



WANARUAH/WONNARUA
Community Energy Strategy
June 2025

Certificate of Authenticity

Guided by Light



Artist: Keira Graham

Date of Birth: 25/07/2009

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Size: 480mm x 270mm

***Created for Ausgrid – Community Energy Strategy 2025.
In partnership with the Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council.***

Story Details:

This artwork was created to reflect the spirit of the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community as we step into a new chapter—one powered by renewable energy and guided by cultural strength, vision, and legacy.

At the centre of the painting is the Wedge-tailed Eagle, the tribal totem of this land. Strong, focused, and deeply connected to Country, the eagle represents resilience, protection, and the enduring wisdom of those who have walked before us. Its wings stretch across generations—honouring the past, guiding the present, and lifting the next generation toward a brighter future.

The background is alive with motion and light, symbolising the renewable energy boom now gaining momentum across Wanaruah/Wonnarua Country. Through Ausgrid's partnership with the Wanaruah/Wonnarua Local Aboriginal Land Council, this moment marks more than just a technical shift—it's a cultural transition too. One that invites community voices, honours Country, and brings young people into the conversation.

Surrounding the eagle are bold, vibrant circles—symbols of energy, community, and connection. They reflect the sun, the wind, and the shared power that flows between people, land, and innovation. This painting shows that progress doesn't mean forgetting who we are—it means building a future where culture and technology move forward together.

As a young Indigenous artist, this piece is part of my own journey—learning to listen, paint, and carry stories with care. I believe our generation is rising—not just to inherit change, but to lead it. To hold tight to what's been passed down, and to shape what comes next with pride, strength, and heart.

This artwork is a celebration of what's possible when we walk forward together—elders, youth, industry, and community—united by vision, respect, and the light of Country that always leads the way.

I permit this artwork to be used by: The Community Energy Strategy and the Hunter Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (HCC REZ) (Ausgrid)

Keira Graham

Acknowledgement

We deeply respect and honour the diverse Indigenous peoples, cultures, and languages of the communities we engage with. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners, knowledge-keepers, and Custodians of the lands on which we work and pay our heartfelt respects to their Elders, past and present.

This strategy was funded by Ausgrid, who recognise the importance of community-led approaches.

The Strategy was developed by Indigenous Energy Australia in collaboration with the community, bringing together cultural knowledge and technical skills to support engagement, respect cultural governance, and focus on practical energy outcomes.

About Indigenous Energy Australia

Indigenous Energy Australia (IEA) partners with Indigenous communities, industry, and government to transform the way infrastructure is developed and delivered in Australia. Our approach is grounded in genuine collaboration, enabling transformative and generational growth. We work across all levels—from being a trusted partner at the grassroots, to providing hands-on technical support within organisations, to offering strategic guidance at the highest levels of decision-making. We are ambitious and unwavering in our commitment to a reconciled and decarbonised future.

As a leader in the field, IEA identifies, explores, and implements innovative pathways that deliver meaningful energy benefits to communities. Our work is guided by best-practice engagement, designed and led by our Indigenous team members, to build enduring relationships that extend beyond project obligations.

This community-first approach is supported by our energy and change experts, who integrate technical innovation with human-centred design to meet national Indigenous objectives. IEA specialises in creating lasting connections and shared perspectives between government, industry, and community, fostering a future where everyone thrives together.



These graphics represent the interconnected strength of communities, underpinned by enabling energy infrastructure. The outer circles signify the diverse elements of community wellbeing, encompassing cultural, social, economic, and environmental health. The flowing lines symbolise the pathways and connections that bind these elements, reflecting the importance of collaboration and shared purpose.

At the heart of the design is the central circle, embodying culture and Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing, which serve as the foundation of community identity and resilience.

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Executive summary

The Wanaruah/Wonnarua Community Energy Strategy sets out the future of energy across our Country- it defines how the success of energy will be measured over the coming generations, and recognises the connection between energy, culture, and Country.

We have set the context for energy across Wanaruah/Wonnarua, made it clear the outcomes our people are achieving, and traced the pathways that will ensure the energy you bring to our community will be a cornerstone to cultural revitalisation (including environmental regeneration), social progression, and economic advancement.

This strategy has been created to share our understanding of energy and Country, we have translated what we know into your ways - a 'strategic document', this is not our way, we communicate with relationships, trust, and cups of tea.

We ask that you read our 'strategic document', consider our challenges and our strengths and aspirations, innovate within the boundaries defined in our seven energy enablement pathways, take inspiration from our solutions cards for your project, and then engage respectfully to understand how we can work together as the rightful custodians of Country.

"We have set the direction for energy on Wonna Country, the onus is now on you to innovate within the guardrails provided, and come to us with your hands full, your minds focused on our community's future, and your hearts committed to as meaningful and ongoing relationship."

Terminology

A number of distinct communities who care for the Wanaruah/Wonnarua Country have contributed to this strategy. The terms "Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander," "Aboriginal," "Indigenous," and "First Nations" are used interchangeably throughout this document. These terms reflect the diversity and shared experiences of communities while respecting each individual's right to self-identify.

The word "Country" is capitalised in recognition of its profound significance to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Country represents more than physical land—it is a vital connection encompassing land, freshwater, and seawater.

Intellectual Property Ownership

This Energy Strategy belongs to the Wanaruah/Wonnarua people. IEA is proud to have worked with Community as they empower themselves and elevate their voices. The section below has been included to support readers to understand appropriate ways to use the strategy and their obligations to respect ICIP.

The Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP)¹ within this document is owned by three individual organisations, each with its own governance structures and priorities. These are the Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council (WLALC), the Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation (WNAC), and the Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation (UAC).

¹ **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights (ICIP)** Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognises the rights of Indigenous peoples to control, own, maintain, protect, and develop their ICIP.

By reviewing and using this document, you acknowledge:

- Project partners should seek free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from the Wanaruah/Wonnarua Community. This is a right which is established through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", to which Australian Government is a signatory.
- Readers relying on the information in the Energy Strategy for their project plans should talk to the Community, by following the 'How to build a relationship with us' process on page 17.

Wanaruah/Wonnarua Country

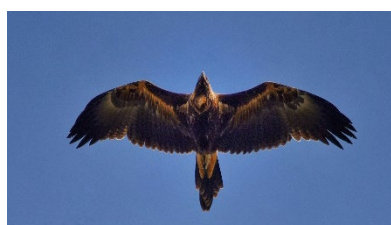
The Wanaruah/Wonnarua people are traditional custodians in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales.



The Hunter Valley is within the Hunter Region, home to the lands and waters of the Guringai, Biripi, Geawgal, Worimi, Wanaruah/Wonnarua, Darkinyung and Awabakal people. The broader area includes local government areas (LGAs) of Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, MidCoast, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Singleton and Upper Hunter.

Our definition of energy

Energy is the essence connecting all living and non-living things, tying us to the land, sky, and sea. It drives creation, transformation, and renewal—honoured by the Wanaruah/Wonnarua people through the wedge-tailed eagle as a symbol of strength and vision and understood in science as the capacity for work in motion, heat, or waves. Energy is physical and spiritual, ancient and evolving—a shared responsibility to respect and sustain the balance of life and nature



Contact details

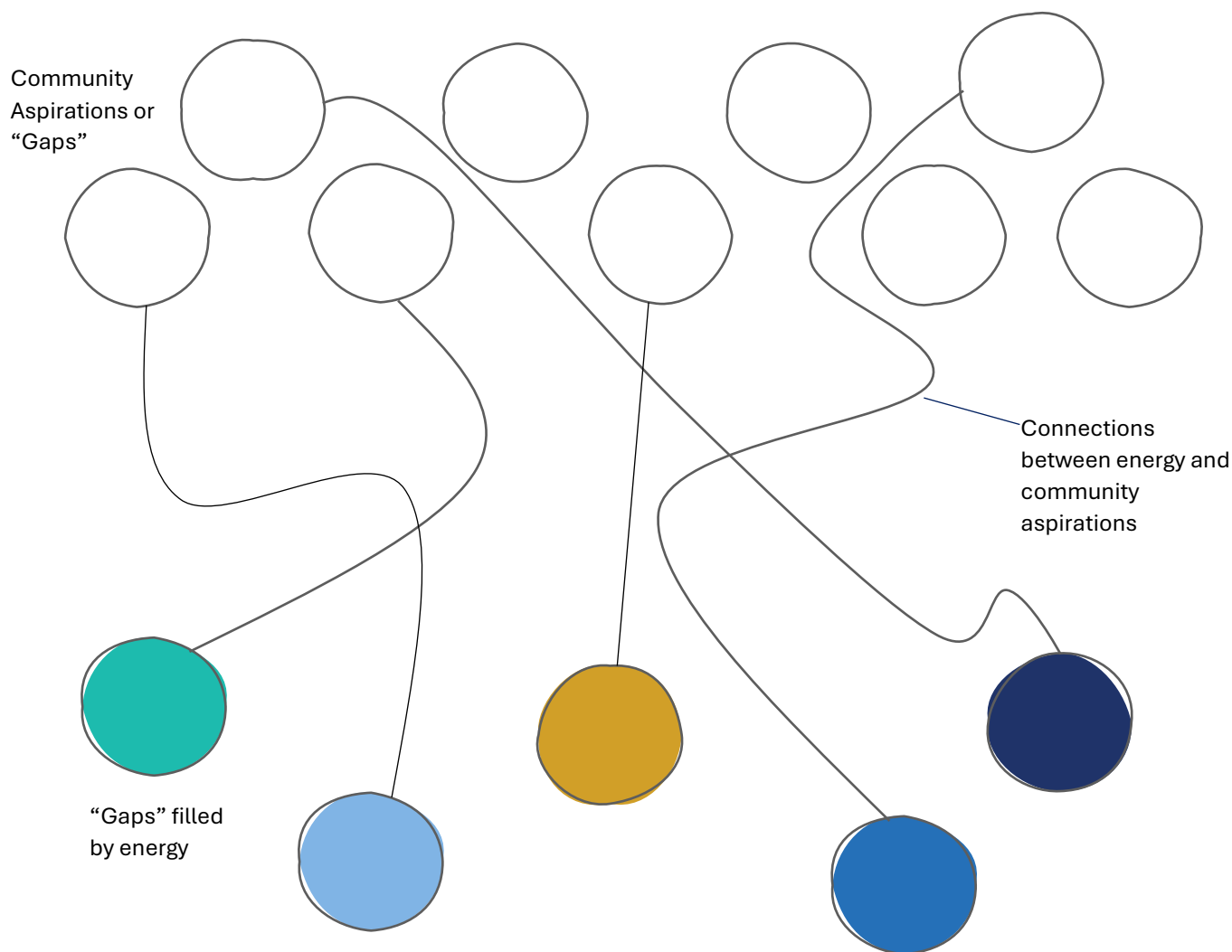
Author group	Contact details
The Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council (WLALC)	ceo@wanaruahlandcouncil.com.au
The Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation (WNAC)	enquiries@wonnarua.org.au
Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation (UAC)	clayer@ungooroo.com.au
IEA	admin@indigenousenergyaustralia.com

Our Strategy and Our People

Our Community Energy Strategy (CES) will empower our people to self-determine our energy future, as the ‘host communities’ for new energy projects. We ask that you consider our strategy as you undertake project planning for the new renewable energy projects that are required to support Australia’s energy transition.

