



REALLIANCE

2024 Annual Report





RE-Alliance pays respect to First Nations peoples and their Elders past and present, who, for thousands of generations, have cared for Country and sustained the world's oldest continuous living culture. We acknowledge sovereignty was never ceded. We commit to working alongside First Nations peoples to achieve a just energy transformation.

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Message from our National Director

The last year has been as eventful and challenging as any before it in Australia's shift to renewable energy.

While the share of renewables in our main national grid clocked 40%, national energy policy discussion continued to throw up false narratives and dead-end alternatives. Despite these, key transmission projects moved forward and the first intentional Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) began to take shape.

A Community Engagement Review by the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner found that repeated instances of poor community engagement and the lack of transparency in the "open-access developer prospecting model" has led to a "material distrust" of renewable energy developers in communities.

Our research into regional attitudes to the renewable energy shift gave us the evidence base we needed to back in what we've been uncovering for more than a decade: regional communities at the heart of the energy shift are crying out for information that is relevant to their lived experience.

While Australians living in these regional areas still generally support the development of large-scale renewables, that support is fragile and we need to work hard to make sure that fear, uncertainty and misinformation don't overshadow potential opportunities and benefits.

As one of the leading voices at the intersection of regional communities and the energy shift we are in a unique position to advocate for, and roll up our sleeves to do, this work with collaboration as a foundational principle.

Our campaign for the government to invest in [Local Energy Hubs](#) – in coalition with the [Community Power Agency](#) and [Yes 2 Renewables](#) – hit a real chord with farmers, community groups and regional leaders across the country. When we speak to communities about the idea of filling a local shop front with trusted local experts to demystify the shift to renewables, the immediate response is that it's a no brainer.

We kicked off a new collaboration with our friends at [The Next Economy](#) and the [Foundation for Rural and Regional Australia \(FRRR\)](#), highlighting the enormous role that people in our regions could be playing to lead Australia's shift to renewable energy. Our role in bringing together and supporting a national network of leaders who are learning from each other and sharing experiences is beyond rewarding for our team.

Speaking of the power of community leadership – you won't find a greater example than Alison McLean and the Hay Shire Council in South West NSW. Taking a proactive response to the declaration of a REZ and the arrival of solar and wind developers, this Council's inclusive and transparent approach to place-based decision-making has been groundbreaking for us to work on. Our attention now turns to how we can progress this work, again with The Next Economy and the FRRR, to develop a replicable model that other communities can benefit from.

Working to ensure that key stakeholders in regional Australia understand the importance of investing in our grid continued to be a key focus for RE-Alliance this year. With the team at [Nexa Advisory](#) we brought together a coalition of organisations representing farming families, electricians, regional communities and environmental and climate advocacy groups to create a range of guiding principles for building Australia's future grid.

Underpinning all of this work has been a strong strategy to elevate regional voices in media coverage of Australia's energy shift – both in the national media narrative and at a regional level. Again, this work has been such a privilege for us as farmers and regional leaders generously step up to share their journeys and outline how their communities are benefitting. We've made films, we've organised countless interviews and it's been a wild but rewarding ride.

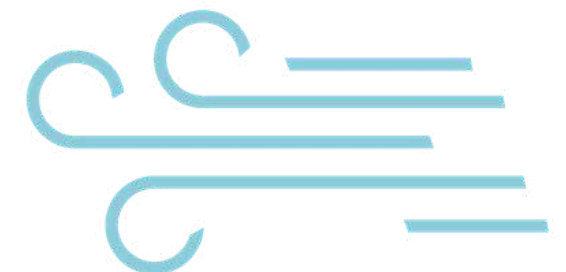
RE-Alliance's commitment to work alongside First Nations people for a fair renewable energy shift saw us partner with the [First Nations Clean Energy Network](#) and Community Power Agency to advocate for and improve the Capacity Investment Scheme for First Nations people.

I know I speak for the entire team and Board when I say that we're more than ready to keep the momentum going and step it up another level to see regional communities move ever closer to the centre of the shift to clean energy.

Andrew Bray.



Andrew Bray
National Director
RE-Alliance



About RE-Alliance

Who we are

RE-Alliance is an independent, not-for-profit group working to ensure the shift to renewable energy delivers a lasting legacy to rural and regional Australia. We help communities and energy companies work together to share in the opportunities presented by this generational change and we bring community perspectives to governments to secure better policy. Because when rural and regional Australians are active players in the shift to renewables, local economies are boosted, communities flourish and we move closer to a better, safer future.

Why we exist

Renewable energy is key to Australia reaching net zero emissions by 2050 and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change. State and federal governments have designated more than 35 Renewable Energy Zones in rural and regional areas across five states, which will host hundreds of new wind and solar farms, hydro projects, batteries and the transmission infrastructure needed to connect them.

This energy shift isn't just important – it's essential for the nation's future. And for it to succeed, the rural and regional communities asked to host this infrastructure need to steer the change, not feel like passengers on a ride they never agreed to.

The problem

When communities aren't involved, projects stall, trust erodes and the broader energy shift slows down. But we know another way is possible. That's why we work tirelessly to make sure that the voices of rural and regional communities are heard and that their needs are at the centre of Australia's shift to renewable energy.

Our approach

At RE-Alliance, we work as facilitators, bringing industry, government and communities together to work through the challenges of a fair and inclusive energy shift.

To do this, our team has engaged in hundreds of meetings and discussions with local stakeholders and community members – answering questions, addressing concerns and making sure people are genuinely heard and included.

While rural and regional communities are our core focus, we also support broader initiatives to ensure Australia's shift to renewable energy is sustainable, responsible and inclusive. This includes advocating for First Nations communities to be actively involved in shaping, implementing and holding equity or owning renewable energy projects through Free, Prior and Informed Consent. We also partner with civil society, farmers, environment groups, government and industry to various ends, including: to ensure renewable energy developments protect natural and cultural heritage; to safeguard biodiversity through better planning and local collaborations; and to identify and address regulatory gaps.

The RE-Alliance staff team in July 2024.



Our vision

A swift renewable energy transformation in Australia that actively contributes to the strength and resilience of our regions.

Our mission

Placing the needs and aspirations of regional Australia at the centre, RE-Alliance works with the electricity industry to mitigate local impacts and deliver lasting benefits, and advocates for government policies and systems to deliver a just energy transformation in line with a safe climate.



Gulgong Show, February 2024

In the last year, in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) in NSW we ran a series of kitchen table conversations with families hosting or set to host large-scale renewables, building knowledge and capacity in farming communities. We were part of the NSW Farmers Association Renewable Energy Taskforce, and are pleased to have been reselected for 2024/2025. We attended 10 local events where we connected with locals about the energy shift, and held regular appearances on local community radio.

In Tasmania, we strengthened our strategic relationships with local governments and leaders across the north west of the state, initiating conversations on regional projects including the proposed REZ. We also hosted a community leaders' panel conversation at the World Wind Energy Association Global Conference in Hobart, promoting dialogue on community engagement in renewable energy projects.

In Victoria, we heard from community leaders through the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Energy Collaboration being led by Wimmera Southern Mallee Development and the Energy Charter. We were also part of the Energy Regional Advisory Panel that is made up of leaders from Western Victoria and Ballarat.

We have gladly welcomed a new member to our team in Queensland, Tom Dixon, who is based near the Sunshine Coast. Tom brings a wealth of experience to the team and the partners we work with having a background in community development, human rights and science communication. He has hit the ground running helping community groups in REZs across Queensland.



Mudgee Small Farm Field Day, July 2024

Our community engagement

Our community engagement team live and work in key renewable energy regions across Australia. We work to equip regional community leaders to navigate local energy shifts. We have our ear to the ground and deeply understand emerging regional issues.

Our local presence underpins the policy and advocacy work of our entire organisation and helps ground broader policy advocacy across the climate and energy sector. The trust we foster within our regional networks underpins our communications and media engagement.

Our community engagement strategy has three prongs:

1. Direct capacity building to develop and support local leaders and community groups navigating local transitions
2. Deep listening in regional communities to inform our government and industry advocacy
3. Telling real stories about renewables and regional Australia, including about challenges and how these can be overcome.

Queensland Environmental Roundtable, August 2024



Our work in Hay

A community-driven renewable energy success story

“We didn't want to see our community divide over whether the energy transition should or shouldn't happen because we knew that it was going to happen – and RE-Alliance stopped the rumour mill. We went really early with our community to ensure that this happened with us and not to us.”

“Without the expertise and guidance of RE-Alliance, the work would not have had the integrity it needed for community buy-in. The work we did with RE-Alliance also empowered our community and council, which meant that we were able to engage with developers and EnergyCo from a position of confidence.”

– **Ali McLean,**
Economic
Development
Manager at
Hay Shire
Council



In April 2023, our community engagement manager Kate Hook was on a roadtrip when she got a flat tyre passing through the rural community of Hay in New South Wales. This was the fortuitous start of a community-driven renewable energy success story.

When Hay was declared part of the South West Renewable Energy Zone in 2022, it found itself at the centre of a growing debate. A transmission line was about to be built, proposals for solar farms and wind projects started pouring in, and many in the town felt overwhelmed.

Alison McLean, Hay Shire Council's economic development manager, was concerned – she had seen other regional communities become divided over renewable energy and didn't want the same for Hay. So when Kate ran into Ali in the visitor centre car park, they realised that forming a partnership made perfect sense.

The Hay community saw an opportunity to define what the region wanted from renewable energy. Instead of resisting change, Hay decided to shape it.

The Council ran a series of collaborative workshops, facilitated by RE-Alliance, with key community leaders. This enabled people to ask questions, express concerns and feel well informed, and enabled the Council to get a sense of people's hopes, aspirations and apprehensions regarding the shift to renewable energy and the potential for economic diversification in their region.

