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Collaring the definition of green jobs

Estimates of so-called green collar jobs in Australia range from 50,000 to 300,000, illustrating that nobody really has a handle on a concept that is rapidly emerging into mainstream discussion. A report to be released next week attempts to define the “elusive green collar worker”.

“We hear figures of anything between 50,000 to 300,000 green collar workers in Australia”, says report co-author Graeme Philipson of **Connection Research**. “But the figures are just guesswork. The fact is, it’s impossible to know how many there are until we define them.”

Are they green collar if they are a lawyer who spends 40% of their time on environment issues? What if about water technician in a highly polluting industry? Community engagement specialists?

The report seeks to answer these questions by proposing a taxonomy, or categorisation, which defines the different types of green collar worker in Australia and New Zealand.

It was produced by sustainability consultancy **Connection Research**, conceived by the Environment Institute of Australian and New Zealand (EIANZ), and funded by the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC).

The report proposes a two-part definition:

1. Managers, professionals and technicians who work in green organisations OR who have green skills and responsibilities within other organisations that may not be considered green; and
2. Services, clerical, sales and semi-skilled workers who work in green organisations.

One of the more interesting distinctions proposed in the report is between jobs in the environmental sector and the sustainable sector. The first is concerned more with practical action, the second more with policy and process. It also takes into account skills levels and which industries green collar workers are employed in, by building on Australian Bureau of Statistics and Statistics New Zealand’s standard ANZSIC and ANZSCO industry and job coding systems.

The outcome is seven broad types of green collar worker: those involved in management, strategy, technology, policy, education, action and process.

The report is the latest phase of the “Evolution or Revolution” project, an initiative by the NSW division of the EIANZ to engage the wider environmental profession, to define green collar workers, and what they need in order to support them to be better professionals and contribute towards addressing environmental issues.

“We want to draw a line in the sand, provide some rigour around a definition, and catalyse the development of metrics that will help move Australia towards a more ecologically sustainable economy. We believe this report is an excellent start,” says Tom Davies, NSW president of the EIANZ.

More details on the report can be found at www.connectionresearch.com.au.

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