Our strategy shares outcomes how energy projects can achieve intergenerational outcomes, and our expectations for the way Government, project developers, and other entities undertake engagement and consultation activities. It defines the role we want energy to play in our future.

Community Energy Strategy



For readers developing or planning renewable energy projects this document will be useful inputting into to ‘community benefit strategies’, ‘engagement strategies’, ‘Aboriginal participation plans’, and any other similar required project documentation.

Purpose

Through this strategy, the Wanaruah/Wonnarua people aim to reinforce their sovereignty, protect their heritage, and lay the foundations for a thriving and self-sufficient energy future.

Our strategy is a living, breathing document, that will expand, contract, and adapt with community experience. This ongoing work is essential as part of a broader truth-telling process to uncover and honour perspectives across the entire Wanaruah/Wonnarua community.

Energy across our Communities

We live in a coal region, and the energy transition means a big change for our people. We need power, and we need social and economic advancement. There's an abundance of coal, and coal fired power stations – this has been an important part of the community for generations.

Today, our people are struggling with the cost of living, and we face continued health and employment challenges. Energy has varied meanings across communities.

For some, 'energy' represents physical resources like electricity, fuel, and heat. For others, it also signifies the more intangible feeling of community and vitality.

Energy plays a key role in many parts of life for our Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. It affects how people live at home, with rising energy bills and the cost of living being major concerns. It also impacts workplaces, where energy efficiency and solar power can improve operations for community organisations, businesses, and future projects like cultural centres.

Transport depends heavily on energy, and getting to school, work, or the shops can be a challenge, especially in the Upper Hunter's regional areas where mobility needs are higher. Energy is also central to the local economy, with coal being a major industry. From mines to power plants, coal has strong ties to jobs and livelihoods in the community.

We know that moving away from coal to renewable energy is a major change for the community. Energy 'solutions' need to be practical and community-driven, addressing the costs of living and other regional challenges.

Census insights

The following insights, drawn from ABS census data provided by Aboriginal Affairs NSW, highlight key trends for the First Nations population in the Hunter Region, in comparison to both New South Wales (NSW) state averages and the broader local population.

While there have been some positive shifts in measurable outcomes since 2016, significant gaps remain in areas such as income, housing security, and other factors that directly impact health and prosperity:

- Population growth and population representation are both higher than average.
- Rates of chronic disease and disability are higher than average.
- There are measurable gaps in income, home ownership, and employment.
- Overall, education rates are improving. A gap remains in Year 12 completion rates, though this gap is smaller than the NSW State average. There are also measurable gaps in education outcomes, however participation in childhood education and tertiary education is increasing.

Further information, including specific statistics and insights, has been included at **Appendix B**.

Community leaders led the development of our strategy, utilising a methodology rooted in cultural respect, collaboration, and community empowerment. Indigenous Energy Australia were proud to work closely with community leaders to empower their voices and work to support equitable representation and perspectives.

The diagram illustrates the Design Thinking process as a network of interconnected stages. At the center is a blue circular icon labeled 'Definition'. It is connected to four other circular icons: a teal one labeled 'Discover' (top-left), a gold one labeled 'Define' (top-right), a blue one labeled 'Develop' (bottom-left), and a teal one labeled 'Deliver' (bottom-right). These four central icons are further connected to two outer circular icons: a teal one labeled 'Challenge' on the far left and a teal one labeled 'Solution' on the far right. The connections between the central icons and the outer icons are represented by a network of grey lines with small white dots, suggesting a complex, iterative process. The overall layout is symmetrical and emphasizes the interconnected nature of the stages.

Between June 2024 and March 2025, IEA facilitated relationship-building and workshops to identify community strengths, challenges, and quick wins. These efforts informed the creation of a living and evolving strategy, owned by the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community, to guide sustainable energy transitions for future generations.

The approach began with "showing face"—building trust and long-term relationships through initial engagements aligned with community protocols.

Key steps included mapping local contexts, identifying challenges and aspirations, and framing these within generational outcomes and other community-prioritised measures. Data sovereignty was central to the process, ensuring that the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community maintains ownership and control over their data.

[illegible]

Key stakeholders involved

The CES has been designed to ensure that all voices are represented equally and inclusively. The development of the strategy is supported by key community organisations, who have taken a leading role in engagement with ‘additional stakeholders’, including Government, businesses, community, and other relevant groups:

- **Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council** (WLALC)- Advocating for sustainable energy solutions that respect cultural heritage.
- **Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation** (WNAC)- Engaging in consultations to ensure the strategy reflects the community's needs and values.
- **Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation-** Facilitating capacity-building and partnerships to empower the community throughout the process. Accountable for health-related initiatives.

Through this strategy, the Wanaruah/Wonnarua people aim to reinforce their sovereignty, protect their heritage, and lay the foundations for a thriving and self-sufficient energy future. Further detail regarding relevant stakeholders is included at **Appendix C.**

Recommendations

A summary of the key challenges and aspirations has been included below, which informed the recommendations and development of Energy Enablement Pathways.

Key challenges and aspirations

Figure 2 Community aspirations

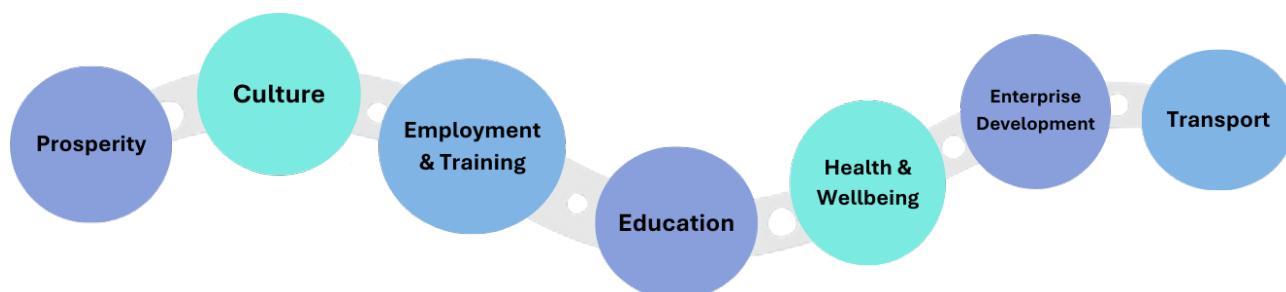


Table 3 Prosperity

Prosperity	
Challenges	Aspirations
• Shortage of suitable housing options. • Escalating expenses for necessities, making it difficult for families to thrive within community. • Insufficient housing options that lead to overcrowded living conditions. • Limited access to affordable essential services reflecting the community's cultural and socioeconomic context.	• A comprehensive housing development program that includes options for social and rental housing has been established. • Uplift budgeting skills of community, providing the knowledge and confidence to make informed financial decisions. • Access to appropriate, affordable housing that meets the needs of families. • Housing projects focused on building and renovating houses that meet cultural, environmental, and practical needs of community. • Establishment of community gardens and cooperatives that provide fresh, affordable food while promoting sustainability.

Table 4 Culture

Culture	
Challenges	Aspirations
- Limited access to engaging cultural, recreational, and creative activities. - Cultural disconnection due to technology, media, and external influences. - Disruptive and excessive noise from loud music that impacts quality of life.	- Initiatives promoting healthy lifestyles, traditional knowledge, and healing. - A cultural centre has been developed to support reconnection to culture and enhance cultural capability, including rehabilitation and truth-telling initiatives. - Implementation of community-led guidelines to manage noise, especially during Sorry Business. - Development of cultural programs that engage community in traditional practices (art, dance, storytelling). - Increased opportunities for intergenerational cultural exchanges with Elders. - Development of digital platforms and media that promote Wanaruah/Wonnarua culture. - Encouragement community-led creative media projects.

Table 5 Employment and Training

Employment and training	
Challenges	Aspirations
- Limited access to training and skills development. - Funding constraints that have impacted the ability to establish and sustain employment readiness programs, or create consistent, long-term employment opportunities. - Lack of facilities and infrastructure to hold regular training in the region prevents skill-building activities from taking place in community. - Lack of tailored employment pathways which has impacted community members in finding positions that match their skills or aspirations.	- The community has access to suitable training that enables them to participate in the energy transition and be prepared to cope with and benefit from incoming development - The community can undertake training and development within their local community - Community members understand the energy sector opportunities available to be able to continue developing or start their career and can independently grow and shape this

Table 6 Education

Education	
Challenges	Aspirations
- Limited access to resources and expertise to develop and deliver specialised programs. - Shortage of qualified educators and tutors to provide basic literacy and numeracy support. - Insufficient job opportunities in community. - Limited access to further education, training, and skill development aligned with local economic needs.	- Creation of meaningful, ongoing employment. - Opportunities for locally-led businesses and enterprises. - Partnerships with industries that invest in community's economic growth. - Increased availability of culturally appropriate and community-driven further education and training programs. - Development of partnerships with educational institutions to bring relevant training and capacity-building initiatives into the community. - An energy literacy program to build community understanding of energy concepts has been developed and implemented. - Support is provided for foundational literacy and numeracy skills. - Mentorship programs are implemented, and partnerships are established with schools to promote engagement with youth, particularly in the context of justice programs. - A notional database has been created to track suppliers that support Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) while working toward reducing the 17 Closing the Gap (CTG) targets. - Partnerships have been maintained and strengthened with the Aboriginal driving school to ensure long-term support for driving programs that facilitate employment opportunities

Table 7 Transport

Transport	
Challenges	Aspirations
- Geographic isolation and poor infrastructure limiting access to services, healthcare, and food. - Limited funding and resources to improve transport options within community. - Lack of existing transport infrastructure, such as bus stops and parking facilities. - Dependence on diesel generators. - Lack of EV infrastructure.	- Improved transport and infrastructure (including petrol station) to ensure reliable access to essential services, healthcare, education, and job opportunities. - A comprehensive community transport masterplan has been created. - Reliable transport options for young people travelling to trade schools and other educational opportunities have been established. - Transportation services, including a community bus, have been enhanced to provide better access to central employment locations.