From this, they created ten fundamental principles to guide developers when engaging with Hay on their projects. These principles are 'the first step in an ongoing partnership between the NSW Government, energy developers and our community to minimise the impacts and maximise the opportunities for Hay.'



These principles outlined what genuine, lasting impact the community wanted to see in their local area. They pushed for commitments to more than just surface-level fixes, demanding affordable energy, self-sufficiency through solar and battery technology, and critical infrastructure improvements like better childcare and housing.

While at the beginning of a long journey, by taking a proactive, community-led approach, Hay is showing that embracing renewable energy doesn't mean sacrificing local values – it means securing a more resilient future.

We've had so much interest in the process we began in Hay, and we hope to support other local councils and communities to adopt and adapt this model to shape their own renewable energy future.



Kate Hook facilitating a session in Hay, September 2023

Talking renewables with our regions

At the start of 2024 we commissioned Essential Research to extensively explore regional attitudes to the renewable energy shift. The results match what we've been hearing on the ground in communities for years: those of us living in the middle of Australia's energy shift are desperate for factual information that is relevant to how the transition is rolling out in our patch.

We conducted four waves of fieldwork with people living in communities where the shift to renewables was either taking place or being proposed:

- Stakeholder interviews with respected community leaders
- 8 focus groups with 48 participants
- 3 day, online overtime discussion groups with 60 participants
- A quantitative survey of 2,024 respondents living in Renewable Energy Zones across the east coast of Australia

We wanted to know: how much do people understand about the need for renewable energy infrastructure, including transmission? What information are they getting about the energy shift and who do they trust to deliver that information? And how much is misinformation informing their views?

Reassuringly, this deep listening exercise told us that Australians living in regional areas where renewable energy infrastructure is being rolled out still generally support the development of large-scale renewables in the regions. But, their support is fragile, and a lot of work needs to urgently happen to ensure fear, uncertainty and misinformation don't overshadow potential opportunities and benefits.

These findings put us – and all the people we work with – in a much more informed position to better respond to what regional communities need.

While RE-Alliance is uniquely placed to roll up our sleeves and do this work, we can't do it alone. That is why we spent considerable time sharing the findings of what we learnt – with industry, local councils, state governments and agencies, the federal government, regional leaders and organisations working across the climate and environment sectors – because if we don't work together to put regional communities at the heart of Australia's shift to renewables, we miss the once-in-a-generation opportunities that come with it.





Local Energy Hubs

RE-Alliance has kicked off our biggest community campaign ever this year, in coalition with our friends at the Community Power Agency and Yes 2 Renewables.

Local Energy Hubs are a proposed network of 50 local outreach centres to support regional households, businesses, farms and communities with everything related to the renewable energy shift, from lowering power bills to navigating Renewable Energy Zones (REZ).

We've been campaigning for the federal government to fund Local Energy Hubs to support our regions to make sense of a busy information space and tackle regional energy priorities – whether that's electrifying agricultural practices, lowering energy costs, developing community energy projects or working to maximise local jobs in a REZ.



Merino wool grower Tony Inder featured in the Local Energy Hubs campaign film.



Local Energy Hubs Victorian Parliamentary event with Victorian State Energy Minister Lily D'Ambrosio (centre), August 2024.

We welcomed Justin Whelan and Jo Lynch to the team to lead our campaign. Justin and Jo are both seasoned community organisers and campaigners who have worked on social and environmental change for many years. They've hit the ground running to grow the campaign.

After many months of planning and preparation, our campaign launched with a film and website in August 2024, earning more than 160 media hits that month and followed by 6 local film screening events. Our campaign has earned the attention of government ministers and so far we've had over 50 meetings with government staff and politicians. A growing number of community leaders, industry bodies and elected local government representatives are supporting our call for Local Energy Hubs.

Our focus now is to continue to grow our campaign and apply pressure to the federal government to invest in the people side of the shift to renewables.

To stay updated on campaign activities head to www.localenergyhubs.org.au.



Community drop-in event in Newcastle, July 2024.



Narrabri farmer Sally Hunter (L) and Singleton farmer Sophie Nichols (R) featured in the Local Energy Hubs campaign film.

HERALD
Local hub needed for local questions
 24 July, 2024

Hunter community groups are seeking federal government assistance to establish a series of local energy hubs to assist people navigate the challenges of the clean energy transition.

We deserve access to the information we need to engage meaningfully with the details of proposals coming to us from government and industry without feeling rail-roaded

Johanna Lynch




NATIONAL PUSH
 ADDING ENERGY TO CAMPAIGN

NEWS

Local Energy Hubs headlines on Channel 7 Orange nightly news – 14 August, 2024



Spotlight on regional leaders: Sally Hunter



NBN NEWS

Local Energy Hubs features on NBN Nine News Tamworth – 14 August, 2024

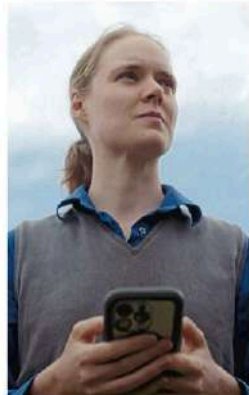
HERALD
Calling for better information on energy transformation
 14 August, 2024

Matthew Kelly

Fourth generation Singleton farmer Sophie Nichols has been featured in a national campaign that urges the federal government to invest in local energy hubs to help communities shift to clean energy. The first regional screening of a new short film to promote the hubs will be held in Singleton on Wednesday evening.

If I had somebody in my town that I could go to who was knowledgeable within the energy space, it would've cut the length of time we had to spend on researching

Sophie Nichols



Sally Hunter is a spokesperson for our Local Energy Hubs campaign. She is a Narrabri farmer and founder of not-for-profit Geni.Energy.

It is also installing a 500kWh community battery – one of only a handful in Australia that is community-owned.

Sally felt that her active participation in the Local Energy Hubs campaign was crucial. “Geni.Energy is a model similar to Local Energy Hubs that has been running for four years, so it made sense: we could help other people practically see what a Local Energy Hub could look like and prove that there was a need for this type of service in our communities.”

Sally has spent her entire life in rural and regional communities, mostly working to improve local social and economic outcomes. She currently lives in Narrabri in north-west New South Wales, and in 2020 established not-for-profit organisation [Geni.Energy](#), a main street shop front to help demystify renewables for locals.

THE LAND
Merino farmer calls for local hubs to break renewables taboo
 16 August, 2024



A local farmer has joined a campaign calling for hubs to inform communities about renewables. Sixth-generation Wellington merino farmer Tony Inder said when major renewables developments started springing up in his community he didn't know much about them.

Countryleader
 19 August, 2024
 Benefits of local energy hubs being spruiked
Farmer features in campaign

NARRABRI farmer and managing director of Geni.Energy Sally Hunter is being featured in a national campaign that urges the federal government to invest in local energy hubs to help communities shift to clean energy. The first regional screening of a new short film to promote the hubs will be held in Singleton on Wednesday evening.

If I had somebody in my town that I could go to who was knowledgeable within the energy space, it would've cut the length of time we had to spend on researching

Sally Hunter



Narrabri and surrounds have five expanding coal mines and an approved fossil gasfield, and Sally has worked to protect the region from the negative effects of these in her work for Lock the Gate Alliance. As we now shift to new energy sources, Sally wanted Geni.Energy to help rural communities take advantage of the opportunities and reduce the negative impacts of the shift – and it has.

The organisation has installed around 70 systems of solar and batteries for homes, farms and businesses across the region, and has run a vast array of events and discussions to help the community better understand the local energy shift.

“The vast majority of the heavy lifting of the renewable energy shift will fall to regional communities, and we are sick of bearing the brunt of the negative impacts without benefitting from the positives. But the shift does have the potential for huge flow-on benefits to our rural communities – and Local Energy Hubs could help deliver these.”

“RE-Alliance occupies a valuable and unique space in the energy shift puzzle. The Local Energy Hubs campaign has been well run and well resourced, and is gaining good traction. The proof will be in the pudding!”



Spotlight on regional leaders:

Chris Sounness



Striking a New Deal

The people living and working in our regions are looking keenly at the opportunities and challenges that come with renewable energy development. They're doing everything in their power to leverage investment into the best possible outcomes for local skills, jobs, energy, community groups and the environment.

But navigating the complex energy space and understanding what to expect of governments and renewable energy developers can be difficult and time-consuming. These local legends might be leaders of community groups, elected representatives or work in local government. Often, they are volunteers. And like many of us living in regional and remote Australia, they probably wear more than one hat!

Striking A New Deal is a joint project with The Next Economy, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Australia and RE-Alliance. We're working together to equip our local governments and communities with tools to positively influence renewable energy development and maximise local investment in regional priorities.

This project commenced in early 2024, and works with community leaders to:

1. Foster a national network of leaders who can learn from each other and share experiences
2. Develop a replicable model for inclusive and transparent place-based decision-making with a single region hosting significant renewable development
3. Develop and share resources to equip regional leaders, and inform future industry practices and government policies.

Our role in this large joint project is to coordinate the national network, which has been very rewarding so far. We look forward to seeing how it will evolve and grow into the future. If you would like to find out more and see if you'd be a good fit as a network member, please reach out to info@re-alliance.org.au.

Chris Sounness is a member of our Regional Leaders Network and the CEO of Wimmera Southern Mallee Development.

Chris has always lived in regional areas, growing up on a farm in the Great Southern region of Western Australia and living in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region for over 30 years, currently in Horsham. He says it is easy to think all rural communities are similar, but what he loves is that each community is unique and rich with its own rhythm.

For five years Chris has been the CEO of [Wimmera Southern Mallee Development](#), an organisation that shapes and guides the region's economic, cultural, social and environmental opportunities. **He is a strong advocate for regional development in the Wimmera and is deeply committed to ensuring changes within the region bring tangible benefits to affected communities.**

Chris says that the renewable energy shift in the Wimmera is tough going at this moment in time. "Community anger is unlike anything I have experienced. Many people in the community are scared and upset, and feel disrespected and not listened to. I worry that this will create fractures that will take generations to heal – but I am also very hopeful that we can get through this moment. These fractures are preventable if we have strong leadership, and people and organisations step up and work together to overcome challenges. We need to tackle misinformation and rebuild trust rapidly."

The Regional Leaders Network has been created at the right time, Chris says, as common challenges emerge across regional and rural Australia.

"I joined the Regional Leaders Network as soon as I could because I value any network where I get the chance to grow knowledge and learn from peers tackling common problems. Being part of the network has helped me expand the range of people I can lean on to discuss issues and touch base with."



Transmission Alliance

There are many groups working hard, but in isolation, to achieve an affordable, sustainable and fair renewable energy shift for all Australians. We know we cannot achieve this without an upgraded electricity grid. It is from this acknowledgement – that transmission is one of the biggest challenges to our clean energy future – that the Transmission Alliance was born.

In February 2024, we established the Transmission Alliance in partnership with Nexa Advisory. The Alliance represents a broad range of groups, including farmers, unions, electricians, regional communities, environmentalists and climate advocacy groups, and also had early participation from the First Nations Clean Energy Network.

Transmission Alliance members:



To identify common ground across such a diversity of organisations, the Alliance developed a guide, which we launched in July 2024: [‘Why investing in our grid is a priority for Australia.’](#)

The guide explores why we need to prepare for Australia's future power needs, ensure energy reliability and affordability, include broad and local economic benefits, properly involve regional communities, and why household and large-scale energy generation are both required.

‘Why investing in our grid is a priority for Australia’ was based on the principles agreed by the Alliance, including:

- Regions at the centre
- Grids and thriving nature
- The importance of free, prior, and informed consent with First Nations people
- Ensuring local jobs and a skilled workforce through collaboration with unions and industry

Going forward, the Transmission Alliance will continue to work together to identify barriers to securing updated grid infrastructure, develop shared solutions and collectively advocate for these necessary changes.

Research activities

With sponsorship from our board member, Dr. Madeline Taylor, our team worked to establish organisational foundations for a research stream, which would complement the policy work we are already doing as well as broaden our impact and influence.

Following full Board endorsement in December 2023, we have taken steps to bring this function to life including collaborating with Dr. Simon Wright (Senior Research Fellow, Energy & Circularity at Charles Sturt University) on a co-authored article which was published in The Conversation on 5 April, 2024.

Throughout 2024, we engaged with several institutions about potential research collaborations, grant funding opportunities and partnerships, which we’ll be able to share more about soon. Watch this space!





Our advocacy and engagement

RE-Alliance's focus in working with industry and government is to ensure that community interests and perspectives are brought to the centre of policy and decision-making around the shift to renewable energy.

This year we participated in a range of formal consultations, advisory bodies and collaborations, which drew from and complemented our organising team's work to engage and reflect the views of local leaders and communities.

Submissions

We made 20 submissions to government policy consultations, energy market agency consultations and parliamentary inquiries on renewable energy and transmission, and were pleased to see our voice having influence and impact on decision-makers.

8 submissions to state legislation, policy and program consultations across QLD, NSW, VIC and TAS

6 submissions to Federal Government departments on renewable energy and transmission frameworks, policies, programs and guidelines

4 submissions to national energy institutions

2 submissions to parliamentary inquiries

External presentations

We presented at a number of conferences and forums, providing a platform for community leaders to share their stories and presenting our work and perspectives to keep community issues front of mind in industry discussions.

- All Energy
- Australian Clean Energy Summit
- Australia-EU Green Hydrogen Dialogue
- Climate Action Network Australia Conference
- Community Energy Congress
- Gippsland New Energy Conference
- Powerlink Transmission Network Forum
- Tasmanian Energy Development Conference
- World Wind Energy Conference
- WWEA Wind Power Around the World

Advisory bodies

Australian Energy Market Operator

We continued to advocate in our role on AEMO's Advisory Council on Social Licence: an 11-member group appointed by AEMO to represent the interests of landholders, communities, First Nations peoples, environmental groups and consumers.

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

We participated in the Department's Stakeholder Reference Group advising on the development of National Transmission Social Licence and Benefit Sharing Guidelines.



First Nations Clean Energy Symposium, May 2024

Stakeholder and industry engagement

We held and participated in regular discussions with stakeholders and allies in the climate, environment, union and community energy sectors including the Australian Conservation Foundation, Community Power Agency, Australian Council of Trade Unions, Electrical Trades Union, Queensland Conservation Council, Environment Victoria, Friends of the Earth, World Wildlife Fund, the First Nations Clean Energy Network and others.

We met regularly with representatives across the wider energy industry, renewable energy and networks peak bodies including AEMO, the Australian Energy Regulator, the Clean Energy Council, Clean Energy Investor Group, Energy Networks Australia and the Smart Energy Council.

We held one final Central-West Orana REZ Industry Round Table meeting in November 2023 with 12 industry participants, 2 NSW government representatives, 1 council representative and 2 community representatives. At the end of 2023, we reviewed this initiative and its impact over the three years of operation and decided to re-allocate our energies in the region to community capacity building and leadership through locally embedded staff.

We participated in several industry and stakeholder initiatives including:

Energy Charter #bettertogether collaborations on:

- Better Practice Renewables and Biodiversity Collaboration Guide
- Transmission undergrounding working group
- Queensland Renewable Energy Council + Energy Charter co-facilitated Queensland Developer Code co-design workshops
- Wimmera Southern Mallee + Energy Charter Collaboration

Clean Energy Council initiatives:

- Offshore wind engagement working group
- Gippsland Community Benefit Sharing working group

Other initiatives:

- (Western Victoria) Energy Regional Advisory Panel



Powerlink Transmission Network Forum, November 2023

Renewables and nature

The intersecting environmental crises of accelerating climate change and ecosystem decline present a great challenge as we upgrade to a renewable-powered grid.

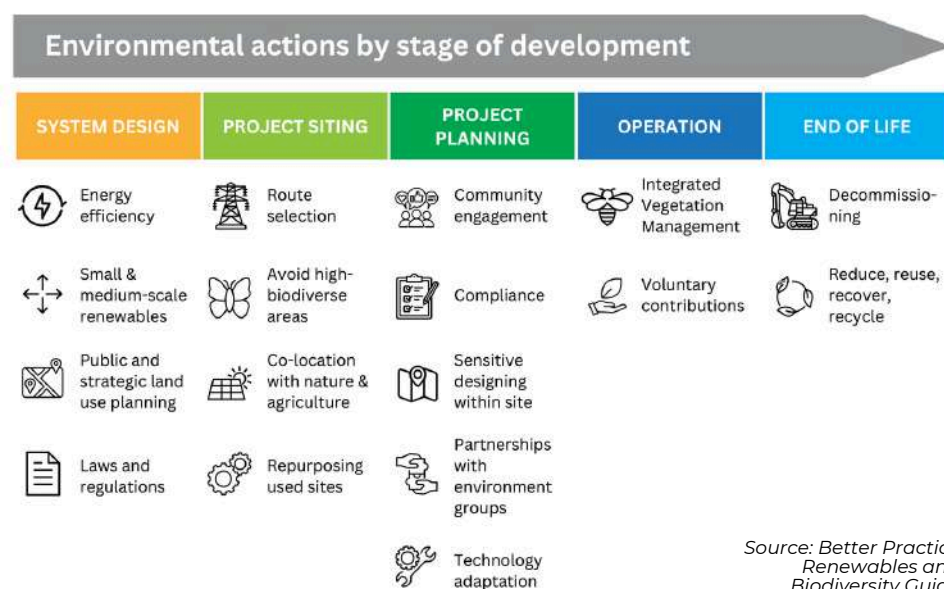
This challenge is deeply felt by environmentalists who have long been fighting for stronger environmental protections in state and federal planning processes. These protections are more essential than ever. As a result of our advocacy with partners in the conservation sector, we are starting to see some improvement – for example, stronger guidance for wind developments in Queensland’s wind code in relation to the environment and community consultation.

Tightening up our environmental protections is slow work. That’s why we’ve also been working with industry on what can be prioritised in the meantime. Our report [Renewables and Thriving Nature: Opportunities for Collaboration](#), co-designed with conservation groups and the energy industry in Queensland and released with the Energy Charter in February 2024, outlines all the opportunities throughout the project development timeline where interventions can be made to improve environmental outcomes.

The report also outlines four areas ripe for collaboration between the energy and environmental sectors to improve nature outcomes in the upgrade to renewables:

- Collecting and sharing environmental data
- Co-designing Integrated Vegetation Management plans with environment groups
- Maximising the use of utility easements for habitat corridors, and
- Regional economic development in the recycling sector.

We need to build new renewable energy infrastructure to replace fossil fuels and, at the same time, improve and protect our natural environment by reducing the impacts of new developments wherever possible.



Source: Better Practice Renewables and Biodiversity Guide



Spotlight on regional leaders:

Tracy Lefroy

Tracy Lefroy is a member of our Regional Leaders Network. She is the President of the Shire of Moora in Western Australia's vibrant Wheatbelt region and a grain grower.

Tracy is determined to actively participate in shaping Australia's renewable energy landscape so that each stakeholder group has agency and influence. She is a grain grower with extensive experience in rural leadership and governance, and her commitment to both agriculture and community development has been recognised with awards including the Evelyn Parker Award for Excellence in Local Government.

Tracy is both personally and professionally invested in the shift to renewables, as both a landowner who will host wind turbines and as the President of the Shire of Moora. Moora has a strong agricultural foundation and is feeling an increase in the shift with a number of new renewable energy projects proposed.

“Our community is deeply connected to the land, which fosters a special kind of determination to sustainably manage our natural resources and embrace new technologies for a better tomorrow. My role allows me to represent rural perspectives in renewable energy discussions, ensuring our community's needs and potentials are recognised and leveraged.”

The Shire of Moora has engaged in a number of initiatives to ensure the community is a central part of the energy shift, including convening community information sessions and collaborating with a collective of local governments to advocate for community inclusion and strategic planning for impacted communities. RE-Alliance has supported the council in this latter work, and Tracy says “the expert guidance, resources and advocacy support that RE-Alliance has provided have been crucial in navigating the complexities of renewable energy projects. Their collaborative approach has made our community's energy transition journey more inclusive and effective.”

“Being in the Regional Leaders Network has enabled me to collaborate with like-minded leaders to advocate for sustainable and community-focused energy solutions. It has been invaluable in providing insights, resources and support needed to champion renewable energy initiatives at a local level. The network has also been instrumental in amplifying the voices of regional communities, ensuring that our unique challenges and opportunities are part of the national renewable energy conversation.”

Media

Between July 2023 and June 2024, we generated (at least!) the following amount of media coverage for RE-Alliance, Local Energy Hubs and the Transmission Alliance:

241 mentions online

24 mentions on radio

20 mentions on TV

9 mentions in print

GoodWeekend
JULY 20, 2024
Changing the regional conversation on renewables – before it's too late
By James Button

RENEW ECONOMY
Community engagement has no cookie-cutter approach: It's time to start listening
ANDREW BRAY 7 February, 2024

The start of the 2024 federal parliamentary year has brought the building of new energy infrastructure across rural and regional Australia into sharp focus.

The majority of regional Australians want renewable energy for the benefits it will bring to future generations. However, the overwhelming message I hear from the communities I work in is that there doesn't seem to be a plan. They need to see that local considerations are well understood and reflected in government policy and project planning.

New England Times
Farmers dig in on renewables as transition accelerates
29 June, 2024

Renewables in agriculture are gaining momentum across the nation as Australia pushes to reach its net-zero emissions target by 2050.

But a lack of funds is constraining some producers, according to RE-Alliance - a group working for the past decade with regional communities hosting large scale renewables.

The group's national director Andrew Bray says one of the biggest barriers facing farmers considering the switch is the high up-front cost, and knowing which path to choose.

This article was syndicated 71 times, including in Australia Community Media and Seven West Media papers.

THE AUSTRALIAN
Andrew Bray, the small town man who believes small towns matter
9 November, 2023

THE LIST
TOP 100
GREEN ENERGY PLAYERS

RENEW ECONOMY
Capacity Investment Scheme needs to set high bar for communities hosting renewables
ANDREW BRAY & JARRA HICKS 28 March, 2024

With social licence now acknowledged as one of the largest challenges for our shift to clean energy, attention can now turn to the nuts and bolts of how it can be earned. The framework that the government sets for how industry works to build renewable generation and storage is a key factor.

The federal Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS) will deliver a massive 23 GW of new renewable energy generation and 9 GW of storage in the regions – which could amount to 40 new wind and solar farms and a dozen battery projects by 2030.

SBS SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
DRIVE with Annie Gaffney
30 May, 2024

"What you see in these Renewable Energy Zones is there might be a number of projects – solar, wind and transmission – and in the absence of an understanding of how it all fits together, and what it means and what it doesn't mean, people will reasonably assume the worst. But if that sort of information is out in the public domain, and if people have had a say in how it works, they will then understand what it is and there will be a bunch of things they don't need to worry about."
– Andrew Bray

10 NEWS FIRST / **ANDREW BRAY** RE-ALLIANCE

Andrew Bray on 10 News First on AEMO's draft Integrated System Plan report – 15 December, 2023

SBS News
News in Depth
27 June, 2024

Andrew Bray, National Director of non-profit advocacy group Re-Alliance, says there's still a lot of work to be done.

"There's 4,000 km of transmission (that) needs to be built by 2030 to connect the new wind and solar generators that we're building. There are seven transmission projects that have been identified as crucial so we really need to get cracking with them."

HERALD
Existing clean energy plan tackles issues now, not in 2040
Andrew Bray, 21 June, 2024

AT RE-ALLIANCE, we work in the space where renewable energy meets rural and regional communities.

For more than a decade we've been pushing for real community input into renewable energy projects to make sure local development challenges are addressed and that direct benefits flow into the communities that host them.

Community support for projects isn't a given - investment to build trust in the process is just as important as funding the infrastructure.

THE AUSTRALIAN
22 June, 2024

"The turbines are really majestic. They're so beautiful in how they turn so slowly. And on a good sunset they catch the colours are they're amazing to look at."

– Dimity Taylor, sheep farmer

Our staff

Our staff are spread across Australia's east coast in mostly regional areas, from northern Queensland to southern Tasmania. They are passionate about seeing regional Australia benefit from our renewable energy shift.



Andrew Bray
National Director



Lu Allan
Advocacy Director



Tony Goodfellow
Advocacy Manager



Kate Hook
Community Engagement
Manager, Central-West
Orana REZ



Neville Mattick
Community Engagement
Manager, Central-West
Orana REZ



Toby Thorpe
Community Engagement
Manager, Tasmania



Justin Whelan
Senior Campaign Manager



Johanna Lynch
Community Organiser,
Hunter Valley



Tom Dixon
Community Engagement
Manager, Queensland



Bridget Ryan
Policy and Industry
Engagement Director



Kitty Walker
Communications Director



Cait Coffey-Wong
Communications Manager



Nathan Palmer
Operations Coordinator



Our board

Our board members generously give their time to govern and guide the work of RE-Alliance. They bring a wide range of skills, expertise and experience to the organisation.



Susan Findlay Tickner



Peter Dreher



Richard Mackie



Luke Osborne
Left November 2023



Karin Stark
Joined November 2023



Dimity Taylor



Madeline Taylor



Jonathan Upson

Thank you

Our work is delivered in collaboration with many organisations, communities and individuals – our partners, other NGOs, industry bodies, experts and community groups. We thank all of them for their expertise and passion.

This year we have collaborated on more projects than ever before. The Community Power Agency, Yes2Renewables, The Next Economy, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, ProjectsJSA, Nexa Advisory and The Energy Charter have been critical partners in delivering important work. Working with them towards our shared goals has been a rewarding and fruitful experience, and we thank them for this.

Thank you to our philanthropic and industry donors who value the work we do and see the importance of bringing regional communities to the centre of our energy shift. Your support provides essential funding to make our work sustainable.

Our volunteer board continues to be a source of wisdom and guidance, and an essential contributor to our work. In particular, we would like to thank Luke Osborne who leaves the board this year after seven years of invaluable contribution, bringing his unique perspective of being both a farmer and renewable energy developer to our work. We are delighted to welcome Karin Stark, a committed advocate for rural Australia, who replaced Luke on the board in November 2023.

Thank you to our staff team, who work collaboratively and dynamically to ensure our work stays relevant in a rapidly evolving policy and political environment.

Finally, we would like to thank our network of members, supporters and partners across regional Australia. You make RE-Alliance the strong advocate that we are.

The farmers, energy workers, small business owners and environmentalists who have joined our organisation as members and participate in our work help us to keep it real and continuously deepen our understanding of local impacts and opportunities.



What's next

RE-Alliance is in the middle of a period of significant growth, both in terms of organisational capacity as well as expertise and reputation. It is critical for us now to maintain our capacity and ensure operational capability to sustain us into the future.

We've been observing a number of trends across the 2023–24 period that have underlined the importance of our work and guide our planning into the future.

Our twin objectives of accelerating the shift to clean energy and improving the social, environmental and economic situation of country Australia are inextricably linked.

We are highly focussed on ensuring that the adoption of renewable energy, at the required pace due to increasing climate imperatives, delivers an uplift to rural and regional communities.

Pushing for the relevant information that country Australia needs

We will ramp up our campaign to push for the federal government to fund a network of Local Energy Hubs in Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) across Australia. Our regions need support to navigate a busy information space and tackle regional energy priorities – whether that's electrifying agricultural practices, lowering energy costs, developing community energy projects or working to maximise local jobs in a REZ.

Supporting and elevating regional voices

We will continue to elevate the voices of regional communities who are living in the middle of Australia's shift to renewables. It is crucial that we support local farmers and community leaders to share their stories of how renewables are benefitting family businesses and communities, including through long-lasting legacy projects.

Backing regional leaders with a growing national network

We will grow our national network of regional leaders who meet monthly to learn from each other and share experiences, supported by facilitated discussion and access to tailored resources. We will develop a replicable model for inclusive and transparent place-based decision-making with a single region hosting significant renewable development. Excitingly, we will progress plans for a national summit of regional leaders next year: a renewables summit in the regions, for regional people.

Encouraging, and sharing, leading industry practice

We will continue to work with industry to highlight what leading practice can look like in regional communities to develop a shared understanding of the most strategic industry practice improvements, policy shifts and improved outcomes for communities and the environment.

Researching for impact and influence

We know the impact of our work is influential and that there are key policy issues we could address if we had better knowledge, evidence or access to expertise to help inform policy asks to governments. Next year, we will be involved in a policy research project looking into community participation in decision-making, and we plan to add more impactful research projects and build our influence to drive key policy changes – always informed and underpinned by regional voices and perspectives.

Investing in our grid is a priority for Australia

We will continue to coordinate the national Transmission Alliance, working together to identify barriers to securing updated grid infrastructure, develop shared solutions and collectively advocate for these necessary changes.

On the ground

Across the Eastern seaboard we continue to live and work in key renewable energy regions. This important on the ground work is crucial to our understanding of emerging regional issues and informs everything that we do – our policy, communications, campaigning and advocacy – and helps us to centre regional voices and issues in national decision making.

As Australia accelerates its shift towards renewable energy, we face both significant challenges and unparalleled opportunities.

The next few years are crucial.





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Connecting people and power

RE-Alliance is an independent, not-for-profit group working to ensure the shift to renewable energy delivers a lasting legacy to rural and regional Australia.

re-alliance.org.au