

## UPC Renewables believes that the Uralla community should benefit from hosting solar developments.

To help guide its support for this principle, UPC commissioned the not for profit group Community Power Agency to lead the development of the New England Solar Farm Community Benefit Sharing Initiative.

The Community Power Agency gathered ideas and feedback on this plan via one-on-one meetings, a community workshop and online feedback. A Community Reference Group (CRG) reviewed and considered these ideas to develop a list of recommended projects for the Community Benefit Sharing Initiative to be included as part of the development application for the New England Solar Farm.

Projects would be open to applicants from the Uralla Shire and the Kelly's Plain and Dangarsleigh areas.

As part of its proposal, UPC will support community projects by providing funding of \$250 for every megawatt (AC) of power generating capacity installed at the New England Solar Farm, a year over the 25 year working life of the solar farm. The contribution will start at \$100,000 beginning from construction.

The CRG recommended that if the solar farm is approved that a Discretionary Trust would be established to oversee the initiative and the long term delivery of the community projects.

The feasibility of each project will be investigated if the application for the New England Solar Farm is approved, with continual oversight from a local community representative group.

### Vision

*The community adjacent to the solar farm and the broader Uralla Shire community share in the benefits from the New England Solar Farm.*

### Principles

- Delivers a broad range of benefits to the local community
- Enhances the unique nature of Uralla Shire particularly its history and high levels of community involvement and connection
- Showcases Uralla region as a sustainable energy leader
- Delivers ongoing and lasting financial, social and environmental benefits to the community by:
  - › Supporting community groups and initiatives
  - › Helping to resource education and skill development
  - › Supporting local business and local job creation
  - › Building local sustainability and resilience such as climate change readiness
  - › Seeking to address social equity issues such as youth opportunities and supporting indigenous culture; and
  - › Reducing energy costs for households, community groups and local businesses.

## Proposed Projects

*The Community Reference Group recommended the following types of projects to be explored as part of the Community Benefit Sharing Initiative.*



### Revolving Loan Program

*To fund no-interest loans for energy efficiency and solar fit outs, energy audits and advice.*

A revolving fund of between \$750,000 and \$1.5 million would be built up over time to provide no-interest loans to local households, not-for-profit community groups, public buildings and businesses. The loans would be used for energy efficiency retrofitting, solar PV installation, solar hot water & water efficiency improvements. Loan re-payments are returned to the funding pool and new funding is allocated each year until it reaches the desired level. The loans would continue to be offered each year, even after the 25 year life of the solar farm.

The first year of the Revolving Loan Fund could prioritise solar PV for community buildings, in order to have the broadest and most immediate impact. This could include sporting clubs or community buildings like halls or preschools. The fund would also support energy education via energy audits and advice.



### Grants Program

Funding for easy to access grants for local projects and activities that promote education, arts, sustainability, active lifestyles and community development. The program would focus on grants for:

- Schools particularly in STEM and creative and active learning.
- Scholarships that support local people undertaking apprenticeships, short-courses, workshops, TAFE diplomas and University degrees.
- General projects such as bush regeneration, sporting equipment for clubs, street tree planting, electric vehicle charging stations and more.



### Community Program

The CRG has recommended that a part-time Community Coordinator be employed to administer the Community Benefit Sharing Initiative and coordinate activities for young people and other community members. For example, working with existing local clubs to arrange sporting activities such as tennis coaching or swimming program or support for after school activities.

The Community Coordinator would also publish a monthly community newsletter to showcase community news and events, help publicize funding opportunities and update the community on projects, the solar farm and energy education.

**Next Steps** *UPC has incorporated the CRG's recommendations into the planning application for the New England Solar Farm and has begun developing the Delivery and Design Plans for the Grants Program. Following approval of the project, UPC intends to announce the initial round of the Community Benefit Sharing Initiative in time for the start of construction in mid-2020. The first year of the initiative will focusing primarily on the Grants Program.*