



Regional Leaders Summit 2026

The Empire, Toowoomba QLD

PROGRAM

Day 1 - Tuesday 15 September	
Time	Session
8:30-9:00	Registration, tea and coffee. <i>Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds</i>
9:00-9:30	Welcome to Country from Conrad Bauwens, Jarowair man of the Wakka Wakka Nation. Welcome to the Summit – <u>Host</u> : Andrew Bray, National Director, RE-Alliance. <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>
9:30-10:30	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. Kylie Davies, Chief Executive Officer, Flinders Shire Council QLD Robert Prestipino, Senior Economic Development Officer, Toowoomba Regional Council QLD Mikaela Carroll, Regional Development Coordinator, RDA Tasmania Gary Mavrinac, Director - Development & Community Services, Mid Murray Council SA <u>Host</u>: Andrew Bray, RE-Alliance. <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>
10:30-11:00	Morning tea. <i>Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds</i>

11:00-11:50	Ask a developer – With Acciona Energia & Neoen Australia <i>(This session is repeated)</i> 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. <u>Facilitator:</u> RE-Alliance <i>Lounge Bar (upstairs)</i>	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. <i>Cradle Coast Authority TAS (10mins)</i> <i>Discussion (40mins)</i> <u>Facilitator:</u> RE-Alliance <i>Supper Room (upstairs)</i>	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, GCCN 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... <i>Gippsland Climate Change Network VIC (10mins presentation)</i> <i>Facilitated discussion (40mins)</i> <u>Facilitator:</u> Australian Local Government Association <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>
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.	Worker accommodation that benefits communities in the long term To kick things off, Dubbo Regional Council NSW will share insights from a mix of worker-housing initiatives in their region: a promising refurbishment project, and others that have faced setbacks. <i>Dubbo Regional Council NSW (10mins presentation)</i> <i>Facilitated discussion (40mins)</i>	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. <i>Uralla Shire Council NSW (10mins presentation)</i> <i>Facilitated discussion (40mins)</i> <u>Facilitator:</u> The Next Economy

	<u>Facilitator:</u> RE-Alliance <i>Lounge Bar (upstairs)</i>	<u>Facilitator:</u> RE-Alliance <i>Supper Room (upstairs)</i>	<i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>
12:50-13:30	Lunch. <i>Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds</i>		
13:30-14:30	Beyond “us” and “them”: supporting communities through division This session explores how to navigate division in communities – including the challenges of mis- and disinformation – and what it takes to rebuild shared ground. We’ll begin with sharing practical interventions drawn from current research, then shift into conversation about your own experiences: what’s working, what isn’t. <u>Facilitator:</u> RE-Alliance <i>Lounge Bar (upstairs)</i>	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. <i>Presentation (15 mins)</i> <i>Discussion (40mins)</i> <u>Host:</u> First Nations Clean Energy Network <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>	
14:40-15:30	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.	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	Strategies for council–community collaboration <i>Discussion</i> <u>Facilitator:</u> Community Power Agency <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>

	<u>Host:</u> First Nations Clean Energy Network <i>Lounge Bar (upstairs)</i>	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.	
15:40-16:30	Battery Energy Storage Systems: facts, risks and regional opportunities Let's discuss all things BESS including negotiating community benefits, navigating community concern and the tricky path for many of host, not development decision-maker. <i>Issues and myths – RE-Alliance (10 mins)</i> <i>Discussion (40 mins)</i> <u>Facilitator:</u> RE-Alliance <i>Lounge Bar (upstairs)</i>	<u>Host:</u> Australian Rural Leadership Foundation <i>Supper Room (upstairs)</i>	Working towards nature-positive renewables, beyond policy reform Join us to discuss what we can do beyond policy reform to work towards nature-positive renewables. We'll start with insights from a Central QLD project that investigated how renewable energy can not only protect our environment, but benefit it as well, before kicking off discussion. <i>RE-Alliance intro (10 mins)</i> <i>Discussion (40 mins)</i> <u>Facilitator:</u> RE-Alliance <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>
16:40-16:50	Gippsland New Energy Conference 2026 outcomes – <u>Host:</u> Darren McCubbin, CEO, Gippsland Climate Change Network. <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>		
16:55-17:00	Wrap up. <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>		
17:00-19:00	Relaxed evening drinks with canapés and charcuterie grazing boards <i>Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds</i>		

Day 2 - Wednesday 16 September

Time	Session
8:30-9:00	Registration, tea and coffee. <i>Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds</i>
9:00-10:15	Welcome – <u>Host</u>: Mayor Geoff McDonald, Toowoomba Regional Council 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. 1. Andrew Smith, Mayor, Western Downs Regional Council QLD 2. Chris Sounness, Chief Executive Officer, Wimmera Southern Mallee Development VIC 3. Anthony Holzwart, Manager Economic Development, Toowoomba Regional Council QLD <u>Host</u>: Lu Allan, Advocacy Director. RE-Alliance. <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>
10:15-10:25	Introduction to the state-based workshops – <u>Host</u> : Lu Allan, RE-Alliance. <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>
10:25-10:35	WHOLE GROUP PHOTO
10:35-11:00	Morning tea. <i>Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds</i>
11:00-12:50	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: <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i> VIC: <i>Lounge Bar (upstairs)</i> NSW: <i>Empire Church Theatre</i> SA, TAS & WA: <i>Supper Room (upstairs)</i>

Day 2 - Wednesday 16 September

Time	Session
12:50-13:30	Lunch. <i>Armitage Centre Foyer & Empire Church Grounds</i>
13:30-14:30	Connect, align, act: state-based workshops (<i>continued</i>). 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: <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i> VIC: <i>Lounge Bar (upstairs)</i> NSW: <i>Empire Church Theatre</i> SA, TAS & WA: <i>Supper Room (upstairs)</i>
14:40-15:00	Workshops report-back – <u>Facilitator</u> : Lu Allan, RE-Alliance. <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>
15:00-15:15	Wrap up and formal close – <u>Host</u> : Andrew Bray, RE-Alliance. <i>Heritage Bank Auditorium</i>

Day 3 (OPTIONAL) - Thursday 17 September

MacIntyre Wind Farm tour

NOTE: Please wear closed-in shoes, long pants and a long sleeve shirt. We have room to store luggage under the coach.

Time	Activity
7:45	Depart from Downs Motel, 669 Ruthven St Toowoomba
8:00	Depart from The Empire, 54-56 Neil St, Toowoomba
-	<i>1.5 hour travel</i>
9:30-10:30	Morning tea, presentation & PPE gear-up
10:30-12:30	Tour
12:30-13:00	Lunch
13:00	Depart
-	<i>1.5 hour travel</i>
14:30	Arrive at Toowoomba Bus Station, 26 Bell St, Toowoomba
14:45	Arrive at Oaks Toowoomba Hotel, 25 Annand Street, Toowoomba
15:00	Arrive at Downs Motel, 669 Ruthven St Toowoomba

Disclaimer: RE-Alliance will make every effort to provide accurate programming information however we reserve the right to make program changes to venue, date, time, speakers, facilitators and session content as we deem necessary.

Contact: Please reach out to Thomasen from RE-Alliance via thomasen@re-alliance.org.au if you'd like to discuss anything.

RE-Alliance acknowledges the Traditional Custodians, the Giabal, Jarowair and Western Wakka Wakka peoples, where this Summit is taking 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 financially supported 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:

