

FIRST NATIONS CLEAN ENERGY STRATEGY ROUNDTABLE – WESTERN AUSTRALIA

30 & 31 OCTOBER | FREMANTLE

First Nations Clean Energy Strategy | WA (Fremantle) Roundtable

Location: Fremantle, SA

Dates: 30 and 31 October 2023

Participants: 124

What is the purpose of the Roundtables?

The First Nations Clean Energy Strategy (the Strategy) roundtables provide an opportunity for First Nations peoples and organisations to discuss what is important from their perspective and to outline the barriers and opportunities so they can meaningfully share in the benefits of the clean energy transition.

The roundtables also provide a forum for government and industry to better understand First Nations perspectives and collaborate on actions, policies, and programs that could be implemented as part of the Strategy.

Key themes captured during the WA Roundtable in Fremantle:

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
 - While Native Title has given First Nations people the ability to negotiate with government and industry, this can also 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, which they value for its cultural, spiritual and economic importance. This should be recognised by government and industry when the use of land towards clean energy projects is negotiated/valued
 - First Nations communities may risk losses of collateral and assets once clean energy projects conclude, or partners pull out of agreements. Clear risk mitigation mechanisms need to be in place 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.



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- b) First Nations people also want to be more than just employees or royalty recipients on large scale clean energy projects. They aspire to have equity stakes and directorships on larger projects so that they can 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 to negotiate contracts and agreements with government and industry will also support communities to protect their interests and ensure 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 to ensure homes are not only structurally sound to benefit from solar installations, but are also liveable, energy efficient and resilient to the impact of 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 ensure First Nations communities are equipped 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 on 'what has worked elsewhere'
 - Information sharing by government, including future energy demand forecasts, capacity building programs and available incentives
 - Information sharing by industry, including future clean energy trends and greater visibility on prospective project pipelines, which will enable communities to make more informed decisions on preferred partners and investors
- c) Roundtable participants recommended that collaboration can be further enhanced through fit-for-purpose governance structures. This entails consultation with the right representatives, including



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Prescribed Body Corporates (PBCs), agreed engagement protocols, a commitment by government and industry to increase their cultural acumen, partnership/joint venture frameworks, and safeguards against 'black cladding'.

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 learnt 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 which extend to future generations, while ensuring greater environmental protection and cultural preservation.
- b) Various roundtable participants expressed that they were inspired 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) While disparities prevail and socio-economic gaps in First Nations communities need to be closed, First Nations people are proud of their culture, heritage and achievements, and wish their successes 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 the 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.



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Organisations represented at the WA (Fremantle) Roundtable:

- Aboriginal Economic Development
- Alinta Energy
- ARC Training Centre for Healing Country
- ATCO Australia
- Banjima Native Title Aboriginal Corporation
- Binalup Aboriginal Corporation
- Binthart Resources/Gooljak Boodja
- Clean Energy Finance Corporation
- Curtin Institute For Energy Transition
- DDR Australia
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)
- Department of Communities (WA)
- Department of Foreign Affairs And Trade (DFAT)
- Department of Jobs Tourism Science and Innovation (WA)
- Department of Mines, Industry Regulation And Safety (WA)
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet (WA)
- Department of Training And Workforce Development (WA)
- Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (WA)
- Doorum Aboriginal Corporation
- Environmental Defenders Office
- First Nations Affairs (WA)
- First Nations Clean Energy Network
- Fisher Research Pty Ltd
- FNCEs Advisory Committee
- Fortescue
- Foundation For Indigenous Sustainable Health (FISH)
- GAP Consultants Pty Ltd
- Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers
- Gooring PBC
- Griffith University
- Heal WA Aboriginal Steering Group, Infrastructure WA
- Horizon Power
- Houston Legal
- Indigenous Clean Energy (Turtle Island)
- Indigenous Land & Sea Corporation
- Indigenous Mining and Civil Australia
- Industry Capability Network WA
- Inspirational Change
- Ips Management Consultants
- Jamukurnu Yapalikurnu Aboriginal Corporation
- K&L Gates
- Karajarri Traditional Lands Association
- Karri Karrak Aboriginal Corporation
- Kinjarling Indigenous Corporation
- Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corp
- Martuku Watkamutiku
- Moerk Water
- National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
- Ngadju Conservation Aboriginal Corporation
- Ngurrara Pty Ltd
- Nimanburr Aboriginal Corporation
- Noongar Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Noongar Land Enterprise Group
- NOPSEMA
- Norton Rose Fulbright
- Pilbara Solar
- Rangelands NRM
- RFF Australia
- Synergy
- Telethon Kids Institute
- Telstra
- Waalitj Hub
- Wajarri Enterprise Limited
- Western Power
- Workplace HSEQ Solutions