

An illustration at the top of the page depicts a diverse group of people and renewable energy infrastructure. On the left, a woman in a red top and orange pants stands with a young child. Next to them, a man in a white shirt and a hat holds a large blue solar panel. In the center, a woman wearing a yellow hard hat and an orange safety vest is kneeling and working on another solar panel. To the right, a house with a red door and a white ladder has a roof covered in solar panels. In the background, there are two wind turbines, a bright sun, and a tree. Two flags are also visible: the Australian Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag.

## QUEENSLAND POLICY OVERVIEW: FIRST NATIONS AND CLEAN ENERGY

### Executive Summary

#### ***Land rights, native title and renewable energy resources***

Queensland has very strong [solar resources](#), and also high quality and nationally competitive [wind resources](#) and there is clearly much potential for the development of clean energy projects on First Nations-titled lands.

Native title has been determined to exist across large areas of Queensland (approximately one third of the state), and around 6.23 million hectares is owned by First Nations groups as freehold Aboriginal land or freehold Torres Strait Islander land under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* (Qld) and the *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991* (Qld).

A further 45 native title determination applications remain pending over substantial areas of Queensland.

#### ***Energy landscape in Queensland***

The Queensland government has committed to 50% renewable energy by 2030 and zero net emissions by 2050. More than 20% of Queensland's consumption is currently generated from renewable energy sources.

The [Queensland Renewable Energy Zones](#) have been announced as the pathway to connect a future pipeline of 25,000 megawatts (MW) of large-scale renewable generation. The three allocated areas are the [Northern](#), [Central](#) and [Southern](#) Queensland Renewable Energy Zones.

In June 2023, the [Energy \(Renewable Transformation and Jobs\) Bill 2023](#) exposure draft opened for consultation. It is proposing new renewable energy targets to be legislated being 70% by 2032, and 80% by 2035. In addition, the legislation will support 100% ownership of Queensland's power line transmission and distribution network, two new pumped hydro projects and maintenance of the majority share of generation (currently 54%).

[Hydrogen](#) industry development is also a large focus under the Hydrogen Taskforce and associated Strategy. The primary lever is the \$4.5 billion [Queensland Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund](#). The fund provides a structure for publicly owned energy corporations to partner with industry.

The [Regional Economic Futures Fund](#) is focused on supporting the transition of local communities where existing coal plants are located.

#### ***Prepay metering, First Nations, housing and energy***

Queensland is the national leader for rooftop solar with 44.4% of suitable dwellings having solar photovoltaic (PV) installed [to date](#). However, for many First Nations, there are significant energy

justice issues, especially for people living in social housing, rental housing and remotely - for this cohort accessing the benefits of rooftop solar is very difficult.

In Queensland, there are 33 isolated autonomous microgrid systems that operate outside of the National Electricity Market. These isolated networks are currently mostly powered by diesel, with some customer-owned rooftop solar PV, and centralised renewable energy installations. Customers living in some remote communities in regional Queensland must use prepaid [power cards](#) to add credit to their electricity meter.

First Nations communities located within the 33 isolated energy networks have a reduced opportunity to benefit from renewable energy. Currently many cannot connect more solar PV due to voltage constraints. Further, the isolated networks operating with prepaid cards for the supply of electricity to households and small businesses do not allow for a solar feed-in tariff to incentivise these houses to take up the benefits of solar PV (although in other jurisdictions these [policy and regulatory barriers](#) have been overcome).

### ***Renewable energy projects***

There are currently 91 existing operating renewable energy power plants, 15 under construction and an additional 141 proposed in Queensland, as seen on this [electricity generation map](#). These are primarily land based solar and wind farms, and Battery Energy Storage Systems and Pumped Hydro Energy Storage installations.

Offshore wind is emerging in the state with [three projects](#) publicly known to be under investigation, although no designated offshore wind zone is yet to be confirmed.

In the past five years, Queensland Government-owned energy corporations have unlocked more than 2,000MW of renewable energy projects through direct investment or via financial offtake arrangements.

### ***First Nations-led energy projects***

Across Queensland there are many potential sites that could be viable for First Nations-led clean energy projects, and clearly there is great opportunity for First Nations to play a leading role in the clean energy industry in Queensland, particularly given the scale of projects proposed.

A number of native title groups in Queensland have entered into Indigenous Land Use Agreements with clean energy project developers and in Gladstone, native title holders are pursuing new opportunities arising from clean energy including with the green hydrogen industry.

