

Renewable Energy in Western Australia

A WALGA RESEARCH PAPER

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Western Australia (WA) is already experiencing the impacts of climate change, including more frequent droughts, heatwaves, extreme rainfall events and rising sea levels. These changes have far reaching effects on communities, infrastructure, environment and industry. Whilst everyone has a part to play in mitigating these impacts, government has a particularly significant role in the planning for, and the incentivisation of, behavioural change.

This research paper examines Australia's imperative to move to net zero, the key stakeholders involved, the progress that has been made and the impact on the Local Government sector. It looks at the energy transition through both an Australian and Western Australian lens, acknowledging that whilst Federal strategies and documents are useful to provide broad guidance, State level strategies provide the vision and frameworks required by Local Governments.

There is a broad array of stakeholders involved in the energy transition across both levels of government, all with their own specific remits. It can be confusing trying to navigate the landscape and determine who are the best agencies to engage with on certain issues. This paper attempts to clarify some of this by looking at the strategies and documents that are guiding decision making at a Federal and State level, and the roles of key stakeholders involved in the energy transition.

While WA is not as advanced in its energy transition journey as some other states, this means there is plenty that can be learnt through case studies and examples from across the country. Some State Governments already have or are in the process of developing, community benefit frameworks and community engagement approaches, and this paper dives into some of the most relevant aspects of these documents. There are several other Local Government Associations, most notably in Queensland and New South Wales, with advocacy positions around the energy transition, which may assist WALGA when pursuing its own advocacy in this space. There are also numerous examples of community benefits in practice - specific areas of the country which have seen community benefits delivered as part of renewable energy projects.

Looking at the energy transition through a Local Government lens highlights many opportunities and challenges which require State Government guidance and support. WALGA conducted a survey of its Members to delve into sentiments, challenge and opportunities to do with the transition, and the results are presented in this paper.

It is important to note that given how broad the climate change and energy transition landscapes are across Australia, and how fast it is evolving, this paper cannot possibly capture everything happening in the space. It can serve as a guide, however, for further research and provide a broad understanding of the key players and documents guiding the changes.

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Energy and Climate Goals: National and State

Over the last few decades, successive Australian Governments have considered policies to mitigate climate change. Approaches such as an emissions trading scheme, Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, and carbon tax were proposed, all with the aim of cutting Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. All had differing levels of success, and some were never implemented.

More recently, the Australian government has taken more concrete action with the passing of [government legislation](#) in 2022 to cut carbon emissions by 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050. The reformed [Safeguard Mechanism](#) is one of the tools that exists to help achieve this goal, by requiring Australia's top greenhouse gas emitters to keep their net emissions at or below a set baseline. This baseline is reduced yearly and those that exceed the baseline must manage their excess emissions, including through the purchase and surrendering of Australian carbon credit units. The Australian Government is also targeting [82% renewable energy](#) in the country's electricity grids by 2030.

In November 2023 the WA State Government tabled the [Climate Change Bill 2023](#) to Parliament, as their own response to climate change. The legislation requires the State Government to develop emission reduction strategies, develop climate adaptation strategies and sector adaptation plans, set emission reduction targets (for both the State Government and for WA as a whole), and report annually to Parliament on the State's progress in reducing emissions. The target for WA includes all emissions from activities occurring within the State's geographic boundaries. These targets will include an interim target, as well as a long-term target of zero net emissions by 2050. The specific State Government target will apply to government operations and cover emissions from more than 130 government agencies and government trading enterprises. In addition to this, the WA Government has committed to a whole of State Government 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 80% below 2020 levels, which will also be formalised as part of the Bill. As of October 2024, the Bill has been read but is yet to be passed.

WA's Energy Transition

The WA State Government have already begun the process of transitioning away from using fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. They have publicly made the commitment to retire all State-owned coal fired power stations by 2030 and replace them with renewable electricity generation and storage, and have committed billions of dollars over the last few years to support decarbonisation efforts and the development of renewable energy technologies.

It is important to note that unlike the states on the east coast, WA is not part of the National Electricity Market. WA has two main energy systems, the South West Interconnected System (SWIS)

and the North West Interconnected System (NWIS), as well as a number of isolated energy systems throughout the State. The SWIS provides most of the energy for WA, and the WA Government has been investing in updates to the System, informed by the 2020 Whole of System Plan and the 2022 SWIS Demand Assessment.

The NWIS is in the Pilbara region and includes numerous variously owned interconnected electricity networks. The NWIS experiences numerous challenges - energy infrastructure ownership is often fragmented, and operations lack coordination, with primary energy users, such as the mining industry, largely seeking their own power supply. A \$3 billion Commonwealth-Western Australia Rewiring the Nation agreement will assist in modernising and expanding the NWIS.

In order to streamline the transition as much as possible, the WA Government has created [numerous new agencies and teams](#). A new Coordinator General role and team will sit within the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTSI) and coordinate and facilitate approvals across government for projects of State significance. A Green Energy Projects Group also sits within JTSI and is designed as the first point of contact for all green energy proponents and investors. The group will support cross-government project facilitation for green energy projects with the aim of delivering streamlined approval pathways.

[PoweringWA](#) was launched in 2023 as a new entity within the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DEMIRS). Their role is to coordinate the actions required to deliver the electricity infrastructure for decarbonising the SWIS. This includes streamlining the development of transmission, renewable electricity generation and battery storage projects, and engaging with stakeholders and communities.

Further details on guiding strategies and documents and the key stakeholders involved in the energy transition can be found in subsequent chapters.

Strategies and Reports

State Government

The WA Government has numerous strategies to guide all the aspects of the energy transition. Many of these strategies list initiatives that will have an impact on Local Governments and their communities, but very few explicitly state how Local Governments will be impacted or involved in the energy transition.

Strategy/Document	Responsible Agency	Published	Overview	Relevance to Local Government
Energy Transformation Strategy	Energy Policy WA	Initial plan: March 2019 (to 2021) Stage 2 plan: July 2021 (to 2025)	<p>The initial Strategy set out five core reform initiatives designed to transform the way WA governs, plans and manages its electricity supply as the state transitions to a lower-emissions future.</p> <p>The second stage focuses on initiatives in four areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the Energy Transformation Taskforce decisions (including the Distributed Energy Resources Roadmap activities and developing the next Whole of System Plan) • Integrating new technology into the power system (including technology trials and preparation for Electric Vehicles (EVs)) • Keeping the lights on as the power system transitions, including ensuring an orderly transition away from coal • Regulating for the future, including establishing a governance framework for the energy transition 	The Strategy is a high level document. Local Governments will be impacted in varying degrees by the actions within the Strategy but there is no explicit mention of Local Government impacts or involvement.

Distributed Energy Resources (DER) Roadmap	Energy Policy WA	December 2019	<p>The Roadmap lays out actions aimed at achieving the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing customers to continue to utilise DER¹ to manage their own energy bills • Enabling all electricity customers to share in the benefits from higher levels of DER • Integrating increasing volumes of DER into the SWIS without adversely affecting the security of the power system. 	<p>The Roadmap is a high level, technical document. It doesn't list explicit impacts on Local Governments or actions for Local Governments to deliver, however the challenges and actions they discuss will have effects on local communities.</p>
Whole of System Plan	Energy Policy WA	August 2020	<p>The Plan models four different scenarios to identify the least cost mix of electricity network, generation and storage infrastructure needed for the SWIS over the next 20 years. It is designed to complement existing planning tools such as AEMO's Electricity Statement of Opportunities, (ESOO) or Western Power's Network Development Plan.</p>	<p>The Plan is a very detailed and includes technical details about the electricity network and scenarios. There are some mentions of current and potential future infrastructure locations, but no specific mention of Local Government implications or actions.</p>
Western Australian Climate Policy	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation	November 2020	<p>The Policy sets out the high-level priorities the State Government will implement to support a more climate-resilient community.</p> <p>It focuses on actions across six 'themes'. Each theme identifies key outcomes for WA's vision of enhanced climate resilience and net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The themes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean manufacturing and future industries • Transforming energy generation and use 	<p>The Policy mentions numerous actions that involve Local Government involvement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Western Australian Regional Climate Alliance</i>: Support regional local governments to drive action on climate change, energy and sustainability through regional partnerships. • <i>CoastWA</i>: Implement a coastal adaptation program to deliver a

