PILBARA SOLAR

POWERING AUSTRALIA

CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTING

First Nations Business Resources

Table of contents

Starting your business journey	04
Business opportunities in construction contracting	05
Renewable energy project life cycle	06
Leading business opportunities on Country	08
Discover trusted guidance and support to turn your ideas into opportunities on Country	12

Acknowledgement of Country

Powering Australia wishes to acknowledge the First Nations peoples of Australia and recognise their enduring connection to Country through culture, people, place and story. We honour the knowledge systems that have sustained these lands and waters for thousands of generations and recognise the vital role of First Nations leadership and self-determination in shaping a just and sustainable future. As Australia undergoes a significant clean energy and industrial transition, we acknowledge the importance of respectful partnership, cultural integrity, and shared purpose to realise the full opportunity of the clean energy transition.

Business opportunities in construction contracting

Starting your business journey

First Nations businesses are stepping into one of the biggest economic shifts Australia has seen and the opportunity is real, immediate, and growing rapidly.

As the clean energy transition accelerates, there's a clear window to move early and position your business for sustained success. With the right insight and forward planning, you can secure a leading business role in projects that will shape regions and communities for decades to come.

It starts by pinpointing where you fit across renewable energy projects and the supply chains that support them. From there, it's about understanding what work is coming, what's required and when it's happening. The businesses that achieve sustained success are the ones preparing early, investing in the right equipment, forming strong partnerships and aligning with projects before they hit the ground.

This resource is built to help you do exactly that. It cuts through the noise to highlight real opportunities, break down the work involved, and give you a clear direction in beginning a sustainable business on Country.

> "The businesses that achieve sustained success are the ones preparing early, **investing in the right equipment, and aligning with projects before they hit the ground.**"

Your practical guide

This resource cuts through the noise. Real opportunities. The work involved. A clear direction to build a sustainable business on Country.

What is construction contracting?

Construction sub-contractors are the critical services that help renewable projects take form. These services are when a business or contractor is hired to deliver construction work under a formal agreement for the construction lead (This is the EPC – Engineering, Procurement, Construction lead) who may not have all the staff or capability to complete the construction of the project on their own. When building renewable energy projects, such as solar and wind farms, a variety of construction contracts are required.

EPC contracts are commonly used in large renewable energy projects, where a single leading company handles design, materials supply and coordinates the full construction works.

The EPC contractor is the main contractor who engages subcontractors to complete various specific tasks, such as earthwork, concreting, fencing, testing and wiring, among others. There are significant opportunities for First Nation Businesses to participate in construction, materials supply and skills development fostering long-term business engagement as renewable energy expands across regional Australia.

Why it matters

Renewable energy construction is more than a project opportunity, it is a pathway to long-term economic growth, workforce development and stronger regional communities. These projects create immediate jobs, generate business opportunities and enable people on Country to build careers close to home while providing a leading contribution to Australia's energy future.

While the construction phase of any single renewable energy project may be time bound, the skills, experience and capabilities gained are highly transferable.
From solar, wind and battery projects through to major infrastructure like roads, schools, hospitals and housing, clean energy construction builds businesses ready to deliver the next generation of essential infrastructure.

For First Nations businesses, this represents a powerful opportunity to grow capability, expand services and secure lasting economic development. For industry and government, partnering with First Nations enterprises is not just valuable, it is essential. Without the leadership, local knowledge and construction expertise of First Nations businesses, Australia's energy transition will be slower and less effective.

Renewable energy project life cycle

From idea to impact, business opportunities exist across all stages, both direct and indirect:

01

Development
(Years 0-4)
Site selection, planning, approvals, and securing funding

02

Construction
(Years 2-4)
Building and installing infrastructure

03

Operations & maintenance
(Years 4–6 onward)
Generating electricity and ongoing maintenance

04

Decommissioning
(Years 29–30)
Removing equipment and restoring the land

Understanding the industry structure

Developer > EPC Contractor > Subcontractors > Decommissioning Crews.

Some First Nations businesses enter by subcontracting or forming joint ventures with majority ownership and controlling rights.

Identifying the opportunity and what's coming next

The businesses that are most successful are the ones preparing today and getting a clear idea of the work that is emerging. Understanding where future demand for construction services in renewable energy, critical minerals and supporting infrastructure is one of the most important steps in positioning your business for growth.

A practical way to do this is by mapping planned and proposed projects in your region. You can do this by engaging with your local councils, requesting information for projects that have a Development Application lodged or approved. You can also undertake your own research for renewable government infrastructure pipelines, developer announcements, feasibility studies and Renewable Energy Zone plans to see what is coming to market. All of this information is publicly available online. Keep in mind to identify and record the type of project, such as solar, wind, battery storage, or microgrids, along with its size, timeline and expected operational date.

This market intelligence gives your business a competitive advantage. It helps you forecast where contractors will be needed, what capabilities will be in demand and when opportunities are likely to open. With this knowledge, you can build capability early, strengthen partnerships, invest in the right equipment and be ready to secure work when projects move forward.

Leading business opportunities on Country

Wind and solar projects create real opportunities for First Nations businesses to lead and grow in construction services. These projects need local capability across civil works, piling and foundations, electrical installation and testing, transport and logistics, and procurement and supply. By targeting these core construction activities, First Nations businesses can secure long-term contracts, build skilled workforces on Country, and strengthen their role in Australia's clean energy economy.

Business segment	Description
Civil works (site clearing, fencing, access roads, drainage, concreting, earthmoving)	Includes clearing vegetation, grading land, installing boundary and security fencing, constructing access roads and laydown areas, implementing drainage systems, and performing excavation, earthmoving, and concreting to establish stable foundations for project infrastructure. Activities often involve erosion control, site compaction, and management of soil, sediment, and stormwater in alignment with environmental requirements.
Piling / foundation services	Involves geotechnical assessment, ground preparation, and installation of deep foundations such as bored piers, driven piles, screw piles, or micro piles to support structures. Tasks include: • Mobilising drilling rigs • Conducting soil tests • Ensuring pile alignment and load bearing compliance • Performing grouting or reinforcement • Coordinating with structural engineers to meet engineering specifications
Electrical works (trenching, cabling, lighting, power connections, solar PV, battery)	Encompasses excavation and trenching for underground electrical conduits, cable installation (LV, HV, communication, and control systems), installation of lighting systems, commissioning of power distribution components, mounting of solar or battery equipment, and ensuring compliance with electrical safety standards. Includes: • Termination testing and integration with existing or new grid infrastructure.
Electrical testing services	Electrical Testing Services are tasks associated with pre commissioning and commissioning tests such as insulation resistance testing, continuity checks, thermal imaging, earthing assessments, fault finding, performance verification, and compliance reporting. Ensures all electrical systems meet safety codes, operational reliability benchmarks, and regulatory certification requirements prior to energisation.
Transport and logistics (moving materials, machinery, equipment)	This involves planning, coordinating and executing the transport of machinery, structural components, cabling, tools, and consumables for the essential function of construction services. Tasks include: • Safe loading/unloading • Securing loads to regulatory standards • Managing delivery schedules • Operating heavy vehicles and material handling equipment and maintaining documentation for traceability • Chain of responsibility • Safe work compliance
Procurement and supply (materials, safety gear, tools, consumables, catering)	Involves vendor engagement, inventory control, quality assurance, logistics coordination, cost tracking, and ensuring materials meet project specifications and safety standards. Includes sourcing: • Purchasing and managing the supply of construction materials mechanical and electrical components • PPE • Tools • Consumables • Site services such as catering

Table 1: What's involved in Construction Contracting

Training and skills for success

Building a successful business starts with knowing what is required to deliver on the ground. That means understanding the skills and training required to operate a successful business. Below are examples of some of the qualifications, training and experience needed for construction contracting.

Civil works (site clearing, fencing, access roads, drainage, concreting, earthmoving)

Training/qualifications needed
- White card
- Driver's licence
- Concreter licence
- Machinery tickets (excavator, grader, roller), TAFE Cert II–III in civil construction
- First aid
- Traffic control, working at heights*

Useful job experience/skills that fit this business:
- Earthworks
- Concreting, road and drainage works
- Machinery operation

Piling / Foundation services

Training/qualifications needed
- White card
- Driver's licence
- Concreter license
- Machinery or piling rig tickets,
- TAFE Cert III in civil construction (Foundations)
- First aid
- Safety / Working at Heights courses

Useful job experience/skills that fit this business:
- Civil construction
- Drilling
- Concreting
- Operating piling and heavy machinery

Electrical works (trenching, cabling, lighting, power connections, solar*, battery)

Training/qualifications needed
- White card
- TAFE Cert III in electrotechnology
- Electrician's licence
- CPR/First aid

Useful job experience/skills that fit this business:
- Electrical installation
- Cabling
- Switchboard wiring
- Power distribution
- Compliance knowledge

Electrical testing services

Training/qualifications needed
- White card
- TAFE Cert III in electrotechnology, electrician's licence
- Test & tag certification
- CPR/First Aid, High Voltage (HV) training (if applicable)

Useful job experience/skills that fit this business:
- Electrical installation
- Maintenance, or commissioning experience
- Knowledge of testing cables
- Instruments and safety systems
- Understanding of AS/NZS electrical standards
- Safety compliance
- Report writing
- Digital test recording systems

Transport & logistics (moving materials, machinery, equipment)

Training/qualifications needed
- Driver's licence (MR/HR/HC)
- Forklift licence
- Load restraint training

Useful job experience/skills that fit this business:
- Truck driving
- Machinery transport
- Logistics coordination permits
- Scheduling
- Safety

Procurement & supply (materials, safety gear, tools, consumables, catering)

Training/qualifications needed
- Basic business
- Procurement training
- Logistics
- Warehousing experience

Useful job experience/skills that fit this business:
- Purchasing
- Supplier management
- Stock control
- Catering
- Pricing and tendering
- Online ordering

*Table 2: Business opportunities in the construction stage. *See the separate business opportunity, End of life Decommissioning, for complementary business with similar training requirements*
***See the separate business opportunity, Solar and General Mechanical, for more information*

Major equipment needed

The businesses that get ahead are the ones that prepare early, matching capability to opportunity and setting themselves up to deliver with confidence.

This is an indicative list of equipment you will need to start your business for the relevant "Business Activity". Equipment costs for clean-technology businesses can vary significantly across Australia due to factors such as transport and freight distances, regional supply availability, import costs, and differences in local labour, installation, and compliance requirements.

The equipment list in this resource represents items typically needed but this may differ depending on region, availability and specific sector needs.

01 Civil works

Excavators	Bulldozer	Water trucks	Backhoe loader
Skid steers	Trucks-tipper	Land roller*	Concrete mixer trucks
Wheel loaders			

02 Piling / foundation services

Solar pile driver	Skid steers	Portable concrete pump	Welding and cutting machine
Excavators	Telehandlers**		

03 Electrical works

Excavators	Portable generator	Essential cable handling tools and equipment	Cable pusher with hydraulic power pack
Elevated work platforms **	Mini spider crane		Basic test instruments
	Cable termination tools		

04 Electrical testing services

Essential small measuring/ testing equipment	tester	Relay test system, high Precision Relay Test Set, OMNICRON CMC	Relay test system
Power quality analyser	Micro ohm meter	Capacitance and tan delta tester	Digital transformer analyser
Insulation resistance	Primary injection test system, CPC 100 OMICRON		Insulating oil test set

05 Transport and logistics

Prime mover trucks	Flatbed trailers	Forklifts	Tilt tray trucks
Crane truck			

06 Procurement and supply

Delivery ute/van	Forklifts	Inventory software	Barcode scanners
Prime mover trucks			

*Table 3: Indicative entry-level equipment cost. *Equipment use in Solar farm. **Equipment use in Wind farm.*

Discover trusted guidance and support to turn your ideas into opportunities on Country

You don't have to start from scratch. A strong network of support is ready to help you turn ideas into real business outcomes.

WHERE TO START

- First Nations business hubs and chambers
- First Nations business directories
- Industry networks
- Training providers
- Government business support programs

FINANCE AND BUSINESS PLANNING

- Indigenous Business Australia – finance and business planning support
- Australian Government Business Portal – online hub for business support and information
- Local Business Development Commission – provides business support (e.g. Small Business Development Corporation in WA)
- Local Investments Funding Grant – local grant investment
- Grant Connect – provides information about Australian grant opportunities
- Clean Energy Finance Corporation – clean-tech project investment
- National Indigenous Australian Agency – provides information on Indigenous business development grants and regional economic programs
- Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) – supports First Nations communities with finance to build and take part in renewable energy and local infrastructure projects

NETWORKS AND PROCUREMENT

- NIAA Indigenous Procurement Policy – government tender opportunities
- AusTender – Federal Government tender website
- Supply Nation – national procurement networks and business opportunities
- Local Aboriginal Business Directory – connects and promotes Aboriginal-owned businesses across Australia

REGULATION AND INNOVATION

- State and National Environmental Regulation – for waste licensing and compliance requirements

PROJECT MAPPING

- Clean Energy Regulator – Large-scale renewable energy data – federal site with data on approved, committed and probable large-scale renewable energy projects across Australia
- Renew Economy Project Maps – interactive maps of Australia's large-scale solar, wind and BESS farms; identifies future construction opportunities

