



# ENHANCING POSITIVE SOCIAL OUTCOMES FROM WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT

## Evaluating community engagement and benefit-sharing in Australia

### GUIDANCE FOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS: SUPPORTING POSITIVE SOCIAL OUTCOMES FROM WIND DEVELOPMENT

- > **INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS AND NGOS PLAY A ROLE IN ENCOURAGING BETTER PRACTICES.**
- > **KNOWLEDGE-SHARING, AWARENESS-RAISING AND ADVOCACY ARE IMPORTANT ROLES SUPPORTING SOCIAL OUTCOMES FROM WIND DEVELOPMENT.**
- > **SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES TO PARTICIPATE IN WIND DEVELOPMENT ENHANCES SOCIAL OUTCOMES.**

Effective community engagement and benefit-sharing practices increase social acceptance of wind developments, creating a win-win for developers and the local community. Drawn from the research report *Enhancing Positive Social Outcomes from Wind Farm Development*, this briefing paper summarises the key areas where industry associations and non-government organisations (NGOs) can play an important role.

#### **INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS AND NGOS PLAY A ROLE IN ENCOURAGING BETTER PRACTICES**

Wind developer staff that are on-the-ground in communities are seeking to undertake meaningful engagement, while meeting a range of requirements associated with the commercial realities of developing large infrastructure projects. This includes balancing a range of stakeholder expectations alongside technical, finance, policy and timing pressures. Despite this complexity, a shift has begun in the Australian wind industry towards valuing and practicing better community engagement and benefit-sharing. Industry associations and NGOs play a role in encouraging this shift.

The research identified that initiatives that encourage better community engagement and benefit-sharing practices include guidebooks, advocacy, education campaigns and lobbying efforts undertaken by NGOs such as the Australian Wind Alliance and industry associations such as the Clean Energy Council. It also identified the central role of the ACT Government's Renewable Energy Reverse Auction, which required community engagement as an assessment criteria. This has been further built upon by the Victorian Government's Renewable Energy Reverse Auctions. Such initiatives have helped to attune investors to community acceptance issues, and increased the likelihood of power purchase agreements (or other mechanisms) only being signed where there is evidence of positive social outcomes.

#### **KNOWLEDGE-SHARING ABOUT BETTER PRACTICE**

Industry associations and NGOs play a role in encouraging better practices of community engagement and benefit-sharing through knowledge-sharing. This includes initiatives to encourage peer-to-peer learning, resource sharing, research and resource development, training courses, workshops and conferences. The research identified a reluctance among developers to share details of community engagement and benefit-sharing plans due to concerns over commercially sensitive information. However, it was also identified that sharing stories and methods of success is key to shifting the culture of the industry in a positive direction. NGOs assist in wind industry peer-to-peer learning and dialogue, including through wind farm tours and open days.

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## AWARENESS RAISING AND ADVOCACY

The research points to the importance of partnerships between NGOs and developers in supporting the social conditions of broad support for renewable energy development through popular education campaigns, awareness raising and advocacy efforts. At times, this may involve encouraging effective two-way communication between developers and communities by providing a conduit between the two.

Industry associations and NGOs also play an important role in political advocacy and lobbying to create policy conditions conducive to enhancing social outcomes from wind development. This includes undertaking research and drafting briefing papers on ways that regulators and policy can support better practice community engagement and benefit-sharing.

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY

NGOs assist in building opportunities between wind developers and local businesses and training organisations. Supporting local businesses and tradespeople to understand and respond to the needs of wind development can encourage local procurement and result in greater local involvement and benefit from wind development.

This research was conducted by Jarra Hicks, Nina Hall, Taryn Lane and Emily Wood and supported by the Clean Energy Council. It provides a snapshot of current community engagement and benefit-sharing practices in Australian wind farms, thus creating an evidence base for improving social outcomes.

To read the full report visit [cleanenergycouncil.org.au/windreport](http://cleanenergycouncil.org.au/windreport).

