



# First Nations Clean Energy Strategy 2024 – 2030

Consultation and Engagement Feedback Report

December 2024



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*'The entire socio-economic status of First Nations people needs to be elevated to parity with the rest of the Australian population to enable First Nations access to reliable, clean energy.'*

**- First Nations Have Your Say consultation respondent**

*"Come and listen to our situation and what's happening in our country. We understand the connections between all things, from the ant to the cassowary. We might be small in numbers, but we are a very tight community with backing from our young people. If we can work together, we will find the right solutions."*

**- QLD roundtable participant**

*"Country for us is in our blood. It is our brother, our sister, our ancestor. It is part of our kinship. We want non-indigenous people to understand that it's not just soil, and it's not just water, it's part of our DNA. Government and industry should respect this."*

**- VIC roundtable participant**

*“The health of the planet relies on Indigenous knowledge, and we are ready play our part.”*  
**- QLD roundtable participant**

*“What we have is a responsibility and an obligation to look after our Country, and when people visit our Country, to make a seat for them at the table.”*  
**- WA roundtable participant**

*“We’re at the table. Now we need to speak up, and make sure we’re at the forefront of this big change which is coming to our Country.”*  
**- SA roundtable participant**

*“The footprint of Aboriginal people is both seen and unseen. The depth of heritage sites and values needs to be understood.”*  
**- TAS roundtable participant**

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This Interim Feedback Report from Consultations to Date (the Report) has been prepared based on comments made by participants of a series of Roundtable Discussions hosted by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water between July and September 2023. The views recorded in the Report are those of the First Nation attendees, with common themes and comments being aggregated as appropriate.

**Acknowledgements**

The authors thank Roundtable and workshop participants for their input. We also acknowledge and thank the First Nations Clean Energy and Climate Change Advisory Committee for their advice and guidance on Strategy development. We also thank the First Nations Clean Energy Network and the National Indigenous Australians Agency for their support.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1. Acknowledgement of Country

We also acknowledge the expertise, research, advocacy and experience of First Nations peoples who have generously contributed to the development of this Strategy and look forward to further conversations with First Nations peoples and building authentic relationships.

### 2.2. Preamble

The development of the Strategy provides an opportunity to review laws, regulations, and policies; to lift barriers and seek regulatory reform; and to inform government investment in innovation, technology, and infrastructure; so that First Nations people can share in and benefit from the clean energy transformation.

### 2.3. A note on language and terminology

We recognise that there are differing preferences in terminology when referring to First Nations peoples. When referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Strategy uses the term 'First Nations peoples'. When referring to people who are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, we use the terms 'non-Indigenous'. In this report, we capitalise the following words: Elder, Traditional Owners, First Nations, Country, Indigenous, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Our capitalisation rationale was used to emphasise the significance of certain words, people and groups, and to emphasise our respect for the people and groups mentioned.

### 2.4. Acknowledgements and thanks

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department) would like to thank the First Nations Clean Energy Network (The Network) for their partnership and guidance throughout the development and delivery of the roundtable series in 2023 and 2024. The Network's support ensured

a credible and well-informed approach to engagement with First Nations communities across Australia. Their partnership in this work is highly valued.

Since July 2023, the First Nations Clean Energy and Climate Change Advisory Committee (the Advisory Committee) met regularly to provide advice to support the research, policy and engagement underpinning the development of the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy Consultation Paper and the draft First Nations Clean Energy Strategy. The Advisory Committee's advice was fundamental to guiding Strategy development. The Advisory Committee continues to be a highly respected and valued partner for providing advice to both the Minister and the Department on First Nations rights and interests in the energy transition and climate change.

# 3. Engagement undertaken to date

## 3.1. Roundtables

### 3.1.1. Roundtable objectives and process

The Strategy roundtables enabled First Nations peoples and organisations to guide the development of the draft Strategy. Roundtables included discussion about the clean energy transformation and provided a forum for government and industry to better understand First Nations peoples' perspectives and collaborate on actions, policies and programs that could be implemented.

The roundtables were conducted over two days. The roundtable agendas were developed so that First Nations community members were present on the first day, with only senior government representatives present as required. On the second day, community members were joined by government and industry representatives to discuss key opportunities and challenges arising from the energy transition and listen and discuss community views.

## We asked First Nations peoples:

- *What's working in your community, and what's not?*
- *What are your key priorities and your big ideas for your community?*
- *Who else needs to be at the table?*
- *What support is required?*

Figure 1: First Nations Clean Energy Strategy roundtables timeline



### 3.1.2. Insight Reports

More than 1,200 community, industry, expert, government, and academia representatives attended nine roundtables across all states and territories.

Insight Reports were prepared from transcribed notes following each roundtable, providing a summary of key themes from each location and participating organisations. The Insight Reports are available at [First Nations Clean Energy Strategy | energy.gov.au](https://www.energy.gov.au/first-nations-clean-energy-strategy).

## 3.2. Consultation Paper, Interim Feedback Report and Have Your Say Survey

On 14 November 2023, the department released the [First Nations Clean Energy Strategy Consultation Paper](#) (the Consultation Paper) and an [Interim Feedback Report](#) for public feedback via the Have Your Say online consultation hub. Submissions closed for comment on 9 February 2024.

The consultation sought views on four goals and eight objectives, underpinned by five guiding principles:

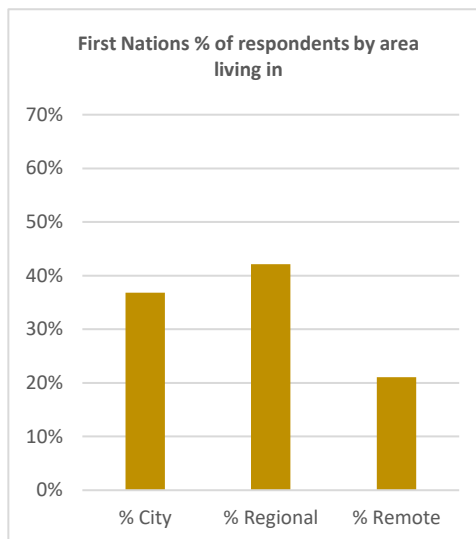
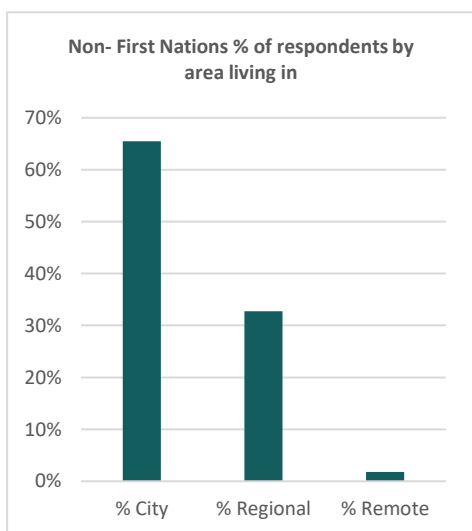
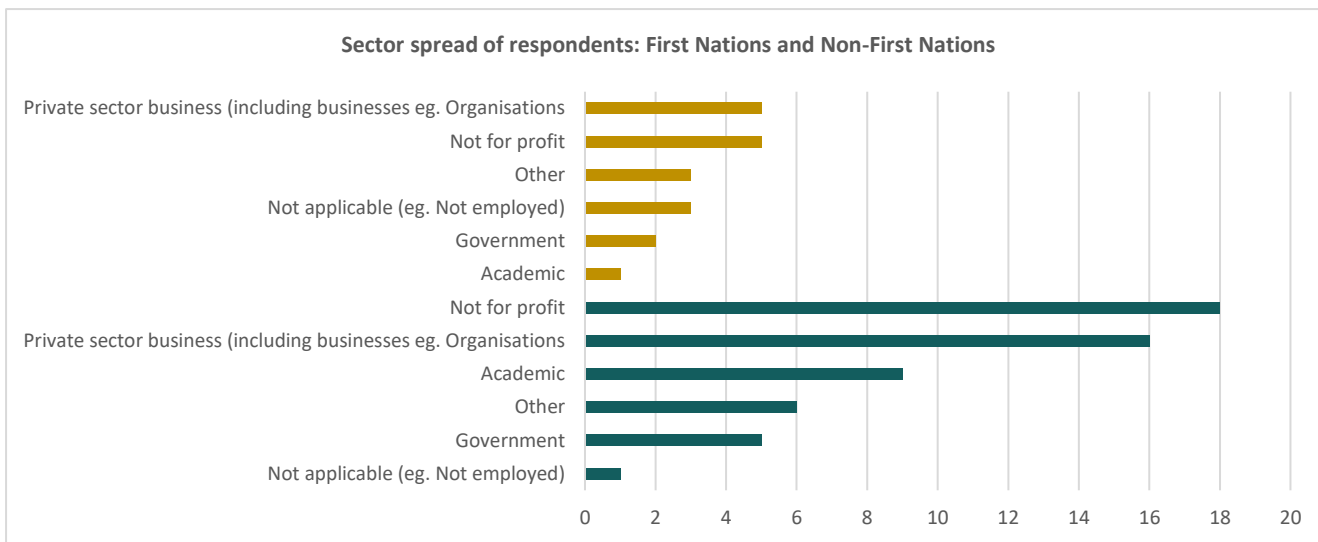
- Access to reliable clean energy is a human right
- First Nations peoples will self-determine how they lead, participate in and benefit from the clean energy transformation
- First Nations peoples are stewards and Custodians of Country, their connection is ongoing and enduring
- Cultural heritage should be recognised, protected and celebrated
- Everyone is responsible for building genuine partnerships and collaboration, underpinned by monitoring and reporting

Ninety responses, including 54 written submissions, were received from across the country, with more than a quarter of responses from First Nations peoples. A qualitative analysis found strong agreement around the three main themes identified in the Interim Feedback Report from roundtable responses, and the emergence of three additional themes for consideration in the development of the draft Strategy. These themes are explored in greater detail in the following section.

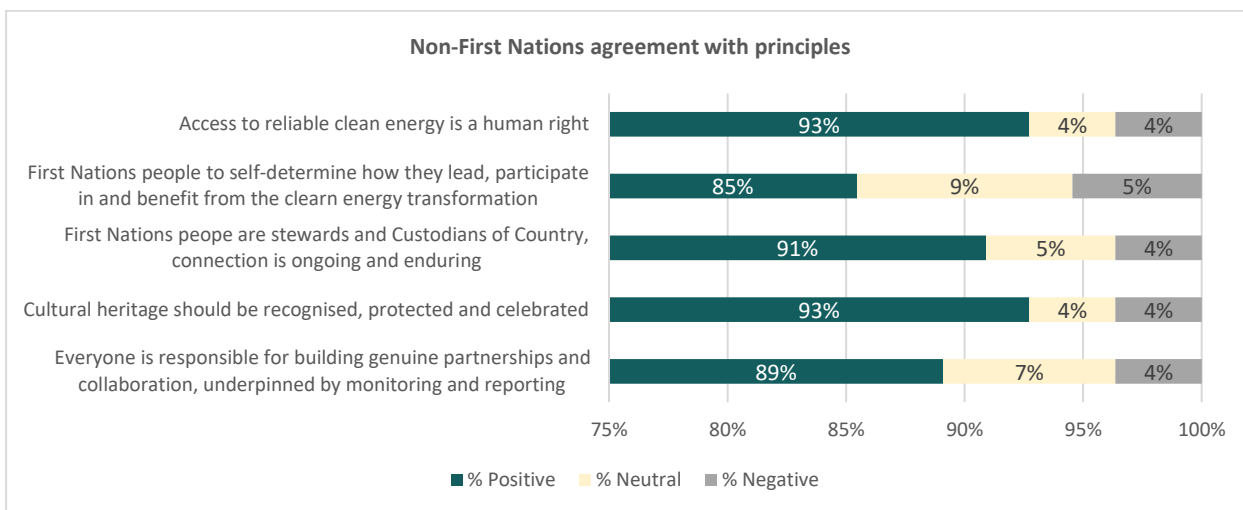
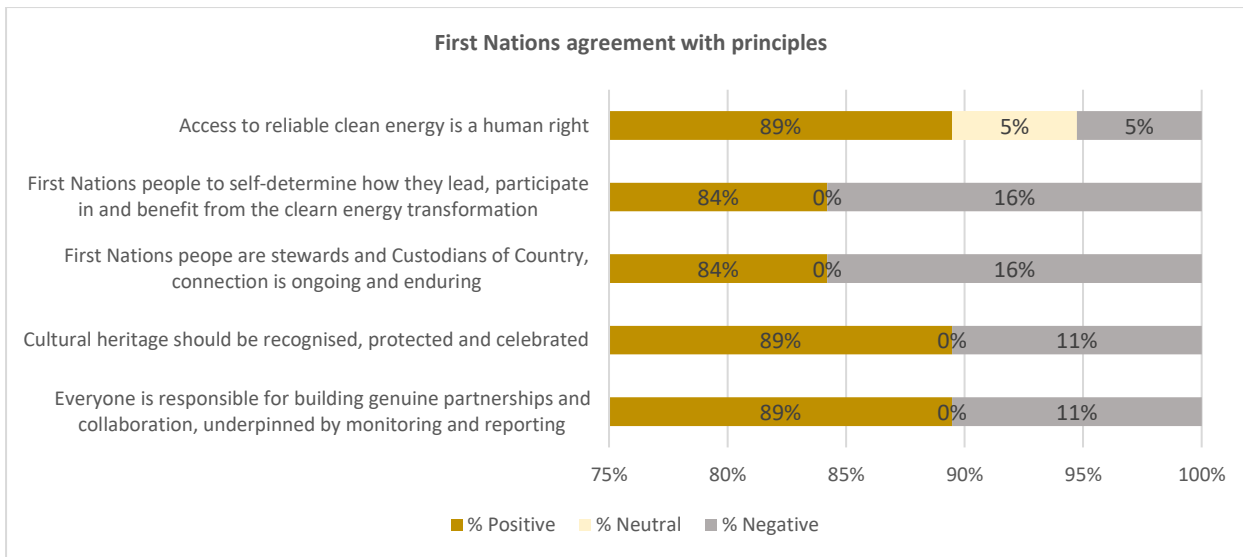
Analysis of the submissions found:

- A broad range of respondents contributed to the consultation process, including private sector businesses, not-for-profit organisations, academia, government agencies and individuals
- Approximately 90% of respondents expressed support for the draft principles, goals and objectives, with similar support from First Nations and non-First Nations responses

The chart below shows the spread of respondents across sectors by First Nations peoples and non-First Nations people.



As shown in the below charts, there was strong support for the draft principles among both First Nations and non-First Nations respondents. There was confidence that the principles, if implemented effectively, could contribute to a successful and sustainable clean energy transformation.



### 3.3. Virtual Briefings

Following the release of the Interim Feedback Report and Consultation Paper, a series of webinars were held, open to representatives of First Nations communities, Traditional Owners, Prescribed Body Corporates (PBCs), Land Councils, First Nations organisations, academia, and industry and government representatives. These webinars provided attendees an update on Strategy development, and stepped through the process for providing feedback directly to the department and through the online 'Have Your Say' consultation.

### **3.4. Focus Group Sessions**

Following analysis of the written submissions, a series of focus group sessions were held with First Nations organisations, research bodies and industry. The purpose of these sessions was to gather key insights for the successful implementation of the Strategy. A summary of the feedback received through these sessions is provided in Section 3.7.

## 4. Areas of feedback

Roundtables proved to be a platform for rich and robust discussions, and communities were vocal in sharing concerns and ideas for greater participation in the clean energy transformation. While the nuances between different states, territories and regions were noted and generally reflect variations in regulations around energy and land access rights, the key messages across roundtables were clear and consistent.

Figure 2: Visual representation of roundtable locations and common topics arising during discussions.



Common themes raised by community members during these roundtables were tested further during the Have Your Say consultation, and follow up focus group sessions, which raised some additional themes for consideration in the development of the Strategy. They are outlined in the below table.

## 4.1. Focus group workshops

Feedback received through the focus group sessions highlighted the need for coordinated action, enhanced community engagement strategies, and targeted capacity-building initiatives to foster sustainable and inclusive renewable energy development in Australia. There was a strong consensus on the need for collaborative, community-centred approaches supported by robust policy frameworks and sustained funding commitments.

*Figure 3: Areas of key feedback from the Strategy consultation process*

## 4.2. Reframing First Nations engagement and respect for Country, culture and heritage

First Nations communities are calling for an unequivocal change in the frameworks which underpin engagement and participation.

Communities are advocating for earlier engagement in clean energy projects, policy and program development. First Nations peoples expressed a desire to build genuine and enduring partnerships based on trust and transparency. Communities wanted to step beyond consultation to actively collaborating with government and industry to achieve the associated social, economic and environmental outcomes of clean energy projects.

First Nations peoples also expressed the need for certainty that their land, water and cultural heritage rights will be protected as clean energy projects progress, with active engagement throughout the project lifecycle.

### 4.2.1. Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

First Nations peoples are calling for earlier and ongoing engagement on clean energy projects. There is a desire for industry to engage in a culturally sensitive and culturally informed manner and demonstrate a willingness to learn.

Some participants expressed concerns that First Nations peoples are feeling pressured into accepting projects that don't benefit their communities, and that they often lack the resources to fairly assess the benefits of projects.

Roundtable participants consistently requested that government and industry ensure that the right community representatives are engaged during consultations to ensure the rights of their collective communities are understood and protected.

*“Understanding the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is straightforward. However, [implementing FPIC consistently] demands deep commitment, time and resources from industry.”*

**– ACT roundtable participant**

*“Having our voices heard within the current structures aren’t working. We’re still resourcing our own participation. Nothing happens unless we’re meeting the Minister herself, which isn’t always feasible. We want more autonomy to advise government and industry, like an advisory group. Then our voices won’t be filtered.”*

**– NSW roundtable participant**

*“Success for us is a voice at every level and every stage of clean energy projects.”*

**– VIC roundtable participant**

*“Each of us have felt the pain and emotional trauma of being consulted wrongly. This shared experience binds us, and it’s something we cannot ignore. We need to see real action, not just more words.”*

**– SA roundtable participant**

Consultation respondents highlighted the need to align Australian policies and legislation with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and FPIC to navigate Australia’s clean energy transition responsibly.

The responses indicated a strong emphasis on FPIC needing to:

- Involve First Nations peoples at all levels, at the early, formative stage of any project or policy, with consent being obtained prior to project initiation, or respecting community vetos where projects do not align with their interests or values
- Provide adequate time, resources and capacity building for meaningful engagement
- Ensure this focus is maintained through development and operations
- Be better understood by industry and government.

The respondents also highlighted the need to align the fast pace of clean energy developments with big picture community aspirations and balance the pursuit of decarbonisation commitments and commercial opportunities with the principles of FPIC.

*Free, Prior and Informed Consent should be embedded in all aspects of the Strategy, established as a priority focus in all policy frameworks and programs, and mandated as a condition for accessing government contracts or funding.'*

**- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA), written submission**

*'Free, prior and informed consent requires adequate time and resourcing for community information and consultation engagement, and as well as the right to say 'no'. Historically the right to veto has been ignored at great cost to First Nations people.'*

**- Doctors for the Environment, Not-for-profit, written submission**

#### **4.2.2. Collaboration, beyond consultation**

A common sentiment throughout roundtables and online consultation was the willingness of First Nations peoples to partner with government and industry on clean energy opportunities and to own and operate their own clean energy projects. First Nations peoples want to shift the tone of engagement from consultation (often perceived as a 'tick and flick' activity) to ongoing collaboration and their own clean energy project leadership.

At roundtables, community members expressed their desire to actively shape negotiation processes with prospective clean energy developers. It was stressed

that while negotiations are necessary for securing land for energy projects, informed consent requires an ongoing and genuine relationship.

Community members are also seeking to lead the design and development of clean energy initiatives as opportunities arise to advance economic development and address current and future community needs. This means taking a leading role in the design and implementation of clean energy policies and programs impacting communities.

*“We need to seriously talk about infrastructure. We have no involvement in the infrastructure development to date, whether its water or power. This also extends to employment and contracts. We are not the installers, the designers, the maintainers. We want real partnerships.”*

**- SA roundtable participant**

*“It’s the old story – you can’t do business until you’ve developed the relationship. We need to develop the relationship.”*

**- WA roundtable (Fremantle) participant**

*“We need acknowledgement that different communities are at different stages in their journey– we need to look at ways to include everyone and build that capacity. Everyone whom a decision impacts should be looked at to ensure no one falls through the cracks. We don’t want anyone to miss out.”*

**- VIC roundtable participant**

Consultation respondents said there is a need for fair and culturally sensitive engagement that involves direct communication with First Nations groups and organisations, including Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Traditional Owners, PBCs, and Cultural Heritage and Native Title organisations from specific areas. Engagement should respect diverse cultural contexts rather than treating First Nations peoples as a homogeneous group.

*“Start by listening. Asking questions. Being genuine in their engagement. Seek to support First Nations aspirations first, rather than convince them of your way of thinking or your proposal or project. Look to partner and support rather than coerce.”*

*– Desert Knowledge Australia, written submission*

### **4.2.3. Respect for and protection of Country, culture, heritage and rights**

First Nations peoples have outlined the need for clean energy project developers to commit to the protection and support for First Nations cultural heritage, ongoing cultural practice, and land and water rights throughout the development and operations lifecycle.

Concerns were raised about the risks that infrastructure development poses to important places, including the potential destruction of landscapes, culturally significant sites, and songlines.

While communities recognise the transition to clean energy is driven by the climate emergency and the need to stop burning fossil fuels, and that access to land is therefore necessary, they are calling for their ongoing connection to Country to be recognised and respected.

Some First Nations communities are worried that the transformation will lead to another wave of dispossession and expressed concern about new tenure arrangements being devised without proper consultation. Some participants expressed a wish to negotiate for the return of land to Traditional Owners once existing energy infrastructure is decommissioned. The return of land is seen as a way for First Nations peoples to strengthen their connection to Country, improve economic, social and cultural outcomes for communities, and leave a legacy for future generations.

Water rights were a shared concern, especially for community members impacted by the proposed development of hydrogen infrastructure. Participants expressed their concerns about how water resources would be used for these projects. Water holds significant economic and cultural importance for First Nations peoples and ensuring water security and sustainability requires careful consideration.

*"It feels to us like land and culture have been commodified."*

**- WA roundtable (Pilbara) participant**

*"When we start projects, we need everyone to buy in, not just as workers. It's about knowing and caring for our homes, understanding our energy, and being hands-on. When we all feel responsible, that's real buy-in."*

**NT roundtable participant**

*"We have an abundance of renewable resources along with generational land management knowledge. It is important for Government to listen to what communities have to say about what happens on our land."*

**- QLD roundtable participant**

*"Businesses must step up, reforge their bonds with the community, and acknowledge the long-standing history and stewardship of the land on which they stand."*

**- ACT roundtable participant**

*"Water has always been one of our most special resources. Since we've been little people, we've been taught that water has its own journey. Each drop of water is significant to us."*

**- SA roundtable participant**

*"We see renewable energy as 'sovereign electrons'. Whether it's wind, sun or water energy – all these have been generated on Country. You're on Country when you use renewable energy."*

**- VIC roundtable participant**

The Have Your Say written, and survey consultation responses were clearly aligned with roundtable feedback, with further suggestions to strengthen this position including:

- Legal reform to ensure rights, interests and responsibilities of First Nations peoples are respected and adverse environmental, cultural and socio-economic impacts are avoided
- Policy and legislative frameworks to prioritise the protection of cultural heritage and intangible cultural knowledge, and avoid sacrifice for development
- First Nations involvement in land selection with developers to avoid negative impacts on cultural heritage and values

The Have Your Say submissions collectively emphasised the need for genuine collaboration, respect for First Nations knowledge, and a commitment to environmental and cultural sustainability in the clean energy transition. This reinforces that the clean energy transition should align with the enduring commitment that First Nations peoples have to care for Country.

*“Ensuring generational benefit and the protection of culture and Country is sustained and in sync with Country itself, making sure it can hold the stories and provide the learnings we need to keep who we are alive.”*

*– Indigenous Energy Australia, written submission*

#### **4.2.4. Monitoring and reporting to ensure transparency and accountability.**

Throughout the consultation submissions, there were regular mentions of monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Strategy’s goals and objectives, which reflects a need for accountability and transparency. Respondents expressed that establishing robust monitoring mechanisms is essential for tracking progress, identifying challenges and making necessary adjustments over the long term.

### **4.3. Meaningful economic participation across the clean energy landscape**

A range of clean energy solutions need to be implemented to transform Australia’s energy sector, including but not limited to large scale solar and wind farms, hydrogen plants and microgrid solutions.

First Nations peoples are expressing a desire to partner with government and industry on the development and implementation of projects. There is a desire for First Nations peoples to be proponents, owners and co-developers. First Nations peoples also see other roles and opportunities for themselves within the clean energy transition, including through employment and procurement for First Nations owned businesses.

A key message throughout the roundtables was that many First Nations peoples do not presently have access to affordable and reliable electricity. This lack of access

severely impacts First Nations peoples' ability to participate in everyday economic, cultural and social activities. Accordingly, achieving access to clean, reliable and affordable electricity is seen as the starting point of economic participation for many First Nations communities and individuals. Unreliable and unaffordable power puts First Nations peoples' mental, cultural and physical health at risk, and prevents access to information services, resources and work opportunities.

#### **4.3.1. Electricity as a basic human right**

Roundtable participants want to ensure the clean energy transformation doesn't leave their people or communities behind. Lacking access to clean, affordable and reliable electricity in some parts of Australia prevents communities from accessing the broader opportunities that the transition presents.

In remote areas, First Nations community members commonly experience power outages and disconnections, with dangerous consequences for stored medicines and essential life support equipment. As with all Australians, electricity is required to charge mobile phones and access the internet, which enables connectivity with communities, access to knowledge and opportunities to generate an income. The use of pre-paid power cards to pay for electricity supply can lead to frequent unplanned disconnections. This was highlighted by participants as a major contributor to financial, health and wellbeing stress.

Some participants believe renewable solutions like solar panels are reserved for wealthy Australians and private homeowners who can access incentives to install these technologies on their homes. First Nations peoples in remote areas feel locked out from the benefits being realised by households connected to main grid infrastructure. For the large number of people living in social and community housing, poor energy efficiency was also raised as an impediment to reducing energy costs for households.

The roundtables affirmed that access to a reliable energy supply is a human right, and participants want to see more progress on Australia's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 7 '*ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.*'

*"We need to see energy reliability as part of a bigger picture, tying it in with the fundamental human right of access to water and housing."*

**- QLD roundtable participant**

*"It's really hard to focus on clean energy opportunities when you have to just focus on getting your bills paid around the house."*

**- VIC roundtable participant**

*"We have more sun than you can poke a stick at, and our trees grow sideways because we have more wind that you can imagine, but our energy is still not reliable."*

**- WA (Fremantle) participant**

*"Many remote Indigenous communities rely on pre-paid metering cards to access electricity and can go days or weeks without electricity because they cannot afford a new metering card."*

*- Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), written submission*

Have Your Say written responses strongly correlated with roundtable feedback regarding electricity disconnections being a major contributor to financial, health and wellbeing stress.

Respondents also described the linkages between poverty, housing, energy access and health in First Nations communities, highlighting that inadequate and/or poorly maintained housing drives up energy usage, results in higher costs and more frequent disconnections. This can cause poorer health and economic outcomes through reduced access to heating, cooling and refrigeration, which amongst other issues, can impact life-saving medications. It was suggested that accelerating the provision of solar panels on public housing, in both urban and remote settings,

should be a priority, in addition to building higher quality, energy efficient and climate-proof housing in First Nations communities, particularly in remote settings.

Respondents highlighted that many remote First Nations communities lack grid connection and are reliant on costly, emissions intensive diesel for electricity. Replacing diesel generation of electricity with renewable energy demonstrably reduces emissions, improves air quality, reduces the cost of electricity for First Nations households and improves the reliability and resilience of electricity supply. To support this transition, solar and batteries were recommended by respondents to replace diesel generators.

*“Begin at community level in remote communities by replacing diesel generators with solar and battery systems. This will reduce people’s energy costs, increase security and reliability, and build trust in energy transformation.”*

*– Doctors of the Environment Australia, written submission*

#### **4.3.2. Opportunities across the broader energy ecosystem**

Roundtable participants identified opportunities for First Nations communities to participate in the clean energy transformation at both micro and macro levels.

First Nations peoples want to lead clean energy projects, ranging from utility-scale projects to microgrids within communities. It was recognised that these projects could contribute to energy self-sufficiency in more remote areas, create wealth and economic development opportunities, and unlock training and employment opportunities for local community members.

Communities also want to lead and be meaningfully involved in large-scale renewable energy projects, including wind and solar, and green hydrogen initiatives both on their own lands and in partnership across all land tenures. Some roundtable participants felt that current renewable energy zone programs and energy market rules precluded them from participating, especially in larger

projects. However, various indirect opportunities have also been identified for First Nations peoples to participate in as Australia transitions to clean energy. Communities will require significant infrastructure upgrades during this transition and First Nations businesses are well positioned to provide these services. For example, services like upgrades to housing and rooftops to fit solar panels and improving household resilience to the impacts of climate change, could be provided by First Nations businesses. Other ideas captured included the installation of energy-efficient appliances, telecommunications and digital services, energy trading and asset leasing (e.g. leasing poles to telecommunication businesses), among others. Participants expressed the desire to actively participate in business opportunities.

*“There is huge potential for First Nations communities to participate in the clean energy transformation. Real benefits can be derived when renewable energy projects are on your lands, which will enable us to have project co-ownership.”*

**– NSW roundtable participant**

*“We need to see Indigenous-led renewable energy businesses at the forefront of the renewable energy movement. There needs to be opportunities for First Nations groups to own large scale renewable energy projects.”*

**– NT roundtable participant**

*“Businesses must step up, reforge their bonds with the community, and acknowledge the long-standing history and stewardship of the land on which they stand.”*

**– ACT roundtable participant**

*“Success for us is a secure income stream, a qualified workforce, global trading, our people being shareholders and not just stakeholders, and our youth are learning for the future.”*

**– WA roundtable (Fremantle) participant**

A key theme among Have Your Say consultation respondents concerned the current distribution of renewable energy assets amongst First Nations peoples and the pathways to increase ownership, control and agency of these assets in ways that are meaningful and make a positive difference to First Nations peoples’ lives.

*“There should be a goal of greater ownership of clean energy infrastructure by First Nations people.”*

*– Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA), written submission*

Respondents suggested that legislation or policy to embed First Nations outcomes prior to project decision making was required. Incentivising co-ownership, equity partnerships and joint-venture arrangements were also suggested.

*“There needs to be a stronger appreciation of the numerous opportunities around land ownership and management and also asset ownership and management. Assets relevant to the success of the clean energy transition include large-scale energy infrastructure; renewable energy installations (large and small); housing (both private and social); appliances; financial assets; and data.”*

*– University of Melbourne, written submission*

#### **4.3.3. Varying roles of participation**

Community members envision a range of roles in which they can partner with government and industry on clean energy opportunities.

They are advocating for a genuine “seat at the table” on large scale projects to ensure First Nation peoples’ voices are heard, and lead on major decisions. Community members want to be supported and equipped to be directors of companies and have expressed a desire to have equity stakes in large scale projects.

They also see a role for themselves as entrepreneurs and business owners. Some ideas captured during the roundtables included the manufacturing/provision of goods within clean energy supply chains, maintenance services, training and skills development services, business development services and cultural advisory services.

On smaller scale projects, First Nations communities see a leadership role for themselves to install, operate and maintain microgrids and household solar within their own communities.

Beyond business ownership, community members have also called for jobs within the industries and organisations which are already driving the transformation of the energy sector. This involvement should be facilitated by the policies and programs delivered by governments.

*"We want First Nations people to be in the driver seat, and not the passenger seat. We want government to change policies to address anti-competitive behaviour."*

**– QLD roundtable participant**

*"We need land agreements first to get the rights to build."*

**– WA roundtable (Pilbara) participant**

*"We aspire to be more than just recipients of clean energy. We want and need growth and skill building for First Nations people, particularly in electrical engineering and design."*

**– SA roundtable participant**

*"We are going to do all of this commercially – we are businessmen and businesswomen. We are the landowners. If you come to us, you need to come with proper negotiations. This is a new revolution."*

**– WA roundtable (Fremantle) participant**

*"We are interested in large scale renewable energy projects which include intergenerational assets which generate intergenerational value."*

**– VIC roundtable participant**

Consultation responses directly supported the roundtable sentiment and highlighted the opportunities the transition presents for First Nations employment that:

- Are culturally safe
- Are local and on Country
- Provide upskilling opportunities for those currently employed in declining industries
- Build career pathways and upskill future generations

## 4.4. Key enablers to ensure a just energy transition

First Nations peoples emphasised that the transformation of Australia's energy system presents an opportunity to create a new economic model ensuring equitable access of opportunity for First Nations peoples, while ensuring the means to make those opportunities real.

Roundtable participants expressed the need for various initiatives and resources to be implemented to make it feasible for First Nations peoples to play their desired roles, including on large scale and local projects.

Skills development, and the establishment of a clean energy workforce, a range of funding mechanisms, and a review of government energy policies were all highlighted as key enablers to ensuring long-term success and benefits for First Nations peoples from the clean energy transition.

### 4.4.1. Skills and workforce development

A common point made across all roundtables was the need for practical skills development and post-qualification training in the trades and industries that will be in high demand in the clean energy sector. First Nations peoples want training that makes them job-ready and confident when entering the clean energy workforce.

First Nations peoples have consistently emphasised the consideration of First Nations youth when designing skills programs. Ideas to encourage youth participation offered by roundtable participants include early childhood curricula, scholarships, internships and mentorship opportunities.

Have Your Say respondents emphasised the need for greater investment in pre-apprenticeship programs to support First Nations school leavers to enter electrical apprenticeships and other career pathways in the clean energy sector. Strong advocacy for Vocational Educational Training in secondary school curriculums was also highlighted as an opportunity to increase First Nations participation in the clean energy sector.

Roundtable participants also proposed that informal education programs could be delivered to create greater awareness of basic clean energy concepts. This could empower communities to use energy and water more efficiently through behavioural change.

A common point made at each roundtable was that an understanding of, and respect for, First Nations cultures and processes needs to be further embedded in government and industry practice and decision-making. There is a reciprocal need for skills development, with significant change needed in the way the government and industry operate.

*“Jobs on Country facilitates meaningful life on Country.”*

**– NT roundtable participant**

*“When we’re gearing up for clean energy, we need to train our young people up before we do that. The question is, who are we going to get to install the solar panels? It needs to be our people.”*

**– QLD roundtable participant**

*“Our people aren’t getting the licences after doing Industry skill TAFE courses. We don’t want the certificate; we want the license so that we are job ready and employable.”*

**– SA roundtable participant**

*“We would like government funded trial projects on Aboriginal land to build up our skills, which can then be transferred to large scale projects.”*

**– NSW roundtable participant**

*“Opportunities for youth are already being implemented within Australian curriculum and classrooms to varying levels of success. For our community, where it is falling down is in the adult space.”*

**– TAS roundtable participant**

Consultation respondents reiterated the need to invest in educational initiatives that are accessible, culturally sensitive and tailored to the unique needs of First Nations peoples to ensure readiness to participate in the clean energy sector.

*“Educational initiatives led by government or nominated organisations should be accessible, both physically and with regard to variations in literacy levels/familiarity with renewable/clean energy concepts, and with regard to the provision of culturally safe training spaces to maximise opportunity for participation by First Nations persons.”*

*– RES Australia Pty Ltd, written submission*

Respondents advocated for a comprehensive approach that integrates education, mentorship and employment pathways to ensure active participation in the clean energy workforce.

#### **4.4.2. Access to funding**

Access to sufficient funding is required for First Nations peoples to fully participate in the clean energy transformation.

Communities emphasised that they are often uncertain about the funding mechanisms available and how to access them. They want government to make it simpler and easier to access existing grants and funds.

New funding mechanisms are also required to support First Nations-owned businesses and programs, as existing funding is “just not enough”. Some of the funding mechanisms proposed by roundtable participants included grants, loans, capital and equity stakes. Participants have requested that government and industry explore innovative funding options. It was also suggested that industry could be incentivised to partner with communities to reduce overall capital requirements, especially where infrastructure is proposed to be sited on First Nations-owned land.

*“We’ve seen many opportunities fall through our hands because we don’t have the funding. Opportunities don’t come into our hands – they pass through our hands.”*

**– SA roundtable participant**

*“We are deeply committed to creating an enduring economic legacy, especially in our regional towns. However, the challenge transcends just funding for employment, skills, and training. These projects unfold on cultural terrains, and it's crucial we invest in navigating them with both safety and cultural respect.”*

**– ACT roundtable participant**

*“I want to be a shareholder, rather than just a consumer.”*

**– NT roundtable participant**

*“There is financing available, but shovels aren't hitting the ground, because it's not enough.”* – **QLD roundtable participant**

Consultation respondents also expressed a desire for government to make it simpler and easier to access existing grants and funds, including reviewing existing funding to ensure programs are fit for purpose.

Respondents highlighted the need for additional funding for clean energy education, workforce development, consultation participation, cultural protection and clean energy development.

*“An action of the FNCES should be to review current funding streams and co-design appropriate Commonwealth programs to mobilise capital from the private market and public programs into First Nations clean energy enterprises.”*

*– Australian National University, written submission*

Additionally, respondents advocated for better financial support and resources for continued participation in consultation and advisory services to the government. They highlighted the fundamental role First Nations peoples have in the regulatory process, and the financial burden this role places on First Nations organisations.

*“At present, First Nations organisations are increasingly required to consult and support regulatory processes in relation to planning and environmental assessments, cultural heritage management, land management and advocate for their community. Without funding and resourcing support, First Nations organisations will not have the bandwidth to meaningfully participate and partner in clean energy projects.”*

*– Flotation Energy Pty Ltd, written submission*

#### **4.4.3. Impactful policy and governance**

Roundtable participants called for clear and supportive policies to enable them to access the range of clean energy opportunities in which they wish to participate.

Policy and regulatory supports are sought to ensure First Nations-owned businesses aren't unfairly excluded from large scale renewable projects, where projects are predominantly driven by major industry organisations, and to empower communities to make informed choices, lead their own projects, increase

their decision-making autonomy and partner with industry. Both roundtables and Have Your Say participants emphasised the need for better support for First Nations groups wishing to engage or partner with energy proponents to ensure they can participate as equal partners.

A review of current energy policies regarding land tenure was proposed, as native title processes are often viewed as obstacles to participating in clean energy initiatives. This review would also address cultural heritage legislation to better protect culturally significant sites and artifacts.

In terms of governance of the Strategy, various roundtable participants requested the mapping of culturally significant sites and biodiversity across Australia, in partnership with First Nations peoples, along with the location and status of clean energy projects. They suggested that a data-driven approach would enable better coordination across government agencies and lead to 'value stacking' of socio-economic benefits in communities.

Participants emphasised the need for tangible action and concrete plans with timelines to hold government, industry and other stakeholders accountable, with a

*"For us First Nations people it's about cultural safety. For us it's about love, sharing, caring – it's part of our law. How can we survive so long on this beautiful piece of dirt, now called Australia, without strong governance?"*

**– QLD roundtable participant**

*"Policies and programs need to be iterative, where they change as we learn and understand best practice. There needs to be reflection on how we can how can we do better time after time."*

**– ACT roundtable participant**

*"We want resourcing to map the closing the gap needs and initiatives within the REZ boundaries, to attract resourcing to the right areas and stack the value."*

**– NSW roundtable participant**

*"Aboriginal people don't have a large data base of knowledge, so we're very reactionary when it comes to policy. Resourcing needs to be 'up there' on the needs list."*

**– VIC roundtable participant**

*"I'd like to see what's discussed here today be put into actual plans, and not just rhetoric, with real dates and timelines so that we can hold government and industry accountable."*

**– SA roundtable participant**

call for robust report back mechanisms and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure that the benefits of the transition are tracked and shared equitably.

Consultation respondents called for industry and government organisations operating in the clean energy transition to develop Indigenous participation plans and Reconciliation Action Plans. Cultural awareness training for energy proponents, including senior management and board members, was also highlighted as a key need for working with First Nations peoples.

Additionally, reforms to limiting policies were suggested to better support First Nations peoples' ability to participate and capitalise on economic opportunities in the clean energy transition. Specifically, suggestions were made to amend the *Native Title Act 1993* to embed the right to FPIC, grant Native Title holders perpetual rights, and allow for adaptable rights in native title lands to coexist with other land uses.

Respondents further highlighted that upfront capital investment and culturally appropriate commercial and consumer arrangements are required for the development of community scale energy solutions and models.

Recognising the existing energy accessibility challenges experienced by some First Nations peoples, respondents advocated for the incorporation of the right to affordable, clean and reliable energy into legislation.

*"In keeping with the principle that access to energy is a fundamental right, establish a nationwide ban on involuntary disconnections for prepayment metering/institute extended consumer protections by the Australian Energy Regulator."*

*- First Nations Clean Energy Network, written submission*

## **4.5. Dismantling systemic barriers and addressing inequality**

Dismantling systemic barriers and addressing inequality was an additional theme identified through the Have Your Say consultation. Respondents stressed the importance of providing equal opportunities for First Nations peoples and dismantling systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality. It was expressed that this would require substantial changes in government policies, processes and

relationships between First Nations groups and energy companies. Respondents also states that ensuring equitable access to clean energy would lead to improved socio-economic, health and cultural outcomes.

#### **4.5.1. Focus on improving wellbeing and increasing equity in addition to economic benefits**

Respondents stated the clean energy transition presents an opportunity to address not only economic outcomes but also inequality in health and wellbeing.

*“Australia’s overall climate change response that this strategy supports should be guided by a vision of improving wellbeing and increasing equity. Current vision focuses on economic benefits: this can undermine just and clean energy transformation.”*

*– Doctors for the Environment Australia, written submission*

*“The entire socio-economic status of First Nations people needs to be elevated to parity with the rest of the Australian population to enable First Nations access to reliable, clean energy.”*

*– Anonymous respondent, written submission*

#### **4.5.2. Acknowledge the links between energy, welfare and health**

Respondents pointed to the need for a multi-faceted approach that addresses socio-economic, health, racial and environmental factors to achieve meaningful and lasting change. Ensuring equitable access to clean energy would lead to improved outcomes in a range of areas.

*“...to achieve benefits for everybody, the transition to net zero emissions must be fair and inclusive. Putting people with the least at the centre of policy design means we can rapidly reduce emissions, poverty and inequality in Australia.”*

*– Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), written submission*

### **4.5.3. Align the Strategy to existing efforts to address inequality, like Closing the Gap**

Respondents acknowledged the historic impact of energy-infrastructure development in First Nations communities and highlighted the opportunity for the Strategy to reshape the clean energy transition to avoid perpetuating inequality. It was suggested that this would require substantial changes in government policies, processes and relationships between First Nations groups and energy companies. Aligning the Strategy with existing initiatives such as Closing the Gap was recommended to reduce inequality.

## **4.6. Tailored and culturally appropriate communications**

A second additional theme identified in consultation submissions was the need for tailored and culturally appropriate communications.

Respondents emphasised the need for improved dissemination of accessible, targeted, and quality information and resources, and the importance of empowering communities with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions. A collaborative approach between industry, government and communities is essential to ensure consistency and prevent misunderstandings.

Have Your Say Respondents highlighted that Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are the best way to build energy awareness and knowledge with First Nations communities. These organisations need dedicated and ongoing resources to engage with their members and develop resources that respond to identified community needs.

### **4.6.1. Nationwide communication campaign to increase information dissemination**

A nationwide communication plan to enhance information dissemination was suggested, along with funding for First Nations organisations to conduct ongoing education campaigns and capacity building initiatives in local communities. These initiatives should draw on successful worldwide First Nations led clean energy projects.

Information should illustrate the positive impacts of renewables on First Nations peoples' lives and strategically frame the transformation within the broader context of climate adaptation and self-determination

#### 4.6.2. First Nations led delivery of culturally appropriate resources

To ensure effective communications with First Nations peoples, a tailored and culturally appropriate approach was suggested. This would involve adopting First Nations-led delivery methods and using culturally sensitive resources.

*'Design, fund and implement a First Nations Energy Efficiency Project which will provide energy-related support to First Nations people – this would be a First Nations-led program involving in-home energy visits (home energy assessments, personalised energy reports containing behaviour change recommendations and relevant information about energy and appliances) and financial counselling, providing in-home education sessions and home energy visits to help curb usage and keep costs down.'*

*~ First Nations Clean Energy Network, written submission*

Recognising the diversity of clean energy needs and aspirations among First Nations peoples, a place-based approach was recommended by respondents. This approach acknowledges the unique challenges and opportunities within each community and allows for tailored information dissemination. Successful engagement models highlight the importance of framing clean-energy discussions at the local level and addressing specific energy-system challenges and opportunities in a way that resonates with each community's distinctive needs and motivations.

*'Trusted First Nations organisations, such as the First Nations Clean Energy Network, should be funded/commissioned to rollout an ongoing education campaign and prepare culturally appropriate training and knowledge sharing.'*

*~ Responsible Investment Association Australasia, written submission*

*'There needs to be varied solutions for different situations in how they can effectively participate in clean energy solutions. These will need to be tailored and facilitated by local community organisation.'*

*~ Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, written submission*

#### **4.6.3. Address misinformation with trusted advice**

Some concerns were raised over the rise of misinformation and the difficulty for the community to identify misleading content. Addressing misinformation is essential to enhancing community understanding, building trust, and facilitating meaningful engagement.

A tailored and culturally appropriate communications campaign would foster the development of energy literacy at the household and community level, supporting First Nations peoples to be better informed and able to identify misinformation.

*'There is a need for greater education on the importance of clean energy, transmission and how it all fits together – at the moment there is a gap which is being filled with misinformation and disinformation.'*

*~ RES Australia, written submission*

### **4.7. Integrating the Strategy with trusted models and partners**

Integrating the Strategy with trusted models and partners is the third additional theme identified from consultation submissions.

Respondents consistently recommended building on existing solutions and working with trusted partners instead of starting from scratch, emphasising the need to integrate First Nations-led initiatives with established policies, programs and entities. Integration is regarded as essential for establishing a strong foundation and ensuring the successful development and implementation of the Strategy.

#### 4.7.1. Adopt existing models and proven strategies

Respondents strongly advocated for the integration of First Nations-led initiatives with existing policies and programs in the development and implementation of the Strategy. The importance of adopting proven strategies and models was emphasised, notably drawing inspiration from the Canadian model, including Indigenous Clean Energy (ICE) and the Canadian First Nations Power Authority (more than 10 submissions referred to the Canadian model).

*'...the development of policy frameworks and programs that enable First Nations people to meaningfully participate in and benefit from the clean energy transformation.*

*In this context, it may be useful to look at the participation of First Nations people and communities in Canada who are at the forefront of the country's clean energy transformation.'*

*~ Energy Consumers Australia, Not-for-profit*

#### 4.7.2. Partner with organisations in the sector

Providing meaningful opportunities for partnerships with First Nations organisations and communities was seen by respondents as a non-negotiable for the success of the clean energy transition.

This involves undertaking early, ongoing, and regular engagement to build genuine relationships that jointly develop a strategy aligning with community priorities. Cultural sensitivity, knowledge transfer and community empowerment are integral aspects of these partnerships, ensuring that the benefits extend beyond economic gains to include active participation and long-term capacity building for First Nations peoples.

#### 4.7.3. Collaborate across States and Territories

Respondents encouraged working across states and territories, leveraging organisations like the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO) and recognised leaders such as the First Nations Clean Energy Network.

Complex issues, such as energy, land and water planning legislation, require comprehensive solutions that address the unique challenges faced by each state and territory. Respondents suggest that collaborating would allow for the development of effective, tailor-made solutions that consider local contexts.

*'The Strategy should also include commitments to actively collaborate with States and Territories to reform energy, land and water planning legislation to recognise First Nations rights, use and occupancy.'*

*~ Environment Victoria, Organisation*

# 5. Appendices

## Appendix A: Key messages from the Western Australia (WA) Roundtable in the Pilbara

*Dates: 27 and 28 March 2023*

*Participants: 100*

### 1) Affordable and reliable energy for First Nations people through community-led programs:

- a) Renewables have the potential to improve quality of life and reduce cost of living pressures for communities through improved reliability and affordability of daily energy use
- b) Access to residential scale renewables (like rooftop solar) was highlighted as an issue for First Nations communities, with systemic constraints hindering the rollout of these types of renewables.
- c) The lack of energy 'equity' in the Pilbara was highlighted, where First Nations communities experience high energy costs and low reliability despite being located adjacent to large-scale renewable energy projects and mining projects
- d) Community highlighted the need for projects and programs to be driven by and co-designed with community to ensure community needs are met

### 2) Community-owned renewable energy projects:

- a) Community and utility scale renewable energy projects, owned directly by First Nations communities, were highlighted as ambitions by attendees. These projects could enable communities to go 'off grid' and become energy independent of centralised utilities; or sell electricity into the grid itself, providing communities with a steady income

- b) A lack of available capital and experience with renewables and large-scale commercial projects were highlighted as major barriers to achieving these ambitions
- c) Concerns were raised about the operation of native title and how it has led to conflict between some First Nations communities. Community members highlighted the importance of a cohesive approach to the clean energy transition in the Pilbara, ensuring equity in capacity building and benefit sharing

### **3) Capacity building – both for project involvement/decision making and employment opportunities:**

- a) A lack of resourcing available for First Nation communities and their representative bodies was highlighted as a challenge for First Nations people to engage with the myriads of industries and companies vying for their communities' attention. Clean energy projects were noted as contributing to this workload.
- b) Changes to how and when communities need to be engaged as a part of project development, as well as the provision of additional support to provide expertise to promote community decision making, were highlighted as solutions.
- c) Providing education and training close to where First Nations people live was highlighted as important for creating ongoing job and business creation opportunities so they can benefit from the construction, operation and maintenance of projects.

### **4) Land access and impacts:**

- a) Recent changes to land-use permitting in WA (known as Diversification Leases) were raised as a serious concern by community members. They expressed uncertainty about the implications of these new leases for their access land and voiced anger and frustration at the way the tenure changes have been developed and rushed through by the WA government.

- b) Concerns were also raised about the potential to loss of access to cultural sites due to of clean energy projects, as well as a lack of knowledge regarding the potential impact of these projects on the land.

**5) Transparency and free, prior and informed consent:**

- a) Industry and governments who engage with communities in line with the requirements of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, including the community's right to withhold consent, was highlighted as critically important.
- b) Government should improve transparency and extend negotiation periods for consultation processes.

## Appendix B: Key messages from the Northern Territory (NT) Roundtable in Alice Springs

*Dates: 16 and 17 May 2023*

*Participants: 110*

### **1) Affordable and reliable energy for First Nations people**

- a) A lack of access to clean, affordable and reliable energy in remote communities, town camps and towns was highlighted as a driver of serious economic and social issues experienced by First Nations communities.
- b) The prevalence of prepayment meters and associated involuntary disconnections because of an inability to purchase credit was raised repeatedly, Residential solar, including battery storage was specifically highlighted as a solution to mitigate these issues
- c) Community members described the linkages between poverty, housing, energy access, and health in First Nations communities. Inadequate or poorly maintained housing can drive up energy usage, leading to higher costs, more frequent disconnections, and ultimately poor health and economic outcomes due to reduced access to heating, cooling and refrigeration.

### **2) Community-led projects supported by education and communication.**

- a) Community and utility-scale renewable energy projects, owned or co-owned by First Nations communities, were highlighted as ambitions by attendees.
- b) Improving community knowledge and understanding of the benefits and use cases of renewable energy was flagged as vitally important. This would enable communities to engage effectively with proposed projects and ensure the long-term success of implemented projects.
- c) Large distances make it difficult for qualified maintenance workers to respond quickly to issues. Improving community education and understanding of renewable projects can help ensure that minor maintenance can be undertaken locally (where appropriate). The [Bushlight Program](#) was highlighted as a particularly successful example of this.

**3) Capacity building – for engaging communities and securing employment opportunities.**

- a) Improving the capacity of First Nations community representative bodies to understand and engage with energy system requirements and the interplay of renewable energy requirements.
- b) Improving education and training for community members was suggested to mitigate the issues the Northern Territory faces in relation to long distance, remote communities and lack of skilled workers. This includes upskilling communities locally so they can operate and maintain their local renewable energy systems.

**4) Transparency and free, prior and informed consent**

- a) Industry and governments engaging with communities in line with the requirements of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, including community's right to withhold consent, was highlighted as critically important.
- b) Community representatives highlighted that First Nations people feel disempowered when it comes to the operation of energy systems in the Northern Territory, with little sense of influence over government decisions regarding their design and operation. Improved transparency and communication from government were noted as one way to solve this issue.

## Appendix C: Key messages from the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Roundtable in Canberra

*Dates: 23 and 24 August 2023*

*Participants: 80*

### **1) A range of clean energy opportunities exist at varying levels of scale.**

- a) Integrate solar installations into communities to decrease reliance on traditional power sources and promote cleaner energy generation.
- b) Implement insulation upgrades to improve housing energy efficiency, leading to reduced heating and cooling expenses.
- c) Retrofit housing and upgrading homes to meet modern energy efficiency standards will result in lower energy consumption.
- d) Pilot programs can help to test and evaluate various energy security measures through smaller-scale pilot projects.
- e) Focus on creating awareness among First Nations communities about various energy solutions and the opportunities for First Nations participation in the clean energy transition.

### **2) Trust and engagement are key to realise clean energy opportunities.**

- a) Establish and maintain trust by fostering strong relationships with tenants based on respect and mutual understanding.
- b) Respect First Nations autonomy and sovereignty by acknowledging their self-governance and decision-making authority.
- c) Invest in a First Nations workforce by training local individuals to take on roles in renewable energy implementation, thereby creating ongoing and reliable employment opportunities.
- d) Create energy market incentives and structures through favourable conditions in the market to encourage investment in clean energy initiatives.
- e) Increase culturally safe and equitable data capture and reporting to enable informed decision-making and transparency.

### **3) There are real barriers and challenges which need to be addressed to ensure equity of access and opportunity.**

- a) Improve communication between government and industry to ensure consistent messaging.
- b) Increase meaningful involvement of First Nations communities in energy decision-making.
- c) Overcome skill gaps and financial limitations to promote renewable energy adoption.
- d) Provide education and support to empower communities in making informed choices and increase decision-making autonomy of First Nations.
- e) Upgrade existing inadequate infrastructure to ensure equitable energy access.

**4) Indigenous rights and consent should be maintained throughout the clean energy transition.**

- a) Clearly outline the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent for project implementation and policy implications (formal and non-formal policy).
- b) Incorporating FPIC principles and assessment processes into the evaluation of also land and energy projects.
- c) Recognise and action First Nations communities' authority to accept or reject projects affecting them.
- d) Secure government commitment to explicitly prioritise the implementation of FPIC.
- e) Overcome challenges in implementing FPIC on a larger scale through careful planning and a collective whole-of-industry approach.

**5) Clean energy policy should address and drive the outcomes of equity, collaboration and accountability.**

- a) Implement actions to secure the basic right to reliable and affordable energy, starting by formally acknowledging energy access as a fundamental right, especially for First Nations communities.
- b) Develop policies and programs in collaboration with First Nations communities to align with their current and future goals.
- c) Partner with First Nations communities for infrastructure development on their lands, where consent is given.
- d) Consider social benefits alongside economic success in contracting processes

## Appendix D: Key messages from the Queensland (QLD) Roundtable in Cairns

*Dates: 28 and 29 August 2023*

*Participants: 100*

### **1) Improve engagement with First Nations Communities by engaging earlier, obtaining consent and demonstrating a willingness to learn.**

- a) First Nations representatives are calling for early and meaningful engagement on all clean energy projects, before pre-feasibility planning commences. Building trust and relationships between First Nations communities and government, industry and other stakeholders is essential to ensure all parties are working together towards a just clean energy transition.
- b) Obtaining Free, Prior and Informed Consent from communities was highlighted on multiple occasions as a critical practice before any project commences.
- c) First Nations community members feel a deep connection to Country and are committed to managing and protecting their land, water, and cultural heritage, as they have done for thousands of years. They want government and industry to learn from their knowledge and enhance the understanding of the cultural and environmental impacts of clean energy projects.
- d) A key success factor for the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy will be to continuously communicate emerging insights and timelines to community representatives. Early benefits from pilot programs can demonstrate the value of the Strategy and build trust from Day 1.

### **2) Meaningful economic participation across the clean energy ecosystem**

- a) Opportunities were identified for First Nations communities to participate in the clean energy transition at both the micro and macro levels:
  - Community-owned microgrids: These could allow communities to set their own tariffs.
  - Large-scale grid solar farms First Nations communities could have a stake in ownership and operations of these projects. The Torres Strait Islands were identified as a key area that may not have been

adequately considered in the QLD Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) planning phase.

- b) Multiple forms of economic participation were highlighted, including:
- Ownership of clean energy projects
  - Employment within the clean energy sector
  - Contracting and procurement opportunities
  - Revenue-sharing arrangements
  - Income-generating training and education programs
  - Maintenance services
  - Business development support and/or advisory services
- c) Energy-adjacent opportunities should also be considered to stimulate economic activity within First Nations communities to ensure sustainability beyond installation of the infrastructure and equipment. These opportunities could include home improvements for climate resilience, telecommunications, digital businesses, energy trading and asset leasing (e.g., leasing poles to telcos or businesses) among others.

### **3) Key enablers to drive First Nations participation in the clean energy transition: policy, capability development and funding.**

- a) Energy policy in Queensland, pertaining to the Renewable Energy Zones and state-ownership of assets, is perceived as prohibitive for First Nations communities to participate meaningfully in the clean energy transition. There is a call for clear and supportive policies that promote First Nations participation in the clean energy sector at the utility scale. These could potentially include enhanced First Nations procurement policies, project ownership policies and First Nations engagement policies.
- b) Capability and capacity building was highlighted several times as a key enabler, starting from early childhood development. This includes training programs, education initiatives and mentorship programs to empower First Nations communities.
- c) Sufficient funding at various levels was identified as a key enabler for First Nations communities to execute clean energy projects end-to-end. Grants, loans, equity investments or other innovative funding models could be utilised with an attractive proposition that First Nations communities already own the land on which projects could be delivered, thereby effectively reducing total capital investments required.

**4) The First Nations Clean Energy Strategy should drive equitable access of information and electricity.**

- a) Ensure equitable access to information about clean energy projects for that First Nations communities. This includes providing basic information on electricity and renewables concepts, potential impacts on land, water and cultural heritage, as well as information about the goals of the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy and its intended outcomes.
- b) Work to ensure equitable access to electricity for First Nations communities and addressing the concerns raised with prepayment meters and associated disconnections was a critical issue highlighted multiple times during the roundtable discussions.

**5) A shift in power systems: not only 'beneficiaries' but also 'leaders'**

- a) Roundtable participants called for clarification of the benefits of clean energy for First Nations communities, including those in social housing. This will help ensure that First Nations people understand and support the clean energy transition, which currently often benefits homeowners in metropolitan areas at present.
- b) First Nations community representatives expressed a strong desire to play a stronger leadership role in the clean energy transition. They don't want to be included 'after the fact', but to partner with government in the transition.
- c) Strong governance mechanisms should be maintained to ensure transparency, accountability, and trust between industry partners, government and First Nations communities. These mechanisms should align with corporate reporting and financial disclosures requirements to ensure mutual trust between all parties.

## Appendix E: Key messages from the South Australia (SA) Roundtable in Adelaide

*Dates: 11 and 12 September 2023*

*Participants: 80*

### 1) An action-orientated strategy shared publicly and contextually, with ongoing benefits tracking.

- a) SA Roundtable participants were vocal on the need for a strategy which is underpinned by concrete plans and timelines to hold government, industry and all other stakeholders accountable. While acknowledging that the starting point for this process is consultation and design, the overwhelming sentiment from community is that consultations should be followed by tangible action, which will enhance trust with First Nations communities.
- b) Participants requested discussions points from consultations, commitments by government and other role players were to be published publicly to drive accountability for implementing the Strategy.
- c) Potential disconnects between Commonwealth vs. State Governments in rolling out policy, and the broader benefits vs. costs of the clean energy transition were needed to be clarified and addressed within the Strategy.
- d) Robust report-back mechanisms and Key Performance Indicators were requested to ensure that the benefits of the transition are measurable and shared equitably between communities.

### 2) The protection of First Nations rights and a potential role for a new Protection Authority

- a) Cultural heritage rights: clean energy infrastructure development poses a risk of irreparable loss of cultural heritage through the potential destruction of landscapes, culturally significant sites, and access to cultural practices and song lines if First Nations communities are not consulted appropriately. Safeguarding these rights requires appropriate consultation through every step of the development process.
- b) Land Rights: The importance of negotiating the return of land to traditional owners especially after decommissioning of existing energy infrastructure, was emphasised as a means for First Nations elders to

strengthen the connection to the land and to leave a legacy for their children.

- c) Water rights: Water rights were stressed as being equally significant as land rights multiple times throughout the Roundtable discussions, with concerns raised on which water resources will be used for hydrogen projects. Water is important for Aboriginal communities for both practical purposes as well as cultural reasons.
- d) An authority dedicated to Indigenous Air, Land, and Sea Protection was proposed reflecting the need to ensure a holistic approach to environmental stewardship. This authority could be responsible for monitoring the impact of clean energy projects on First Nations communities and the environment, and for advising the government on ways to mitigate any negative impacts.

### **3) Best practices for community engagement need to be defined.**

- a) A call was made for clear First Nations engagement principles and terms of reference to enable respectful discussions and negotiations.
- b) Industry-specific legislation was proposed to govern collaboration with First Nations communities on clean energy projects, emphasising the importance of a legal framework which enables equitable partnerships.
- c) An independent platform was requested for Aboriginal communities to gather in a safe and unobstructed manner and continue discussions on an ongoing basis. A suggestion was made that a representative body at the SA level and or a national peak be stood up and resourced to represent First Nations interests as it relates to renewable energy.

### **4) Clean energy opportunities within and beyond large scale green energy projects, including microgrids and virtual power plants, housing upgrades and energy efficiency solutions.**

- a) First Nations communities want meaningful economic participation in the infrastructure development of major wind, solar and green hydrogen projects. They also aspire to own and operate microgrids. Aboriginal participants see a role for themselves to coordinate these projects, potentially through virtual power plants, and seek to move beyond mere consultation to active participation.

- b) Housing upgrades can make communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change in the context of changing weather patterns. Participants saw an opportunity for community members to provide related building services, generating revenue within their community.
- c) Access to and installation of energy efficiency appliances was also highlighted as a key opportunity to participate in the clean energy transition. While energy efficient electrical appliances reduce power bills, these need to be made financially accessible to Aboriginal communities with a proposal for a government-funded exchange program for exchange existing appliances with energy efficient alternatives.

## **5) Sustainable and coordinated skills development and capacity building**

- a) Participants expressed the desire to empower young First Nations peoples to take on leadership roles in clean energy projects, ensuring intergenerational sustainability. The Strategy should incentivise participation of First Nations youth by equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the clean energy sector through programs such as scholarships, internships, and mentorship opportunities.
- b) Instead of just providing certificates, the focus should be on job-readiness through practical skills and post-qualification training, enabling individuals to enter the workforce with confidence.
- c) An Aboriginal-focused training academy was proposed to coordinate clean energy skills development. Such an academy should equip young people with the broader skills required to develop innovative solutions to enable the clean energy transition and to mitigate the address the challenges brought by climate change.
- d) Informal energy-focused education programs should also be provided to communities to drive behavioural change regarding responsible use of energy and water.
- e) Skills development should not be limited to First Nations communities. First Nations cultural awareness needs to be further embedded into government organisations and decision-making and be incorporated into corporate ESG skills development and reporting requirements within Australia.

## **6) A desire for partnerships between community and industry which result in true empowerment.**

- a) First Nations Communities desire a genuine “seat at the table” to ensure that their voices are not only heard but are influential in shaping clean energy initiatives. This includes opportunities for directorships and equity stakes in renewable energy projects and Indigenous procurement policies.
- b) The clean energy transition presents inter-generational wealth creation. SA has high quality and abundant natural resources for wind and solar energy as well as hydrogen projects, and First Nations communities desire real economic benefits from the use of their land and water.
- c) Access to reliable and sufficient funding is a key enabler to empower First Nations communities to own, operate and maintain clean energy projects. Government should simplify access to existing funding and grants and explore new funding mechanisms to ensure meaningful economic participation of First Nations-owned businesses in the clean energy transition.
- d) Industry has an opportunity to develop new innovative business models which integrate First Nations perspectives and skills into their core projects and operations, beyond mere consultation. By working collaboratively, industry and First Nations communities can create a more sustainable and equitable future for all Australians

## Appendix F: Key messages from the Western Australia (WA) Roundtable in Fremantle

*Dates: 30 and 31 October 2023*

*Participants: 124*

### 1. Land, at the heart of the clean energy transformation

- a) While land was recognised by Roundtable participants as a key mechanism to enable traditional owners to participate in Australia's clean energy transition, several concerns were voiced throughout:
- First Nations people have not yet achieved full justice and recognition of their Native Title rights in Western Australia, and land tenure approvals processes are deemed cumbersome and lengthy
  - Native Title has given First Nations people the ability to negotiate with government and industry, but this can sometimes lead to competition between different communities and make it difficult to collaborate on projects
  - First Nations people have a unique and deep connection to their land, valuing it for its cultural, spiritual and economic importance. This should be recognised by government and industry when negotiating the use of land towards for clean energy projects.
  - First Nations communities may face risk of losing collateral and assets once clean energy projects conclude or partners pull withdraw from agreements. Clear risk mitigation mechanisms are needed to manage partnership arrangements and end-of-life liabilities.

### 2. Capacity building to ensure First Nations people have 'a real seat at the table'

- a) First Nations people want to be able to develop and maintain their own clean energy projects. This will allow them greater control over the projects and the ability to reap greater economic benefits.
- b) First Nations people aspire to be more than just employees or royalty recipients on large scale clean energy projects. They seek equity stakes

and directorships on larger projects to have a real say in decision-making processes.

- c) Skills development and information sharing programs were requested to support First Nations capacity building in renewable energy technologies, business development and end-to-end project management.
- d) Access to legal advice and support will help First Nations communities to negotiate contracts and agreements with government and industry, protecting their interests and ensuring that they receive a fair share of clean energy benefits.

### **3. More comprehensive funding mechanisms required to improve access to and reliability of clean energy and to strengthen economic benefits**

- a) A call was made for more comprehensive funding for small scale clean energy projects, including multiple forms of renewable energy generation, batteries/storage and distribution systems. A more holistic approach to funding will ensure that communities, especially remote communities, have access to more reliable electricity, as disconnections remain a reality for many First Nations communities.
- b) Funding is also required to improve First Nations housing standards, ensuring homes are structurally sound and liveable, they can benefit from solar installations, energy efficient and resilient to climate change.
- c) Roundtable participants also expressed the desire for funding for pre-feasibility studies and tested the potential of government acting as a guarantor for large scale projects. This would equip First Nations communities with more quality information on prospective projects and that they have greater access to lower cost financing.

### **4. New models for collaboration between First Nations communities, government and industry**

- a) New models for collaboration are needed between neighbouring First Nations communities, government and industry to ensure that Australia's clean energy transition is inclusive and equitable.
- b) Roundtable participants recommended that successful collaboration necessitates greater information and resource sharing on multiple levels:
  - Information sharing between different First Nations communities and regions to share lessons learned and best practices

- Information sharing by government on future energy demand forecasts, capacity building programs and available incentives
  - Information sharing by industry on future clean energy trends and prospective project pipelines to enable communities to make informed decisions on preferred partners and investors with suitable organisations.
- c) Roundtable participants recommended fit-for-purpose governance structures to enhance collaboration. This involves consulting with the right representatives, including Prescribed Body Corporates, establishing agreed engagement protocols and committing to increase cultural understanding. Government and industry should implement safeguards against 'black cladding' and ensure fair and equitable partnerships

#### 5. **Greater recognition and showcasing of First Nations successes**

- a) Representatives from the Indigenous Clean Energy social enterprise in Turtle Island (Canada) presented case studies and lessons learned to participants of the WA roundtable in Fremantle on their journey to participate in Canada's energy transformation. Today, Indigenous communities are at the forefront of Canada's transition towards clean energy, evidenced by enabling policy and meaningful stakes in key projects. Indigenous communities in Turtle Island have secured economic benefits for future generations while ensuring greater environmental protection and cultural preservation.
- b) Various Roundtable participants expressed their inspirations by the outcomes achieved by Indigenous communities in Turtle Island, but raised that Australia also has proven successes of First Nations businesses in the clean energy landscape – often leveraging their own funding.
- c) Despite existing disparities and socio-economic gaps, First Nations people are proud of their culture, heritage and achievements. They desire greater recognition for their contributions to the clean energy transition to be celebrated and showcased more broadly.
- d) The clean energy transition in Australia holds enormous potential to inspire hope and agency in young people. By actively participating in the clean energy transition, First Nations communities can secure social, cultural and economic benefits for themselves and future generations to come and be recognised for their enduring role in protecting the

environment as the world continues its shift towards a more sustainable growth trajectory.

## Appendix G: Key messages from the Victoria (VIC) Roundtable in Geelong

*Dates: 27 and 28 November 2023*

*Participants: 104*

### 1. Capacity building and resourcing of First Nations organisations and communities required to enable effective participation in the energy transition

- a) A common discussion point at the VIC Roundtable was the need for greater capacity building and resourcing of First Nations communities to effectively engage with government and industry. Roundtable participants expressed concerns about the volume of consultations they are requested to participate in, often without any perceived action taken on their feedback.
- b) VIC Roundtable participants raised various ideas to equip First Nations communities to participate in the clean energy transition:
  - Access to basic information around clean energy concepts, such as different types of renewable energy technologies, their benefits and potential impacts of clean energy projects on communities
  - Training and scholarships to support First Nations people in clean energy fields, building upon traditional knowledge of land and sea management
  - Resourcing for Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs), who play a critical role in representing First Nations peoples' interests in clean energy projects to enhance their capacity to advocate for their communities' interests in clean energy projects.
  - Access to legal expertise to support communities in negotiating fair agreements with developers and asserting their cultural rights throughout the lifecycle of clean energy projects
- c) Capacity building of First Nations communities will reduce consultation fatigue, enhance decision-making abilities, and ensure that First Nations communities benefit from clean energy projects, in the way they deem fit, through the principle of self-determination.

## **2. Clean energy is seen as an opportunity to create inter-generational and inter-community wealth**

- a) VIC Roundtable participants envision a future where First Nations communities can build intergenerational wealth building through ownership, shareholding, and equity stakes in clean energy projects.
- b) Participants called for a transparent and accountable clean energy transition, with greater transparency on funding flows and visibility of clean energy project opportunities on their lands.
- c) Dismissing tokenistic 'crumb' funding as inadequate, participants requested access to substantive funding to ensure meaningful First Nations people's seat at the decision-making table on clean energy projects.
- d) An innovative proposal was tabled for further exploration: the establishment of a VIC Traditional Owners Renewable Energy Corporation. This corporation would employ renewable energy managers to navigate the clean energy landscape and ensure equitable benefits sharing on behalf of their communities.

## **3. Collaboration and partnerships mechanisms need to be developed to ensure equitable sharing of benefits – including non-recognised organisations**

- a) First Nations communities want to be genuine partners in the development of Australia's clean energy future. This means having a real say in decision-making processes from the outset and collaboration across project lifecycles, not just being consulted after decisions have been made.
- b) Participants emphasised the importance of ensuring that all First Nations peoples, regardless of Native Title recognition or Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) status, have the opportunity to participate in the clean energy transition. This includes providing resources and opportunities for non-recognised groups also have voices heard in the decision-making processes.

- c) Various proposals were made to increase collaboration between First Nations communities and to strengthen partnerships with government and industry:
- Developing engagement standards to drive respectful engagement across the clean energy sector
  - Regionalising consultations to allow for tailored discussions for communities with specific needs and interests taken into account
  - Sharing lessons learned and best practices for engagement across States and Territories
  - Centralised data sharing platforms to improve access to accessible, accurate and up-to-date information on clean energy projects and developers

#### **4. Consultation protocols equally as important for clean energy projects on Sea Country, as on Land**

- a) A large proportion of VIC Roundtable discussions focused Sea Country, and participants acknowledged the significant potential of offshore wind energy generation in the State.
- b) Participants expressed a lack of clarity on the jurisdiction of projects impacting Sea Country and were concerned that offshore wind project consultations to date have been rushed and insufficient in its coverage of different communities.
- c) Participants reiterated that the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent extends to projects on Sea Country as well as Land Country, and requested for engagement standards reflect all types of clean energy.

#### **5. Protection of nature and cultural heritage can be improved through comprehensive mapping, fit-for-purpose policy and an uplift in cultural acumen**

- a) Participants at the VIC Roundtable explained that for First Nations people, nature is more than the environment—it's interwoven with their identity, setting the rhythm for life, and needs to be protected. The concept of "sovereign electrons" was introduced at the VIC Roundtable, emphasising First Nations' sense of responsibility over the lands and waters on which renewable energy is generated.

- b) Participants also emphasised the non-negotiable requirement for safeguarding First Nations lore, culture and way of life as clean energy infrastructure is built.
- c) Three key solutions were proposed to ensure the protection of nature and cultural heritage during Australia's clean energy transition:
- Comprehensive mapping of Land and Sea Country to support First Nations communities in their community benefits analysis and to determine where projects can be sustainably established.
  - Clean energy policies which recognise First Nations values and culture
  - Cultural competency initiatives to uplift government and industry's understanding and respect for First Nations' sacred connections to the land and waters

## Appendix H: Key messages from the New South Wales (NSW) Roundtable in Wollongong

Dates: 7 and 8 December 2023

Participants: 70

### 1. **First Nations landholders have a major opportunity to participate in the energy transition, but land tenure policy in NSW is deemed a barrier to realise this potential**

- a) The potential for First Nations to host renewable energy projects was a prominent topic at the NSW Roundtable. Participants highlighted the significant opportunities they see in the proposed NSW Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) and the transmission infrastructure which will pass through many First Nations communities.
- b) Challenges in land claim processes were critically discussed, with emphasis on the protracted and opaque nature of these processes, were identified as significant barriers in NSW. One participant mentioned they have a claim entering its seventh year without resolution.
- c) The *Native Title Act 1993*, *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* and NSWALC Community Development Levy were seen as potential impediments, suggesting a need for legislative reform to facilitate more effective participation of First Nations in clean energy initiatives.
- d) Roundtable participants expressed a willingness to use moratoriums on clean energy projects to assert their rights in the face of what they experience as bureaucratic delays, in line with the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.
- e) Despite these challenges, participants are exploring different ways to participate in clean energy projects.

### 2. **Sustainable economic benefits within the REZs, and support towards new Aboriginal Energy Zones**

- a) Roundtable participants expressed a desire for sustainable economic opportunities linked to clean energy projects, including direct benefits for individuals beyond organisational gains.

- b) Participants proposed First Nations jobs and procurement targets in the REZs which align with the demographic proportions of First Nations people which live in the project areas.
- c) The aspiration for direct ownership and equity stakes in major clean energy projects was also evident from discussions. Participants requested support for developing Aboriginal Energy Projects outside of the traditional REZ framework in NSW.
- d) Adjacent business opportunities, such as constructing accommodation facilities for REZ construction workers, were discussed as ways to broaden the economic impact of clean energy projects.
- e) Long term funding was requested to ensure First Nations participation and economic benefits can be sustained across the clean energy project lifecycle

### **3. Improved collaboration and a data-driven approach could lead to 'value stacking' of socio-economic benefits in clean energy project areas**

- a) The lack of coordination between various government departments that engage with First Nations communities was a point of critique.
- b) A proposal was raised for a more coordinated approach between government agencies to ensure multiple priorities in the 'Closing the Gap' reform are achieved simultaneously within clean energy project areas. Participants discussed how initiatives within the different project areas could be tailored, based on accurate community-level data.
- c) Historical trading practices among First Nations communities were recalled, with a proposition to revitalise these exchanges in a digital era. Participants raised the idea of collecting and mapping data in their individual communities against the 'Closing the Gap' priorities to ensure that initiatives are effectively targeted and beneficial.
- d) Participants requested resourcing to create this evidence base of community needs and to retain sovereignty over their data. They believe that this data-driven approach and better coordination across government agencies will improve collaboration and lead to 'value stacking' of socio-economic benefits in their communities.

### **4. Capacity building of First Nations organisations required to sustain and scale their ability to engage**

- a) First Nations peoples are eager to participate in clean energy projects, but concerns were raised about the capacity of their representative organisations to do so on a continued basis.
- b) The need for resourcing and support for Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) was underscored to empower them in their role as intermediaries between community, industry, and government.
- c) The high social return on investment of First Nations businesses was acknowledged. Participants requested greater investment to enable First Nations businesses to scale their capacity to participate in clean energy value chains.
- d) Government was requested to explore how clean energy training programs typically available at TAFEs, could be made available within First Nations communities, along with wrap-around support to ensure training is effective.

**5. Cultural heritage and environmental protection could be strengthened through cultural mapping, recognition of the voice of elders and improved legislation**

- a) The destruction of culturally significant sites and biodiversity in past developments was a significant concern, with a call for proactive measures to protect these sites in future clean energy infrastructure rollouts.
- b) One participant relayed how archaeological and culturally significant sites, such as Aboriginal camp sites, middens and burial sites, have been destroyed through sand mining efforts in Northern NSW. They urged government and industry to avoid repeating these mistakes as clean energy infrastructure is rolled out.
- c) Participants were inspired by insights from the COP 28 Indigenous Dialogue. While Indigenous communities comprise less than 5% of the world's population, they protect 80% of global biodiversity. NSW Roundtable participants expressed a strong responsibility for protecting their natural environment and raised concerns about the lack of consultation on projects impacting sea Country.
- d) Three key solutions were proposed to strengthen cultural heritage and environmental protection throughout the energy transition:

- Comprehensive mapping of culturally significant sites and biodiversity, in partnership with First Nations communities
- Revising of the Cultural Heritage Act in NSW to ensure better protection of culturally significant sites and artefacts
- Recognising and learning from First Nations elders as custodians of cultural knowledge and history to ensure protection of significant sites aligns with their deep-rooted values and traditions of their communities.

## Appendix I: Key messages from the Tasmania (TAS) Roundtable in Hobart

*Dates: 15 and 16 February 2024 and 26 March 2024*

*Participants: Approximately 40*

### **1. Sustainable and coordinated education, skills development, and capacity building**

- a) A call was made for the provision of educational opportunities and support for First Nations youth including adult education, to cater to various learning styles.
- b) Education should be made accessible within communities, with infrastructure development to support this goal.
- c) Upskilling in governance training should be supported to enable greater representation of First Nations peoples at organisational and company boards at higher levels, and empowerment in high-level decision making.
- d) Higher education support in STEM fields was proposed to empower Community to design, oversee, and manage the building of power grids on Aboriginal owned land.

### **2. Best practices for Community consultation and collaboration need to be defined**

- a) Initial consultation should occur before the progression of any project that will impact Country. Additionally, roundtable participants emphasised the need for continued conversations with community throughout the project lifecycle, including when industry and government are unable to support an initiative, with community being advised of the outcomes.
- b) A proposal for a mandatory standard process for community consultation, with evidence, was made and supported by roundtable participants across community and industry.

### **3. A plan for equitable compensation, equitable distribution of funding, and equitable access to opportunities for funding, is needed.**

- a) There was a call to ensure communities are sufficiently resourced, reducing reliance on volunteers in under-resourced areas. Alongside this,

education and access to resources for community organisations need to be provided to ensure equitable access to existing and future grant opportunities.

- b) Assurances need to be put in place to ensure that funding is received and allocated appropriately and equitably, addressing the unique issues of Tasmanian communities. A potential per capita funding model was suggested, by Community members in attendance, whereby funds would be distributed to organisations equitably so multiple organisations can benefit without being in competition with each other. It was suggested that this could be implemented using a mechanism like that used in Community health care funding, where organisations report back to government via an online portal for analysis and allocation of funds.
- c) Payment of a lump sum amount for a specified period of time to Community organisations and representatives in return for their information and services was discussed in relation to fairer compensation for Community's advice and knowledge. Additionally, the cost of cultural load in compensating the Community for the burden of repeatedly reliving their trauma during consultation processes should be factored in.
- d) Robust discussion was had around the potential for establishment of a fund, where compensation received by Community in return for access to their land can be accessed by First Nations communities to assist them in becoming self-sufficient.

**4. New models of collaboration between First Nations communities, industry and government are required to ensure an inclusive and equitable transition to clean energy including the potential for a 'rating system', shared publicly and contextually, as part of development and procurement processes**

- a) Discussion was held on implementing a public rating system to distinguish developers' performance by jurisdiction. This system would evaluate the level and quality of community engagement and consultation, aiming to ensure consistent quality of work across regions.
- b) To support this, limitations (such as within legislation) that impact how and why developers perform at different levels in different jurisdictions to be addressed. Federal government oversight will be needed to ensure consistent protections across State and Territory governments, particularly regarding complex target setting and tracking.

- c) Participants discussed the inclusion of social objectives that can complement engagement as part of the proposed rating system. Additionally, a measure to uplift contractors making submissions for development was proposed. This would require a minimum standard for Indigenous engagement plans, including partnering with experienced local communities.

## **5. Protections for cultural heritage and safety as a mandatory inclusion**

- a) A proposal for the implementation of Community and heritage zones with approvals was put forward. This could be underpinned by an Aboriginal heritage scheme, where 'red zones' are designated as areas that cannot be developed, and development are scaled accordingly, similar to planning zones. Examples such as Cape Barren Island highlight the importance of community-level zoning measures for land protection and care. Robbins Island is an example of a region with significant intangible heritage and storylines that may not be a suitable area to develop due to lack of previous surveys.
- b) The inclusion of cultural safety as a core objective of the Strategy was also proposed, alongside the development of a cultural safety plan to achieve this objective. Additionally, current Aboriginal heritage laws in Tasmania need to be updated to capture intangible heritage.

## **6. Genuine protections and investment in the environment and housing as part of the Strategy**

- a) Participants expressed concern that Tasmania could become a 'sacrificial' state for the country's clean energy transition, with the potential for negative impacts on local communities' land, environment, and cultural practices. They called for genuine consideration of alternative locations for large-scale clean energy projects such as wind farms.
- b) The loss of 95% of the region's kelp forests due to climate change impacts resulted in significant carbon loss and cultural impacts, such as the disruption shell stringing for ceremonies. Additionally, the migration of species like turtles and manta rays to the region due to rising sea temperatures highlights the need for a careful and considered approach to clean energy development.

- c) Participants called for increased regulatory oversight of local industries, such as salmon farming, which can pollute waterways and negatively impact the environment.
- d) Investment in housing upgrades can increase community resilience climate change, free up funds for other initiatives, such as community gardens.
- e) Reducing the time for assessment of planning approvals and building permits can help address the housing crisis and enable community housing organisations' to provide housing more efficiently.