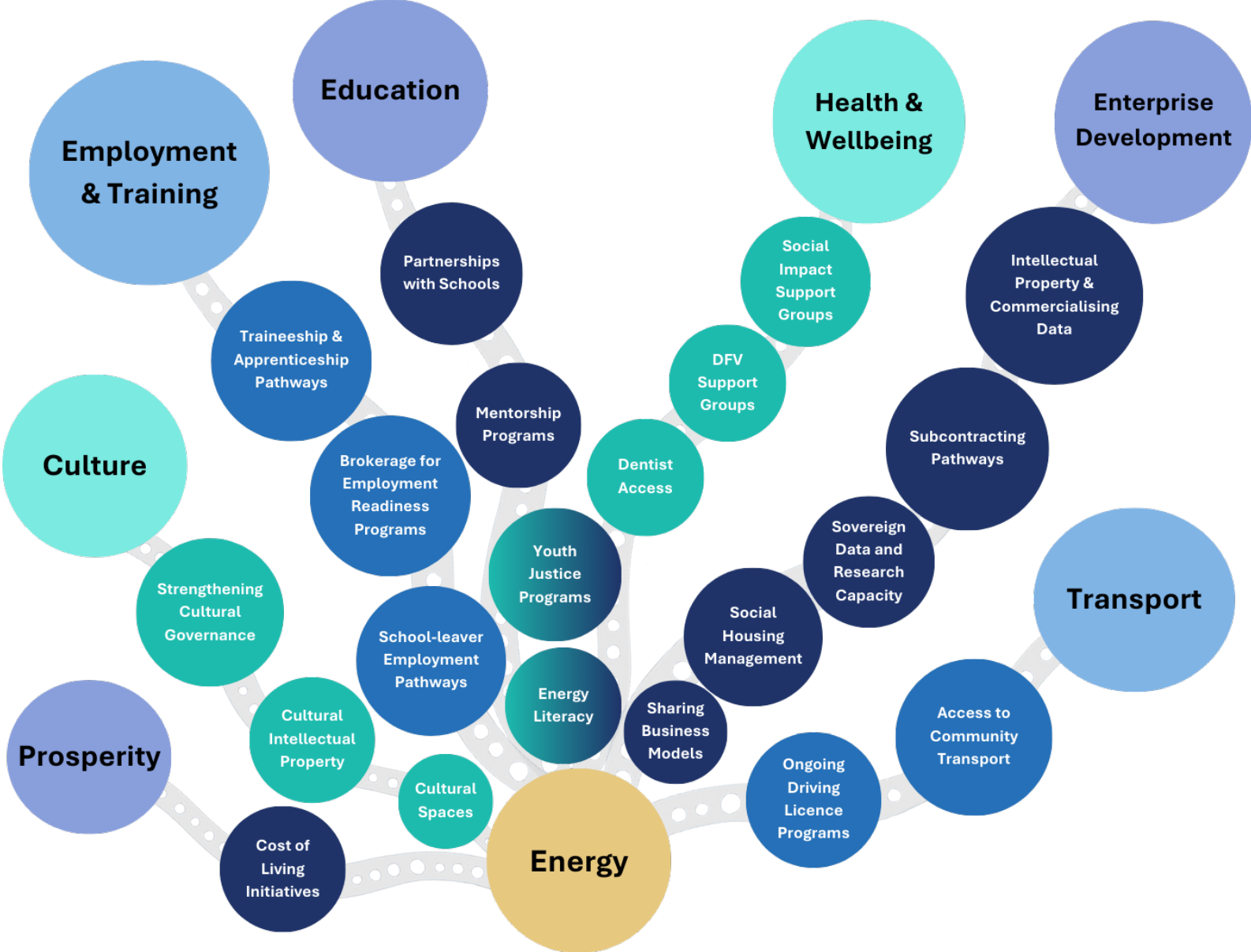
Table 8 Health

Health	
Challenges	Aspirations
- Limited access to dental and general health services due to lack of providers and geographic isolation. - Impact of alcohol and other drugs which affects the wellbeing of individuals, families, and the broader community.	- Community health is enhanced through improved access to dental services and mental health support, along with health promotion and engagement initiatives that emphasise the importance of preventative care. - A comprehensive analysis of existing health services has been conducted – identifying gaps and developing strategies for improvement and sustainable delivery. - Initiatives promoting healthy lifestyles, traditional knowledge, and healing.

Table 9 Enterprise Development

Enterprise development	
Challenges	Aspirations
- Community lacks the necessary skills and/or experience in business development. - Barriers related to technology, funding, and expertise needed to explore and implement renewable energy opportunities. - Challenges in coordinating with community to align economic strategies.	- An enterprise development program that fosters knowledge sharing among local communities and facilitates collaboration with other communities has been established. - An initiative to support local business growth, including creating a trust and investment program to encourage community investment, has been launched. - Assistance is provided for accessing renewable energy opportunities (such as solar and wind) and developing a facility for recycling solar panels. - Avenues for in-kind business support and protecting intellectual property (IP) related to community initiatives have been investigated. - The feasibility of entry-level land management programs has been assessed, and a mutually beneficial strategy for sustainable land management has been formulated. - The Economic Engine Room strategy aligns to local initiatives with broader economic goals, including advancing energy generation and transmission development projects. - Enterprise development efforts continue in algae farming, recognising the need for a minimum three-year timeline for capital and operational expenditures (Capex and Opex). - The establishment of 100% community-owned and operated businesses is promoted. - Data tracking systems to monitor Closing the Gap statistics over time have been implemented, and mechanisms have been developed to support financing applications. - The production of native foods within community is underway, and a local business knowledge sharing model has been created to enhance collaboration and learning among entrepreneurs.

Figure 3 Priority areas - Energy Enablement Pathways



Engagement guidelines

Guidelines on ways to engage with community are included in this section. Stakeholder mapping has been included at **Appendix C**. Information about the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Community Benefit Sharing Guideline (2024) has been included at **Appendix D**.

Community Engagement Framework

The following ways of engagement were developed between key community stakeholders and should be considered when planning engagement activities.

Consider your commitments to Reconciliation

- Entities seeking to engage should ensure that their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is included on the Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation Closing the Gap platform. This shows your support and alignment with our community priorities.

Engagement Principles

The following community engagement principles should be used. These engagement principles will continue to be refined and evolve as community's energy maturity develops and priorities change:

- **Prioritise relationship building:** Invest time in genuinely connecting with community on a personal level, fostering trust without a set agenda. Let shared goals emerge organically from these interactions.
- **Community leadership:** Ensure the energy initiative is led or co-led by community members to centre community perspectives and create relevant solutions.
- **Inclusion:** Enable diverse voices from across Wonnarua/Wonnarua to be actively engaged in decision-making processes throughout the energy initiative.
- **Clear communication:** Maintain ongoing communication with community by sharing regular updates, including challenges, and practice truth-telling to maintain trust. Always seek feedback on how best to continue the engagement process.
- **Long term partnerships:** Emphasise building sustained, trust-based partnerships that go beyond short-term project goals, fostering ongoing collaboration and mutual respect.

Community Engagement Model

Our model prioritises **relationship building, community leadership, inclusion, clear communication, and long-term partnerships.**

Figure 4 Community Engagement Model



Communication and Engagement Methods

The most important step is to build a relationship as early as possible in planning for your project. A range of options to begin consultation have been included below.

Figure 5 Engagement methods

In-person

- One-on-one conversations – personal discussions with key community members to address specific concerns or provide detailed information.
- Community meetings and workshops – gatherings where information is shared, and feedback is collected in an open, interactive environment. This should be undertaken in both small focus groups and larger groups.
- Community BBQs – an informal event to establish and maintain ongoing relationships with community.
- Yarning circles – an inclusive and culturally appropriate way to discuss ideas, share stories, and gather feedback in a relaxed setting.

Digital platforms

- Social media updates – regular posts on Council and local organisation social media platforms to keep community informed and allow for interaction.
- Webinars and virtual town halls – online meetings to provide an alternative platform for engagement with community members who are unable to attend face-to-face.

Informational materials

- Posters and flyers – placed around community, including the library, school, daycare, and local store, to provide easy-to-read updates.
- Newsletters – both printed and digital, offering detailed updates on project milestones, timelines, and next steps.

Interactive tools

- Surveys and polls – collecting feedback on preferences, challenges, or ideas through paper forms, mobile apps, or digital surveys.
- Suggestion boxes – placed at community hubs where individuals can submit concerns or ideas anonymously.

Quick wins and strategic actions

Our strategy includes recommendations that are ‘quick wins’, and recommendations that are more ‘strategic, long-term activities’.

A quick win is defined as an initiative that can be delivered either immediately, or during the planning and construction phase of your project. A strategic action is more considered, longer-term programs to drive outcomes.

A list of the identified actions has been included below, with a table indicating which actions are relevant to each identified community outcome area detailed on page 11 and 12.

Quick wins

1. **“Help us measure success”** – Establish metrics of energy’s success and equip community to complete ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
2. **“Bums on seats” – Dedicated Community Representative:** Fund a part-time employee for Wanaruah/Wonnarua Aboriginal organisations. This individual will engage with stakeholders to advocate for and represent the community’s aspirations.
3. **Residential Energy Audits:** Conduct assessments to understand community energy use, identify opportunities for improving energy efficiency and reducing household energy costs.
4. Develop a **program of funded works** to revitalise key community cultural spaces
5. Build a **community garden co-op** powered by renewables
6. Developers provide **entry-level employment opportunities**
7. Deliver an **energy literacy program**
8. Deliver a biannual **satellite dental service**
9. Implement a **community-owned bus service**
10. Aid the development of **cultural centres** to support people to connect to culture and to showcase Wanaruah/Wonnarua culture.
11. Fund **audit of existing health services**
12. Conduct **feasibility study of entry-level land management programs**
13. Deliver a **financial literacy program**.

Strategic long-term actions

1. Establish a **Community Investment Program** to support the purchase of energy-efficient white goods and provide education assistance for individuals pursuing higher education or alternative STEM pathways.
2. Invest in **renewable energy systems** for local health and social enterprises to support sustainable operations and reduce energy costs.
3. Develop a **community-level Closing the Gap Strategy** and monitor implementation progress
4. Develop a **healthy Country plan**
5. Analyse and develop **employment pathways** linked to local employment barriers and opportunities
6. Fund/deliver **employment readiness programs**, matched to pipeline of employment opportunities
7. Hold **training** in region for in-demand skills and knowledge within the energy sector
8. Conduct **analysis of all required health services** and develop a strategy to provide or improve these
9. Develop **community transport masterplan**
10. Create an **enterprise development program** that includes local knowledge sharing
11. Update **residential hip-pocket actions**
12. **Aboriginal driving school**
13. Foster **partnerships with industry** to invest in community’s economic growth
14. Deliver **enterprise development program**
15. **Solar homes program**
16. **Finance housing development program**.

Quick wins

Table 1 Quick win strategic actions

	Prosperity	Culture	Jobs	Education	Health	Transport	Enterprise	Key stakeholders
Invest in community's ability to monitor and evaluate energy success metrics.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	ALL
Deliver an energy literacy program				X				
Household and business energy audit and energy efficiency.	X		X		X			
Rooftop solar roll out								
Develop a program of funded minor works to revitalise key community cultural spaces		X						
Sponsor sports teams and community events.		X					X	
Build a community garden co-op powered by renewables		X	X	X	X		X	
Developers provide entry-level employment opportunities			X					
Deliver energy awareness program								
Deliver biannual satellite dental service					X			
Implement a community-owned bus service	X					X		
Publish information on the links between energy and Aboriginal culture.								
Fund audit of existing health services					X			
Conduct feasibility study of entry-level land management programs								
Deliver finance and budgeting literacy program								

Long term strategic actions

Table 2 Long term strategic actions

	Prosperity	Culture	Jobs	Education	Health	Transport	Enterprise	Key stakeholders
Develop a community-level Closing the Gap Strategy and monitor implementation progress		X	X	X	X		X	
Electrify all homes and businesses	X			X	X			
Analyse and develop employment pathways linked to local employment barriers and opportunities			X		X			
Fund/deliver employment readiness programs, matched to pipeline of employment opportunities			X					
Hold training in region for in-demand skills and knowledge within the energy sector			X	X				
Conduct analysis of all available and unavailable health services and develop a strategy to provide or improve these					X			
Aid the development of cultural centres to support people to connect to culture and to showcase Wanaruah/Wonnarua culture.		X					X	
Create an enterprise development program that includes knowledge sharing with local communities		X	X				X	
Foster partnerships with industry to invest in community's economic growth		X	X	X			X	
Deliver enterprise development program			X	X			X	
Solar homes program	X			X	X			
Finance housing development program								
Aboriginal driving school								

Energy Enablement Pathways (EEP)

Energy Enablement Pathways (EEP) are the ways we have defined 'benefits' and should be treated as the priority outcomes that new energy should consider when planning for their projects.

Our pathways are:

- Pathway 1: Prosperity
- Pathway 2: Culture and family
- Pathway 3: Employment and Training
- Pathway 4: Education
- Pathway 5: Transport
- Pathway 6: Enterprise Development
- Pathway 7: Health

Measuring our progress

Responsibility and accountability for monitoring progress against our strategy will be shared between our three representative bodies, with different accountabilities.

We are still deciding the best way to measure progress. Our early ideas are:

- **Annual evaluation:** Evaluations to be conducted at least annually, analysing project progress, measuring impact, and identifying implementation barriers. Results will be documented and shared with the community for reflection and improvement.
- **Tailored metrics:** Metrics specific to community aspirations will complement general indicators, ensuring relevance and accountability for sustainable progress.

Key Indicators

Our initial ideas for how to monitor progress are included below. These will be finalised and developed into a monitoring framework in 2025:

- Energy: 'Proportion (%) of clean energy in community', 'Reliability of energy', 'Affordability of energy supply', 'Energy resilience', 'Energy participation'
- Culture & Family: 'Life expectancy', 'GP visits'
- Jobs & Education: 'Energy literacy (SDG 4)', 'Local employment', 'Number of Indigenous owned / co-owned businesses', 'Available training and upskilling programs and courses', 'High-school completion rates / STEM subjects?'
- Transport & Infrastructure: 'Access to transport', '(SDG 9)'

Pathway 1: Culture

Further insights relating to the development of the pathway are detailed below. Outcomes, steps, and impact metrics are included over page.

Cultural connections to renewable energy

There are profound cultural connections between renewable energy and Wanaruah/Wonnarua culture. The Wanaruah/Wonnarua people are the custodians of Wanaruah/Wonnarua Country, where they have harnessed renewable energy from the sun for millennia. While seemingly distinct from the contemporary energy industry, the principles underpinning Wanaruah/Wonnarua's traditional energy practices and the current energy system share numerous parallels, including aligning with nature and local ecology, sourcing resources in a distributed manner, and adopting a communal approach to using energy resources.

Decarbonisation and cultural aspirations

This symbiotic relationship with country, paired with aspirations for a stable, fair, and prosperous economy, reflects the goals of the decarbonisation of the energy system. This approach embodies the way of the old people.

Scientific principles in cultural practice

The link between renewable and distributed energy industries also extends to foundational scientific principles. Wanaruah/Wonnarua practice and culture demonstrate practical examples of physics, chemistry, biology, and energy theories in action. A woomera (spear thrower) exemplifies physics, fire

and plant-based energy reflect chemistry, and trade illustrates economics. Fundamental scientific principles that govern the universe are evident throughout Indigenous culture, and while often framed as 'western', these laws of science resonate as more akin to 'lore' than to 'judicial law.'

Weaving connections into learning and practice

Recognising these clear connections and weaving them into curricula, workplaces, and energy awareness efforts is vital for any energy interest operating on Wanaruah/Wonnarua Country. This approach presents unfamiliar scientific and energy concepts through a familiar cultural lens, framing both knowledge systems as equally valuable and interconnected. Such efforts can improve traction and uptake of energy knowledge, awareness, and literacy within the community ('mob'), and can often strengthen the Wanaruah/Wonnarua people's connection to country.

Energy unlocking cultural participation

Beyond philosophical reflections, energy also unlocks tangible cultural outcomes. Energy underpins the fundamental dependencies of many aspects of life. Access to clean, reliable, and affordable energy reduces stress on the Wanaruah/Wonnarua people, freeing up time and space for greater cultural focus and participation.

Key Outcomes

- Cultural programs and cultural support programs are developed, adjusted or expended to strengthen cultural connection and address key barriers to community participating in and connecting with culture.
- Wanaruah/Wonnarua culture becomes recognised within the energy industry and is woven within business practice by Wanaruah/Wonnarua people
- There is an uplift in Wanaruah/Wonnarua peoples' connection to culture, and the amount of time they spend undertaking cultural activities and obligations.
- Awareness and immersion training is held in the region to develop industry and government knowledge and awareness of culture, and their conviction and belief in its importance and value.

Key Steps

1. Complete a cultural baseline to measure the strength of connection in Wanaruah/Wonnarua
2. Draw out, in more detail, some local examples of the connection from the renewable energy industry to Wanaruah/Wonnarua culture and practice and develop examples of the 'foundational scientific lores' at play in Wanaruah/Wonnarua.

Impact metrics

- Language
- Participation in cultural activities
- Time on Country
- Young people in detention
- Successful land claims and km2 of Country under management

Pathway 2: Employment & Training

Further insights relating to the development of the pathway are detailed below. Outcomes, steps, and impact metrics are included over page.

Pathways between energy and employment

Employment is one of the foremost aspirations for the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. There are direct and indirect pathways presenting a significant opportunity for the energy industry to support employment.

Energy provides direct employment opportunities to the Wanaruah/Wonnarua Indigenous community in fields such as electrical trades, engineering, solar racking and installation, and energy-specific civil jobs. Additionally, it offers indirect employment opportunities in areas such as landscaping, traffic control, accommodation, and food and beverage services.

Focus on long-term careers

A core tenet of any program or initiative aimed at Indigenous employment in Wanaruah/Wonnarua should be a long-term perspective, encapsulated in the phrase: “careers, not jobs.”

Cultural alignment with renewable energy

A unique aspect of energy careers for Indigenous people is the alignment between Indigenous cultural practices and the principles of the renewable energy industry. Environmental stewardship, protections, and caring for country align with the ‘symbiotic’ nature of sustainable energy and the concept of custodianship. Employment in the energy sector offers the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community careers “on Country.”

The need for a holistic approach

Given the energy industry is relatively new to many Indigenous people, a holistic approach is essential. Community members’ energy literacy and general understanding of the industry must be developed over several months or even years before individuals can be considered ‘up to speed.’ To address this, it is crucial to offer a culturally appropriate ‘crash course’ as a staple of any employment opportunities provided to the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. In

addition to incorporating this training into the induction process for successful candidates, offering an open program to potential candidates prior to employment is strongly recommended, as it would provide a valuable skills uplift in the community.

Support for Indigenous energy careers

For Indigenous energy careers to thrive, individuals must be supported to ‘walk in two worlds’ by having access to wraparound support and services. Organisations must implement interventions across the career pipeline and focus on building long-term careers rather than short-term jobs.

On-site and off-site support

Beyond a gradual introduction to the energy industry, it is essential to provide meaningful support both inside and outside the workplace. Incorporating Indigenous knowledge into business practices through cultural weaving, mentoring support, and two-way knowledge exchanges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees are critical in-work measures for organisations aiming to employ community members. Outside the workplace, organisations can have the greatest impact by financially supporting existing community programs and institutions. Supporting initiatives such as sports clubs, cultural programs, and community events fosters community cohesion, improving employee retention and satisfaction.

Leveraging transferable skills

Wanaruah/Wonnarua country has a history of mining development, which has equipped the community with a relatively high level of transferable skills. Although these skills may not be energy-specific, they can easily be adapted. Many Indigenous businesses and a significant portion of the Indigenous population in the region are already engaged in mining or related industries. This situation requires a dual approach: up-skilling those entering or re-entering the workforce and cross-skilling

individuals transitioning from industries with declining career opportunities.

Competition and industry attractiveness

With an established mining industry in the region, competition may arise in attracting candidates who are already employed or those with potential to the energy sector. As such,

energy interests operating in Wanaruah/Wonnarua must be competitive in their financial and non-financial offerings.

Direct skills gaps within the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community as identified by community are 'self-confidence, STEM, writing, excel, energy 101 knowledge.'

Key outcomes

- Employment pathways addressing local barriers and opportunities, including skills development and transition support, are identified and developed, along with employment readiness programs aligned with upcoming job opportunities.
- A two-person Indigenous Data Sovereignty team, with coordinators in the Upper and Lower Hunter regions, are embedded within a local corporation. Their role includes developing site-specific programs, monitoring site activities, providing IP support, and building data-driven capabilities.
- Workforce programs are expanded through brokerage, focusing on young people (particularly young men aged 14 and older). High School Pathways (e.g. Clontarf) are developed for certain employment opportunities including Cert I in Construction, Cert II in Engineering Pathways & Year 12 Engineering Skills.
- Opportunities for long-term employment are fostered, including:
 - Roles for individuals transitioning from incarceration
 - Subcontracting pathways with major energy companies, and
 - Entry-level jobs in partnership with developers.
- Training is held in the region to develop in-demand skills and knowledge within the energy sector, and traineeships and apprenticeships are offered to build practical experience.
- Funding opportunities are identified to support administrative roles for staff and board members.
- Programs that integrate land management and employment skills development are established.

Key steps

1. Skills audit of community.
2. Baseline of community's energy literacy and familiarity with the energy industry.
3. Establishment of initiatives to socialise energy concepts with community. Delivering familiarisation as well as skills and knowledge development.
4. Create the programs that have wrap around support including workplace mentors and strengthen of community institutions.
5. Review and monitor progress.

Impact metrics

- Employment within the Energy sector.
- Workforce participation.
- Employment pipeline metrics.
- # of wrap around services/programs in existence.

Pathway 3: Education

Further insights relating to the development of the pathway are detailed below. Outcomes, steps, and impact metrics are included over page.

Education and energy opportunities

Education is closely tied to long-term employment, and energy education presents a new opportunity for community members of all ages. Energy education is essential for transitioning workers laterally into the new energy industry, progressing disengaged working-aged people, and shaping the next generation of the Wanaruah/Wonnarua workforce.

The importance of STEM skills

Energy is deeply rooted in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills, which are underrepresented in society, the workforce, and schools despite their growing importance in a technological world. The national priority placed on improving STEM outcomes and participation presents a significant opportunity for establishing energy-focused education and training programs and curriculum. It is highly recommended that energy interests consider collaborating with local schools, TAFE, universities, employment agencies, and training providers to strengthen STEM skills and participation in the region.

Benefits of energy education

While energy education clearly increases the potential pool of energy workers, there are additional benefits that both STEM and energy skills can create at home—particularly in well-connected and multi-generational households. These benefits may include electricity savings from improved energy literacy, better financial literacy, home upgrades informed by knowledge of energy consumption reduction, and more. Contributing to a solid foundation in STEM skills offers far-reaching advantages beyond the energy industry.

Cultural and historical considerations

Education programs must account for cultural appropriateness and familiarity in delivery, exposure to the industry, and the incorporation of energy technology into theoretical learning sessions or curricula. Using cultural and historical analogies—such as applying energy principles to throwing a boomerang or highlighting the parallels between renewable energy and Indigenous culture—can vastly improve program outcomes and retention.

This could include:

- Site tours - get students to sites to understand how the technology works and what examples may look like.
- Demonstrate technologies via practical kits and models where students of all ages can interact and build small scale models that employ renewable, electrical and STEM concepts.
- Contextualize and provide familiar threads to technology via cultural tie-ins and analogies.
- Provide role models that encourage students to study relevant subjects and provide an aspirational ‘dark emu’ that students can work to.

Similarly to employment, significant investment is required in support systems both inside and outside the school gate. This may include energy interests contributing to sports and cultural programs, or more directly to breakfast programs at school, school-based community liaison officers and specified transport to and from learning facilities.

Key outcomes

- There is regular exposure of school aged students (primary and secondary) to the energy industry via formalised excursions and curricula integration.
- STEM programs are strengthened or established and include links to a cultural focal point.
- Non-school aged training and education programs are established that include addressing 'soft skill' barriers such as self-confidence, communication, organisation, etc.
- Bridging programs are established by organisations and government that allow clear pathways via education to gainful and long-term employment.
- Interventions are developed pre and post school, and aimed at primary school to ensure, lost time is made up for or the tie is not lost in the first place. CTG 4 - only 34% of children begin school developmentally on track.

Key steps

1. Education audit and skills analysis of community in partnership with school, tertiary and workplace assessments. Establish regular monitoring of these metrics and ensure community own and have access to this data.
2. Audit community capacity and capability to deliver training.
3. Conduct energy awareness program with community.
4. Complete a gaps analysis based on education level and skills in community, capacity for community on deliver training and on skills and education needed to maximise participation in the energy industry.
5. Establish relevant programs ensuring that the development of existing community organisation is a priority.

Impact metrics

- % of children commencing school developmentally on track
- Students performance in STEM
- Year twelve attainment for 20- to 24-year-olds
- Tertiary qualification attainment of 25- to 34-year-olds
- Full engagement in employment, education or training of 15- to 24-year-olds

Pathway 4: Transport

Further insights relating to the development of the pathway are detailed below. Outcomes, steps, and impact metrics are included over page.

The connection between transport and energy

Transport and energy are inherently connected, as all transport requires energy or a fuel source. The most significant connection and opportunity for transport is electrification, which offers lower transport costs and improved accessibility.

Emissions and electrification

Transport accounts for approximately 18.5% of Australia's total emissions each year. To meet national and state net zero commitments, this sector will undergo major energy transitions, including the rapid and comprehensive electrification of the national fleet. Electrifying transportation and improving transport access are interconnected, with e-micromobility being a prime example. E-micromobility allows communities to travel around towns affordably and efficiently.

E-micromobility opportunities

Investigating and developing community-based e-micromobility programs could significantly benefit the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community by improving access to work, health services, and daily needs, such as shopping. Transport also presents opportunities for community-owned businesses. Micromobility has a lower barrier to entry compared to passenger vehicles, with fewer age and licensing restrictions and more affordable costs. Initiatives such as community-owned e-mobility businesses or services, as well as low or no-interest loans for Wanaruah/Wonnarua community members to

own e-micromobility, are valuable pathways to explore.

Public and community e-mobility

Another form of transport that could uplift and enable the community is general e-mobility, such as public or community transport. Electric buses or shuttles operated by local organisations could help community members commute to work, access essential supplies, seek medical assistance, and attend school. Electrifying these transport modes would also improve air quality in regions like Wanaruah/Wonnarua country, which have poorer air quality due to industrial activity. Like micromobility, public and community e-mobility reduce barriers such as licensing, car ownership, and maintenance costs.

Addressing barriers to transport

Addressing existing barriers to current transport modes is another potential link between energy and transport. Rent-to-own programs and licensing initiatives, which have shown success in other Indigenous communities, could be adapted to meet local needs.

Enterprise opportunities in transport

A final pathway combining transport and enterprise development could involve establishing a locally owned electric haulage, transport, and logistics company. Such an initiative could create employment opportunities while further embedding sustainable transport solutions in the community.

Key outcomes

- There are e-micromobility solutions and service within community
- There are community owned and operated e-micromobility services
- There are local First Nations transport businesses operating successfully.
- Programs are established that address the barriers to community's mobility
- Programs are established that increase the number of drivers licenses and access to vehicles

Key steps

6. Complete a transport audit.
7. Assess what transport is necessary for basic necessities, social and emotional wellbeing, and what may be needed to support a new energy industry.
8. Identify priority transport areas.
9. Make investments or deliver initiatives or programs that address these priority areas.

Impact metrics

- Number of Wanaruah/Wonnarua people with licenses
- Vehicle ownership rates
- Average cost per km
- Average emissions per km
- Total or average kms travelled per x period

Pathway 5: Enterprise Development

Further insights relating to the development of the pathway are detailed below. Outcomes, steps, and impact metrics are included over page.

Opportunities in enterprise development through energy

Enterprise development in the energy sector can take many forms. Opportunities such as solar installation, energy efficiency upgrades, and large-scale renewable energy projects provide varying levels of participation for community-owned businesses. It is well acknowledged that Indigenous businesses bring significant benefits to their communities and employ Indigenous staff at rates far higher than non-Indigenous businesses². This alongside increasing corporate and government commitments to Indigenous procurement and employment, creates a ‘perfect storm’ of conditions for assisting community members in establishing or scaling local businesses.

Subcontracting opportunities and support

A holistic approach is essential when procuring from and developing Indigenous energy projects or energy-adjacent businesses. This includes supporting business owners to specialise in energy-related areas or transition laterally, while also building or improving basic business functions such as governance and insurance. Procurement processes should be adjusted to reduce barriers to entry for Indigenous businesses. Measures like setting mandatory targets, sole sourcing, or breaking work into smaller packages are recommended.

Engaging Indigenous businesses

Engaging Indigenous businesses that offer services such as project management, landscaping and vegetation management, fencing, cleaning, traffic control, engineering, trade, and labour hire is an effective way for government and industry to involve community members. These services present an accessible

pathway for increasing Indigenous participation in the energy sector.

Commercial and residential energy opportunities

Another pathway for enterprise development involves creating energy businesses focused on commercial and residential energy rather than large-scale industrial projects. These businesses have the potential to deliver long-term outcomes for the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community.

While direct engagement with community-owned businesses may be limited, supporting them to establish or improve business fundamentals and acquire relevant skills remains vital. Potential businesses in this area could include residential and commercial solar installation, energy efficiency audits, energy upgrades, and energy literacy training, which could be integrated into schools or other programs. Other relevant businesses might include electric vehicle maintenance, electric transport and trucking companies, electric charging stations, or food shops.

Community-owned energy ventures

Community groups, organisations, and individuals are also exploring the development of large-scale community-owned assets. This could include installing solar on other business premises, such as council buildings, shopping centres, grocery stores, or warehouses. These ventures would enable the community to sell power either to themselves, the grid, or the building occupants. Such projects, which involve innovative business models, should be analysed in collaboration with the community.

² Parliament of Australia Report on Indigenous Businesses. (2021). [Accessible online.](#)

Reducing energy costs and improving business outcomes

Electricity is a critical input in any business, whether service- or product-based. Reducing energy costs through solar installation or energy efficiency audits and upgrades can directly improve a business's financial position. Agreements between large power producers and Indigenous businesses can also contribute to lowering energy expenses. These strategies

should be explored with businesses and community organisations. In addition, non-commercial premises, such as those owned by community institutions, should be included in these considerations, as they often have a greater need for relief from utility cost.

Capability uplift and skills translation

All enterprise development requires capability support. Many established businesses require wrap-around growth or translation, and many individuals or groups require holistic support to stand businesses up. e.g business plans for the establishment of a new business or for an existing business to enter a new market.

Key outcomes

- Business development program specific to energy are established and operating in Wanaruah/Wonnarua
- Wanaruah/Wonnarua participation and procurement in the energy industry increases to at least parity with the portion of the population that is Indigenous.
- Programs are established that address barriers to individuals and groups starting their own business
- Energy exposure and awareness programs are fully established and are effectively increasing energy awareness and literacy.

Key steps

1. Undertake awareness activities to expose community to. inform them about. and familiarise them with the energy industry.
2. Raise awareness as to what opportunities may be presented by the energy industry and the broader transition
3. Engage community to understand capability for business development
4. Offer internal support programs to improve or establish business basics.