Key terms	Definitions
AS/NZS electrical standards	The Australian and New Zealand standards that govern how electrical work must be designed, installed, tested and maintained. All electrical works on renewable energy construction projects must comply with these standards.
Battery energy storage system (BESS)	A large-scale facility that stores electricity generated by solar or wind farms for later use. BESS projects require the same range of civil, electrical and mechanical construction services as solar and wind farms.
Bored pier	A type of deep foundation created by drilling a hole into the ground and filling it with reinforced concrete. Used to support heavy structures on renewable energy sites where surface soil conditions are insufficient.
Chain of responsibility	A legal framework that holds everyone in the transport supply chain – including schedulers, loaders and vehicle operators – accountable for ensuring loads are transported safely and in compliance with regulations.
Civil works	Ground-level construction activities required to prepare a site for development, including vegetation clearing, grading, fencing, access road construction, drainage, excavation, earthmoving and concreting.
Commissioning	The process of testing and verifying that all installed systems – electrical, mechanical and civil – are operating correctly and safely before a renewable energy project is energised and handed over to the operator.
Development application (DA)	A formal submission made to a local council or planning authority seeking approval to carry out a development project. Tracking approved DAs is a practical way for businesses to identify upcoming construction opportunities in their region.
EPC contractor	Engineering, Procurement and Construction contractor. The lead company responsible for designing, sourcing materials for and delivering a renewable energy project from start to finish. EPC contractors engage subcontractors to complete specific scopes of work.
Energisation	The point at which a renewable energy system is connected to the electricity grid and switched on for the first time. All electrical testing and commissioning must be completed and approved before energisation can occur.
Expression of interest (EOI)	A preliminary submission made by a business to register its interest in providing services for an upcoming project or contract. Often the first step in a competitive procurement process before a full tender is released.
Geotechnical assessment	An investigation of the ground conditions at a project site, including soil type, load-bearing capacity and stability. Required before piling and foundation work begins to ensure structures are engineered to suit site conditions.
HV / LV cabling	High Voltage (HV) and Low Voltage (LV) electrical cables used to distribute power across a construction site and connect renewable energy systems to the electricity grid. Installation requires a licensed electrician.

Table 3: Key terms & definitions

Insulation resistance testing	An electrical test that measures the resistance of cable insulation to confirm it is safe and fit for purpose before systems are energised. A standard pre-commissioning requirement on all renewable energy construction projects.
Joint venture	A business arrangement where two or more companies partner to deliver a project or contract, sharing resources, risks and profits. A common pathway for First Nations businesses to enter construction contracting by working alongside established contractors.
Load restraint	The process of securing materials, equipment and machinery on transport vehicles to prevent movement during transit. Correct load restraint is a legal requirement and a key safety obligation for transport and logistics businesses.
Microgrid	A small, localised electricity network that can operate independently from the main grid. Microgrids often combine solar, battery and generator systems and are increasingly being built in remote First Nations communities and regional areas.
Piling	The installation of deep structural foundations – such as driven piles, screw piles or bored piers – into the ground to support solar panel mounting structures, wind turbine towers and other heavy infrastructure.
PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)	Protective clothing and equipment worn by workers to minimise the risk of injury on construction sites. Includes items such as hard hats, high-visibility vests, steel-capped boots, gloves and eye protection. PPE is a legal requirement on all construction sites.
Procurement	The process of sourcing, purchasing and managing the supply of materials, equipment and services needed for a construction project. Effective procurement is essential for keeping projects on time and within budget.
Renewable energy zone (REZ)	A designated geographic area identified by government as suitable for large-scale renewable energy development due to its wind or solar resources and proximity to transmission infrastructure. REZs signal where major construction opportunities will emerge.
Screw pile	A type of foundation screwed directly into the ground using machinery, commonly used to support solar panel racking on large solar farms. Faster to install than poured concrete foundations and easily removable at decommissioning.
Subcontractor	A business engaged by a principal contractor (such as an EPC contractor) to carry out a defined scope of work within a larger construction project. First Nations businesses often enter the construction sector as subcontractors.
Tendering	The formal competitive process by which businesses submit a detailed proposal and price to win a contract. Responding to tenders from EPC contractors and project developers is the primary way construction subcontractors secure work on renewable energy projects.
White card	A nationally recognised construction induction certificate (General Construction Induction Card) required before any person can work on a construction site in Australia. The first qualification needed to enter the construction industry.

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