

# Invitation to help shape the National Community Energy Strategy

Dear Community Energy Congress Participant,

You are invited to help shape a **National Community Energy Strategy** on **Tuesday 17 June, 9am-12pm** at Old Parliament House, as part of the inaugural Community Energy Congress.

With the organic emergence of over 45 community energy projects across Australia in the past five years, we now have an opportunity to intentionally create a shared approach - a shared strategy - to grow a vibrant community energy sector with all the benefits that brings.

Without a shared strategy, or if this strategy is developed by only a few people, communities will continue to do great work but we will also each continue to encounter the same entrenched barriers to community energy. If we work together strategically, we can overcome these barriers to realise the potential of the growing desire and demand for community energy. We will follow in the footsteps of other countries (Scotland, Germany, Denmark, USA) that now have hundreds or thousands of community energy enterprises.

**We can't do this alone. We need your input, ideas and expertise.**

The Congress organisers have made a start on the Strategy (see inside), but we can't go any further without you. On Tuesday, Day 2 of the Congress we hope to get a large proportion of the community energy sector in the room, and roll up our sleeves to co-create a strategy that provides our sector with direction and guidance to transform the future.

We have engaged two top-class facilitators to assist us in this endeavour. They will make our time together productive, relevant and highly creative and enable us to collectively identify what can and needs to be done in order to grow a vibrant community energy sector in Australia.

Whether you are involved in a community energy project, work for an electricity network or retailing company, develop renewable energy projects for a living, work in energy policy or are simply interested to find out more, this is one part of the Congress not to miss!

## Where you fit in

Our facilitators will guide us (Congress delegates participating in the session) through a shared visioning process, before moving into an open space session where we will ground-truth the Strategy inside. This will involve you participating in discussions around whether the Strategy is on the right track, and what other ideas you have for it.

At the same time, we will form working groups of Congress delegates to progress the priority initiatives in the Strategy.

To help prepare for this session, we encourage you to reflect on the 'Questions' for each of the five areas of the Strategy (listed inside) and bring your thoughts and answers with you to the session.

The outcomes of this process will then be integrated with the other work done to date to finalise the National Community Energy Strategy.

## Aim of the Strategy

The aim of the National Community Energy Strategy is to grow a vibrant community energy sector across Australia. It seeks to achieve this by developing a common agenda and encouraging commitment from all key actors in the emerging community energy sector toward a shared vision, set of objectives and priority initiatives.

We will then be seeking interested parties to get involved with strategic initiatives and working groups to start implementing the Strategy and realising our vision for a thriving Community Energy Sector throughout Australia.

## Background

In mid-2012, a group of about 30 people gathered in a basement room of a Sydney hotel to participate in a symposium on community energy, organised by the Total Environment Centre. A common commitment between the participants emerged from this event: to work together to grow a vibrant community energy sector in Australia. This group would later start the Coalition for Community Energy (C4CE).

The first joint action toward this commitment was a piece of research on the [Opportunities and Challenges to the Community Renewable Energy Sector](#), funded by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, and led by the Community Power Agency. The findings of this research sparked the idea of developing a National Strategy to overcome the identified challenges and to act on the opportunities.

A proposal to carry out work on the Strategy was put to the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), led by the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) at the University of Technology Sydney. The Strategy team comprises the following founding organisations of C4CE: Starfish Initiatives, Embark, the Alternative Technology Association, the Total Environment Centre, Community Power Agency, Sustainable Regional Australia and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage. With the success of this proposal, work on the National Community Energy Strategy began.

## Work so far

The following steps were undertaken to develop the Draft National Community Energy Strategy:

**Define the overarching questions guiding the development of the Strategy:** It was agreed that these were: What will it take to get the current wave of community energy projects in development to a point that they are operating? What will it take to replicate the successful models of community energy in communities across Australia?

**Develop a framework for the Strategy that addresses these guiding questions:** An all day workshop by the Strategy team identified the five key areas that need to be addressed in order to grow the community energy sector:

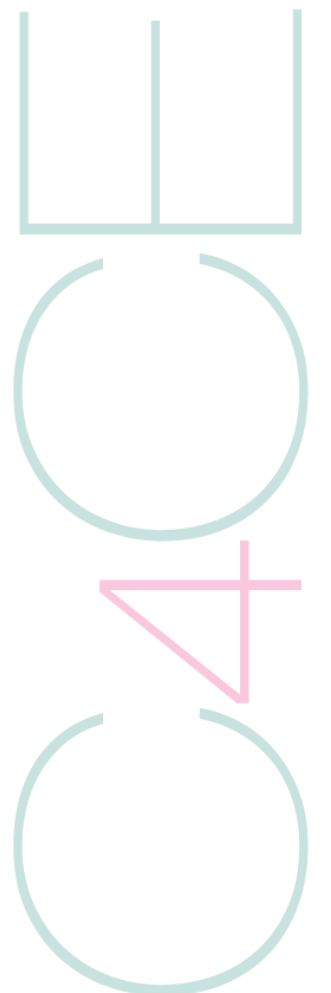
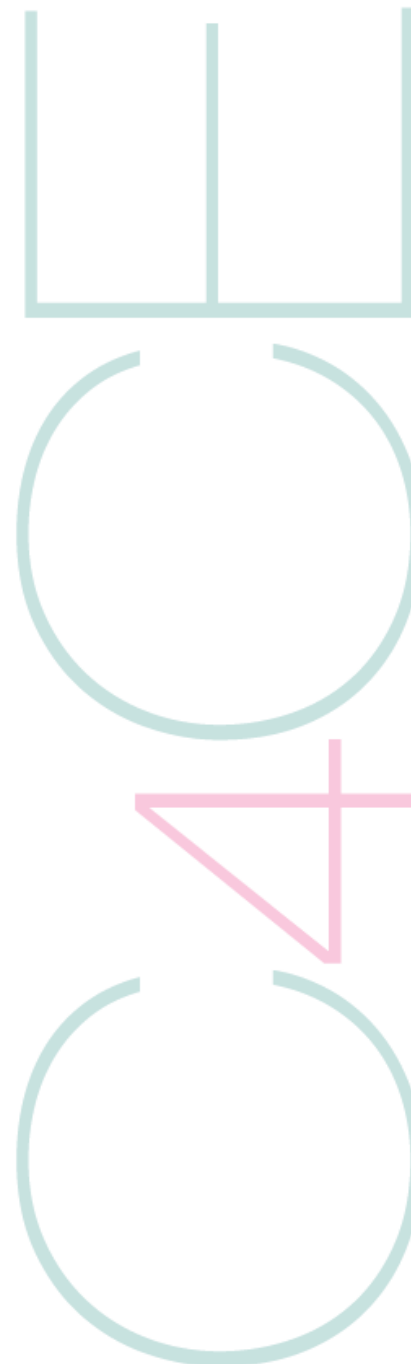
- *Facilitating community energy models:* identifying models that require minimal institutional changes to be successful, and outlining strategies that may facilitate their uptake in communities across Australia.
- *Funding and Financing:* investigating the most appropriate avenues to increase funding for community energy projects.
- *Capacity Building:* identifying initiatives that can build the capacity of community energy proponents to deliver their projects on the ground.
- *Building Community, Government and Industry Support for Community Energy:* identifying enablers for building community energy knowledge amongst key stakeholders who currently lack such knowledge.
- *Policy and Regulatory Reform:* identifying key policy and National Electricity Market reforms that will enable community renewable energy projects.

**Develop a Draft National Community Energy Strategy for feedback:** A national survey of 38 community energy projects and a series of interviews with key stakeholders were used to identify objectives and priority initiatives for each area. The information gathered was summarised into the draft Strategy, set out on the inside pages of this document, ready for your feedback!

## Want to know more?

If you would like to find out more about the research that sits behind the ideas for objectives and priority initiatives outlined on the following page please contact the following sub-strategy leads:

- **Community Energy Models:** Edward Langham, Institute for Sustainable Futures, [edward.langham@uts.edu.au](mailto:edward.langham@uts.edu.au)
- **Finance and Funding:** Nicky Ison, Institute for Sustainable Futures, [nicola.ison@uts.edu.au](mailto:nicola.ison@uts.edu.au)
- **Capacity Building:** Manny Pasqualini, Community Power Agency, [manny@cpagency.org.au](mailto:manny@cpagency.org.au)
- **Building Support for Community Energy:** Taryn Lane, Embark, [taryn@embark.com.au](mailto:taryn@embark.com.au)
- **Policy and Regulatory Reform:** Mark Byrne, Total Environment Centre, [markb@tec.org.au](mailto:markb@tec.org.au)



# Draft National Community Energy Strategy Summary

	Community Energy Models	Finance and Funding	Capacity Building	Building Support for Community Energy	Policy and Regulatory Reform
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an environment that encourages and fosters innovation and development of new community energy models.</li> <li>• Increase the accessibility of existing viable community energy models.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise the finance/ funding available to community energy projects and their income streams.</li> <li>• Reduce costs of community energy projects to increase their economic viability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the community energy sector into a vibrant, robust, highly skilled, and adaptable sector.</li> <li>• Build capacity from within through a number of innovative communications, networking and skills development initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase key actors' awareness of community energy and its benefits.</li> <li>• Assist community energy projects to communicate the benefits to their local community and the wider public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster a policy and regulatory environment that supports and does not inhibit the growth of the community energy sector to reach its full potential.</li> </ul>
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we integrate emerging opportunities, such as energy storage and demand management, into community energy models?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we build confidence of funding partners? For example government, philanthropy, companies, institutional and community investors, etc.</li> <li>• How do we open up new sources of funding?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the best ways for us to share / provide skills and knowledge?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which actors are integral to mainstreaming community energy? For example policy makers, electricity retailers, financial institutions etc.</li> <li>• What messages resonate with a wider audience and are key to the advancement of community energy?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the longer term policy and regulatory reforms required to advance community energy?</li> </ul>
Priority Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline and promote viable community energy models.</li> <li>• Create resources that assist community groups to decide which model to adopt or to develop a new model.</li> <li>• Track progress of community energy models and sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for community energy grant programs: government and philanthropic.</li> <li>• Increase community energy groups' confidence in donation fundraising.</li> <li>• Work with institutional and sophisticated investors to develop a revolving finance fund.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with commercial developers.</li> <li>• Foster innovative approaches to electricity retailing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop dynamic peer-to-peer networks and shared learning through collaborative communications tools.</li> <li>• Support networking initiatives, events, training and mentoring.</li> <li>• Provide shared services and backbone support, e.g. financial and member administration.</li> <li>• Develop a database for stakeholders to register the support they can provide/ require e.g. potential solar hosts register.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a partnership strategy for targeted allies of the community energy sector.</li> <li>• Recruit influential champions to promote community energy.</li> <li>• Create a strategy for pitching community energy to key 'gatekeepers'.</li> <li>• Create an evidence based communications strategy framework for community energy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for continuation of the RET and support for ARENA.</li> <li>• Support projects in gaining access to electricity networks at a reasonable cost and timeframe.</li> <li>• Promote rights for projects to sell energy at a fair price.</li> <li>• Support community energy groups in setting up community off-grid or micro-grid systems.</li> <li>• Support community energy projects in selling energy services to their members and the market e.g. electricity, heat, energy efficiency services etc.</li> <li>• Advocate for a regulatory structure that supports crowd-based equity funding.</li> </ul>