Impact metrics

- Number of businesses in Wanaruah/Wonnarua
- X number of businesses established
- X number of existing businesses enter the energy market.
- Wanaruah/Wonnarua GDP
- Total spend with Wanaruah/Wonnarua businesses by energy businesses
- Percentage of spend with Wanaruah/Wonnarua businesses by energy business.

Pathway 6: Health

Further insights relating to the development of the pathway are detailed below. Outcomes, steps, and impact metrics are included over page.

The health-energy connection

Health is one of the most direct ways energy can improve Indigenous peoples' lives in the long term. This health-energy nexus is a priority on Wanaruah/Wonnarua country.

Household-level opportunities

The greatest opportunity to uplift health in Wanaruah/Wonnarua is at the household level. Access to reliable, affordable, and clean energy is essential for social wellbeing and is included in the UN sustainable development goals (sdgs). Energy-efficient housing serves as 'health hardware,' with safe, comfortable, and efficient housing being a key determinant of health outcomes.

Having reliable and affordable power allows for the storage of fresh and healthy food, medicines, and the operation of life support and other medical devices. It also enables the use of lights for safety, productivity, and study, as well as air-conditioners and similar devices to improve comfort—leading to gains in both physical and mental health.

Electrification and energy efficiency

Affordable, reliable, and clean energy, along with home energy efficiency, provides substantial improvements to quality of life. Energy efficiency initiatives make power more affordable, and electrification or home modifications offer vast benefits in comfort and savings. For example, insulation can reduce heating and cooling energy demand and costs, while upgraded hot water systems, such as heat pumps, provide sustained access to hot water, particularly showers, improving hygiene and health outcomes.

A 'whole of energy' approach is required to realise these benefits. For instance, window coverings or awnings can reduce cooling demand by an estimated 30%. Programs supporting the purchase of energy-efficient appliances or upgrades can enhance both physical and mental health.

Mental health benefits

Mental health improves through better comfort, such as appropriate lighting and indoor temperatures, and through reduced household stress and anxiety due to lower energy bills. Energy costs are often perceived as the highest household expense and a source of anxiety for Indigenous families, especially when these costs are seen as inflexible or uncontrollable.

Electrifying cooking appliances

Gas cooking contributes to 12.5% of childhood asthma cases and affects all occupants by producing particulates and reducing indoor air quality. Replacing gas cooking appliances in Indigenous households is a priority for Wanaruah/Wonnarua and should be addressed by energy stakeholders working on country.

Improving air quality

In addition to improving indoor air quality, transitioning to clean energy and reducing coal-related industrial activities in the Hunter region will noticeably enhance regional air quality.

Addressing food security

Regional Australian communities, including Wanaruah/Wonnarua, often face challenges accessing fresh and healthy food despite producing agricultural goods. Terms such as 'nutrition deserts' or 'food deserts' describe these scenarios, where healthy food is scarce or prohibitively expensive. Establishing community-owned farms, gardens, or growing operations offers a culturally aligned solution. Such projects can improve diet, access to healthy food, and overall health while reflecting the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community's commitment to living sustainably with the land.

Community lighting and safety

Improving community lighting should also be a consideration for energy interests. Better lighting can create or be perceived to create safer streets, potentially contributing to crime prevention.

Reliable power and connectivity

Reliable power improves connectivity, either by addressing poor energy reliability or by freeing up household budgets to fund internet access.

Energy-enabled connectivity enhances health by providing better access to online information, medical staff (including telehealth), and job opportunities. Improved connectivity is also linked to better mental health outcomes

Key outcomes

- The health to energy nexus in Wanaruah/Wonnarua is fully explored with key tangents quantified this should be via joint initiatives completed with community.
- A material uplift in Wanaruah/Wonnarua health is achieved and this uplift can be attributed to energy improvements
- A community wide energy efficiency retrofit program is in operation and is community run. This program focusing one 'whole-of-energy' retrofitting existing housing stock and ensuring all new housing is built appropriately.
- All gas cooking appliances in social and community housing are electrified

Key steps

1. Identify primary health metrics and ensure they are being monitored accurately and at an appropriate frequency.
2. Begin electrification of all cooking appliances in social housing
3. Establish energy efficiency program for residential and commercial buildings
4. Set up a solar installation program for residential and community organisations

Impact metrics

- People living in appropriately sized housing
- People living in housing with appropriate thermal performance
- Suicide rate
- Mental health incidence rate
- Life expectancy
- Incidence of key illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes.

Pathway 7: Prosperity

Further insights relating to the development of the pathway are detailed below. Outcomes, steps, and impact metrics are included over page.

Household impact

Cost of living is the primary issue facing Australians, and it has long been central to the great Australian dream. Like most issue of national significance, Indigenous Australians are disproportionately impacted by cost-of-living pressures.

Energy is a primary household bill and is perceived as the most expensive expense within Australian homes.

Cost of living or prosperity is one of the most direct pathways for energy to impact Wanaruah/Wonnarua individuals, families and households – and efficient avenue to direct livelihood improvement.

Businesses and Community Organisations

Much like the direct impact energy bills can have on individual, family, and household prosperity; addressing the cost of energy for community businesses and organisations can have a direct community impact. For many of these organisations' energy bills are one of their primary

means of production and their largest expenses. Reducing these bills through community buying

power, energy efficiency and demand side approaches, and rooftop solar offers significant opportunity to improve community prosperity.

Enterprise

As highlighted in *Pathway 5*, enterprise development offers significant financial opportunity for community. Whether it is commercially driven solar development, an energy supply chain business, solar installer, energy efficiency installer, or an electrified transport business, all are pathways through which community prosperity can be improved.

Energy Education

Energy Education is another avenue towards financial prosperity. Having the knowledge to manage energy use more cost effectively or to access services and products that will improve the hip pocket of Wanaruah/Wonnarua people and households alike, is vitally important.

Energy education includes conversations with community about how energy can improve your hip-pocket, assistance with householders' ability to read energy bills and take action, and generally about what the energy industry is and what opportunities it presents.

Key outcomes

- Wanaruah/Wonnarua people can afford their energy bills
- Wanaruah/Wonnarua own homes and can afford their rent
- Generational wealth is being built within community.
- Wanaruah/Wonnarua people own businesses
- Wanaruah/Wonnarua people have jobs that earn the same as other throughout the Hunter.

Key steps

5. Identify primary prosperity metrics and ensure they are being monitored accurately and at an appropriate frequency.
6. Determine the single largest determinant to Wanaruah/Wonnarua prosperity
7. Work with communicate to educate about the links from energy to prosperity, specifically at the individual level
8. Frame and fund programs that will begin to address prosperity gaps via energy.

Impact metrics

- Average energy bill \$\$
- Energy bill affordability
- Average Wage
- Employment rate
- Home ownership
- Rent affordability

Disclaimer

This report is dated 8 April 2025 and incorporates information and events up to that date only. It excludes any information arising, or event occurring, after that date which may affect the validity of the work.

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Contact us for further information

admin@indigenousenergyaustralia.com

Appendices

Appendix A: Solution Cards

A solution card summarising the recommendations and key insights for key initiatives has been included on the following pages.

Solution: Community Gardens and Cooperatives

Description	
Community gardens and cooperatives powered by renewable energy aim to provide fresh, affordable food by integrating sustainable agriculture with clean energy solutions. Community Gardens and Co-operatives fundamentally serve to foster connections by creating spaces where community can grow produce together. By using renewable energy for function such as water irrigation and lighting, the gardens minimise their environmental impact and operating costs. The cooperative model enables shared ownership, encouraging community to contribute to decision-making and the distribution of produce – promoting economic resilience and sustainable living practices.	
Impact and implementation	
Impact	- For Wanaruah/Wonnarua, this initiative offers the potential to significantly improve food security by providing locally grown, affordable fresh produce. Increased access to nutritious food reduces the need for community members to travel, making healthy choices more convenient and achievable. This can directly improve health outcomes by decreasing the risk of diet-related diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. - The cooperative model also fosters economic resilience through shared ownership and local job creation. Use of renewable energy not only supports environmental sustainability, but also aligns with the values of caring for Country. - This initiative serves as a catalyst for strengthening social connections and fostering a sense of community. It encourages intergenerational knowledge sharing around traditional practices, food cultivation, and sustainable living, while building capacity for local leadership. By reducing dependency on unreliable energy sources and supporting local food production, the community will be empowered to achieve greater self-determination over their future.
Implementation	Assess community needs: Undertake a co-design process to understand community priorities, concerns, and resources, ensuring the initiative meets community aspirations. Evaluate potential locations for community gardens, considering factors like land availability, soil quality, and suitability for renewable energy infrastructure. Develop relevant education programs: Use local languages in promotional materials, offering hands-on workshops for students across all levels (daycare to Literacy for Life), and ongoing learning opportunities. Establish renewable energy infrastructure: Conduct feasibility studies (starting with a pilot site) and plan for a local maintenance team. Install and integrate renewable energy infrastructure to power irrigation systems, greenhouses, lighting, and other essential elements. Ensure long-term sustainability: Set up cooperative management structures and provide training for community members on sustainable farming practices, renewable energy maintenance, and business skills. Plan for maintenance funding, creating income streams, considering resilience to climate risks, and regularly evaluating outcomes. Celebrate milestones with community events to maintain momentum.
Stakeholders	
Lead agency	TBC
Potential partners	Traditional Owners and PBCs: Engaging Traditional Owners ensures that cultural knowledge and perspectives are incorporated into the project. Their involvement is crucial for ensuring the initiative aligns with local customs and practices. Local Government: The Local Government can play a vital role in providing regulatory support, funding opportunities, and community outreach. The initiative can also be integrated into broader local development plans. Education: Education providers can incorporate sustainable farming and renewable energy topics into their curricula, offering hands-on learning experiences for students. They can also support community outreach efforts, helping raise awareness about the benefits of the initiative. Government-Owned Energy Corporation: Ergon is the current government-owned energy corporation servicing the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. They could provide technical expertise, resources, and support for implementing renewable energy solutions like solar panels and energy-efficient irrigation

