

Regional Leaders Summit 2026 Program The Empire, 54-56 Neil Street, Toowoomba QLD					
Day:	Tuesday 15 September 2026			Wednesday 16 September 2026	Thursday 17 Sept
Time	The Empire, 54-56 Neil Street, Toowoomba, Queensland				OPTIONAL DAY - Macintyre Wind Farm Tour
	Registration, tea and coffee from 8:30am Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds				7:45am DEPART from Downs Motel, 669 Ruthven St Toowoomba 8:00am DEPART from The Empire, 54-56 Neil St, Toowoomba 1.5 hour travel Please wear: 1. Closed-in shoes 2. Long pants 3. Long sleeve shirt Acciona will supply hard hat, safety glasses and high vis vest.
08:30 - 09:00					
09:00 - 09:30	Welcome to Country from Conrad Bauwens, Wakka Wakka and Jarowair Traditional Owner Welcome from Andrew Bray, National Director, RE-Alliance Heritage Bank Auditorium			Welcome from Mayor Geoff McDonald, Toowoomba Regional Council QLD ----- Panel: Leveraging local power for regional prosperity With communities taking back control of the energy shift, this panel focuses on how leaders are using that momentum to deliver tangible, long-term prosperity. They'll unpack how local influence is being channelled into new industries, workforce pathways, infrastructure investment and community-owned outcomes. Expect stories of innovation, strategic thinking and bold regional ambition. Host: Lu Allan, Advocacy Director, RE-Alliance Panellists: 1. Anthony Holzwart, Manager Economic Development, Toowoomba Regional Council QLD 2. Andrew Smith, Mayor, Western Downs Regional Council QLD 3. Chris Sounness, Chief Executive Officer, Wimmera Southern Mallee Development VIC Heritage Bank Auditorium	
09:30 - 10:00	Panel: Growing our power and getting the job done This panel spotlights leaders who are designing the tools, frameworks, policies and relationships that give their communities real influence over how the energy shift unfolds in their region. They'll unpack how they're building local power, shaping development and delivering results on the ground — from directing developer behaviour and ensuring effective impact mitigation through to economic development goal realisation. Expect honest insights, inventive approaches and a sense of what's possible when locals lead with confidence, creativity and a clear mandate to lead the localised energy shift on their terms. Host: Andrew Bray, National Director, RE-Alliance				
10:00 - 10:15	Panellists: 1. Kylie Davies, Chief Executive Officer, Flinders Shire Council QLD 2. Robert Prestipino, Senior Economic Development Officer, Toowoomba Regional Council QLD 3. Mikaela Carroll, Regional Development Coordinator, RDA Tasmania TBC - Mid Murray Council SA				
10:15 - 10:30	Heritage Bank Auditorium			Announcements and introduction to the state-based workshops Heritage Bank Auditorium	
10:30 - 11:00	Morning tea Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds				Tour
11:00 - 11:50	Ask a developer - With Acciona Energia & Neoen Australia Acciona and Neoen will lift the lid on their processes, constraints and ways of working, giving participants a grounded understanding of developer behaviour. Bring your questions — this session is designed for frank, practical Q&A. Facilitated by RE-Alliance Lounge Bar (upstairs)	Working towards worker accommodation that benefits communities in the long term The Cradle Coast Authority TAS will kick off discussion with an honest account of their planning and advocacy work to progress innovative housing solutions alongside the renewable energy roll-out, in a tight market with a significant influx of expected workers. Cradle Coast Authority (10mins) Discussion (40mins) Supper Room (upstairs)	Attracting and keeping a locally based workforce As the Gippsland Climate Change Network knows, the hardest part of workforce development is making sure local people see themselves in the jobs of the future, early enough to participate in them. To kickstart discussion, CCN will unpack how they're tackling this head-on through their annual conference, the Academy, school engagement and a growing group of young ambassadors. In this session we'll share practical lessons on early engagement and building a workforce that stays local. VR may be part of the experience... Gippsland Climate Change Network VIC (10mins presentation) Facilitated discussion (40mins) Heritage Bank Auditorium	Connect, align, act: state-based workshops Session #1 Purpose: 1. Participants are more connected to colleagues in their state 2. Identify key roadblocks in each state to progressing local energy transitions 3. Identify key levers of change to progress local energy transitions 4. Identify key actions to take in each state to address key roadblocks QLD - Heritage Bank Auditorium NSW - Empire Church Theatre VIC - Lounge Bar (upstairs) SA, TAS & WA - Supper Room (upstairs)	9:30am - 10:30am - Morning tea, presentation & PPE gear-up 10:30am - 12:30pm - Tour
12:00 - 12:50	Ask a developer - With Acciona Energia & Neoen Australia Acciona and Neoen will lift the lid on their processes, constraints and ways of working, giving participants a grounded understanding of developer behaviour. Bring your questions — this session is designed for frank, practical Q&A. Facilitated by RE-Alliance Lounge Bar (upstairs)	Worker accommodation that benefits communities in the long term Case study #2 (10mins) Discussion (40mins) Facilitated by RE-Alliance Supper Room (upstairs)	Aligning stakeholders to manage cumulative impact Facing a daunting list of cumulative impacts, the University of New England and Uralla Shire Council NSW took initiative, bringing regional stakeholders together to tap into local knowledge, build alignment, and kickstart solutions. Their experience offers a rich case study in local leadership. Join the session to contribute your own solutions and work through shared challenges. Uralla Shire Council NSW (10mins presentation) Discussion (40mins) Facilitated by The Next Economy Heritage Bank Auditorium		Lunch 12:30pm - 1:00pm
12:50 - 13:30	Lunch Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds				1:00pm sharp - Depart 1.5 hr travel

13:30 - 14:00	Not a zero sum game: the benefits of First Nations inclusion First Nations inclusion is a pathway to better project, community and regional outcomes. Through discussion with the First Nations Clean Energy Network, participants will examine examples and identify the practical components that shift thinking beyond costs toward long-term value. Presentation (15 mins) Discussion (35mins)			Connect, align, act: state-based workshops (continued) Session #2 Purpose: 1. Participants are more connected to colleagues in their state 2. Identify key roadblocks in each state to progressing local energy transitions 3. Identify key levers of change to progress local energy transitions 4. Identify key actions to take in each state to address key roadblocks QLD - Heritage Bank Auditorium NSW - Empire Church Theatre VIC - Lounge Bar (upstairs) SA, TAS & WA - Supper Room (upstairs)	
14:00 - 14:30	Host: Jonathan Kneebone, Director Policy & Engagement, First Nations Clean Energy Network <i>Panellists to be announced soon</i> Heritage Bank Auditorium	To be announced			
14:40 - 15:00	"First Nations perspectives on SIA and CBA frameworks" This session, led by the First Nations Clean Energy Network, explores Social Impact Assessment and Community Benefit Agreement frameworks from a First Nations perspective. We'll look at how impacts and meaningful benefits are identified, but more importantly, we'll discuss what it takes to move from identification to holistic implementation – ensuring mitigation measures are delivered and agreed benefits are realised in practice. Host: Kaneya Poudal, Engagement and Policy Lead, First Nations Clean Energy Network	Regional leadership in an era of energy transition This experiential session shifts the focus from technical solutions to explore what it takes to lead through uncertainty, bridge differences and create shared purpose during complex change. Leaders will explore: ~ how people see, experience and process change ~ how to work across different perspectives and turn tension into possibility; ~ how trust, relationships and collaboration can help communities shape their future through uncertainty and systemic change. Host: Australian Rural Leadership Foundation	Strategies for council–community collaboration Discussion Facilitated by Community Power Agency Heritage Bank Auditorium	Workshops report-back Facilitator: Lu Allan, Advocacy Director, RE-Alliance Heritage Bank Auditorium	2:30pm - Arrive back at Toowoomba CBD Stop #1 - Toowoomba Bus Station, 26 Bell St, Toowoomba Stop #2 - Downs Motel, 669 Ruthven St Toowoomba <i>(& other locations TBC)</i>
15:00 - 15:15				Wrap up and formal close Andrew Bray, National Director, RE-Alliance (CLOSE 3:15pm) Heritage Bank Auditorium	
15:15 - 15:30	Lounge Bar (upstairs)	Supper Room (upstairs)			
15:40 - 16:30	Battery Energy Storage Systems: facts, risks and regional opportunities Case study (10mins) Issues and myths - RE-Alliance (10mins) Discussion (30mins) Facilitated by RE-Alliance Lounge Bar (upstairs)		Working towards nature-positive renewables Case study (10mins) Discussion (40mins) Heritage Bank Auditorium		
16:40 - 16:50	Announcements and wrap up Heritage Bank Auditorium				
16:50 - 17:00	Group photo				
17:00 - 19:00	Relaxed evening drinks with canapés and charcuterie grazing boards <i>Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds</i>				

RE-Alliance acknowledges the Traditional Custodians, the Giabal, Jarowair and Western Wakka Wakka peoples, where this Summit will take place. We pay our respect to the Elders, past and present and to all First Nations peoples.

We are deeply grateful to the following organisations who are financially supporting rural and regional leaders to get to the Summit:



Department of
**Energy and Economic
Diversification**



PoweringWA



And to our local sponsor, Toowoomba Regional Council.



The Summit is supported by leading organisations in regional development, local government (represented by the Australian Local Government Association) and energy shift:

