



## **Sustainability Advisory Committee**

**Thursday 20 April 2023  
6.00pm  
Council Chambers  
209 Comur Street, Yass**

# SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the Sustainability Advisory Committee will be held in Council Chambers 209 Comur Street, Yass, on Thursday 20 April 2023, commencing at 6.00pm

## AGENDA

Page No.

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

#### **1. Apologies**

#### **2. Declarations of Interests**

#### **3. Confirmation of Minutes**

Minutes of Sustainability Advisory Committee held on 31 January 2023

#### **4. Reports**

4.1 Draft Sustainability Policy & Sustainability Assessment Framework..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4.2 Program of Current and Future Policy and Strategic Reviews..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4.3 Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-2027 and Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-2027 Action Plan ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4.4 FOGO Threshold Questions Paper ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4.5 Electric Vehicle Charging Feasibility Study..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4.6 Environmental Upgrade Financing..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4.7 Town Power 2GW Regional Renewable Energy Projects..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

#### **5. Next Meeting – 18 May 2023**



## **Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee**

**Tuesday 31 January 2023**

6.00pm

Council Chambers

209 Comur Street, Yass

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# Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee held on 31 January 2023

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## **Present**

Cr Adrian Cameron (Chair), Peter Davidson, Ana Wardle (via Teams), Saan Ecker (via Teams), Luke McAlary, Caitlin Nelson, Alex Tewes, Alison Elvin (6.06pm)

## **Also Present**

Lynette Safranek – Director Corporate & Community, Tony Stevens – Manager Facility and Waste Assets, and Shirree Garland – Corporate Planning & Executive Support Officer

Meeting opened at 6.00pm

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

### **1. Apologies**

Nicole Elliott and John Connelly

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

Caitlin Nelson declared a non-significant declaration of interest in Item 4.5 – Waste Management Update, due to her employment with the ACT Government – currently involved in re-development of ACT recycling facility.

### **3. Confirmation of Minutes**

#### **COMMITTEE DECISION**

*That the minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee held on 7 November 2022 be taken as read and confirmed.*

### **4. Reports**

The Chair advised that a late report on Pre Budget Submission had been circulated to members, but not placed on the agenda, would be discussed under Other Business.

#### **4.1 REVISED DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY POLICY**

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#### **SUMMARY**

At its 7 November 2022 meeting the Committee agreed that further work should be undertaken on the draft Sustainability Policy and that the Sustainability Assessment Framework document should be finalised and included with the Policy. Council staff were also to provide, where possible, additional data to enable the completion of benchmarks and points of comparison in the Framework document.

Finally, it was agreed that a Councillor Workshop with representatives from the Sustainability Committee should be sought to make a presentation on the draft policy once it was completed.

#### **COMMITTEE DECISION**

*That the revised Sustainability Policy and the finalised Sustainability Assessment Framework, incorporating minor amendments, be endorsed by Committee members.*

*(McAlary/Nelson)*

## Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee held on 31 January 2023

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### COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

*That representatives of the Sustainability Advisory Committee brief Councillors individually on the Sustainability Policy and Sustainability Assessment Framework with the aim of both the Policy and Framework being reported to the March Council meeting.*

*(McAlary/Davidson)*

### 4.2 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN WORKING PARTY

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#### SUMMARY

At its November 2022 meeting the Committee discussed the establishment of a Climate Change Action Plan Working Party.

#### COMMITTEE DECISION

*That the verbal report on the establishment of a Climate Change Action Plan be noted.*

**ACTION:** Director Corporate & Community to arrange further discussions with the Climate Change Action Plan Working Party with the Director Planning & Environment and Media & Communications staff.

### 4.3 DRAFT SOUTH-EAST AND TABLELANDS REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN

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#### SUMMARY

The NSW Government has published the South East & Tablelands Regional Transport Plan with a horizon of 2041. The Plan is currently on public exhibition and submissions on the draft Plan must be made by Friday 24 February 2023.

#### COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

*That Committee acknowledge that Council will be providing a submission on the draft South East & Tablelands Regional Transport Plan, taking on board issues raised by the Committee.*

### 4.4 COMMITTEE PROCESSES AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

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#### SUMMARY

At the November 2022 Committee meeting a report on Committee Processes and Working Arrangements was deferred for further discussion and consideration at a future meeting. The November 2022 report is now re-presented.

## Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee held on 31 January 2023

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### COMMITTEE DECISION

*That the Sustainability Advisory Committee formalise roles for the provision of secretarial support and the ongoing work program of the Committee, including the development of meeting agendas, the preparation of minutes and liaison between members and Council, and establishing responsibilities for the ongoing work of the Sustainability Advisory Committee.*

### 4.5 WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

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#### SUMMARY

To present an update report on waste management activities.

#### COMMITTEE DECISION

*That the update report on waste management be noted.*

### OTHER BUSINESS

### 4.6 PRE BUDGET SUBMISSION

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#### SUMMARY

Discussion was held on the report circulated prior to the meeting. The Director of Corporate & Community advised that the Chief Executive Officer and herself had discussed the report and advised that the contents of the report were deemed to be outside the Terms of Reference of the Committee. The report should either be provided to Council as a Notice of Motion or discussed at the Councillor Budget Workshop.

The Chair and members advised that the report was provided with the aim of providing advice.

Advisory letter with submission to be provided to staff. Chair to have further discussions with Committee members out of session prior to letter being sent to staff.

### 5. Next Meeting

Tuesday 4 April 2023, at 6.00 pm in Council Chambers.

The meeting closed at 7.19 p.m.

## 4.1 DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY POLICY & SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

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### SUMMARY

In light of the Council decision in February 2023 to simply note the recommendations from the Committee on the draft Sustainability Policy and Sustainability Assessment Policy, this report suggests a way forward to revise the draft Sustainability Policy and for the Committee use the Sustainability Assessment Framework as a means of setting its priorities.

### RECOMMENDATION

*That:*

- *The draft Sustainability Policy be revisited to better reflect the corporate format for policy documents.*
- *The Sustainability Assessment Framework not be part of the Sustainability Policy.*
- *The Sustainability Assessment Framework be adjusted to remove the financial sustainability section and be used by the Committee as a tool to set priorities.*
- *The priorities for the Committee emerging from the Strategic Assessment Framework be:*
  - *The design of a Food & Garden Organics service.*
  - *A review of the current trends and approaches for Council to move to Electric Vehicles.*
  - *Engagement with other Advisory Committees on common interests.*
  - *A community led (Council supported) Climate Change Action Plan.*

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### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

### POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Guidelines for Advisory Committees and Committees of Council

### REPORT

In January 2023 the Committee recommended that Councillors be informed individually of the draft Sustainability Policy and Sustainability Assessment Framework.

The Committee addresses Council via its reports and recommendations. It is acknowledged that there are some complexities in the draft policy and framework which would be more appropriately discussed in a Councillor Workshop. A workshop was organised and held on 14 February 2023 with Committee members provide the opportunity to address Councillors on the policy and framework.

The Committee minutes and the discussions from the Workshop were presented to the February 2023 Council meeting.

The commentary in the report to Council on the Committee's minutes and the Councillor Workshop indicated there were some concerns with the draft policy and the assessment framework e.g.

- Both the policy and the framework need some further work to better reflect the corporate format for policy documents.
- The financial sustainability section in Part 2 of the Framework is not necessary. Council staff are responsible for preparing the statements and oversight is provided by Office of Local Government, NSW Audit Office and Council's participation in the CRJO Audit Risk & Improvement Committee. An additional oversight is not considered necessary.



- The framework has highlighted some priorities to focus the Committee and is a useful tool for the Committee however it is not necessary for it to be included in a policy. The priorities identified for the Committee to focus its advice on include:
  - The design of a Food & Garden Organics service
  - A review of the current trends and approaches for Council to move to Electric Vehicles
  - Engagement with other Advisory Committees on common interests
  - A community led (Council supported) Climate Change Action Plan

These priorities could be part of the Committee's work program.

A revised recommendation was presented to Council that the draft policy be further refined (based on the commentary on the minutes) and the Sustainability Assessment Framework be used as a tool by the Committee to determine its priorities rather than included in the policy.

At the February 2023 Council meeting, Council noted the minutes and only adopted the Committee recommendation relating to the Regional Transport Plan.

As a result this leaves the policy and framework recommendation in a bit of 'no man's land' at present. Arguably the recommendation was simply noted, and no further action determined. This means that the Committee can either not proceed any further with the draft policy and framework or take a revised approach to progressing the draft policy and framework.

To progress the work by the Committee it is suggested that:

- The draft Sustainability Policy be revisited to better reflect the corporate format for policy documents. This could be simply a statement of the priorities that the Committee intends to focus on to meet the objectives of the Community Strategic Plan. A revised version of the Sustainability Policy is included in **Attachment A** and is also takes a similar approach to the University of Newcastle *Environmental Sustainability Policy (Dec 2022)*.
- The *Sustainability Assessment Framework* not be part of the *Sustainability Policy*
- The *Sustainability Assessment Framework* be adjusted to remove the financial sustainability section and be used by the Committee as a tool to set its priorities.
- The priorities for the Committee emerging from the *Strategic Assessment Framework* be:
  - The design of a Food & Garden Organics service
  - A review of the current trends and approaches for Council to move to Electric Vehicles
  - Engagement with other Advisory Committees on common interests
  - A community led (Council supported) Climate Change Action Plan

An additional priority is for the Committee to provide Council with comments on the *Regional Waste & Sustainability Materials Strategy 2022-27* and *Action Plan* prepared by the Canberra Region Joint Organisation (refer separate report).

The Committee can continue to use the revised *Strategic Assessment Framework* to reconsider priorities once the current priority projects have been completed.

**ATTACHMENTS:** A. Revised Sustainability Policy

## 4.2 PROGRAM OF CURRENT AND FUTURE POLICY AND STRATEGIC REVIEWS

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### SUMMARY

To present an update on a program of current and future policy and strategic reviews.

### RECOMMENDATION

*That the report on the development of a program of current and future policy and strategic reviews be noted.*

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### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil at this stage

### POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Community Engagement Strategy

### REPORT

A program of current and future policies or strategic reviews has not yet been undertaken as the Governance vacancies have not yet been filled.

All policies currently have a review time frame and it is up to the policy author to undertake a review. If needed amendments are made (e.g. legislative changes) and the revised policy is presented to Council for consideration. If there are any significant changes then the revised policy is placed on public exhibition for wider community comment. If the revisions are only administrative in nature, public exhibition is not undertaken.

Strategic Plans are generally reviewed every 5 years other than plans with a legislated review period (eg Integrated Planning and Reporting documents).

Once the Governance recruitment has been completed work on the development of a program can be prepared.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

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## 4.3 REGIONAL WASTE & SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS STRATEGY 2022-2027 AND REGIONAL WASTE & SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS STRATEGY 2022-2027 ACTION PLAN

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### SUMMARY

Council has referred the *Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-27* and *Action Plan* developed through the Canberra Region Joint Organisation to the Committee for comment.

### RECOMMENDATION

*That Committee members provide comments on the Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-27 and Action Plan for recommendation to Council.*

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### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil at this stage

### POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-27
- Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-27 Action Plan

### REPORT

#### 1. Introduction

Council recently considered the recommendations from the December 2022 Canberra Region Joint Organisation Board meeting on the *Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-27* and *Action Plan*. (refer [Attachment A](#) and [B](#)).

The Board endorsed the strategy and action plan and determined to refer the strategy to each member Council for endorsement. While staff have had some input into the preparation of the Strategy this is the first time Council has seen the report.

Council have determined to refer the strategy and action plan to the Sustainability Advisory Committee for comment.

It should be noted that the strategy makes reference to a draft 2017 report on waste which is included in [Attachment C](#).

#### 2. Background

The Strategy has a vision of protecting regional communities and optimising economic development through better resource recovery and waste management practices. It references the importance of:

- (i) supporting the circular economy
- (ii) supporting state-based net zero emission initiatives and
- (iv) the value of sustainable procurement.

The Strategy specifically considers how the region can:

- Identify opportunities to provide existing waste services more efficiently and consider the viability of services provided by member Councils in the region
- Identify opportunities for member Councils to utilise waste assets and resources in the most efficient manner to maximise waste avoidance, reduction and resource recovery
- Review existing regional co-operation and co-ordination activities
- Identify opportunities to deal with problem wastes in the area

- Consider regional community education strategies
- Explore emerging or innovative waste management developments

The Strategy notes that since 2018/19, the residual waste stream, which comprises more than 50% of the total material generated in the CRJO area, has steadily increased resulting in a significant amount of waste being landfilled. It is anticipated that with the introduction of FOGO, residual waste volumes will decline slightly. However, the Strategy projects that the waste stream will continue to grow towards 2037/38 and that the residual waste stream will remain the largest component.

The Strategy also lists existing public and private waste infrastructure, identifies regional challenges such as transport costs and sets out opportunities for action. These are translated into 51 actions in the Action Plan. The three major priorities are:

- Meeting future infrastructure and service needs
- Reducing carbon-to atmosphere emissions from waste
- Protecting the environment and human health

Nine key performance indicators are identified against which progress can be assessed, including annual reductions in waste per person, recovery rates per person, reductions in plastics and litter, a reduction on organics to landfill, etc.

### 3. Comments

The Strategy is perfectly well structured in that it shows the clear relationship between chosen actions and the Strategy's objectives. It also then ties those actions to set time frames – Year 1, Years 2 and 3, and Years 4 and 5 – and to the appropriate KPI's.

In most cases, however, the actions are limited in ambition. For example, they are focused on the need for further research or investigation. Others propose subject-specific strategies be developed or discussions be scheduled amongst interested parties to try and reach agreement. Still others are concerned with education, communication, and information sharing tasks.

Given this limited ambition, the actions can likely be achieved by the CRJO if properly resourced, and there is limited risk for Council in relying upon this work being done by the CRJO. That is, if they fail it places no particularly burden on Council.

At issue is the degree to which the CRJO can realistically achieve the more critical and ambitious actions it has set for itself and whether Council can rely on the CRJO getting the job done. In this regard, particular attention is drawn to:

- **Action 11 – implement regional procurement for metal collection, organics processing, concrete crushing, solar panel collection, kerbside collections and/or mattresses or any other key material streams; and Action 13 – develop a regional solution to FOGO processing.**

In respect of these two actions, the reality is that individual members of the CRJO have their own strategies, plans, infrastructure and contractual arrangements and this makes it highly unlikely the CRJO will be successful in brokering collective action; certainly not in the short term.

As such, Yass Valley should not delay its efforts to source or build its own FOGO processing capacity in the hope that the CRJO will provide the answer. Further delay will only prove more costly.

- **Action 14 - Establish a mobile CRC for Yass, Hilltops and Upper Lachlan** – it is difficult to judge whether a mobile CRC can be established within a one-year timeframe but it is more likely to come off as a joint initiative, given that size and volume seem to be the two issues historically holding it back. Note that while preference has been given to date in funding CRC's in high density areas, this has not precluded regional LGA's applying for funding and receiving it if they have mounted a strong case.
- **Action 20 - Investigate an online regional information and data collection, dashboard and hosting platform/portal** – is only an investigatory proposal but the likelihood of successfully

developing such a system of dashboard reporting across jurisdictions in the near future seems remote. As such, Council should not hold off doing its own work to improve its data collection, analysis and reporting now.

- **Action 32 - Establish a MoU with ACT No Waste for joint funding and collaboration** – and **Action 39 - Cross Jurisdictional Regional Illegal Dumping Strategy** – are also to be achieved in the short-term and are equally remote possibilities. As such, Council should not delay its own efforts to seek waste-related grant funding and address illegal dumping activities within the LGA, in the expectation that the CRJO will somehow deliver the funding and provide a solution to the cross-border dumping issue.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Strategy highlights:

- The degree to which Council's service offering is limited in comparison to its peers (refer Table 4.2 summary of service infrastructure and offerings across jurisdictions along with Appendix C)
- The fact that Yass Valley is the only Council which does not have an up-to-date and formally adopted waste strategy (refer page 11 of Action Plan).

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-27
- B. Regional Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-27 Action Plan
- C. Draft Yass Valley Waste Strategy 2017-2027

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## 4.4 FOGO THRESHOLD QUESTIONS PAPER

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### SUMMARY

The Sustainability Advisory has identified it can assist Council in the transition to a FOGO collection in a number of areas. Firstly, the scope and design of a scheme appropriate to Yass Valley. Further it may be able to assist in developing applications for grant funding and, finally, in engaging the community once Council has settled upon a preferred approach. As a first step in this task the Committee has developed a draft paper which, amongst other things, sets out relevant threshold questions for resolution.

### RECOMMENDATION

*That:*

- 1. The threshold questions paper be further refined by Council staff.*
- 2. Members propose to Council that a joint workshop involving Committee members, relevant staff and Councillors be held to work through threshold questions.*
- 3. Subject to the outcome of that workshop, a strategy be developed for broader engagement with the general public and relevant community stakeholders on threshold issues.*

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### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The introduction of a FOGO service will have financial implications for Council which needs to be identified as part of the design of a scheme.

### POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Waste Management Policy

### REPORT

The design of a FOGO scheme for Yass Valley was identified as a priority through the work on the Strategic Assessment Framework undertaken by the Committee.

According to the Australian Government's [National Waste Policy Action Plan](#) organic waste is one of the main waste types sent to landfill. It creates greenhouse gas emissions and costs households thousands of dollars each year. Organics like food and garden waste are valuable resources that can be harnessed and returned to productive use, turned into compost to improve and fertilise soil, or rescued to provide food for people and animals.

Audits of residential kerbside residual waste bins in NSW shows:

- In areas where Councils do not provide organics collection, 54% of waste in the landfill bin is food and organics waste
- In areas where Council provide a garden organics collection but not a food organics collection, 41% of waste in the landfill bin is food and organics waste

As outlined in NSW Government's new [Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy](#), the separate collection of food and garden organics from all NSW households is required by 2030.

A total of 43 Councils in NSW already provide a FOGO service.

To help with the transition to FOGO and other waste initiatives, the NSW Government will invest \$65M over five years from FY2023 with \$46M allocated towards FOGO implementation by LGA's. This funding will support the rollout of new collection services, the development of more processing capacity and a State-wide education campaign that will help households adjust to the changes and improve their recycling habits.

The attached paper (refer **Attachment A**) provides:

- A summary of the environmental financial, regulatory and customer service-related reasons for introducing FOGO collection services
- A brief overview of the organics composting market at this time
- Relevant recent local case studies and costings
- A series of threshold questions that need to be addressed regarding design and implementation of a FOGO collection service in Yass Valley
- A series of second-order questions to be resolved once threshold matters are determined

**ATTACHMENTS:** A. FOGO Collection Service - Rationale, Case Studies and Threshold Questions

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## 4.5 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING FEASIBILITY STUDY

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### SUMMARY

To inform the Committee of an EV Feasibility Study being offered to Council in the Canberra Region Joint Organisation. The study will enable Councils to identify suitable charging and obtain a better understanding of key cost and technical parameters of the technology.

### RECOMMENDATION

*That:*

- 1. The report of the Electric Vehicle Charging Feasibility Study be noted and Council's involvement in the project be endorsed.*
- 2. Progress reports on the study be presented to future meetings of the Committee.*

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### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

### POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Community Strategic Plan – EN.2 Strategic Objective - Adopt environmental sustainability practices

### REPORT

The NSW Office of Energy & Climate Change have offered to undertake an Electric Vehicle (EV) Feasibility Study for Hilltops, Upper Lachlan, Snowy Monaro, Bega, Wingecarribee, Goulburn, Yass, Queanbeyan-Palerang, and Snowy Valleys.

NSW Office of Energy & Climate Change have reached out to Canberra Region Joint Organisation as part of the NSW Government's commitment to Net Zero. The Sustainable Councils Program assists Regional Councils in reducing carbon emissions.

NSW Office of Energy & Climate Change are currently seeking interest from select Regional Councils to offer them a free EV Feasibility Study, funded by the Sustainable Councils Program. The study will enable Councils to identify suitable Destination and Fast-Charging sites, and better understand key cost and technical parameters of the technology.

The feasibility study, paid for by the Sustainable Councils Program, will prepare Councils for installing EV infrastructure and support the EV transition in our region. It may also prepare Councils to apply for the NSW Government grants offered for Destination and Fast-Charging EV grants coming available this year.

Council interest in participating in the study has been registered and staff attended an initial meeting on 24 March 2023.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil



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## 4.6 ENVIRONMENTAL UPGRADE FINANCING

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### SUMMARY

Environmental Upgrade Financing is an innovative financing mechanism made under NSW Legislation which allows building owners to repay a loan for upgrades through a Local Council charge on land. The feasibility of Council actively supporting such a financing mechanism is considered worth further investigation, both in terms of its environmental benefit and economic development potential.

### RECOMMENDATION

*That:*

- 1. The opinion of the Economic Development Advisory Committee be sought as to the possible level of demand for environmental upgrade financing in Yass Valley.*
- 2. Subject to that advice, Council consider further actions to investigate the feasibility of operating an Environmental Upgrade Finance Program in the Yass Valley including an assessment of its legal implications and any financial risks.*

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### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Default on payments becomes an additional financial and administrative activity for Council staff.

### POLICY & LEGISLATION

- *Local Government Act 1993*

### REPORT

#### 1. Background

Environmental Upgrade Financing, sometimes referred to as Building Upgrade Finance, is a type of loan made possible under Legislation in NSW, Victoria and SA which allows a lender, with the assistance of a Local Council, to fund environmental upgrades to private property which might otherwise struggle to obtain a loan.

The unique aspect to the mechanism is that the loan is secured against the land, rather than the business itself which is often prohibitive in that such debt usually needs to be kept on “the books” for years or raised against personal property, eg. the family home.

Under the mechanism an Environmental Upgrade Charge is raised against the land in question and quarterly repayments are collected, just like Council rates, and forwarded to the lender until the full amount and interest has been paid off. The details of the loan are documented upfront by an Environmental Upgrade Agreement signed by the business, the lender and Council.

Use of this financing mechanism is specifically restricted to paying for works that improve the energy, water or environmental efficiency and overall sustainability of commercial and other buildings. Potential participants in the scheme might include industrial and manufacturing firms, local agricultural businesses including wineries, clinics, motels or accommodation providers, aged care facilities, childcare, retailers and distribution facilities.

While at this time limited to commercial operations, expansion of the legislation to include residential properties is apparently under consideration.

#### 2. What are the benefits?

Possible benefits to Yass Valley from supporting Environmental Upgrade Financing include:

- Reduced community emissions and improved environmental outcomes
- Assistance to local businesses in addressing increasing utility and other operational costs

- Access for local businesses to fixed loans often with better terms
- Improved asset values for businesses
- A clear, demonstrable incentive for local businesses to stay within or move to Yass Valley
- Reduced demand on local infrastructure, including water and waste services
- Increased quality of building stock across the LGA

### 3. What is the financial risk?

Councils bear no financial liability for the loan under Environmental Upgrade Financing.

In the event of a charge notice not being paid, Council would simply be expected to use its 'best endeavours' to recover payments in line with the *Local Government Act 1993* and in the same way that it would for unpaid rates notices. In the worst-case scenario, whereby a property must be sold to recover unpaid debts, the charge notices would be placed alongside the rates notices for payment.

### 4. How does it operate?

Council may choose to administer the scheme itself but there are third-party operators such as 'Better Building Finance' which can manage all administrative and reporting aspects of the program.

Note: Better Building Finance are the only third-party administrator currently operating in NSW. Their service is offered free of charge as they are subsidised by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and in fact, if understood correctly, Council may be paid a signing-on fee and an annual administration fee for time taken by Council staff on administering each ongoing project. Building owners typically pay a small administration fee that is based on the size of the loan.

Building Better Finance currently works with over 50 Councils across NSW, SA and Victoria, providing finance through Bank Australia and other lenders. QPRC have recently commenced a 2-year trial of the scheme with Building Better Finance.

A formal resolution by Council is all that is required to enable a scheme, supported by appropriate delegations to Council staff.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

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## 4.7 TOWN POWER 2GW REGIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

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### SUMMARY

A proposal for new solar PV and battery storage projects has been received and the company is seeking to identify any Council interest.

### RECOMMENDATION

*That:*

- *The proposed new solar PV and battery project known as “Tower Power” be noted.*
- *Infra Pty Ltd be invited to make a presentation to the Committee.*

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### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil at this stage

### POLICY & LEGISLATION

Nil

### REPORT

A proposal (refer **Attachment A**) has been received to provide communities in Yass Valley with exclusive access to utility-scale renewable energy generation and storage, and to make an important contribution to achieving Australia’s renewable energy goals.

Infra Pty Ltd is a developer of private infrastructure projects. The company is proposing to develop a National portfolio of up to 80 new solar PV and battery storage projects representing 2GW of generating capacity and 4GWh of storage in total.

The projects are called **“Town Power”**. Each Town Power project will be located adjacent to a regional community which, through its Council, will have exclusive rights to its capacity. Individual projects will be in the range of 10MW/20MWh to 50MW/100MWh, or equivalent in capacity to rooftop PV and home batteries for between 2,000 and 10,000 households.

Key features of the Town Power projects include:

- Each project will connect directly to the existing local medium-low voltage distribution network serving its community, providing embedded generation and storage.
- The Council representing the community will enter an agreement with Infra’s project company under which it will be allocated exclusive rights to the project’s capacity in exchange for a fixed annual capacity payment over circa 20 years. There may be multiple projects in a given Council area.
- The capacity payments will be fixed to recover the financed capital cost of the project and its operating costs. They will **not** be benchmarked or otherwise referenced to energy prices in the NEM.
- Each project is expected to be eligible to receive large-scale generation certificates. These will all be allocated to Council, which will be able to retain them or sell them in the market to offset the capacity payments.
- Council will make capacity or power from the project available to households and businesses in the manner that it and the community chooses.
- Council will enter agreements with the distribution company that owns and manages the local distribution network to deliver power from the project to households and businesses on its behalf.

- For the avoidance of doubt, it is **not** proposed that the local distribution network be separated or islanded from the National transmission network. Rather, the projects are intended to substantially reduce the communities' demand for power from the National Electricity Market.

The company is seeking to engage with Council to establish if there is any interest in the proposal. The Committee may wish to invite the company to make a presentation prior to considering the proposal.

**ATTACHMENTS:** A. Town Power Proposal