Solution: Energy Literacy Program

Description	
Energy literacy is foundational for the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community, empowering the community with the knowledge and skills to understand, engage and participate in the energy transition. This includes understanding household energy bills, how energy is generated, stored and transported, and include a broader holistic understanding of the clean energy transition. Energy literacy will be instrumental for supporting pathways into energy careers, aid community members to better understand household energy bills, communicate with utilities, and identify opportunities for energy bill reductions.	
Impact and implementation	
Impact	- This initiative can support an array of outcomes for the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community including cost of living, health and careers. - For households, energy literacy can support smarter energy choices and ultimately realise energy bill savings and improved money management. This can be a product of finding better energy deals, communicating with utilities who have overcharged, when to operate certain appliances where peak and off-peak rates exist, etc. - For individuals, energy literacy is foundational to careers in the energy transition and energy related industries such as manufacturing. - For communities, energy literacy will be critical to supporting and empowering communities to make collective decisions about large scale energy and infrastructure projects on their Country, to negotiate and maximise benefit sharing arrangements.
Implementation	Assess community needs: Undertake a co-design process to understand community priorities, concerns, and resources, ensuring the initiative meets community aspirations. Develop a baseline of community's energy literacy and familiarity with the energy industry. Socialisation and support: socialise energy concepts with community. Delivering familiarisation as well as skills and knowledge development. Create the programs that have wrap around support including workplace mentors and strengthen of community institutions. Funding: Fund a 'Yarnin' Energy with Indigenous Households workshop series run by Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN) Education: Work with education partners to build community capacity to teach energy literacy in community by community. Work with Ergon to create community-oriented bills for easier understanding. Review and monitor progress: metrics may include #/% of homes with at least one member who can understand an energy bill, #/% of community members that can discuss the energy transition, #/% of school aged students who can name energy jobs
Stakeholders	
Lead agency	TBC
Potential partners	Traditional Owners and PBCs: Engaging Traditional Owners ensures that cultural knowledge and perspectives are incorporated into the project. Their involvement is crucial for ensuring the initiative aligns with local customs and practices. Local Government: The Local Government can play a vital role in providing regulatory support, funding opportunities, and community outreach. The initiative can also be integrated into broader local development plans. Education: Education providers can incorporate sustainable farming and renewable energy topics into their curricula, offering hands-on learning experiences for students. They can also support community outreach efforts, helping raise awareness about the benefits of the initiative. Government-Owned Energy Corporation: Ergon is the current government-owned energy corporation servicing the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. They could provide technical expertise, resources, and support for implementing renewable energy solutions like solar panels and energy-efficient irrigation

Solution: Procurement planning to support Indigenous suppliers

Description	
First Nations businesses are growing across Australia, around 4 per cent per annum (RBA 2022). With increasing corporate and government commitments for indigenous procurement and employment, the conditions for enterprise development are more favourable than ever. However, many substantial barriers remain especially concerning entry into energy sector related enterprises. Support to establish or improve businesses fundamentals or acquire relevant skills are all avenues that should be explored with Wanaruah/Wonnarua to help overcome critical barriers. Enterprise development can take many forms through the energy sector. Opportunities such as solar installation, energy efficiency upgrades, large-scale renewable energy projects and many more offer participation at varying levels for community-owned businesses. Both sub-contracting and standalone business opportunities need further development and awareness amongst the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community and are underpinned by strong relationships with the many voices across community and upticks in energy literacy and familiarity with the energy industry.	
Impact and implementation	
Impact	- Indigenous businesses offer significantly more benefit to their communities and employ Indigenous staff at orders of magnitude above non-indigenous businesses (Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2021). - Establishing or extending indigenous businesses development across industrial, commercial and residential focussed energy holds real potential to deliver generational outcome for the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. Pathways are broad ranging from sub-contracting for industry and large-scale projects to smaller business opportunities in commercial and residential such as solar installation, energy efficiency upgrades and auditing.
Implementation	Assess community needs: Undertake a co-design process to understand community priorities, concerns, and resources, ensuring the initiative meets community aspirations. Engage community: Engage community to understand capability for business development. Raise awareness as to what opportunities may be presented by the energy industry and the broader transition Establish a supplier baseline and data base specific to energy projects: create / reinforce existing procurement networks Procurement planning: forward plan your 'Indigenous Procurement Plan', by working with community and relevant stakeholders to understand the best way to repackage relevant packages of work so they can be delivered by an SME. Review and monitor progress: metrics could include #/% of contract value being delivered by Indigenous suppliers / enterprise, # of businesses on your supplier register, project #/% of SME delivering works packages.
Stakeholders	
Lead agency	TBC
Potential partners	- Traditional Owners and PBCs: Engaging Traditional Owners ensures that cultural knowledge and perspectives are incorporated into the project. Their involvement is crucial for ensuring the initiative aligns with local customs and practices. - Local Government: The Local Government can play a vital role in providing regulatory support, funding opportunities, and community outreach. The initiative can also be integrated into broader local development plans. - Education: Education providers can incorporate indigenous enterprise development and renewable energy topics into their curricula, offering hands-on learning experiences for students. They can also support community outreach efforts, helping raise awareness about the benefits of the initiative. - Government-Owned Energy Corporation: Ergon is the current government-owned energy corporation servicing the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. They could provide technical expertise, resources, and support for implementing renewable energy solutions like solar panels and energy-efficient irrigation.

Solution: Community-owned and operated bus

Description	
Mobility in regional areas can be a particular challenge for Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. Barriers and challenges include having a licence, price of petrol, car ownership and reliable public transport. A simple, low-cost solution would be to provide the community with at least one or more community-owned and operated busses. These busses would ideally be electric, powered by solar and charging points also owned by community at community centres.	
Impact and implementation	
Impact	A community owned and operated bus (ideally an electric bus) could support community members to access essential services, attend skills and training programs, attend cultural activities and meet up with their community more regularly.
Implementation	Assess community needs: Undertake a co-design process to understand community priorities, concerns, and resources, ensuring the initiative meets community aspirations. Work with community to determine baseline access to services and training limited by mobility. Long-term planning: Identify home location for bus. Map out how a bus or fleet of busses can grow over time and eventually be electric, powered by solar and onsite chargers for reduced servicing and fuel costs. Plan for maintenance and repair funding Review and monitor progress: # of buses owned, # of busses that are electric/powered by renewable energy, %/# of community able to access transport that enables them to reach services, training, and undertake other activities.
Stakeholders	
Lead agency	TBC
Potential partners	Traditional Owners and PBCs: Engaging Traditional Owners ensures that cultural knowledge and perspectives are incorporated into the project. Their involvement is crucial for ensuring the initiative aligns with local customs and practices. Local Government: The Local Government can play a vital role in providing regulatory support, funding opportunities, and community outreach. The initiative can also be integrated into broader local development plans. Education: Education providers can support community outreach efforts, helping raise awareness about the benefits of the initiative. Government-Owned Energy Corporation: Ergon is the current government-owned energy corporation servicing the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. They could provide technical expertise, resources, and support for implementing renewable energy solutions like solar panels and energy-efficient irrigation

Solution: Solar for low-income households

Description	
One in three Australian households now have solar and are benefiting from significantly lower energy costs. Solar is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to deliver household energy savings in addition to other household energy upgrades. Solar for low-income homes/rentals has already been trialled in Queensland through Ergon as a delivery partner. The trial involved no upfront costs or payment by the households involved. This initiative could be rolled out across the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community.	
Impact and implementation	
Impact	- Household energy bill relief through the installation of solar can have a wide-ranging set of benefits for Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. - Not only can solar reduce energy bills, it delivers health outcomes such as the capacity to run air-conditioning (AC) during the day for free during heatwaves when otherwise households may forego AC due to energy bill fears.
Implementation	Assess community needs: Undertake a co-design process to understand community priorities, concerns, and resources, ensuring the initiative meets community aspirations. Baseline and feasibility: Complete a household audit of homes without solar to understand baseline. Complete a feasibility study for running a solar for low-income homes program. Engagement: Work with community agencies to engage Delivery partner: Deliver in partnership with Ergon, design a fit-for-purpose roll out of solar for indigenous households on Wanaruah/Wonnarua. Finance: Develop financing solutions in collaboration with community. Review and monitor progress: metrics could include #/% of homes with solar, #/% households reporting bill savings due to solar.
Stakeholders	
Lead agency	TBC
Potential partners	Traditional Owners and PBCs: Engaging Traditional Owners ensures that cultural knowledge and perspectives are incorporated into the project. Their involvement is crucial for ensuring the initiative aligns with local customs and practices. Local Government: The Local Government can play a vital role in providing regulatory support, funding opportunities, and community outreach. The initiative can also be integrated into broader local development plans. Education: Education providers can in support community outreach efforts, helping raise awareness about the benefits of the initiative. Government-Owned Energy Corporation: Ergon is the current government-owned energy corporation servicing the Wanaruah/Wonnarua community. They could provide technical expertise, resources, and support for implementing renewable energy solutions like solar panels and energy-efficient irrigation

Appendix B – Census Data

The data has been provided by Aboriginal Affairs NSW, along with the following disclaimer:

‘Please note that these portraits are generated using a third-party application. While we recognise the need for data and insight outputs that centre Aboriginal priorities in data storytelling, these portraits neither centre community views, nor align with the strengths-based transformation that AANSW is trying to embody.’

Summary insights

Insight	Summary statistic	Relevant notes
Population growth		
Higher than average population representation and population growth	- The First Nations population in the Hunter Region is increasing much more quickly (45%) than other community members (9%) - Higher proportion of First Nations community living in the Hunter Region (6.5%) compared to NSW State averages (3.4%)	The ABS estimates that the census undercounted by First Nations people in 2021 by 17.5% on average.
Health		
Higher than average rates of chronic disease, higher than average rates of disability.	- The most common health conditions for First Nations community in the Hunter Region were mental health conditions, asthma, arthritis, and diabetes, impacting around 33% of the population. Disability rates in the region have increased from 2016 – 2021. From 2016 to 2021, the proportion of First Nations residents of the Hunter Region with a severe disability rose from 8.2% to 9.4%. The greatest increase in the First Nations disability rate was among those aged 15–19, up 2% from 6% in 2016 to 9% in 2021	Disability rates provide a useful indicator of a community's health and need for support services. Nationally, disability rates among First Nations people are about 25% higher than overall rates, across most age groups.
Income and employment		
A measurable gap in income and home ownership.	- There is a home ownership gap of -21% with First Nations community members less likely to own their own home compared to other community members: In 2021, 50% of First Nations households in the Hunter Region were either buying or owned their home, compared with 71% of 'other' households, a home ownership gap of 21%. The gap had closed by 2% since 2016; having closed by 2% over the previous five years. There is an income gap of -20% between First Nations community members and other adults in the region: In 2021, the median income of First Nations adults in the Hunter Region (\$602) was 80% that of non-First Nations adults here (\$755). The personal income gap was -20%.	- Personal income is an important indicator of individual well-being. - Ownership of a home is the main way that most Australians accumulate wealth and ensure secure accommodation. - Employment is a prime determinant of a community's income, so it is an important indicator of well-being
A measurable gap in employment.	First Nations community members have a 10% unemployment rate compared to 5% with other adults in the region. . In 2021,	