¹ Distributed Energy Resources (DER) are smaller– scale devices that can either use, generate or store electricity, and form a part of the local distribution system, serving homes and businesses (ie rooftop solar panels)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storing carbon and caring for our landscapes • Lower-carbon transport • Resilient cities and regions • Government leadership 	<p>strategic response to the recommendations of the Assessment of Coastal Erosion Hotspots report, including local government grants to undertake coastal management for the public benefit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bushfire Risk Management Program:</i> Administer the Bushfire Risk Management Program to support bushfire risk management planning & underpin bushfire mitigation activities, in conjunction with Royalties for Regions grants for bushfire mitigation activities on unallocated and unmanaged crown reserves, and crown reserves managed by local government authorities.
WA Renewable Hydrogen Strategy and Roadmap	Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation	Strategy: released in 2019. Revised in 2021 Roadmap: November 2020	The Strategy outlines a hydrogen vision for WA: <i>'Western Australia will be a significant producer, exporter and user of renewable hydrogen.'</i> The roadmap identifies 26 initiatives the WA Government is driving and supporting to realise the Hydrogen Strategy's vision, mission and goals.	The Roadmap talks to specific projects being investigated or underway in different Local Government areas. There are no specific actions for Local Governments.
State Electric Vehicle Strategy for Western Australia	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation	November 2020	The Strategy focuses on actions that can assist the local uptake of EVs and ensure that the electrification transition is facilitated in a way that is efficient and coordinated.	There are numerous infrastructure-based actions that will likely impact Local Government areas, however no specific actions are assigned to Local Government.



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EV Action Plan	Energy Policy WA	August 2021	<p>The Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outlines the WA context for EV uptake and its relationship to the State EV Strategy and DER Roadmap• Outlines the opportunities created by EVs including improved utilisation of the power system and their role in supporting integration of renewable energy within the power system• Describes the risks to WA power systems that may result from the rapid uptake of EVs in the absence of planning• Identifies “no- or least-regrets” steps that can be taken now and over the medium-term to minimise these risks• Allocates 26 actions to Energy Policy WA, Western Power, Horizon Power, Synergy & the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO).	WALGA was consulted on the document given Local Governments will have a role in approvals for charging infrastructure etc.
SWIS Demand Assessment	Energy Policy WA	May 2023	<p>The Assessment collates industry data to understand the potential change in electricity demand over the next 20 years, considering the requirements of existing industrial users on the SWIS and potential growth in new industries like hydrogen and critical minerals. It includes an assessment of future low-emissions electricity demand and an analysis of the network, generation and storage infrastructure that would be required to support it. The assessment builds on the 2020 Whole of System Plan.</p>	There are no specific mentions of Local Government roles and responsibilities, but specific regions are highlighted as being locations of renewable generation hubs or where new high-capacity transmission lines need to be built.



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Climate Adaptation Strategy	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation	July 2023	<p>The sets out four directions to support and accelerate climate adaptation across the state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce and communicate credible climate information and resources.• Build public sector climate capability and strengthen accountability.• Enhance sector-wide and community partnerships to unite and coordinate action.• Empower and support the climate resilience of Aboriginal people.	<p>The Strategy talks to the State Government's commitment (through Department of Water and Environmental Regulation) to <i>'Evaluate outcomes of the Regional Climate Alliance Pilot Program and consider options to strengthen local government capacity'</i> in 2023.</p>
Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategy	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation	December 2023	<p>Outlines pathways and priority actions for the State's transition to net zero emissions by 2050. Pathways have been designed for sectors which are the main sources of emissions. These includes electricity, industry, transport, agriculture and land, building and waste.</p>	<p>WALGA was consulted on the document. The Strategy mentions a Local Government initiative (to be delivered by Dept of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries in 2024): <i>'Progress reforms to include provisions for Building Upgrade Finance in the Local Government Act 1995. This will allow local governments to facilitate loans to third parties for specific building improvements such as solar panels and other green energy fixtures, helping to reduce emissions associated with buildings within their district'</i></p>

Federal Government

The Federal Government also has numerous strategies and documents to guide them through the decarbonisation process. Many of these sit at a high level, with no reference to specific impacts on Local Government and many are still in development, so the relevance to Local Government is unknown. The National Energy Performance Strategy is the most relevant strategy for Local Governments as it discusses the work across all three levels of government, including specific Local Government initiatives. The Community Engagement Review also talks to the role of Local Government at a high level.

It is important to note that different States operate in different energy markets. While the east coast is part of the National Energy Market, WA is not.

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Published	Overview
Net Zero Plan	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	Underway	<p>The Plan will lay out government priorities, policies and measures to reduce emissions and support investment in low emissions and renewable activities. This Plan will be informed by six sectoral decarbonisation plans, which cover major sectors of the economy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy and electricity • Industry • Resources • Transport • Agriculture and land • Built environment <p>The sectoral plans will also consider key enabling technologies. Consultation and development are still underway.</p>
National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	Underway	<p>The National Climate Risk Assessment will focus on areas that are of national significance and are at risk of impacts from climate change (ie. environment, agriculture, health, infrastructure etc) The Plan will respond to the nationally significant priority risks identified in the Assessment and provide a framework for prioritising adaptation action. It is due for release at the end of 2024.</p>

National Energy Performance Strategy	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	April 2024	<p>The Strategy is a national framework for improving Australia's energy performance. It talks to several initiatives involving Local Governments, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Energy Upgrades Fund which will see the Federal Government partner with councils to co-fund high-impact energy upgrades to help councils cut emissions and reduce energy bills. • A community batteries program which will provide shared storage for up to 100,000 households, reducing household bills, cutting emissions and supporting the grid. • The scaling up of the CitySwitch program to help office tenants and local governments improve energy performance within their communities.
National Consumer Energy Resources Roadmap	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	July 2024	The Roadmap sets out an overarching vision and plan to unlock CER ² at scale across Australia. The roadmap's implementation plan outlines priority reforms through four workstreams: Consumers, technology, markets and power system operations.
National Energy Transformation Partnership	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	August 2022	A framework for Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to work together on reforms to help transform Australia's energy system to achieve net zero by 2050. The Partnership reports to the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council (ECMC), the decision-making body for energy, climate change and adaptation reforms.
First Nations Clean Energy Strategy	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	Underway	The Strategy aims to identify ways to support First Nations' aspirations to be involved in and benefit from the energy transition and ensure access to reliable clean energy for all Australians.
Future Gas Strategy	Department of Industry, Science and Resources	May 2024	The Future Gas Strategy maps the Australian Government's plan for how gas will support our economy's transition to net zero in partnership with the world.
Community Engagement Review	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	February 2024	The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) conducted an independent Community Engagement Review which makes numerous recommendations on how to

² Consumer energy resources (CER) are consumers' resources that generate or store electricity, as well as flexible loads that can alter demand in response to external signals. CER includes rooftop solar, batteries, electric vehicle chargers and controlled loads such as water heaters and air conditioners.



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improve engagement with the stakeholders involved in renewable energy infrastructure developments. These fall into the following broad areas:

- Encourage best practice and select reputable developers for new projects
- Reduce unnecessary and onerous community engagement by improving the way project sites are selected
- Make engagement more efficient by revising planning and approval processes
- Improve complaint handling processes
- Keep communities informed about the transition, including its goals, benefits and requirements
- Equitably share the benefits of the transition.

Recommendation 9 explicitly recommends that Local Government be involved in community benefits: *States, territories and local governments to encourage local community groups to proactively identify opportunities for the broader community's benefit, as well as to take ownership of sound opportunities to secure support and funding.*

ALGA made a submission to the review on behalf of the local government sector.

Key Stakeholders

Decarbonisation and renewable energy sit under the remit of multiple State and Federal Government Ministers. As a result, there are numerous government agencies involved in the energy transition. In WA, the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety is one of the key departments, as both PoweringWA and Energy Policy WA fall within it.

State Government

Stakeholder	Remit
Energy Policy WA (EPWA)	<p>EPWA provide policy advice to government to facilitate the delivery of secure, reliable sustainable and affordable energy services to West Australians.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rulemaking and administration of the Wholesale Electricity Market (WEM) Rules, the Gas Services Information (GSI) Rules, and new rules to apply to the NWIS • WEM and GSI market development, including conducting reviews of a policy or technical nature in the WEM • Development of periodic Whole of System Plans for the SWIS
PoweringWA	<p>PoweringWA coordinates the actions required to deliver the electricity infrastructure for decarbonising the SWIS. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline the development of transmission, renewable electricity generation and battery storage projects • Work with government partners and stakeholders across the entire electricity value chain • Engage with communities and First Nations people • Ensure foundations are in place for investment in electricity infrastructure
Department of Jobs, Tourism, Innovation and Science (JTISI)	<p>JTISI delivers initiatives that support all economic activity in WA. In the context of the energy transition, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseeing the development of WA's battery and critical minerals industry • Being the first point of contact for major green energy projects, to assist proponents through government processes
Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DEMIRS)	<p>DEMIRS covers numerous areas – those most relevant to the energy transition include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy policy advice to government on delivering secure, reliable, sustainable and affordable energy services to WA (through EPWA and PoweringWA) • Resource and environmental regulation
Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD)	<p>DTWD is leading the establishment of the Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence, design to deliver training to prepare workforces to meet the future demands of the clean energy sector.</p>



Western Power	Owned by the State Government, Western Power is responsible for building, maintaining and operating an electricity network. They own and operate the transmission and distribution infrastructure within the SWIS.
Synergy	Synergy provides 52% of the electricity sold to households and business customers in the SWIS and about 55% of the contestable gas load in the industrial and commercial market. They both generate and sell electricity.
Horizon Power	Horizon Power is WA's regional and remote energy provider. They operate across the full energy supply chain with generation, transmission, distribution and retail services.

Federal Government

Stakeholder	Remit
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)	The Department manages and delivers policies and programs to underpin the supply of reliable, secure and affordable energy. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powering Australia and the Net Zero Plan • National Energy Performance Strategy • The National Energy Transformation Partnership • Reporting through the Annual Climate Change Statement, which tracks progress made during the year towards achieving Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets • The Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council
Australian Renewable Energy Agency	The Agency supports the global transition to net zero emissions by accelerating the pace of pre-commercial innovation through financial assistance and sharing knowledge. Current projects include the Community Batteries Funding Program, designed to support the deployment of community batteries for energy storage in the distribution network, and the coordinated purchase of charging infrastructure and battery electric vehicles by 22 Local Governments in WA.
Climate Change Authority	The Climate Change Authority is an independent statutory body established to provide expert advice to the Australian Government on climate change policy. Current projects include reviewing the potential technology transition and emission pathways that will best support Australia's transition to net zero emissions by 2050 across sectors such as electricity and energy, transport and resources.
Net Zero Economy Agency	The Agency will manage the transition to a net zero economy and help deliver the vision for A Future Made in Australia. Their work includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalysing investment in new industries and jobs, particularly in emissions-intensive regions • Supporting workers impacted by net zero transition find new opportunities, particularly workers in coal-fired power stations and dependent mines



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping coordinate policy and program design and delivery for an orderly and positive net zero economic transformation, through advice to government and by working on-the-ground in key regions• Building community understanding, confidence and engagement with the net zero economic transformation <p>The Agency is a precursor to the establishment of a legislated Net Zero Economy Authority. The Authority has been enshrined in law, as of the 9 September 2024.</p>
Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC)	<p>CEFC have access to \$30.5 billion in investment capital from the Australian Government. Part of this is being used to roll out renewable energy projects, as well as energy storage and grid-balancing technologies. They are also responsible for investing the Rewiring the Nation Fund (\$19 billion) on a range of projects designed to achieve net zero emissions ambitions, including transmission, infrastructure, long-duration storage, electricity distribution network infrastructure and distributed energy resources.</p>
Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council	<p>The Council is a forum for the Commonwealth, Australian states and territories, and New Zealand to work together on priority issues and key reforms in the energy and climate change sectors.</p> <p>The agreed priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transforming Australia’s energy system to align with net zero while providing more affordable, secure, and reliable energy to Australians, (including improving regulatory certainty and efficiency for, and accelerating delivery of, dispatchable renewable energy, storage and nationally significant transmission projects)• Efficiently and effectively contributing to the achievement of all Australian emissions reduction targets• Investing in Australia’s adaptation and resilience to climate change• Empowering and comprehensively engaging with Australia’s regions and remote communities on the pathway to decarbonisation and Australia becoming a renewable energy superpower• Delivering a coordinated and strategic approach to achieving improvements in energy productivity across the economy.
Clean Energy Regulator	<p>An economic regulator accelerating carbon abatement through administering Australian Government schemes to measure, manage, reduce and offset carbon emissions in Australia.</p>
Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner	<p>An independent role appointed by the Australian Government, reporting to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy. According to the Terms of Reference: <i>The Commissioner will work collaboratively with all levels of government, scientists, experts, industry and the community to resolve complaints from community members about proposed and operational wind farms, large scale solar farms (5 MW or more), energy storage facilities, such as pumped hydro and large-scale batteries (1 MW or more) and new major transmission projects.</i></p>
Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC)	<p>There are numerous Australian market bodies overseeing national electricity and gas markets. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The AEMC which develops the rules by which the markets must operate



Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) Australian Energy Regulator (AER)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AEMO which manages the day-to-day operations of the markets • The AER which monitors performance and compliance with the rules
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Other Organisations

Below captures a snapshot of some of the industry associations, think tanks and advocacy organisations operating in the energy transition space. This is by no means an extensive list - it is designed to provide an overview of some of the key players working with communities and businesses.

Stakeholder	Remit
Clean Energy Council	The peak body representing Australia's clean energy sector. Their mission is to accelerate Australia's transition to a clean energy future, laying the foundations for Australia to become a global clean energy superpower. They aim to lead and support the growth of clean energy in Australia by providing a strong voice for their members, promoting the industry, driving effective policy decisions, working to improve industry standards, and offering industry education and certification services.
RE-Alliance	An independent, not-for-profit advocacy organisation working to secure an energy transformation that delivers long-term benefits and prosperity to regional Australia. Their membership base includes landholders, farmers, small businesses, climate campaigners, environmentalists and people living across regional Australia. A key advocacy platform is the funding of Local Energy Hubs in renewable energy zones across Australia (whose role would include supporting local government leadership and facilitating cross-sector collaboration, for example, to enable regional benefit-sharing and workforce preparedness).
Smart Energy Council	An independent body for the Australian smart energy industry. Their membership base is comprised of all sizes Australian businesses and international organisations. Their mission includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote scientific, social and economic development through the environmentally sound use of solar, storage and smart energy. • To advocate for the industry and clean, efficient, cheap and smart energy solutions for all Australians • To accelerate Australia's solar, storage and smart energy industry
Regional Australia Institute	An independent think tank dedicated to building robust regional economies. They have a heavy focus on the energy transition, with their recent report, Towards Net Zero - Empowering Regional Communities , examining the community dynamics, barriers and enabling factors that support mid-sized regional Australian communities in their transition to net zero.

Case Studies and Examples

Community Benefits/Engagement Frameworks

There are many examples of community benefit and community engagement frameworks across Australia. The table below provides an overview of some of the key ones discovered. Further information about State Government frameworks and guidelines can be found on page 18.

Document	Organisation	Overview
Community Benefits Handbook	RE-Alliance	Provides guidance on what community benefits, such as community and regional enhancement funds, can look like when it comes to renewable energy projects. The document also contains numerous case studies.
Community Engagement Guideline for the Australian Wind Industry	Clean Energy Council	A best practice approach to community engagement that addresses six key stages of the wind farm lifecycle and offers practical advice for action.
A Guide to Benefit Sharing Options for Renewable Energy Projects	Clean Energy Council	The guide includes strategies and case studies on different forms of benefit sharing, including neighbourhood benefit programs, grant funds and innovative financing methods, that enable community co-investment or community co-ownership. It also discusses benefit sharing strategies that go beyond making cash-based contributions, such as creating impact through regional economic development approaches (e.g. local jobs and contracting), in-kind contributions (e.g. employee volunteerism) and partnership benefits (e.g. industry capability networks and education opportunities)
Regional Benefit Sharing Discussion Paper	Community Power Agency	Provides an overview of what regional benefit sharing is and explores different types of benefit sharing at each geographic level. It also provides concepts of sustainable funding models, benefit sharing budget design, merit criteria and case studies.
Community Benefits Framework	Queensland Hydro	Outlines Queensland Hydro's approach to planning and delivering benefits for the communities in which they operate. All submissions for funding will be assessed and prioritised against three primary criteria: do initiatives demonstrate a strong strategic fit; can they demonstrate positive and enduring value to the community and do they have a high likelihood of implementation.
Roadmap to Renewables	NT Government	The Roadmap was released In 2017 by the NT Government. It identifies the opportunity to provide community engagement measures to include disadvantaged customers, training the workforce and education of the public.



Energy and Jobs Plan: Local Energy Partnerships	Queensland Department of Energy and Climate	The Energy and Jobs Plan was released in May 2024 by the Queensland Government. It outlines how the Queensland energy system will transform to deliver clean energy.
Draft Benefit Sharing Guideline Draft Energy Policy Framework	NSW Department of Planning and Environment	The NSW Government published a Guideline document in November 2023, alongside an Energy Policy Framework. The documents are designed to assist in the assessment of renewable energy project development and the delivery of community benefits.
Draft Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Community Benefits Plan Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development	Victoria Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change	In May 2024, the Victorian Government published the draft Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Community Benefits Plan for consultation. It provides a framework for delivering direct benefits to communities hosting new transmission and renewable energy infrastructure. The Government also released the Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development document in 2021, which is aimed at renewable energy developers and outlines best practice for community engagement processes and benefit sharing.
Renewable Energy Development in Tasmania: A Guideline for Community Engagement, Benefit Sharing and Local Procurement	Tasmania Department of State Growth	The Guideline was published in May 2024 by the Tasmanian Government. It sets out what is meant by social licence to operate and provides principles and practical questions to guide the engagement process.

Local Government Association Advocacy

At the September 2024 WALGA State Council meeting, three advocacy positions were endorsed in relation to the energy transition. These three positions can be found [here](#) (item 6.16, 6.17 and 6.18), as well as being listed in Appendix 1. Two other Local Government Associations also have advocacy positions regarding the transition.

Local Government NSW (LGNSW)

In LGNSW's [2024- 25 Advocacy Priority](#) document, they talk to the following advocacy priority: *Renewable energy zones and state significant developments: Implement a strategic framework to ensure the local impacts of state significant developments and renewable energy zones on local infrastructure, farmland and neighbouring communities are carefully considered, and councils receive development contributions to fund the local infrastructure required to support them*

Their 2024 Policy Platform also talks to the above priority, as well as working with regional and rural councils to find solutions that address the unique housing pressures associated with major infrastructure and state significant developments and renewable energy zones.

To date, LGNSW's work includes the preparation of numerous State Government submissions, including a submission on the issues paper [Renewable Energy and Agriculture in NSW](#) and a submission on the draft [Energy Policy Framework](#).

Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)

The energy transition is a focus of LGAQ's [2024 Advocacy Action Plan](#). Key resolutions focus on road infrastructure, community contribution fees and local benefits, local government support for assessing solar farm applications and requirements for proponents to engage with neighbouring properties.

Community Benefits in Practice

There are numerous examples of positive community outcomes that have been negotiated as part of renewable energy developments. Below are a few examples from across Australia, ranging from community funding through to community ownership.

Hepburn Energy

Hepburn Energy is Australia's first [community-owned wind farm](#), with almost 2000 shareholding members, mostly from the local region. Located in Victoria, they are now working on being the first hybrid wind, solar and battery co-operative.

The total cost of the project was \$13.5 million, with \$9.8m contributed by nearly 2000 community investors, \$1.7m in grants (Sustainability Victoria & Regional Development Victoria) and a \$3.1m loan from Bendigo Bank (not fully drawn).

The project also has a benefit sharing model. A Community Fund distributes \$15,000 per turbine per year in grants for important sustainability projects in the community (indexed over 25 years delivering over \$1m back to the community over the coming 25 years). Those in the immediate neighbourhood (roughly 2.5km radius) of the wind farm are eligible for:

- A gift of shares so they can participate in formal decision-making processes
- Contributions to energy affordability for each household
- Prioritisation in the Community Fund

Sapphire Wind Farm

The [Sapphire Wind Farm](#) is located in the New England region of northern NSW. It is owned by Squadron Energy; however, it is unique in the fact it allowed for the community to co-invest in the wind farm, with [\\$1.8m raised](#) by the community. There is also a Sapphire Community Fund which is split across the two councils involved, based on the number of turbines installed in each area.

Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)

The Central-West Orana REZ is NSW's first renewable energy zone. A [Community and Employment Benefit program](#) has been established by State Government, which includes a Local Community Fund to be administered by the EnergyCo agency. Upfront funding will come from the Transmission Acceleration Fund, and after 2028 funding will come from access fees paid by renewable energy generators connecting to new transmission lines in the REZ. The types of projects that could be funded by the Local Community Fund include:

- Public infrastructure upgrades
- Housing and accommodation
- Training and employment programs
- Health and education programs
- Support for energy efficiency and local rooftop solar

- Initiatives for First Nations people

Hay Shire Council

Hay Shire Council is part of the area the NSW State Government has marked as the South West Renewable Energy Zone. Recognising the opportunities and challenges this presents, the Council took the opportunity to engage with the community on the vision, aspirations and concerns for their Local Government when it came to renewable energy projects. This formed the basis of their [Fundamental Principles for Successful Renewable Energy Development in Hay LGA](#) document, which sets out the position, expectations and priorities of the Hay community in relation to renewable energy development in the Shire and broader region. The Shire's next step is to develop a 10-year Economic Transition Roadmap.

Community Benefit Arrangements: Jurisdictional Examples

This table provides legislated or regulated community benefits arrangements by state. It does not include voluntary or ad-hoc project payments.

		Western Australia	Northern Territory	South Australia	Queensland	New South Wales	Victoria	Tasmania
Publications		None	2017 Roadmap to Renewables	None	2024 Energy and Jobs Plan: Local Energy Partnerships	2023 draft Benefit Sharing Guideline and draft Energy Policy Framework	2024 draft Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Community Benefits Plan . 2021 Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development	2024 Renewable Energy Development in Tasmania: A Guideline for Community Engagement, Benefit Sharing and Local Procurement
Annual Benefit	Wind	N/A	None reported	N/A	None reported	\$1,050 p/MW pa ³ to \$1,700/MW pa for REZs	\$500-\$1,500 p/MW p.a. ⁴	\$800-\$1,800 p/MW p.a. through to decommission
	Solar	N/A	None reported	N/A	None reported	\$850 p/MW p.a. ⁸	\$130-\$800 p/MW p.a. ⁵	\$150-\$800 p/MW p.a. through to decommission
	Tx	N/A	None reported	N/A	It has been reported that landholders could receive \$300,000 per km of easement.	\$200,000 per km of new high voltage transmission hosted, paid in annual instalments over 20 years	Proposed: \$8,000 per km of new transmission easement pa for 25 years	N/A: Tas Networks is providing \$10m for a 240km one off payment (\$41, 666/km)

^{3 8} Paid over the life of the development and indexed to the Consumer Price Index

⁴ [Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria](#). As a guide, sharing benefits of between \$500 - \$1,500 per megawatt (MW) of installed capacity per annum for wind projects is used by several Australian wind farm projects.

⁵ [Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria](#): The CEC suggests that for large-scale solar projects, the contribution range has been \$130-\$800 per MW (AC) per year over 10 to 25 years.

Northern Territory

What?

In 2017 the Northern Territory government released the [Roadmap to Renewables](#) report which was prepared by an independent expert panel. The panel's role was to advise and provide a report on viable options to reach the renewable energy target taking into consideration technical, financial, operational and economic issues. The report provided 11 recommendations to guide government to achieve the target.

The document is heavily focussed on all the aspects required to achieve the goal of 50% renewable energy by 2030 rather than having a specific focus on community benefits and engagement. It does, however, recommend seeing renewable energy as an enabler of economic development. It states, *'To ensure long-term benefits for all Territorians, the Northern Territory Government should include renewable energy as a central pillar of economic policy, maximising benefits of forthcoming disruptive change in the electricity sector caused by the global transition to competitively priced renewable energy.'*

What does it say about community benefits and engagement?

One of the recommendations in the report is to undertake a variety of community engagement measures to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged customers, training of the workforce, and education of the public regarding renewable energy. This recommendation is predominantly aimed at smaller scale renewable energy projects, rather than looking at large scale projects and associated community benefits programs.

Queensland

What?

In 2022, the Queensland Department of Energy and Climate released the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, which outlined how the Queensland energy system will transform to deliver clean energy. As a follow up to this, the Department undertook community engagement in 2023 to better understand how the community was experiencing the energy transition. This consultation helped inform the [Local Energy Partnerships](#) document. The [Community Partnerships and Enabling Frameworks](#) provides an overview on the progress of the initiatives.

What does it say about community benefit and engagement?

The [Community Partnerships and Enabling Frameworks](#) states the following initiatives are underway:

- ***Code of Conduct***: the development of a mandatory, nation-leading Code of Conduct for renewable energy developers to ensure they engage genuinely with landholders and communities when developing, building and operating new generation and storage projects.

