

THE FIGHT FOR TALENT IN THE CLIMATE CHANGE BATTLE



The Fight for Talent in the Climate Change Battle



Since 2010, NGO Recruitment's international desk has recruited for a wide range of not-for-profit organisations worldwide, sourcing both local and expatriate candidates for roles based in the Asia Pacific region and internationally.

Head of NGO Recruitment's Asia Pacific and international team, Lois Freeke, now supported by Aya Long, is highly successful at searching for a wide range of positions including country and regional leadership, program management positions, marketing and communications, training, research and analysis, advocacy and campaign strategists, and fundraising and philanthropy roles.

Lois is currently experiencing a high demand for international climate, environment and renewable energy-related professionals and takes some time from her busy schedule to give us a quick update.



Lois Freeke

Manager,
Asia Pacific & International
NGO Recruitment



The Fight for Talent in the Climate Change Battle



Thank you for talking with us today, Lois. We understand you're super busy at the moment. What's driving demand in your markets?

I've been recruiting in this space for five years and while we've always been focused on sourcing candidates for a wide variety of international NGOs operating within the Asia Pacific, it's the climate action sector and environment sector that are currently driving most of our current demand for professionals across the region. Addressing the challenge of climate change has obviously become a huge global concern. NGO Recruitment is witnessing considerable growth in demand for climate advocacy and strategy roles ranging from conservation, renewable energy acceleration, environmental and social governance and sustainable finance.

The challenge for us is that it's a relatively immature market where candidates with 10 to 15 years of experience are few and far between. We're often required to bring people in from outside this sector as there just isn't enough talent available on the ground, or because they need specific networks or sector knowledge. We need to be extremely strategic in the way we conduct our searches.



The Fight for Talent in the Climate Change Battle

What skills are most in demand?

We're seeing a high demand for private sector talent in climate and environment jobs currently, especially those with skills, experience, networks and knowledge of sustainable finance and corporate engagement and influencing in particular. Sustainable finance roles, for example, engage with the finance sector to influence investment and finance out of fossil fuel projects and high greenhouse gas emitting projects and into renewable energy projects to accelerate clean energy transition across the region. Candidates with corporate sustainability, clean energy policy leadership, and ESG experience are in demand because of their capacity to help drive clean energy transition in the private sector.

Many candidates we're placing have transferable finance and private sector experience, whether they've worked as analysts, bankers, or in private equity, for example. Depending on the market, it's more common now to find people in the private sector motivated to move into a not-for-profit setting and join the climate movement. However, the challenge we face is that these candidates often don't have the advocacy, influencing, campaign and campaign strategy skills our climate action clients also require. As an example, finance sector engagement combined with advocacy is an extremely hard to find skillset.

“Addressing the challenge of climate change has obviously become a huge global concern”



The Fight for Talent in the Climate Change Battle

So how do you fill these skills gaps?

We have a range of strategies to find transferrable skills and experience whenever possible. Sometimes we go to other markets and bring candidates back to their home countries from overseas. Sometimes we will negotiate with clients about where they might be able to compromise and what skills can be taught. Most of the time, we do lots of work behind the scenes to prepare our candidates for the interviews and educate them about the sector and the role. We have created a selection of relevant resources and information and share them with our candidates to help them prepare for meetings with our clients when necessary.

We have also written and produced a comprehensive NFP careers resource – [The Ultimate Careers Guide to the Australian and Asia Pacific Not-for-Profit Sector](#) – to assist with career transition and development. I also personally volunteer as a career mentor to climate job seekers via [Work on Climate](#) and [#opendoorclimate](#) and run weekly sessions to help candidates transition into the sector.

There are many different tools at our disposal, but at the end of the day, we always need to conduct extensive research and very, very deep multi-country, multi-level executive searches. And our success in this sector is evident. We've built up organisations focused on advocacy within the climate movement as well as research and think tank organisations, and we have successfully recruited for every conceivable role related to climate, showcasing the effectiveness of our recruitment strategies.



“It’s more common now to find people in the private sector motivated to move into a not-for-profit setting and join the climate movement.”

The Fight for Talent in the Climate Change Battle

Which countries are you most engaged with?

Climate action NGOs focus on countries where there is a massive need for climate work. We specialise in the Asia Pacific region and Japan has been a key market for us recently. The country has traditionally been very conservative in getting investment out of fossil fuels and into clean energy and it is a challenging market to recruit in for many reasons. Other countries where we're busy include Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, as well as Australia sometimes.

Often our searches are multi-country, and currently we are searching around the Pacific and Oceania, too. When sourcing sustainable finance candidates, we primarily focus on finance hubs with the highest numbers of financial service institutions, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and sometimes Bangkok. We have searched all over the world and also have placed candidates in the US, the UK, and Europe.

How different is conducting a search campaign in Asia Pacific compared to Australia?

Every country has its challenges and differences, generally we are conducting in-depth multi-country searches and headhunting can be difficult in some markets.

For example, in Japan potential candidates don't respond to job advertisements or messages as readily, or engage with recruitment consultants in the same way as they do in Australia, so there's a lot of intricate work involved in building relationships. Our international searches tend to be more time-consuming and technical, involving headhunting and research across continents.



The Fight for Talent in the Climate Change Battle

What's your outlook for 2024?

We are continuing to face the challenges of talent short market, but this is where we thrive. I have no doubt the demand for sustainable finance and private sector engagement roles will continue to drive demand for talented private sector professionals across the region who have the motivation, transferable skills and experience to pivot into the climate sector. More regional corporate sector platforms and initiatives are emerging which are driving renewable energy demand from the buyer side.

At NGO Recruitment, we are seeing increased demand for roles in the decarbonisation of high greenhouse gas emitting fields, including concrete, heavy manufacturing, automotive, transportation, textiles, cities and infrastructure more generally.

We have also been actively recruiting for fellowships that are on a rise in the Asia Pacific region as well as globally. Here, we're looking for transferable skills and strong mission and vision alignment, and training is then provided on how to operate within a not-for-profit environment and ecosystem.

“At the end of the day, we always need to conduct extensive research and very, very deep multi-country, multi-level executive searches.”

This can include advocacy, theory of change, campaign skills, strategic thinking, and so on. This is one way that the sector is developing the necessary talent it needs.

We're also seeing an increase in the number of career platforms offering climate career transition and education support to plug the skills gaps via education and certifications. These include [Terra.do](#), [Work on Climate](#), [Voiz Academy](#) and Australian online platform [Global Futures](#) for sector education.

A lot of free education is being circulated, and many climate network members are willing to share their time with people interested in moving into this important area. One example is [Open Door Climate](#), a movement started by the chief innovation officer at the Environmental Defense Fund, Daniel Hill. Hundreds of climate professionals worldwide are now available for 10-15-minute career chats about how they got into their jobs and offer advice for people looking to get into the network.

Organisations like [Work for Climate](#) and [Project Drawdown](#) are also helping people become internal climate champions within their organisations.

There's lots of hope in this sector and a growing demand for climate education, fellowships, career platforms and coaching. Many people would love to work in climate if they only knew how, and that's what we're also supporting where we can, to then be able to provide the very best talent to our client organisations.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Sydney Head Office
Phone: +61 (0) 2 8243 0570

Melbourne
Phone: +61 (0) 3 8080 8978

Brisbane
Phone: +61 (0) 7 5530 8066

Asia Pacific & International
Phone: +61 (0) 408 629 107

E: info@ngorecruitment.com
W: ngorecruitment.com