Insight	Summary statistic	Relevant notes
	the First Nations unemployment rate in Hunter was 10%, with 1,943 people out of work, compared to 5% rate among other adults here.	
Education		
Increasing levels of childhood education.	• There are significantly more children in education since 2016, reflective in part of the population growth: In 2021, First Nations children and teenagers attending school in the Hunter Region numbered 15,421, with 2,110 in pre-school, 7,877 in primary school, and 5,434 in high school. The number of First Nations pre-schoolers was up by 888 or 73% since 2016 and up by 192% from 2011.	• The proportion of adults who have completed Year 12 is an important indicator of a community's educational resources. • Nationally, over half of all adults (58%) have completed Year 12 • Tertiary qualifications have a big influence on people's earning capacity and community well-being.
A measurable gap in those who finish year 12, but a less significant gap than the NSW State average.	• There is a 'year 12 gap' of -14% between First Nations community members and other community members in the region, which is not as significant as the NSW State average of -28%. • In 2021, 34% of the Hunter Region First Nations adults had completed Year 12, compared with 47% of non-First Nations adults. The Year 12 gap was -14%. The Year 12 gap had changed little since 2016; having closed by 2% over the previous five years.	
Average rates of tertiary qualifications compared to NSW state averages, slightly less than other adults.	• 41% of the First Nations people aged 15+ living in the Hunter have a tertiary qualification. • The 2021 Census found that 41% of First Nations people aged 15+ living in Hunter had a tertiary qualification. By comparison, 41% of First Nations adults in NSW and 53% of other adults in Hunter had a tertiary qualification.	
Education rates are increasing	• The growing population are receiving more education, with an increase of 221% in qualifications alongside an increase in population of 124%: In the decade from 2011, the number of First Nations adults in Hunter with qualifications increased by 221%, while their population increased by 124%. • There were 5,398 more with a Certificate III and IV and 1,663 more with a Advanced Diploma / Diploma qualification.]	

Further detail

In the 2021 Census, the First Nations population of Hunter region was 49,909 people, of whom 48,010 identified as Aboriginal and 979 as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; 910 identified as Torres Strait Islander.

- **Higher proportion of First Nations community living in the Hunter Region, compared to NSW State averages:** First Nations people comprised 6.5% of the regions population, compared with 3.4% in NSW, with equal representation (on average) between men and women. This gender representation changes at different ages – with noticeably more males than females for people younger than 19 years old.
- **The First Nations population in the Hunter Region is increasing much more quickly than other community members:** Between 2016 and 2021, the First Nations population counted in the Hunter Region rose by 45% (an increase of 15,594) from 34,315. The region's overall population rose by 9%. Noting that the ABS estimates that the census undercounted by First Nations people in 2021 by 17.5% on average.
- **The First Nations community are younger on average than other community members:** The First Nations population of the Hunter Region has an age profile that is significantly younger than the non-First Nations population, with a much lower median age (22 vs 43 years). The First Nations population of the Hunter Region had a smaller proportion in the working stage of life (15–64 years), compared to the rest of the population, with a much higher proportion of children under 15, and a much smaller proportion of people aged 65 or older.
- **The most common health conditions for First Nations community in the Hunter Region were mental health conditions,** asthma, arthritis, and diabetes, impacting around 33% of the population: The 2021 Census found that about one-third of First Nations residents of Hunter (17,955 people) had a long-term health condition.
- **Disability rates in the region have increased from 2016 – 2021:** Disability rates provide a useful indicator of a community's health and need for support services. Nationally, disability rates among First Nations people are about 25% higher than overall rates, across most age groups. From 2016 to 2021, the proportion of First Nations residents of the Hunter Region with a severe disability rose from 8.2% to 9.4%. Among all people in Hunter, the disability rate changed little, and was 6.7% in 2021. The greatest increase in the First Nations disability rate was among those aged 15–19, up 2% from 6% in 2016 to 9% in 2021.
- **There is a home ownership gap of -21% with First Nations community members less likely to own their own home compared to other community members:** Ownership of a home is the main way that most Australians accumulate wealth and ensure secure accommodation. In 2021, 50% of First Nations households in the Hunter Region were either buying or owned their home, compared with 71% of 'other' households, a home ownership gap of 21%. The gap had closed by 2% since 2016; having closed by 2% over the previous five years.
- **There is an income gap of -20% between First Nations community members and other adults in the region:** Personal income is an important indicator of individual well-being. In 2021, the median income of First Nations adults in the Hunter Region (\$602) was 80% that of non-First Nations adults here (\$755). The personal income gap was -20%.
- **The income gap has closed by 2% from 2016-2021:** Since 2016, average First Nations wages here had risen by \$189 per week, or 30%, from \$621. In 2021, the average weekly income of First Nations adults (aged 15+) in Hunter was about \$809, which was close to First Nations adults in NSW (\$813), and 17% less than non-First Nations adults.

- **First Nations community members have a 10% unemployment rate compared to 5% with other adults in the region:** Employment is a prime determinant of a community's income, so it is an important indicator of well-being. In Hunter, 17,555 out of 32,701 First Nations adults (15+) were employed in 2021 – 54% of adults. In 2021, the First Nations unemployment rate in Hunter was 10%, with 1,943 people out of work, compared to 5% rate among other adults here.
- **There are significantly more children in education since 2016, reflective in part of the population growth:** In 2021, First Nations children and teenagers attending school in the Hunter Region numbered 15,421, with 2,110 in pre-school, 7,877 in primary school, and 5,434 in high school. The number of First Nations pre-schoolers was up by 888 or 73% since 2016 and up by 192% from 2011.
- There is a 'year 12 gap' of -14% between First Nations community members and other community members in the region, which is not as significant as the NSW State average of -28%: The proportion of adults who have completed Year 12 is an important indicator of a community's educational resources. Nationally, over half of all adults (58%) have completed Year 12. In 2021, 34% of the Hunter Region First Nations adults had completed Year 12, compared with 47% of non-First Nations adults. The Year 12 gap was -14%. The Year 12 gap had changed little since 2016; having closed by 2% over the previous five years. The Year 12 gap in NSW was -28% and had changed little since 2011. It narrowed by 1% between 2006 and 2011.
- **41% of the First Nations people aged 15+ living in the Hunter have a tertiary qualification:** Tertiary qualifications have a big influence on people's earning capacity and community well-being. The 2021 Census found that 41% of First Nations people aged 15+ living in Hunter had a tertiary qualification. By comparison, 41% of First Nations adults in NSW and 53% of other adults in Hunter had a tertiary qualification.
- **The growing population are receiving more education, with an increase of 221% in qualifications alongside an increase in population of 124%:** In the decade from 2011, the number of First Nations adults in Hunter with qualifications increased by 221%, while their population increased by 124%. There were 5,398 more with a Certificate III and IV and 1,663 more with a Advanced Diploma / Diploma qualification. Among these 32,701 First Nations adults were:
 - 7,843 people with Certificate III and IV (24%);
 - 2,310 people with Diploma or Advanced (7%);
 - 1,817 people with Bachelor Degree (6%).

Appendix C: Additional Stakeholders

These organisations have collaborated with the broader community to identify priorities, overcome challenges, and design pathways that will enable energy independence.

Table 3 Community stakeholders

Group	Sub-group	Organisation name
Community Representative Organisation	Traditional Owners and PBCs	- Wanaruah LALC - Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation
	Education Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	- Muswellbrook Primary School - Singleton High School - Muswellbrook TAFE
	Health	Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation
	Employment	- Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation - Dreampath
	Local Business	- NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce – Mandurah - Hunter Indigenous Business Chamber
	Housing	- Hunter Valley Aboriginal Corporation - WLALC - Gunida Gunyah
	Sport	Local sporting clubs e.g. Merewether Carlton Rugby Club
	Culture, Arts, and Justice Groups	Arts Upper Hunter
Government	Local	- Upper Hunter Shire Council - Singleton Shire Council - Muswellbrook Shire Council - Hunter Joint Organisation
	State	NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
	Federal	- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water - The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
Industry	Private	- Ausgrid - Glencore - BHP - Mach Energy - Bloomfield - Acciona - Yancoal - AGL - Bengalla - Dartbrook - BlackRock Industries
	Government Owned Corporation	Hunter Water

Appendix D: Regulatory Context

Benefit sharing from the NSW Government Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

The principles outlined in the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) Benefit-Sharing Guideline provide a framework for ensuring fairness in distributing benefits to Indigenous communities.

Key considerations include:

- **Tailored Approaches:** Benefits must be aligned with the unique aspirations and challenges of the community. This involves actively listening to the priorities identified by Indigenous stakeholders.
- **Mechanisms for Benefit Distribution:** These can include direct financial contributions, funding for community projects, infrastructure investments, and employment opportunities. Examples include renewable energy installations, training programs, and social enterprise development.
- **Support for Community Wellbeing:** Benefits should promote positive outcomes, such as improved education, healthcare access, and cultural preservation, contributing to the long-term wellbeing of the community.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Clear mechanisms must be established to ensure benefits are distributed equitably, reaching all members of the community and avoiding unintended disparities.

For Indigenous communities, equitable benefit-sharing goes beyond financial gains. It involves respecting cultural heritage, supporting self-determination, and creating pathways for sustainable, community-led growth.

Importance of Stakeholder Engagement

The DPHI guideline also emphasises the critical role of stakeholder engagement in fostering inclusive growth. Engaging Indigenous stakeholders ensures that projects align with cultural priorities and provide meaningful opportunities.

Key practices for effective engagement include:

- **Early and Ongoing Engagement:** Engagement should begin at the earliest stages of planning and continue throughout the lifecycle of the project. This allows Indigenous communities to provide input and influence decisions.
- **Culturally Respectful Practices:** Communication and collaboration must be guided by cultural protocols. This includes working directly with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal organisations to ensure their voices are central to the process.
- **Collaboration and Co-Design:** Projects should be co-designed with Indigenous stakeholders to foster trust, address their specific challenges, and ensure the outcomes align with their aspirations.
- **Inclusive Representation:** Engagement efforts should include diverse voices across the community, ensuring all groups—elders, youth, and other key representatives—are heard and acknowledged.
- **Capacity Building:** Stakeholder engagement should incorporate training and capacity-building opportunities that empower Indigenous communities to actively participate in and benefit from projects.
- **Building Long-Term Relationships:** Engagement should go beyond short-term project goals, focusing on establishing lasting partnerships that create trust and shared accountability.

By prioritising meaningful stakeholder engagement, communities can address structural inequalities and ensure that renewable energy projects contribute to inclusive and equitable growth.