- **Partnering with industry, local councils and peak bodies:** partnerships with a range of organisations to ensure local communities can engage and are shaping how the renewable energy transformation takes place, and local benefits of renewable energy development are flowing to regional communities and local businesses.
- **Community Benefits:** working with companies to ensure community benefits in the form of investment in local services. For example, Queensland Hydro is reestablishing GP services in the township of Imbil on the Sunshine Coast. A further \$30 million benefits framework will give communities decision making power of where benefits are directed.
- **Best Practice Guidance:** a partnership with the [Queensland Renewable Energy Council \(QREC\)](#) to improve practice in the renewable energy industry and develop best practice guidelines, including community engagement. Relevant initiatives include:
 - An annual industry survey to collect Queensland data to guide better practice.
 - Local Government engagement in Renewable Energy Zones to understand local needs and support communities to participate in the energy transformation.
 - A Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing Renewable Energy Developer Guide.
 - Investigation and development of opportunities for on-farm benefits of hosting renewable energy.
 - An assessment and Approvals Toolkit to outline how to navigate assessment and approval pathways.
- **Supporting local councils:** a collaboration with the Local Government Association of Queensland, to deliver a [Local Council Energy Partnership \(LCEP\) program](#) aiming to support councils to make the most of the energy transformation in their regions. This includes a State Government commitment of \$1.21 million to facilitate councils and Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs) to connect with planning experts to ensure they can get the best results from renewable energy developments and provide a coordinated approach for local communities. Under the program, funding will be provided to:
 - Boost Councils' ability to engage on and navigate the energy transformation
 - Help local councils that access energy from the National Electricity Market to understand how to get greater benefits for their communities when negotiating power purchase agreements for renewable energy
 - Work with remote and isolated communities, Traditional Owners and Councils to develop the Remote and First Nations Clean Energy Strategy

New South Wales

What?

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment is proposing a new [Energy Policy Framework](#) for the assessment of large-scale solar and wind energy development and transmission infrastructure in NSW. The framework includes guidelines that outline how the impacts of renewable energy projects and transmission infrastructure will be assessed and managed. It talks to the

development of the Benefit Sharing Guideline and states the proposed rates for benefit sharing (see above table). The policy framework is still being finalised.

The draft [Benefit Sharing Guideline](#) provides advice on how community benefit sharing can be incorporated into the consideration and delivery of large-scale renewable energy developments. It outlines:

- A benefit sharing policy approach, objectives and implementation strategy
- Benefit sharing mechanisms that operate at neighbourhood, local and regional levels
- A proposed model, including guidance on the expected total value of benefit sharing for individual projects.

What does it say about community benefit and engagement?

The Benefit Sharing Guidelines apply to large scale solar and wind energy generation projects that are declared to be State significant developments. Applicants for projects will need to consider the guideline where it is referenced in the Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) and prepare the project's environmental impact statement (EIS) in accordance with any requirements set out in the guideline.

Applicants of large-scale renewable energy projects are required to:

- Engage with the relevant council, local communities, and neighbours in the vicinity of the proposed development, to consider options for distributing and sharing the proceeds of projects at different levels.
- Develop a proposed model for community benefit sharing (including neighbourhood and local community benefits) that is consistent with the policy principles within the Guideline.
- Outline the project's proposed model for community benefit sharing and the expected total value (financial amount or equivalent) of community benefits in the EIS for the project. This includes any proposed funding amounts to be included in a planning agreement and the financial value of other initiatives offered by the applicant. Applicants are advised to use the following rate when determining the total funding value for community benefits for a given renewable energy project: \$850 per megawatt per annum for solar energy development, or \$1050 per megawatt per annum for wind energy development, paid over the life of the development and indexed to CPI.
- Implement or otherwise give effect to any benefit sharing initiatives or other benefit sharing requirements as required by any conditions of consent.

Victoria

What?

The Victoria State Government recently formed VicGrid, a new agency responsible for planning and developing the state's transmission infrastructure. As part of this, the government are developing a draft [Renewable Energy Zone \(REZ\) Community Benefits Plan](#), a framework for delivering direct benefits to communities hosting new transmission and renewable energy infrastructure, as it is developed across the state. The draft plan provides an overview of:

- Who may be eligible to receive benefits and what those benefits may be
- How those benefits could be managed and distributed
- What projects may be eligible
- What the obligations may be for industry, including transmission companies and generation and storage developers

In 2021, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning also release the [Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development](#) document. This outlines best practice for community engagement processes and benefit sharing and tools for enhancing social outcomes. It is aimed at renewable energy developers.

What does it say about community benefit and engagement?

The draft REZ Community Benefits Plan proposes the creation of new benefits for:

- **Landholders:** Landholders who host new electricity transmission infrastructure will receive payments of \$8,000 per kilometre of typical easement area per year for 25 years. These payments are over and above current compensation arrangements.
- **Regional communities:** Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Community Energy Funds will support projects that improve energy supply, reliability, efficiency and affordability for businesses, communities and households. They will also support initiatives that create benefits from the energy transition, for example projects that build renewable energy supply chains, create jobs, promote renewable energy research and innovation, or help attract renewable energy investment. The Funds will be financed by mandatory financial contributions from transmission companies, generation and storage developers who develop projects within REZs. The draft REZ Community Benefits Plan proposes that transmission companies will contribute \$8,000 per kilometre of new transmission easement per year for 25 years to the Funds in relation to the full length of the infrastructure, both in and out of REZs. These contributions are proposed to come out of transmission companies' existing Easement Land Tax payments. It is also proposed that generation, storage and hybrid (combined generation and storage) projects will pay access fees to connect to the transmission network in REZs, which will contribute to the Funds.
- **Traditional Owners:** The Victorian Government will work in partnership with First Peoples to co-design benefits for Traditional Owners of REZ areas and related transmission corridors.
- **Significantly impacted neighbours:** Transmission companies will make benefits available to Victorians whose land is near and significantly impacted by new transmission infrastructure.

Legislation to give effect to the REZ Community Energy Funds and Traditional Owner benefits is expected to be introduced into Victorian Parliament in early 2025. The benefits in the draft plan are in addition to existing compensation arrangements, discretionary benefits provided by private project developers and individual community benefits arrangements.

The Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria documents talks to the following contribution amounts as a guide:

- Wind projects: \$500 - \$1,500 per megawatt (MW) of installed capacity per annum
- Large-scale solar projects: \$130-\$800 per MW (AC) per year over 10 to 25 years.

Tasmania

What?

In May 2024, Tasmania's Department of State Growth published [Renewable Energy Development in Tasmania: A Guideline for Community Engagement, Benefit Sharing and Local Procurement](#).

The Guideline sets out what is meant by social licence to operate and provides principles and practical questions to guide the process and key outcomes sought for:

- **Community engagement:** How local communities are consulted and involved in the process of site selection, feasibility, design, planning and approval, construction, operations, and decommissioning.
- **Benefit sharing:** How the benefits of development are shared to create lasting value for local people and communities that host the project
- **Local procurement:** How local people and businesses are encouraged and enabled to participate in providing services and skills to new developments

The Government has also been seeking feedback on [Community Benefit Sharing \(CBS\) Schemes](#), as a result of their recent announcement of the first proposed Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), situated in north west Tasmania. A CBS framework will outline how benefits from renewable energy generation are delivered within the REZ. The framework is being developed in conjunction with the local community - a community advisory board is in the process of being developed to finalise the framework design.

What does it say about community benefit and engagement?

The Guideline talks to principles and key questions to guide community engagement at a high level. In discussing community benefits, it talks to the desired outcomes being a community co-design process to develop benefit sharing plans, community involvement in ongoing governance and decision-making of benefit sharing delivery, benefits flowing to those in closest proximity to the project, as well as the broader local community; and the project bringing a range of long-lasting benefits to the community and the project owners.

Proponents are encouraged to tailor their contributions to the local community and project itself. Current range of contributions from existing renewable energy projects are suggested as a guide:

- Wind Farms: \$800-\$1,800 per installed MW per year through to decommissioning
- Solar Farms: \$150-\$800 per installed MW per year through to decommissioning.

The full range of these figures represent current best practice based on the large amount of variability in each project. Given proponents are encouraged to tailor their contributions, they may be on the lower end of the scale for smaller projects and communities or may exceed \$1,800 per installed MW per year.

WA Local Governments

Local Government have a large role to play in the energy transition, ranging from project approvals to advocating for, and administering, community benefits.

