

MAPPING OUR ENERGY FUTURE

Community Guidelines for Townsville's Renewable Energy Transition

Key Recommendations

Reduce Impacts of Projects

1. **Select appropriate sites for development:** Prioritise cleared or degraded land, and avoid areas of remnant vegetation, wildlife corridors and threatened species habitat, and proximity to riparian zones and wetlands.
2. **Do your research:** Engage early with Traditional Custodians and walk with them on Country to better understand the environmental and cultural values of the site and adjacent landscapes, use thermal drones to detect cryptic wildlife populations, such as koalas, prepare Property Management Plans covering regional connectivity and natural/cultural values, and undertake soil testing and erosion controls.
3. **Design your project with conservation outcomes in mind:** Allow riparian zones room to expand rather than only protecting current footprints. For solar projects, incorporate "conservoltaics" design concepts, including revegetating between solar panels with low native grasses and retaining or replacing artificial watering points for birds. Use only fauna-friendly fencing and pole-mounted solar panels (not concrete pads) and plan drainage to support aquifer recharge.
4. **Manage your project responsibly:** Utilise innovative technology for conservation outcomes (e.g. "Felixir" for managing feral cats and "Identiflight" for reducing bird strikes in wind turbines). Include roadkill mitigation strategies for workers accessing the project site, particularly near dawn and dusk. Provide and enforce the use of vehicle wash-down facilities to reduce the spread of weeds into new areas.

Follow local principles for respectfully engaging Traditional Custodians

1. **Understand the governance of the Traditional Custodians and groups you're engaging with:** Just because you've worked with Traditional Custodians before doesn't mean it will be the same everywhere. Undertake cultural awareness training

that is relevant to the group you want to engage so that you understand their governance and protocols and can engage respectfully. This includes recognising cultural authority – who speaks for Country and how that is identified and respected.

2. **Walk on Country with the Traditional Custodians:** Proponents need to have a good understanding of the Country they're working on and how it looks on the ground. This is a baseline expectation.
3. **Involve Traditional Custodians in the EPBC process:** They know their Country. If they've been locked out due to private ownership, they can ground truth oral history that has been passed down to them about Country. This process can also help to identify cultural heritage.
4. **Understand and respect cultural heritage:** You need permission to move around Country, to ensure sacred sites and cultural heritage are protected.
5. **Ensure the FPIC process continues for the whole project duration:** Transparency and consent must be ongoing, not just during negotiations.
6. **Adequately resource dedicated roles on both sides:** PBCs should have multiple roles funded by the proponent to support negotiations, cultural heritage work, employment and training. This should be designed in a way that acknowledges the cultural load and expectations placed on individuals and groups and ensures this is properly resourced and sustainable over time. Proponents also need to support at least one consistent, long-standing role within the company to support respectful Traditional Custodian engagement for the lifetime of the project.
7. **Share data about Country with Traditional Custodians:** Data from site surveys should be shared with Traditional Custodians in a way that is useful to them. This data could be used for mapping, planning, sharing, advocating or carrying out focused work in future. This should be an early conversation.
8. **Ensure shared benefits help build long-term capacity:** This could look like education, apprenticeships, scholarships, employment or part ownership of projects. It could also look like funding for ranger programs or citizen science projects to help build skills and look after Country. Proponents need to be up front about how much revenue their project will bring in to help keep negotiations transparent.
9. **Invest in Caring for Country initiatives:** Community Benefit Funds should contribute to conservation outcomes.

10. **Provide reliable information to First Nations leaders and communities:** There are some Traditional Owner groups in our region who haven't been provided with clear, independent and culturally appropriate information about renewable energy – what it is, how it works, why it's needed, or what the risks or benefits might be. This information needs to be provided before negotiations can begin, to ensure people are supported to make informed decisions in a fair and transparent way.
11. **Ensure Traditional Custodians are equipped to negotiate:** This could look like a peer support network across a region and/or access to relevant experience, skills and expertise.
12. **Involve Traditional Custodians in decisions around community benefit funds:** Traditional Custodians should be involved in the decision-making for community benefit funds with the local government if projects are on their Country.

Invest in community resilience and long-term nature outcomes

1. **Give back:** Financially support local wildlife care organisations if their services are required as a direct or indirect result of the project.
2. **Invest in local conservation efforts:** Invest in the work of established local conservation groups to support long-term environmental outcomes. Resource new and existing Caring for Country programs to strengthen ecological resilience, improve conservation outcomes and enhance the region's capacity to sustainably manage the impacts of future renewable energy development.
3. **Support research and innovation:** Fund basin-scale and cumulative impact studies. Support ongoing research into biodiversity outcomes of conservoltaics, through site access for research or direct funding support. Invest in research and implementation of recycling programs to ensure all recyclable components are can be recycled - preferably locally.
4. **Fund climate adaptation and resilience:** Invest in urban greening and other nature-based solutions for climate adaptation and ecological resilience. Invest in community energy infrastructure (including community batteries) and more climate resilient infrastructure to address needs identified by local communities.