

# First Nations Clean Energy Strategy

## Pilbara, Western Australia Roundtable

Location: Port Hedland, Western Australia

Dates: 27 and 28 March 2023

Participants: 70 over two days

*\* A full list of organisations is available below.*

### What is the purpose of the roundtables?

The First Nations Clean Energy Strategy (the Strategy) roundtables provide an opportunity for First Nations people to discuss what is important from their perspective and to outline the barriers and opportunities so they can 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 from the Pilbara, Western Australia Roundtable

#### **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 to the rollout of these types of renewables needing to be overcome.
- c) Likewise, the lack of energy 'equity' in the Pilbara was highlighted – with First Nations communities that experience high energy costs and low reliability located adjacent to large-scale renewable energy projects.
- d) Community highlighted the need to ensure that projects or programs established to tackle these issues are 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 by First Nations communities directly, were highlighted as ambitions by attendees. These projects could support communities to go 'off grid' and be independent of centralised utilities; or could be built to sell electricity into the grid itself, providing communities with a steady income.

- b) A lack of available capital, as well as lack of experience with renewables specifically and large commercial projects generally, were highlighted as the 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 the clean energy transition in the Pilbara being undertaken in a cohesive way for First Nations communities, 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 generally was highlighted as a challenge for First Nations people to engage with the myriad 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) Additionally, providing education and training close to where First Nations people live so they can benefit from the construction, operation and maintenance of projects was highlighted as important for ongoing job and business creation opportunities.

### **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, with community members unsure of what these new leases would mean for their right to access land.
- b) Concerns were raised about the potential to lose access to cultural sites because of clean energy projects and a lack of knowledge regarding the impact of these projects on the land.

### **5. 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 (FPIC), including community's right to withhold consent, was highlighted as critically important.
- b) Government improving their transparency and having longer negotiation periods for consultation processes.

## Attendee Organisations

Alinga Energy Consulting Ptd Ltd

Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Cwlth)

Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation

Central Queensland University

Cheeditha Energy

Claypan Services Pty Ltd

Cundaline Resources

Curtin University

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Cwlth)

Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (WA)

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (WA)

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (WA)

Department of Primary Industries And Regional Development (WA)

Department of the Premier & Cabinet (WA)

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (WA)

First Nations Clean Energy Network

Fortescue

Yinhawangka Aboriginal Corporation

Goorring Aboriginal Corporation

Horizon Power

IBN Group

Impact Investment Partners

Karajarri Traditional Lands Association

Kariyarra Aboriginal Corporation

Kariyarra Enterprises

Miriuwung and Gajerrong (MG) Corporation

National Indigenous Australians Agency (Cwlth)

North Regional TAFE

Nyamal Aboriginal Corporation

Nyamba Buru Yawuru Limited

Original Power

Pilbara Development Commission

Pwc's Indigenous Consulting

Wajarri Enterprises

Wuggubun Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation