



Australian Renewable Energy Zones Conference

by informa ●●●

20 – 21 MAY 2026 | SWISSOTEL SYDNEY



SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

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|---|---|
|  <p>Mark Westbrook, <i>Chief Project Officer</i>, EnergyCo</p> |  <p>Adele McCarthy, <i>Executive Director Strategy & Planning</i>, VicGrid</p> |
|  <p>Geoff Petersen, <i>Partner</i>, Gilbert + Tobin</p> |  <p>Paul Peters, <i>CEO</i>, Energy Security Corporation</p> |
|  <p>Victoria Mollard, <i>Executive General Manager</i>, Australian Energy Market Commission</p> |  <p>Jacqui Fenwick, <i>Policy and Regulation Expert</i>, Baringa</p> |
|  <p>Joshua Baker, <i>Director</i>, Capella Capital</p> |  <p>Matt Moncrieff, <i>National First Nations Engagement Manager</i>, ACCIONA Energia</p> |
|  <p>Colin Crisafulli, <i>General Manager Future Grid and Asset Management</i>, Endeavour Energy</p> |  <p>Lily Morton, <i>Lawyer</i>, Gilbert + Tobin</p> |
|  <p>Renene Windsor, <i>Industry Director, Transmission & Distribution</i>, Aurecon</p> |  <p>Chester Li, <i>Regulatory Affairs Manager</i>, Potentia Energy</p> |
|  <p>Bart Sykes, <i>Regional Economic Development Manager</i>, Squadron Energy</p> |  <p>Stephanie Bashir, <i>Principal & Founder</i>, Nexa Advisory</p> |
|  <p>Claudia Hodge, <i>Project Manager- Community Development</i>, Community Power Agency</p> |  <p>Martin Russell, <i>Director, Environment & Planning</i>, Aurecon</p> |
|  <p>Dr Scott Dwyer, <i>Associate Professor and Research Director, Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF)</i>, University of Technology Sydney</p> |  <p>Jeff Drayton, <i>Mayor</i>, Muswellbrook Shire Council</p> |
|  <p>Tom McMahon, <i>Partner</i>, Mandala Partners</p> |  <p>Jess Kite, <i>Head of Community and Regional Development</i>, Squadron Energy</p> |
|  <p>Jessica Brown, <i>Director Strategy Partnerships and Engagement</i>, Dubbo Regional Council</p> |  <p>Anthea Middleton, <i>CEO</i>, Powering Skills Organisation</p> |
|  <p>Senior Representative, Transgrid</p> |  <p>Shai Richardson, <i>First Nations Officer</i>, Ausgrid</p> |

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8:30 Registration and Morning Coffee

9:00 **EVENT OPENING**

Alexandra Bennet, *Conference Director, Informa*

9:05 Opening remarks from the Chair

9:10 **Update on New South Wales REZ**

Mark Westbrook, *Chief Project Officer, EnergyCo*

9:35 **Progress on Victoria's Renewable Energy Zones**

Adele McCarthy, *Executive Director Strategy & Planning, VicGrid*

10:00 **Q&A**

Mark Westbrook, *Chief Project Officer, EnergyCo*

Adele McCarthy, *Executive Director Strategy & Planning, VicGrid*

10:20 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Policies, regulations, and state/local initiatives – A critical role in shaping the development and success of REZ

- Regulatory Complexity - How can governments harmonize regulations to create a more streamlined framework for REZ development?
- How can regulations strike a balance between safeguarding ecosystems and accelerating renewable energy deployment?
- What are the key elements of effective long-term policies for REZ, and how can they be implemented consistently across regions?
- How can REZ initiatives align with broader state and local priorities, such as job creation, economic growth, and climate resilience?
- What best practices can be adopted to expedite approval processes without compromising quality or stakeholder engagement?

Jacqui Fenwick, *Policy and Regulation Expert, Baringa Partners*

Chester Li, *Regulatory Affairs Manager, Potentia Energy*

10:50 Networking and refreshment break

11:20 Session to be advised



11:50 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Investment & Financing: Valuable insights, opportunities, risks and what can be done about project cost rises & blow outs?

- What makes REZ projects attractive to investors and stakeholders?
- Financing options?
- What are the key challenges, and how do they impact project delivery?
- Securing funding for large-scale REZ projects and transmission upgrades remains a challenge – What needs to be done?
- The effect transmission projects roll out has on investment decisions by developers
- What can be done to mitigate cost rises and blowouts in REZ projects?

Joshua Baker, *Director, Capella Capital*

Paul Peters, *CEO, Energy Security Corporation*

Mark Westbrook, *Chief Project Officer, EnergyCo*

12:20 **Regulatory fragmentation with REZ policy**

Geoff Petersen, *Partner, Gilbert + Tobin*

12:45 **Investments in Renewable Energy Zones: Insights, Challenges, and Opportunities**

- What's working & what's not working in Renewable Energy Zones?
- Pros and cons of Expanding Renewable Energy Zones
- Effectiveness of access rights and enabling faster project approvals
- Underwriting schemes: Effectiveness, impact, success stories & limitations

Stephanie Bashir, *Principal & Founder, Nexa Advisory*

1:15 Networking and lunch break

2:10 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Data Centre Precincts – Co-locating Data Centres with Wind, Solar & Battery Projects in Renewable Energy Zones (REZs)

- Power as the Key Constraint: For large-scale data centres, the primary limitation is access to power rather than land availability
- Barriers to new data centre projects: High land costs, lengthy connection timelines, and limited power availability
- Looking at some of the benefits of regional Locations: larger land parcels, better cooling potential, and access to essential supporting infrastructure, including gas pipelines and water resources
- Exploring the Future: Could the future of data centres extend beyond traditional grid reliance?
- Benefits to local Communities: Understanding the role data centres can play in regional development
- Current Landscape: With 78 data centre projects under development and 178 already operational, grid access in major hubs has become a critical bottleneck. What needs to be done?

Tom McMahon, *Partner, Mandala Partners*

Australian Renewable Energy Zones Conference

Wednesday 20 May 2026

DAY 1

2:40 Session to be advised

3:00 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Transmission Congestion and Curtailment: Challenges and solutions

- Upgrading and expanding the grid comes with a raft of challenge – What can we do to address these?
- Addressing transmission bottlenecks, curtailment, delays and cost blowouts
- How can the industry better share information to make decisions in an increasingly complex environment?
- Key insights from Transmission Planning Reports
- How is the current roll out of transmission projects affecting developers' investment decisions?

3:30 Networking and refreshment break

4:00 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Empowering First Nations Communities: Delivering genuine value and inclusion

- Strategies for ensuring Indigenous voices are central to renewable energy project planning and decision-making
- Examining policies that genuinely empower Indigenous leadership and participation in renewable energy initiatives
- Exploring innovative models that ensure equitable distribution of benefits from renewable energy projects
- Ensuring community benefits extend beyond initial project deployment

Matt Moncrieff, *National First Nations Engagement Manager, ACCIONA Energia*

Jess Kite, *Head of Community and Regional Development, Squadron Energy*

Shai Richardson, *First Nations Officer, Ausgrid*

4:30 **BESS's and their interplay with REZ development: Enhancing stability, reliability, resilience and security**

- Stability and Reliability: The critical role of batteries and energy storage
- Resilience Planning: Ensuring that REZ infrastructure is resilient to climate risks
- The role of energy storage in strengthening grid security and reducing reliance on peaking plants
- How can projects maximizing project value and securing competitive allocation within REZ?
- Futureproofing the grid

Victoria Mollard, *Executive General Manager, Economics and System Security, Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC)*

5:00 **Cost control: Insights into proven ways and lessons learned in Energy Infrastructure Design and Construction**

— Insights and Lessons Learned:

- > Proven strategies to control costs and maintain the pace and scale of the energy transition
 - > Examples of design decisions that appear cost-effective but often lead to inefficiencies
 - > Importance of making context-specific decisions for delivery efficiency in Australia
 - > Considering environmental offsets alongside commercial and macro benefits
 - > Structuring incentives to encourage public-private cooperation and flexibility
- Industry-Wide Opportunity:
- > The energy industry has the collective ability to influence costs
 - > Need for faster adoption of learnings from one project to another, including optimisations, cost reductions, and pushing limits
 - > Emphasis on fostering a consistent and collective cost mindset across all disciplines

Renée Windsor, *Industry Director, Transmission & Distribution, Aurecon*

5:30 **CLOSING** | Closing remarks

5:30 – 6:30 Networking drinks



8:30 Registration and Morning Coffee

9:00 **OPENING** | Opening remarks from the Chair

9:10 **Aligning infrastructure delivery with community value, enhancing business certainty and strengthening regional outcomes**

- Why workforce accommodation, cumulative infrastructure pressure and fragmented benefit-sharing are emerging as key risks in Renewable Energy Zones
- Introducing the Shared Value Masterplan: a coordinated planning framework that brings proponents, councils and communities together before impacts escalate
- How precinct-based workforce accommodation and regional workforce strategies can serve multiple projects while reducing cumulative impacts
- Practical steps to improve business certainty, align infrastructure investment with regional priorities, and build durable community support

Greg Ley, *Founding CEO and Director, Lecroma*

9:40 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Building Capacity and Skills

- Ensuring the state's energy transformation delivers jobs for regional communities
- Building a workforce capable of supporting REZ development is a long-term challenge
- What's being done to address the need for skilled workers given the shortages of engineering, construction, and maintenance expertise can significantly delay projects

Anthea Middleton, *CEO, Powering Skills Organisation*

Jessica Brown, *Director Strategy Partnerships and Engagement, Dubbo Regional Council*

10:10 Session to be advised

10:40 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Housing for renewable project workers – Is integration is the key?

- Exploring the significance of worker accommodation that not only supports towns but also fosters integration into the local community
- Potential for long-term community benefits – repurposing temporary worker villages into affordable housing, aged care facilities, or tourist accommodations
- Identifying opportunities to refurbish existing buildings to provide housing for renewable project workers
- Addressing concerns about the impact of temporary workers on local housing and rental markets
- Mobile accommodation solutions and staff retention strategies for the REZ sector
- Potential pressures on health services, and infrastructure

Bart Sykes, *Regional Economic Development Manager, Squadron Energy*

Jeff Drayton, *Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council*

11:10 Networking and refreshment break

11:40 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

Urban REZ (UREZ) – Turning cities into a Renewable Energy Zones and self-sufficient energy hubs

- How can UREZ balance demand, improve power quality and reliability, and deliver socio-economic benefits to communities?
- The potential for UREZ to transform urban distribution systems into smart grid building blocks
- Managing rapid DER growth while maintaining energy system reliability and cost-competitiveness
- Exploring the solutions: Layered energy management systems, metering, and communication infrastructure to optimize existing network assets
- Selecting UREZ sites: resource availability, network capability, and community engagement
- Discuss the importance of community-driven approaches in ensuring successful UREZ implementation.
- Examine the role of partnerships among communities, energy management entities, and commercial factors
- Explore how initial demonstration projects can serve as prototypes for broader deployment across Australia

Colin Crisafulli, *General Manager Future Grid and Asset Management, Endeavour Energy*

Dr Scott Dwyer, *Associate Professor and Research Director, Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF), University of Technology Sydney*



Australian Renewable Energy Zones Conference

Thursday 21 May 2026

DAY 2

12:10 The power of early decisions: Digital ecosystem brings biodiversity insights into infrastructure corridor planning

- The industry faces challenges in determining route and site positioning for energy infrastructure - How can risks be mitigated through data-driven, early decision-making?
- Early-stage decisions minimise the environmental impacts of a project and help set it up for delivery success
- A look at how upfront environmental and social considerations significantly enhance project viability and approval prospects
- Utilising digital environmental planning tools to develop early-stage models that support planning, design, assessment, and approvals.
- Demonstrating how integrating environmental planning with front-loaded design parameters help de-risk and safeguard site and route selection?
- Highlighting the benefits of incorporating biodiversity offset costs as part of early analysis provides an even more accurate view of total Capex requirements for construction?

Martin Russell, *Director, Environment & Planning, Aurecon*
Senior Representative, **Transgrid**

12:40 Session to be advised

1:10 Networking and Lunch break

2:00 Strategic Offset Delivery Agreements: opportunities & benefits for landholders, communities and biodiversity

Lily Morton, *Lawyer, Gilbert + Tobin*

2:30 Benefits sharing strategies for communities in renewable energy zones

- Delivery models and enabling policy to support socially equitable community co-investment in renewable energy
- How to design and implement effective tailored regional benefit sharing programs such as how to address engagement fatigue, and First Nations self-determination
- Tackling long-term challenges and create lasting benefits such as social services and community housing

Claudia Hodge, *Project Manager - Community Development, Community Power Agency*

3:00 Session to be advised

3:30 **CLOSING** | Closing remarks from the Chair & Close of Conference



SPONSORSHIP AND EXHIBITION OPPORTUNITIES

This well-established industry conference, with a great line up of industry experts, is the key meeting place for your industry. Where policymakers, energy leaders, and developers will gather to shape Australia's renewable energy future.

This event is a great occasion to get together as an industry and share essential learnings and provides an opportunity to arrange meetings, and network with your industry colleagues both current and new.

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	Book & pay until 20 April 2026				Book & pay from 21 April 2026		
Conference Package	PRICE	GST	TOTAL	SAVE	PRICE	GST	TOTAL
Two day conference	\$3,550	\$355	\$3,905	\$400	\$3,950	\$395	\$4,345

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