When considering clean energy projects, obtaining the right advice is critical, which includes legal and commercial, as is leveraging political and financial capital to 'buy into' projects.

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## First Nations data and information for Queensland

### ***What is the First Nations population and the demographics in Queensland?***

In the 2021 Census, 237,000 people identified as First Nations in [Queensland](#). This represents 4.6% of the population and a gradual increase from 4.0% in 2016 and 3.6% in 2011. The population represents over one-quarter (28.7%) of the national population, second to NSW.

Of that group of 237,000 people:

- 81.5% identified as Aboriginal
- 9.2% identified as Torres Strait Islander
- 9.3% identified as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and
- 52.4% were under 25 years of age.

In the [2016 Census](#), Queensland had three out of the ten most populous Indigenous Regions (IR). This included the Torres Strait IR having the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons (81.8%) of all IRs in Australia.

In the 2021 Census, 48% of First Nations lived across seven major centres such as Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns and the Gold Coast. Nearly half of the employed First Nations people were working across three types of occupations: community and personal service workers, labourers, and technicians and trades workers. First Nations people were more likely to be employed in the government sector (21%) than non-Indigenous people (16%).

### ***What are the prominent First Nations institutions in Queensland?***

In Queensland, the Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) and Native Title Service Providers (NTSPs) are:

- Cape York Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- North Queensland Land Council Native Title Representative Body Aboriginal Corporation
- Queensland South Native Title Services Ltd, and
- Gur A Baradharaw Kod Torres Strait Sea and Land Council.

There are 16 Indigenous Shire Councils in Queensland. These Councils do not have a rate-base, so State Government funding is necessary to deliver core services to their communities. In addition, there is the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils and the North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils which are both representative of large First Nations populations.

The [Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations](#) has 1,223 entities listed for Queensland, with less than 2% of those being large entities. The large entities include the NTRBs and NTSPs listed.

Other examples of large Indigenous corporations in the State are provided below with service themes:

- *Education and training* - eg. Bamagau Kazil Torres Strait Islanders Corporation, NPA Family and Community Services Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corporation

- *Health care and health promotion* - eg. Bidjerdii Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation Community Health Service Central Queensland Region, Burringilly Aboriginal Corporation, Gurriny Yealamucka (Good Healing) Health Services Aboriginal Corporation, Kambu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health, Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health Services
- *Community services, housing and tenancy* - eg. Gungarde Community Centre Aboriginal Corporation, Murri Watch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation, Mutkin Residential and Community Care Indigenous Corporation, Ngoonbi Community Services Indigenous Corporation
- *Land and waters management—caring for country* - eg. Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation.

Many other entities under other regulatory structures exist outside of the Indigenous Corporation structure.

The key social policy peak bodies form the [Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition \(QATSIC\)](#). These include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited, and the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Services. Together they are the formal parties that signed the national [Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) with the Queensland Government.

A key Government office is the [Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office \(RILIPO\)](#). RILIPO facilitates the coordination of major infrastructure investment across Queensland's remote, discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as economic opportunities. The office supports the 16 Indigenous Local Government areas, and the communities of Thursday Island, Horn Island, Coen, Mossman Gorge and Mona Mona.

### ***How is land commonly held by First Nations groups in Queensland?***

#### **Freehold Aboriginal land and freehold Torres Strait Islander land**

In Queensland, around 6.23 million hectares of land is owned by First Nations groups as a special tenure called freehold Aboriginal land or freehold Torres Strait Islander land. This tenure is created when it is granted or the land is transferred under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* (Qld) and *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991* (Qld) (known collectively as the Indigenous Land Acts). This land is held on trust for the First Nations group by:

- bodies corporate registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (Cth) (CATSI Act) – where there has been a determination under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) that native title exists, this will be the prescribed body corporate for the determination
- land trusts established under the Indigenous Land Acts (this structure is no longer used for new land grants, but existing land trusts continue to function), or
- two Shire Councils: Mornington and Aurukun Shire Councils.

## **Aboriginal Deed of Grant in Trust land**

Aboriginal Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) land is State land, usually former Aboriginal reserves and missions, that has been granted in fee simple in trust to an Aboriginal group under the *Land Act 1962* (Qld) (now repealed) or the *Land Act 1994* (Qld). The trustees of Aboriginal DOGIT land are Aboriginal Shire Councils which are, in most cases, the local government authority.

In the 1980s, the Queensland Government granted fifteen DOGITs: Cherbourg, Doomadgee, Hopevale, Injino, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Napranum, New Mapoon, Palm Island, Pormpuraaw, Umagico, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah.

## **Native title land**

Native title has been recognised on [around one third](#) of the State of Queensland, which includes large tracts of Aboriginal freehold because native title interests are not extinguished on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land. Native title often exists alongside other interests in land, such as pastoral leases or mining leases, and can also exist alongside tenure under the Indigenous Land Acts.

When a determination is made recognising the native title of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander group, the group must establish a registered native title body corporate (RNTBC). These are more commonly known as prescribed bodies corporate (PBCs). PBCs either hold native title rights and interests on trust for native title holders or act as their agent in respect of those rights and interests. Native title PBCs must be registered under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act).

The most common type of native title interest in Queensland is non-exclusive native title, where the rights and interests of the First Nations group have been found to exist alongside other interests, such as pastoral leases. There are also areas of exclusive native title in Queensland, where native title has been found to include possession to the exclusion of all others.

As at August 2023, there are 44 native title claims in Queensland awaiting resolution.

Registered native title claim groups have rights under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), including in relation to notification, consultation and negotiation in relation to infrastructure and projects, notwithstanding that their claim has not been determined.

## ***What opportunities exist to develop projects on tenure held by First Nations?***

There is much potential to develop clean energy projects on First Nations title lands. There is also potential to develop projects for the extraction of critical minerals deemed essential for the national transition to renewables.

## ***What kind of funding and support do First Nations representative bodies receive?***

### **Indigenous Shire Councils**

Queensland's Indigenous Shire Councils do not receive council rates and instead rely on funding from the State Government to deliver services to their communities. In the 2023-2024 State budget, the Queensland Government committed \$69.85 million to funding for [Indigenous Councils](#).

## **Native title prescribed bodies corporate**

The Commonwealth Government provides basic support funding to PBCs, ranging from \$50,000 to \$80,000 per year to each PBC to assist it to meet its corporate obligations and operational requirements. The Commonwealth Government has also committed to providing \$54.2 million over three years from 2022 to 2025 to PBCs in the form of capacity building grants. PBCs must apply for these grants, which can be used on activities to increase the PBCs' capacity to take advantage of economic opportunities.

PBCs also receive operational and administrative support from NTRBs and NTSPs funded by the Commonwealth Government. In Queensland, the native title registered bodies and service providers are the Cape York Land Council, Carpentaria Land Council, North Queensland Land Council, Queensland South Native Title Services, and the Gur A Baradharaw Kod Torres Strait Sea and Land Council.

## ***The capacity and capability of First Nations organisations***

The capacity and capability of First Nations representative organisations varies greatly from organisation to organisation.

Many PBCs have significant experience negotiating complex Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) or ancillary agreements, to agreements reached under section 31 of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth). In some cases, these agreements have provided funding and other opportunities to develop capacity and capability.

Many Indigenous Shire Councils have experience delivering infrastructure projects within their communities.

*It is important that any third party approaching a First Nations organisation to undertake activities on Country is prepared to fund the provision of independent legal and other expert advice to ensure that the First Nations organisation and the people it represents can properly participate in any negotiations.*

*Independent, expert advice is critical to obtaining free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).*

## ***A description of the levers, capacities, and capabilities required to negotiate an equitable benefit for renewable energy projects.***

### **Development approvals**

Public submissions in relation to proposed projects are usually invited and community members can make submissions in support of a project or to oppose all or some aspects of a project.

*First Nations communities should talk to any clean energy companies proposing projects in their region about the proposal.*

### **Indigenous land**

Where renewable energy projects are proposed on Aboriginal DOGIT land or land transferred under the Indigenous Land Acts, there will be strong opportunities for the negotiation of equitable



benefits. Aboriginal DOGIT land or land transferred under the Indigenous Land Acts cannot be sold or mortgaged but the trustee may grant leases for up to 99 years.

There are three types of leases that may be granted over Indigenous land under the Indigenous Land Acts: standard leases, home ownership leases and townsite leases. Standard leases may be granted to any person for any purpose (including the provision of clean energy infrastructure). Leases must be registered. These leases can provide economic development opportunities and a consistent income stream for First Nations communities.

A lease of Indigenous land may be obtained by approaching and negotiating with the relevant trustee. Each trustee has its own application process and should be contacted to obtain further information.

The Indigenous Land Acts include requirements as to how trustee decisions are to be made, and an ILUA may be required (see below).

### **Native title land**

If a clean energy project will require a Crown licence (including for the purpose of an access road etc) over land where native title rights and interests have been recognised or a registered native title claim has been made, that licence should only be granted if it falls into one of the categories of future acts that are valid under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth).

In many cases, a project proponent is likely to need to negotiate an ILUA with any registered native title claim group or PBC. An ILUA sets out how a proposed activity may occur and provides for a form of compensation or benefits package for the native title party. In these cases, there will be very strong opportunities for the negotiation of equitable benefits by the PBC or native title claim group.

There will be times when proponents do not need an ILUA because other future act categories in the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) will be relevant. This will depend on the purpose of the licence, the past use of the land, etc. In those circumstances, the proponent will need to follow the relevant requirements such as notifying or consulting with the PBC or native title claim group or issuing a public notice which would give potential native title holders an opportunity to lodge a native title claim within a certain timeframe.

It is also worth noting that pastoral leaseholders may apply under the *Land Act 1994* (Qld) to have an additional purpose of renewable energy added to the purpose of their lease (e.g. their existing lease could be for grazing/pastoral purposes and an additional purpose of renewable energy can be added). [Queensland government operational policy](#) provides that the requirements of the *Native Title Act 1993*(Cth) will need to be addressed before a leaseholder will have any additional purpose approved.

### ***Key and recent issues relating to economic development and First Nations and other points of relevance to First Nations outcomes such as special programs or support.***

In 2022, employment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all age groups increased to 57.2% from 52.1% in 2016. However, significant issues such as children and youth in detention, rates of preventable diseases and overall mortality rates continue to remain high in Queensland.

The 2021–22 Queensland Budget launched a \$300 million Path to Treaty Fund. The [2023-2024 Budget](#) launched in June hosts many significant socio-economic programs including:

- The second Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan (2024–2027). \$51.3 million over 4 years and \$77 million for social housing in remote First Nations communities.
- Our Way, \$167.2 million over 4 years and \$20 million ongoing from 2027–28, for reduction of First Nations representation in the child protection system.
- Managing Country with First Nations Peoples. \$38.6 million over 4 years and \$10.4 million per annum ongoing to progress active co-stewardship of Country.
- Strengthening First Nations Peoples' Inclusion and Economic Development in Water Management. \$11.7 million over 3 years.
- Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services, \$41 million.
- Paving the Way — First Nations Training Strategy. \$8.3 million for skills and training that will lead to sustainable, local jobs, and empower them to achieve self-determination through economic participation.

### ***Existing relationships between First Nations and the renewable energy sector in the jurisdiction?***

The renewable energy sector operates across many levels in the Queensland context. This includes Government owned and private projects.

Large-scale projects of note include five wind farms currently proposed in the Northern Queensland Renewable Energy Zone:

- Chalumbin
- Upper Burdekin
- Mt Fox
- High Road
- Kaban.

Environmental concerns have been voiced for this high-density development area.

This includes Windlab's 400MW Upper Burdekin Wind Farm which involves a partnership with native title holders - the Gugu Badhun, to enable Indigenous stewardship for the project's environmental management strategy under the [Gugu Badhun-Windlab Indigenous Land Use Agreement \(ILUA\)](#).

The 445MW [Aldoga Solar Farm](#) is another project of note and is described as a 'flagship renewable energy project' that will be built on Economic Development Queensland's (EDQ) land. It has signalled an intention to work with First Nations businesses to procure services, equipment and workforce.

The 352MW [Western Downs Green Power Hub](#) located on the lands of the Barunggam people has also committed to an ambitious 10% Indigenous participation target for employment and supply chain procurement for their project.

Aside from the potential involvement in energy generation projects, opportunities exist for groups to engage in new industrial projects powered by clean energy. For example, in Gladstone, in an initiative announced at the start of the inaugural summit of the [First Nations Chamber of](#)

[Commerce and Industry](#), the Hydrogen Utility® (H2U) and the First Nations Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, Taribelang Bunda Peoples Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC executed a Memorandum of Understanding about [H2U's H2-Hub™](#) Gladstone project, a multi-billion dollar renewable energy complex producing green hydrogen and green ammonia, proposed to be established in the Yarwun region of the Gladstone State Development Area.

### ***Are there energy security/access/justice issues for First Nations in Queensland?***

Housing tenure is closely related to energy security issues.

In 2021, most (81.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland lived in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) dwellings. The most common First Nations tenure types in 2021 were:

- 32% rented via real estate agent
- 26% owned with mortgage
- 13% rented via housing authority
- 12% owned outright.

In Queensland, there are 33 isolated autonomous microgrid systems that operate outside of the National Electricity Market. First Nations communities located within these 33 isolated energy networks have a reduced opportunity to benefit from renewable energy.

Customers living in some remote communities in regional Queensland must use [power cards](#) to add credit to their electricity meter. Power card holders are eligible for the Queensland Government Electricity Rebate (\$372.20 per year). The tariff options are at the same rates as other Queensland government-owned Ergon Energy customers throughout Queensland, however, local system constraints mean many cannot connect solar PV.

The [prevalent justice issues](#) associated with this system are:

- Long periods without electricity when households cannot afford credit
- Less hardship assistance than mains power
- Limited advantage of off-peak tariffs, renewable energy, and energy efficiency
- Historical exclusion of these customers from reporting complaints to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ).

### ***Is there finance / funding available for First Nations renewable energy projects?***

The [Queensland State Budget](#) released on 13 June did *not* provide any specific First Nations funding for renewable energy projects however, some funding streams are broadly available that could be of relevance. These include:

- Queensland Business Energy Saving and Transformation Program, \$35 million over 3 years
- Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan Implementation. \$43.8 million over 4 years for energy transformation. \$205.7 million over 5 years for the Regional Economic Futures Fund, renewable energy precincts, recycling and manufacturing opportunities, and bioenergy
- Household Energy Initiatives, \$60 million over 2 years for energy efficiency
- Grow Manufacturing Capacity through Energy Programs in Queensland, \$8.9 million over 5 years for small to medium manufacturing enterprises
- Resources Community Infrastructure Fund, \$118.2 million in 2023-24 for Round 3

- Indigenous Council Funding Program, additional funding of \$25.8 million
- Resilient Homes Fund, \$20.6 million over 3 years
- First Nations Economic Development, additional funding of \$1.4 million over 4 years.

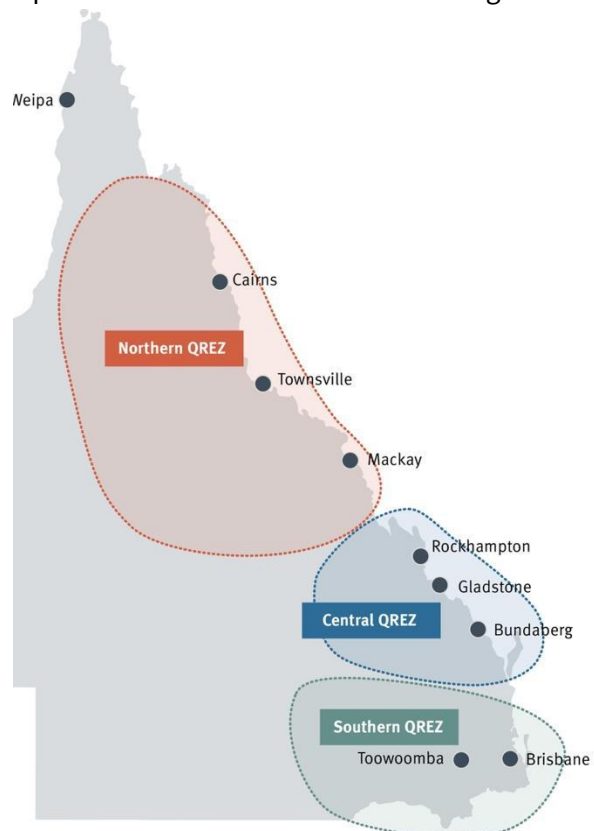
## Queensland renewable energy policies and information

### ***What are the key renewable energy policies, programs, and initiatives?***

The Queensland State government has committed to 50% renewable energy by 2030 and zero net emissions by 2050. More than 20% of consumption is currently generated from renewable energy sources. Queensland is the national leader for rooftop solar with 44.4% of suitable dwellings having PV installed [to date](#).

The Queensland [Energy and Jobs Plan](#) is the primary document that outlines how Queensland’s energy system will transform.

The [Queensland Renewable Energy Zones \(QREZ\)](#) have been announced as the pathway to connect a future pipeline of 25,000MW of large-scale renewable generation. The three allocated areas (map to the right) are the [Northern](#), [Central](#) and [Southern](#) QREZ. Phase 1 has been initiated across all three zones with a goal of connecting 6,000MW of renewable capacity. As part of the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan, the Queensland Government committed \$145 million for QREZ, with the majority being designated to transmission upgrades.



In June 2023, the [Energy \(Renewable Transformation and Jobs\) Bill 2023](#) exposure draft opened for consultation. It is proposing new renewable energy targets to be legislated, being 70% by 2032, and 80% by 2035. In addition, the legislation will support 100% ownership of Queensland’s power line transmission and distribution network, two new pumped hydro projects, and maintenance of the majority share of generation (currently 54%).

[Hydrogen](#) industry development is also a large focus under the Hydrogen Taskforce and associated Strategy. The primary lever is the \$4.5 billion Queensland Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund. The fund provides a structure for publicly owned energy corporations to partner with industry.

The [Regional Economic Futures Fund](#) is focused on supporting the transition of local communities where existing coal plants are located.

## ***The electricity network in Queensland***

The Queensland electricity network is primarily located within the National Electricity Market (NEM) jurisdiction.

The NEM is governed by National Electricity Rules (NER), which are made under the National Electricity Law by the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) and have the force of law. The NER regulates distribution network planning and expansion and governs the operation of the wholesale electricity market (which consists of the commercial exchange of electricity from generators to retailers).

Outside of the NEM there are 33 isolated autonomous microgrid systems (consisting of both generation and network assets managed by Ergon Energy) across 39 Queensland communities. These isolated networks support 8,300 connections and 21,000 customers.

In Queensland, [electricity infrastructure and assets](#) are owned by a mixture of government and private companies. Three transmission service providers operate in the state:

- Powerlink Queensland – Government owned corporation (GOC)
- ElectraNet Pty Limited
- AusNet Transmission Group Pty Ltd, trading as AusNet Services.

Electricity is then supplied to 2.2 million Queensland customers via an electricity distribution system managed by three distributors:

- [Energex](#) (GOC) operates in South East Queensland. It has a distribution area of 25,000km<sup>2</sup>.
- [Ergon Energy](#) (GOC) operates in rural and regional Queensland. Its network covers over 1 million km.
- [Essential Energy](#) (NSW GOC) is a NSW distributor that extends into Queensland near Goondiwindi.

Connecting [new network infrastructure](#) is done through two pathways – either by a network service provider or by a private entity, and there are different approval processes applied to each pathway. The [Queensland SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint](#) is the key State Government document describing the four new high-voltage (up to 500 kilovolts (kV)) backbone transmission projects that are proposed to be constructed by the mid-2030s and deployed to facilitate the QREZ. These upgrades are:

- Two transmission connections to connect Borumba to southern Queensland
- Line between southern and central Queensland
- Line to connect central Queensland to north Queensland
- Line to connect Townsville to Hughenden (may extend to North West Minerals Province).

Prerequisites for delivery include early engagement with the community (landholders, First Nations peoples and broader community stakeholders) to ensure meaningful and early input into the potential transmission corridors and targeted local benefits arrangements.

## ***What renewable energy projects are in the pipeline in Queensland or concluded and of relevance?***

In regard to [mid and large scale renewables](#), there are currently 91 existing operating renewable energy power plants, 15 under construction and an additional 141 proposed in Queensland. These are primarily land-based solar and wind farms, and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Pumped Hydro Energy Storage (PHES) installations. Offshore wind is emerging in the state with [three projects](#) publicly known to be under investigation, although no designated offshore wind zone is yet to be confirmed. In the past five years, Queensland Government-owned energy corporations have unlocked more than 2,000MW of renewable energy projects through direct investment or via financial offtake arrangements.

A project of relevance currently under development is the [Ergon Energy Decarbonising Isolated Communities](#) study for the 33 isolated microgrid communities in the state. The study aims to:

- Determine the feasibility of managing customer solar connections in isolated communities
- Identify the best way to increase customer solar installations in isolated communities
- Find new methods to decarbonise isolated networks and use less diesel fuel.

Another key Government program is a [five-community feasibility report](#) by Ergon that will conclude in late 2023, which covers the following investigative phases:

- Increase uptake of customer solar PV in isolated communities, including dynamic installations
- Integration of battery energy storage systems to store excess solar energy, and turning off of diesel generators for periods of the day.

Mapoon, Burketown, Birdsville, Windorah and Bedourie are the initial locations of interest for the project. Mapoon is an Aboriginal Shire Council. The population of Burketown is 49% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, Birdsville is 25%, Windorah is 19%, and Bedourie 23%.

The [Queensland Microgrid Pilot Fund](#) recently closed in 2023. The Fund's intent was to increase electricity resilience in times of extreme weather events, for Queenslanders living in regional areas and First Nations communities. In addition, there were decarbonisation goals due to diesel generation reliance. The [selection criteria](#) for the program included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community benefits, reach, and stakeholder collaboration. In addition, proposed microgrid sites were evaluated by the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DSDSATSIP) and the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office (RILIPO).

Recently deployed programs included [solar for remote communities](#) which was part of the \$3.6 million Decarbonising Remote Communities program. Within that program, four Indigenous communities in Queensland's far north had renewable energy systems installed to reduce the use of diesel power. Participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils were key project partners in planning and delivering these projects. The project sites were:

- Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council: 304kW ground-mounted solar farm extension (adjacent to the existing 264kW solar farm) and 105kW of rooftop solar on four Doomadgee Shire Council buildings.

- Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council: 65kW of rooftop solar and upgrade to allow for integration with diesel generators that power the local grid. Stage 2 included 95kW of rooftop solar and 32 kilowatt-hours of battery storage installed on three council-owned buildings.
- Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council: 210kW of rooftop solar on eight buildings.
- Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council: 360kW of rooftop solar on 13 buildings.

A remote site funded under the Australian Renewable Energy Agency's ([ARENA](#)) Regional Australia Renewables Program was the [Barcaldine Remote Community Solar Farm](#) (BRCSF) which received \$22.8m and was completed in 2022 on a 90 hectare site, fringe-of-grid and near the Barcaldine Gas Power Plant. The project demonstrated network and improvement of network efficiency and reliability.

### ***What rules or policy does Queensland have for promoting energy storage?***

Regarding overall storage, firming and dispatchable capacity, Queensland is forecast to need 6,000MW of long-duration storage under a highly renewable system scenario, complemented by 3,000MW of grid-scale storage and up to 3,000MW of new low-to-zero emission gas-fuelled plants.

In June 2023, as part of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, the Queensland Government stated they will invest a further \$500 million for more large-scale and community batteries to enable Queensland's publicly owned energy businesses to invest in battery projects across the State.

The government has undertaken three stages of multi-year studies since 2016 for hydroelectric and pumped hydro energy storage (PHES) systems. This has identified favourable sites for a 5 gigawatt (GW) Pioneer-Burdekin project west of Mackay and a 2GW Borumba Dam project west of the Sunshine Coast. These projects are proposed to be state-owned, will provide multi-day storage, and engagement with First Nations people will occur as part of any work on identified PHES sites.

### ***Are there any policies or frameworks or programs in the jurisdiction that are relevant or have a focus on First Nations outcomes?***

In October 2022 the [Regional Energy Transformation Partnerships Framework](#) was released for consultation. This includes *Principle 6: Empower First Nations peoples*, which states:

*The Queensland Government will empower First Nations peoples as part of the energy transformation, underpinned by inclusive engagement to enhance opportunities for employment and business participation.*

The Government further states a commitment to ongoing engagement to identify what local Indigenous people want from the energy transformation in their communities and to deliver on that. This includes that the cultural values of the land are respected and maintained.

As part of the assessment process for renewable energy projects, the Queensland Government has also released [Solar Farm Guidelines](#) for communities, landholders and project proponents.

The Guide states that during feasibility and planning “*Engagement with Traditional Owners will focus on identifying, managing, or otherwise excluding areas of cultural heritage value. The proponent and Traditional Owners may need to continue or complete negotiations to finalise a*



*cultural heritage management plan (CHMP) for the life of the project*". The process is set out in the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld)* and *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld)*. Then in the development phase, beyond the cultural heritage management plan (CHMP) requirements that may occur, the Guidelines refer to further engagement for social sustainability, local industry participation or diversity initiatives. The operations phase refers to a focus on social sustainability and long-term community involvement for First Nations people.

### ***Does Queensland provide any support, funding, or policy levers for community energy projects or social / community housing electrification and solar / storage solutions?***

The Queensland Government doesn't currently provide any open programs for community energy or social/community housing. However, the Government recognises the growing role of distributed and customer energy resources in the electricity system. This is primarily led by rooftop solar customers, batteries, and now electric vehicles. Significant upgrades are needed at the distribution network level to facilitate more uptake in the future.

Regarding broad household incentives, the Queensland Government has not yet released its programs for the forthcoming year. However, they have stated the intent to create a smarter, integrated electricity system and to expand access to the benefits of technologies like solar and batteries to more Queenslanders.

The [Community Sustainability Action](#) grants provide funding to eligible community groups and individuals for innovative projects which seek to address climate change. Round 7 closed late 2022 and up to \$100,000 per application was available from a total pool of \$3m. Community facilities could apply for up to 30 kilowatt (kW) renewable energy systems, battery storage and energy efficiency.

For the 33 isolated microgrid systems across 39 Queensland communities, the [Isolated Networks Strategy 2030](#) sets out the ambition "*To enable community participation in energy supply and services in isolated networks to provide sustainable, cost effective and reliable solutions.*" The isolated networks are currently mostly powered by diesel with some customer-owned rooftop solar PV and centralised renewable energy installations. The strategy outlines the goal to transition to renewable energy by actively enabling predominantly rooftop solar, customer or community-owned and operated generation.

### ***Are there barriers to the placement of solar on First Nations housing?***

There are no unusual barriers to other types of housing assets for grid-connected First Nations housing stock.

Aside from Ergon Energy, all Queensland retailers can set their own [feed-in tariffs](#). Setting minimum and maximum tariffs is a common model and rates currently vary from 0c to 15c. For regional communities outside of South East Queensland, there is a flat rate tariff available which is currently sitting at 9.3c/kWh for 2022–23. The Government provides landlords and tenants with a [solar for rentals calculator](#) to help work out if installing solar is viable.

Currently, many First Nations communities located within the 33 isolated microgrid networks cannot connect more solar PV due to voltage constraints. Further, some of the isolated networks operate with prepaid cards for household and SME electricity and this does not allow for a solar feed-in tariff to incentivise these houses.



A [Solar for Rentals Trial](#) program ran from 2019 - 2020 in Bundaberg, Gladstone and Townsville and provided \$3,500 to landlords to share the value of installing solar systems. Yumba-Meta Ltd, an accommodation and services provider with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, had over 50 properties in its portfolio benefit.

The [Emergency Backstop Mechanism](#) requires that new and replacement systems of more than 10 kilovolt-amperes (kVA) and above are now fitted with a generation signalling device. This device will reduce the risk of state-wide power outages by switching these systems off for a short time when necessary.

### ***Does Queensland have programs or policies supporting jobs and skills outcomes and business development for First Nations?***

Under the [Paving the Way – First Nations Training Strategy](#), \$4 million in funding is available under the Indigenous Workforce and Skills Development Grant program to create training and employment opportunities for up to 800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that lead to good jobs in their communities. The first two rounds closed in May 2023 and funding will be available until June 2024.

The Government states the QREZ developments, should include opportunities to engage Indigenous businesses and genuine economic participation. Proponents are encouraged to use tools such as the [Black Business Finder](#) and [Supply Nation](#).

The [Queensland Government Building and Construction Training Policy](#) encourages skill and opportunity development for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relation to Queensland Government building and civil construction projects.

The [Buy Queensland 2023](#) Strategy and Policy aims to increase the use of local workforces in projects and particularly in regional and remote communities. Renewable energy projects could trigger several key requirements, including the application of Best Practice Principles for all major projects (>\$100 million).

The Strategy seeks to deliver outcomes such as:

- increase government procurement spend with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses to three percent
- boost access for suppliers including, for example, small and medium enterprises and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.

In addition, the [Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy](#) (QIPP) aims to:

- support Government agencies to target procurement activities to ensure Indigenous businesses can equitably access procurement spend, and
- support Indigenous businesses to successfully tender for Government contracts.

Participating in specialised training is another opportunity. The Government is funding a Hydrogen Training Centre of Excellence at Beenleigh, a Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Training facility at the Bohle TAFE campus in Townsville, and training facilities at Gladstone State High School and Electro Group Training to deliver renewable energy skills and training.

[Queensland's North West Minerals Province](#) development is a partnership with North West Queensland local governments, communities and industry. Under this work is a key diversification priority to strengthen services, employment outcomes and business opportunities for First Nations peoples.

***Information in this document should not be relied upon as legal advice. Each situation will be different and you should obtain and rely on legal advice for your own situation.***