In 2012 all three levels of government agreed on the [*Roles and Responsibilities for Climate Change Adaptation in Australia*](#). The document sets out the principles for the management of climate-change risks and the roles and responsibilities for adapting to climate change within the three tiers of government: Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local.

As outlined in the document, the role of Local Governments include:

- Administer relevant State and Territory and / or Commonwealth legislation to promote adaptation as required including the application of relevant codes, such as the Building Code of Australia
- Manage risks and impacts to public assets owned and managed by local governments
- Manage risks and impacts to local government service delivery
- Collaborate across councils and with State and Territory Governments to manage risks of regional climate change impacts
- Ensure policies and regulations under their jurisdiction, including local planning and development regulations, incorporate climate change considerations and are consistent with State and Commonwealth Government adaptation approaches
- Facilitate building resilience and adaptive capacity in the local community, including through providing information about relevant climate change risks
- Work in partnership with the community, locally based and relevant NGOs, business and other key stakeholders to manage the risks and impacts associated with climate change
- Contribute appropriate resources to prepare, prevent, respond and recover from detrimental climatic impacts.

Beyond this document, little information exists to support WA local governments in their role in the energy transition and renewable energy projects. Other States have strategies that talk to Local Government and the impact the transition may have on them, but no frameworks have been created to guide WA Local Governments in their decision making.

WALGA's Energy Transition Survey

In October, WALGA conducted a survey of its Members asking about Local Government sentiment, opportunities and concerns towards the energy transition.

Key takeaways from the survey include:

- **66%** of respondents stated the energy transition is important or very important to their community.
- Only **8%** perceived community support to be low or very low when it comes to renewable energy projects.
- **43%** of Local Governments had received community feedback on the energy transition
- **43%** of regional Local Governments have a large-scale renewable energy project underway
 - **80%** of projects underway are onshore wind farms
 - **62%** of projects were at the informal discussion stage
- **60%** of regional Local Governments stated local economy diversification as the greatest opportunity from the energy transition.
- When it comes to community benefits frameworks, upgrades of infrastructure, services or facilities (**62%**) and new infrastructure, services or facilities (**47%**) were stated as the top two most important inclusions.
- No framework to deliver community benefits (**57%**) was stated as the biggest challenge for regional Local Governments

"I would have no idea who to go to for help if we got an application, would have to ask a Shire who already has had one what to do and hope they are helpful."

"Our projects are on a huge scale. One project proposed exceeds \$20B capex and will change the local communities significantly."

"Disconnected State Government, JTSI, DPLH, other agencies are not equipped to deal with projects of the magnitude being experienced in the mid-west. Most projects are Projects of State Significance, and this leaves little for Local Government to input."

"The energy transition projects are mega-projects that small communities are totally unprepared for."

"Proponents are wedded to the notion that they get away with offering small grant programs in the order of \$100k to \$150k per year. That is outdated community benefit model used by resource companies for decades & it does not leave a legacy of community benefit."

A more detailed overview of the responses can be found in Appendix 3.

Appendix

Appendix 1- WALGA Advocacy Positions

Energy Transition Engagement and Community Benefit Framework

Position Statement

It is essential that the energy transition currently underway delivers economic opportunities, ensures reliable and affordable electricity, and the greatest possible benefits for the community. WALGA calls on the State Government to develop a comprehensive framework to manage the impact of the energy transition that includes local engagement and the realisation of local community benefits from energy transition projects as a priority.

Background

Western Australia's energy industry is transforming to achieve the goal of net zero emissions by 2050. In WA there is no framework that provides a consistent approach to how proponents of major energy projects consult with local communities and how they can share in the benefits of the energy transition. To ensure that local communities and Local Governments are supported in achieving this vision it is important that a framework is delivered to guide the development of this infrastructure to ensure that communities see long-term, tangible, local and sustained benefits from the energy transition. As the projects are currently being rolled out, it is critical that this framework be developed as a priority.

Renewable Energy Facilities

Position Statement

The growth in the number, size, and complexity of renewable energy facilities across Western Australia is expected to continue as energy generation and other traditional industries de-carbonise their facilities and operations. The renewable energy state planning framework requires changes to ensure it is fit for purpose to guide the ongoing development of this sector.

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

1. Adopt a new State Planning Policy for renewable energy facilities, to replace the existing Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities, that:
 - a. Facilitates the orderly development of renewable energy facilities across Western Australia;
 - b. Outlines the key planning and environmental considerations, for the location, siting, design and operation of renewable energy facilities and their associated infrastructure;
 - c. Provides a framework that clearly stipulates the minimum required documentation and technical reports that need to be submitted with proposals for renewable energy facilities;
 - d. Supports the development of Local Planning Policies by Local Governments to further guide locally appropriate planning consideration of renewable energy facilities;
 - e. Provides a clear relationship with:



WALGA

- i. i. State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural planning and Development Control Policy 3.4 - Subdivision of rural land, to ensure planning decisions adequately balance the need to protect and preserve rural land for rural purposes;
 - ii. ii. State Planning Policy 2.4 - Planning for Basic Raw Materials to ensure proposals for renewable energy facilities consider their impact on basic raw material supply at the earliest stage of the planning process; and
 - iii. iii. State Planning Policy 2.9 - Planning for Water to ensure water resources impacted by renewable energy facilities are identified and adequately managed.
- f. Includes policy measures to address:
- i. possible negative impacts on or alienation of productive agricultural land;
 - ii. their proximity to lot boundaries with particular attention to potential negative, impact on town sites and sensitive land uses;
 - iii. potential negative impacts on airport operations;
 - iv. their appropriateness in the 'General Industry' zone and impacts and suitable location on heavy industry sites
 - v. the need for local engagement and the realisation of community benefits from the development of renewable energy facilities.
2. Review the definition of 'renewable energy facility' considering the increasing size and scope of facilities and consider creating definitions based on the scale of the facility (Utility-scale and other), and the form of facility (solar energy and wind energy).
 3. Provide guidance to Local Governments on the consideration of green hydrogen production facilities on rural land where it is an incidental use to a renewable energy facility.

Background

The placement and management of renewable energy facilities have become contentious issues in local communities across Western Australia. Concerns have been raised regarding the location of these facilities on agricultural land, their proximity to rural boundaries and residences, and their potential impact on right-to-farm practices such as aerial spraying activities.

The 2023 WALGA Annual General Meeting resolved that WALGA establish and promote policies to protect and prioritise the preservation of agricultural land against its displacement by non-agricultural activities that lead to a net reduction of the State's productive agricultural land.

The Great Eastern Country Zone passed a similar resolution at their April Zone meeting.

The Central Country Zone made a similar resolution, requesting WALGA advocate to the State Government *to develop a more comprehensive and effective approach to guide the management and placement of renewable energy facilities; including but not limited to wind, solar, battery, renewable diesel and associated infrastructure.*

Furthermore, Local Governments have also raised concerns with the coordination of renewable energy facilities in industrial areas, particularly in relation to their appropriateness in the 'General Industry' zone and impacts and suitable location on heavy industry sites. The existing State Government *Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities* is inadequate to address these concerns, leading to inconsistent application and approvals of renewable energy facilities across the State.

Priority Agriculture

Position Statement

The state planning framework should provide sufficient statutory protections for areas identified as high quality agricultural land.

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

1. Amend the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 to:
 - a. Create a new model zone under Schedule 1, Part 3, Clause 16 for land identified as high quality agricultural land known as the 'Priority Agriculture' zone, with the following objectives:
 - i. to retain priority agricultural land for agricultural purposes; and
 - ii. limit the introduction of sensitive land uses which may compromise existing, future and potential agricultural production.
 - b. Define 'Priority Agriculture' zone under Schedule 2, Part 1, Clause 1 to align with the definition provided in State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural planning.
2. Review the areas which have been identified by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development as high quality agricultural land and expand the extent of mapping to address the whole of Western Australia.
3. Undertake a 'health check' of *State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural planning and Development Control Policy 3.4 - Subdivision of rural land*, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Background

A 2023 WALGA Annual General Meeting resolution and subsequent resolution by the Great Eastern Country Zone requested WALGA *establish and promote policies to protect and prioritise the preservation of agricultural land against its displacement by non-agricultural activities that lead to a net reduction of the State's productive agricultural land.*

WALGA prepared a *Research Paper: Protection of Productive Agricultural Land* (Research Paper) which provided policy context, WALGA advocacy and analysis of State and Local Government approaches to land use protections. The Research Paper described the process of high quality agricultural land being identified by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, which can then inform Local Governments who choose to adopt priority agricultural land provisions within their local planning frameworks.

This work identified a lack of consistency between the subregional planning strategies across the different regions of WA that has impeded the implementation of best practice planning controls into local planning frameworks, and thus produced inconsistent application across the State.

Appendix 2- Other Data and Surveys

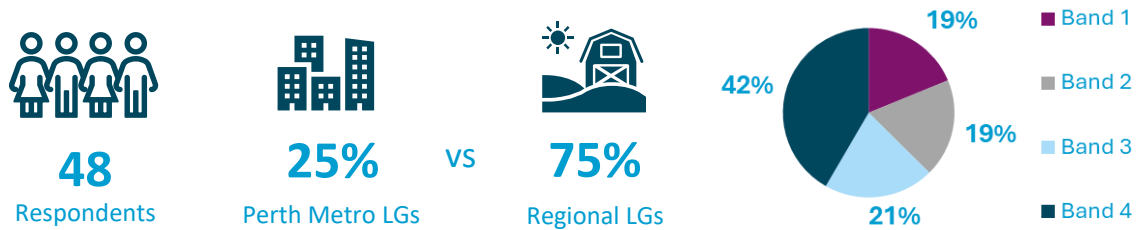
Data is critical in understanding the renewable energy landscape in WA and across the country.

There are numerous sources which provide an overview of supply and demand of renewable energy, as well as investment in, and attitudes towards, renewables projects. There isn't one definitive source showing all the renewable energy projects underway in WA and their current locations.

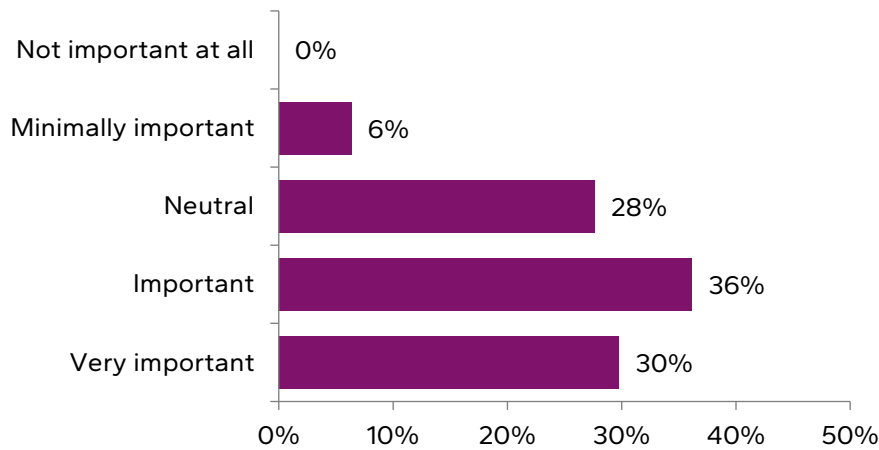
Data/Survey	Overview
OpenNEM	Live supply and demand of all energy types by state (over different time series), including WA's SWIS.
Wind Map of Australia 2023	Shows approximate locations of wind projects bigger than 1MW that are operating, under construction, in the planning stages or in the concept phase in 2023.
Solar Map of Australia 2022	Shows locations of solar plants greater than 30MW that are operating, committed or deemed by the Clean Energy Regulator to be probable projects as of February 2022.
CSIRO Attitudes to the Transition and Infrastructure	A survey of Australian attitudes to the renewable energy transition and different types of renewable energy infrastructure.
Visualising climate hazards for Australia	Shows climate hazards with a profile of each Local Government Area in Australia.
Australian Energy Update 2024	A source of energy statistics for Australia showing energy consumption and supply by industry and state.
Clean Energy Council Renewable Projects Quarterly Report	Shows the level of investment in large-scale energy storage and large-scale renewable energy generation.
Climate change projects in WA	Provides an overview of some of the large projects happening in WA.

Appendix 3- Detailed WALGA Survey results

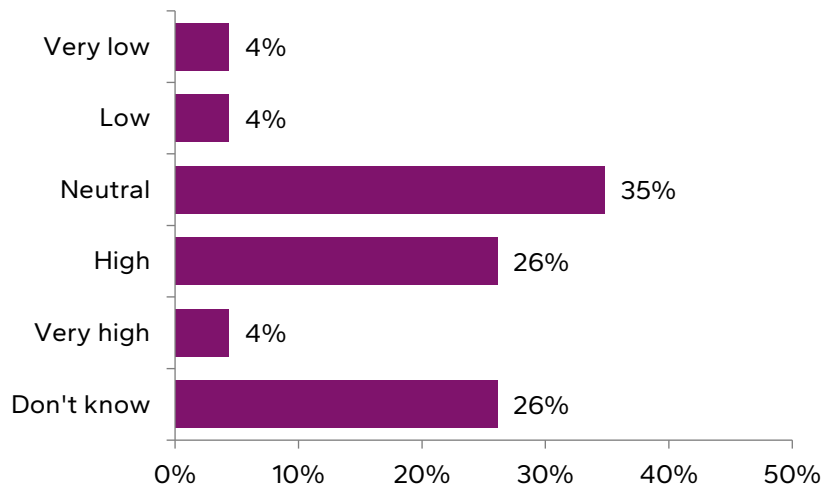
Survey Demographics



How important is the energy transition to your community?

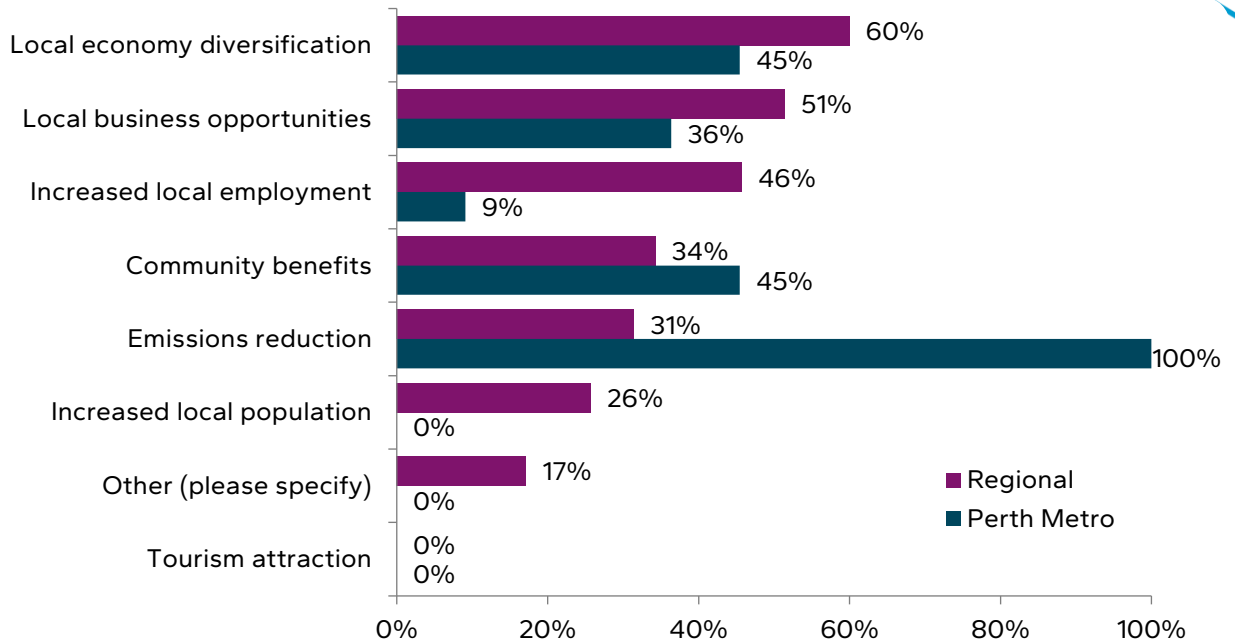


What is the perceived level of community support for large scale renewable energy projects in your local government area to facilitate the energy transition?

