels and water recycling systems and retrofitting homes to be more energy efficient.

The program will also create 10,000 positions in a national Green Jobs Corps that will provide environmental training for unemployed people between 18 and 24 and employ them in public works projects, such as planting trees and restoring walking tracks. Money would also be poured into another 10,000 jobs that encourage sustainability and green building practices.

Rudd said the 94 million Australian dollar (\$77 million) job creation and

training program was aimed at helping youth obtain new skills "that will be highly relevant to a lower-carbon economy in the future."

The announcement was welcomed by Sharan Burrow, president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, who called it "a great step forward."

"It's a recognition that here is a prime minister who is determined to act on unemployment," Burrow said.

Rudd's office did not immediately respond to AP questions on whether the money would be diverted from funds already in the budget or if Rudd planned to seek a new appropriations bill.

Rudd has focused heavily on the environment this year and is pushing tough legislation to curb Australia's emissions of [carbon dioxide](#). Most opposition parties oppose the legislation, which goes before the Senate next month.

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