



Innovative, sustainable energy, water and waste management

For our region to establish itself as a leader in renewable energy production; effective, sustainable water management; and innovative approaches to waste management to improve environmental and service delivery outcomes



Develop a Northern Rivers Renewable Energy Prospectus

Goal #8.3: To strengthen our region’s emerging position as a NSW leader in renewable energy generation, storage and use, in accordance with widespread community support for reduced emissions and action on climate change.

Background:

Along with the rest of the world, our community is in the midst of a major energy sector transition. NRJO is committed to the development of a Northern Rivers Renewable Energy Investment Prospectus that identifies opportunities for public, private and community investment in renewable energy projects.

Success in this area has been identified through NRJO strategic planning exercise as having the following characteristics:

- Increased energy supply from renewable sources, including waste to energy
- Reduced emissions
- All council buildings and infrastructure powered by renewable energy
- Renewable energy considered as part of new developments
- Power purchase agreements and tariffs in place to enable greater use of renewable energy
- Lower energy costs for residents

Policy Context:

In September 2013, the NSW Government released the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan.

NSW Government aims to attain 20% renewable energy by 2020 and this proposal aligns with key goals of the Renewable Energy Action Plan:

- Attract renewable energy investment
- Build community support
- Attract and grow renewable energy expertise



The Plan has 24 actions under 3 goals that detail the Government's intention to work closely with NSW communities and the renewable energy industry to increase renewable energy generation in the state at the least cost to the consumer. It would be the related NRJO goal to have interested businesses encouraged and supported by the government's renewable energy and energy efficiency policies and programs.

Achievements:

The region is philosophically well aligned with renewable energy initiatives, leading examples include:

- In January 2018, Lismore City Council and Farming the Sun officially launched the Lismore Community Solar initiative – the first Council/community owned solar farm in the country including Australia's largest floating solar farm. A solar farm is also installed and generating energy on the roof of the Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre. After several years of hard work between Farming the Sun, Lismore City Council, and a community committed to renewable energy, it is incredibly exciting to see these projects coming to fruition.
- Lismore Community Solar is at the forefront of Australia's nascent community energy movement and sector. It has created Australia's first ever Council operated and community funded solar farms. The purpose of Lismore Community Solar was to create two 99kW solar farms through a partnership between local community members and Lismore City Council ~ with funding provided by local community 'impact' investors and operation of the solar farms by Lismore City Council. The two solar farms are flagship projects for Lismore City Council's 2023 Renewable Energy Master Plan addressing objectives outlined in the Imagine Lismore 10 Year Plan 2013-2023.

Problem:

Providing renewable energy solutions across the Northern Rivers region has become a priority focus for communities, local governments and State and Federal Governments. Regional commitment in the NR has been demonstrated through the establishment of Australia's First Community Owned Electricity Retailer – ENOVA Energy, a leadership working group Sustain Energy Northern Rivers, and community groups such as Zero-Emission Byron Bay and Mullumbimby's COREM, among others.

There is a high degree of interest across the region to invest in renewable energies or partner with relevant investors/stakeholders to bring forward renewable energy projects. However, a number of barriers exist, including the inadequate servicing by the network distributor Essential Energy, as well as issues working with the Environmental Protection Agency (NSW).

The ability to develop projects can require a lot of patience and have taken years to establish. However, as new operating models for Community Energy (CE) projects develop and toolkits/resources are produced, it will aid in the efficiency of the development of these projects. This will assist CE project



developers, especially in terms of enhancing financial literacy and reducing the volunteer load of organisations.

Support and Partnerships

The development of the renewable energy prospectus will deliver sustainable energy, high value jobs in key employment areas, new research and innovation opportunities and capital raising connections where none currently exist. The project is supported by Regional Development Australia NR.

The region has a strong community affinity with establishing a renewable energy industry; energy drives our lifestyle, our industries, cultural activities and economy. It's important to the community to seek appropriate solutions to energy needs and maintain Northern Rivers as an exemplar region for New South Wales and Australia.

Innovation capacity

Created Australia's first community owned energy retailer

- A community focussed University, TAFE and Community College sector
- Highly successful creative and innovative industries
- Creative and Innovative individual human resources

Partnerships

Sustain Energy Northern Rivers provides a ready-made reference group comprising Government Agencies, LG's, community groups, business and industry focussed on renewable energy solutions for the region

Within the NSW JO network and specifically the NRJO, there is significant interest in *The Southern Lights Project* – proposing to deliver over 80,000 smart, connected LED street lights and a low to medium bandwidth Internet-of-Things communications network to communities encompassing over 1.1 million people living in country NSW. This enabling infrastructure will provide better, safer, cheaper lighting and connectivity that will act as a catalyst for participating councils and others to invest in smart community technologies that will increase efficiencies and improve service delivery. (REROC, RAMJO, Central NSW JO, CBRJO, Far West JO make up this group of councils involved in progressing this key project)

Solution and Actions sought:

To realise the benefits and positive impact on the region and our residents, **NRJO is seeking \$15,000 co-contribution for the development of a professional Renewable Energy Prospectus.**