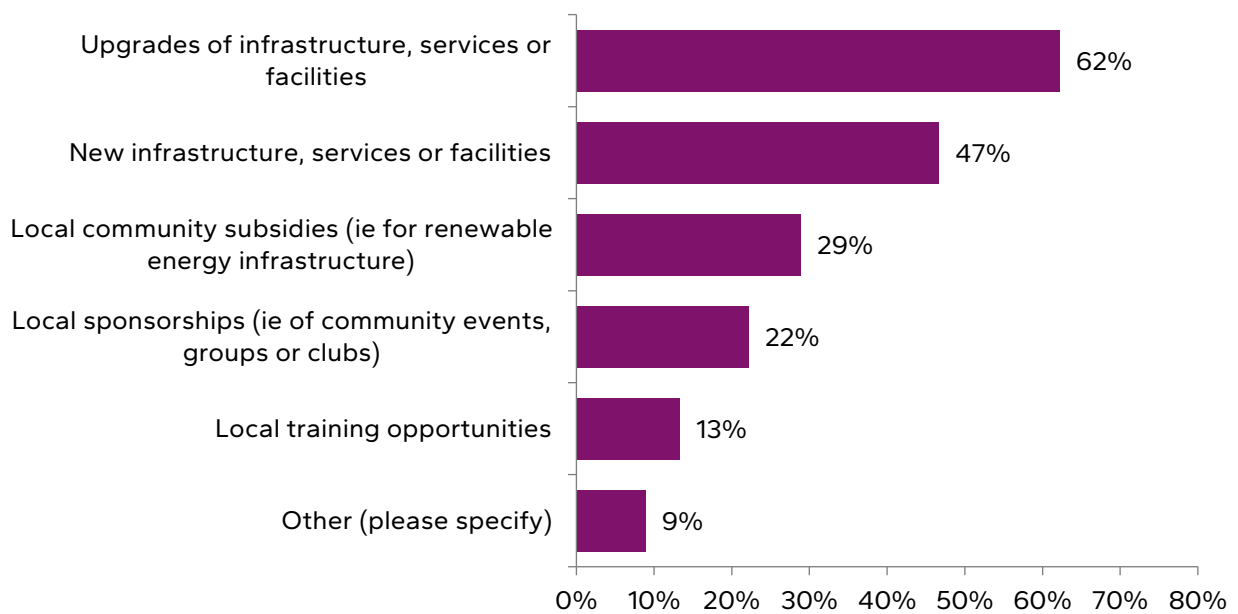




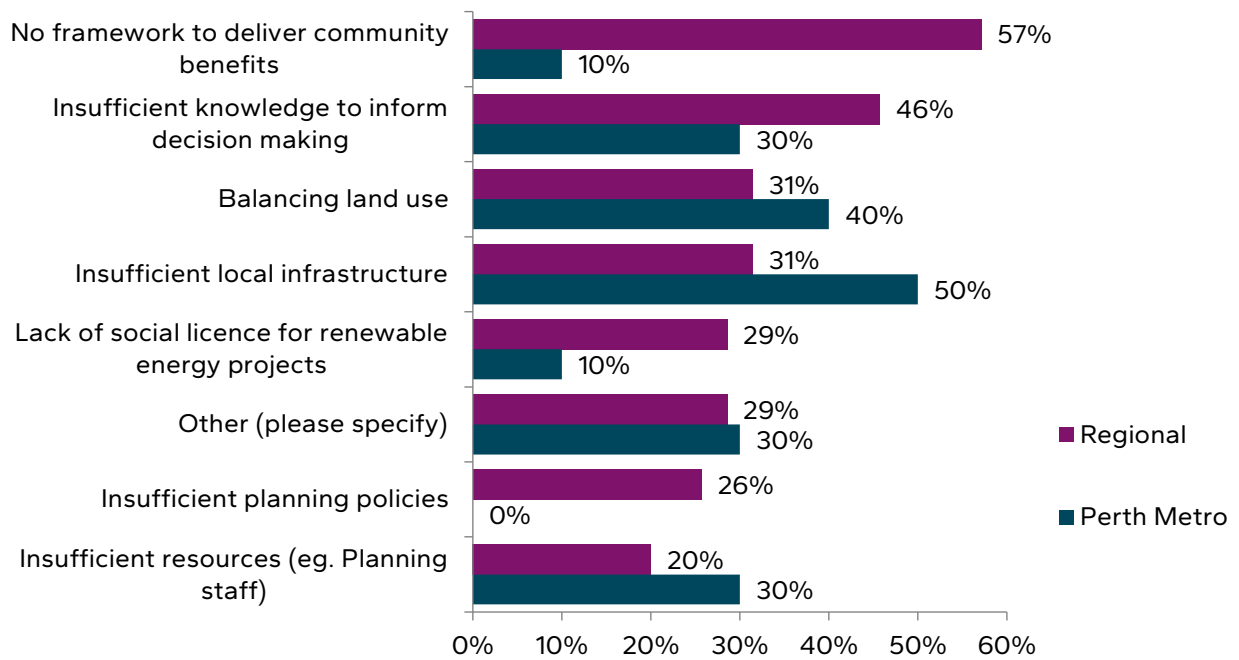
What are the biggest opportunities for your Local Government when it comes to the energy transition? [Choose up to 3]



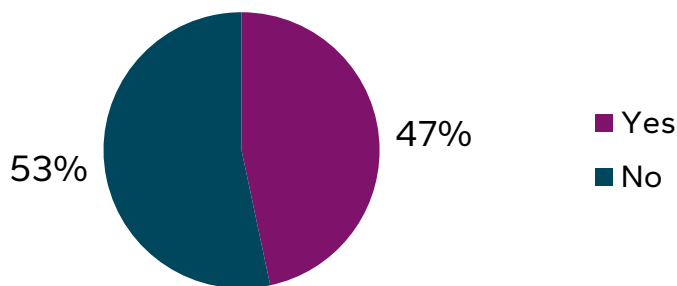
What would be most important to your Local Government to include in a community benefits framework for renewable energy projects? [Choose up to 2]



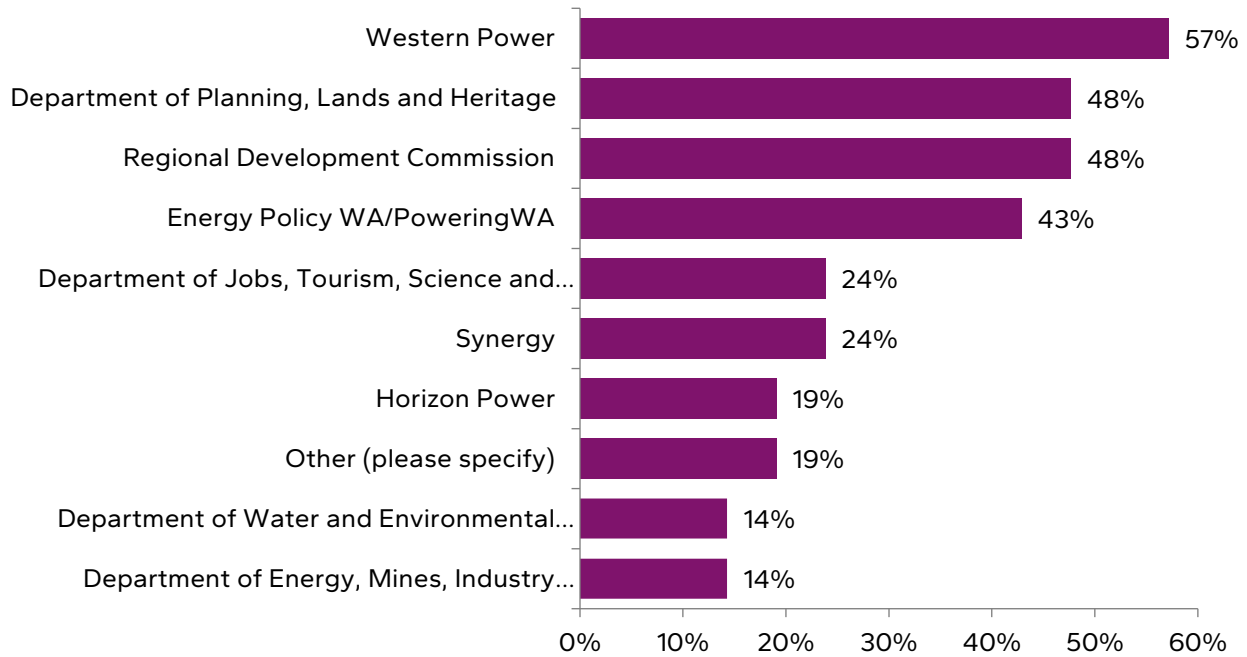
What are the biggest challenges for your Local Government when it comes to the energy transition? [Choose up to 3]



Have you engaged with a State Government agency on the topic of the energy transition?



Which State Government agencies have you engaged with? [Select all that apply]



What topics are you engaging on? [Select all that apply]

