

## North East Regional Sustainability Alliance (NERSA) minutes

**Time:** 10am – 12pm, Monday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

**Venue:** CSU Wangaratta, 218 Tone Road, video conference room.

### Acknowledgement of country

Rowan acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which the NERSA meeting was held.

**1. Present:** Rowan O'Hagan – chair (WLS), John Naylor (WLS), Narelle Martin, Kevin Smith (BSFG), Brian Edwards, (SUO), Petula Edwards (SUO), Zaylee Saint-James Turner (RCoW), Jenny Davies – minutes (WATCH)

**Via Zoom:** Kate Shaw (SV), Clare Bishop (TRY), John Dahlenburg (EPA)

Kate Shaw was welcomed to her first NERSA meeting.

**2. Apologies:** Jo Vincent, Cam Walker, Dan Alder, Kay Blore, David Blore, Tony Lane, Anne Jovaras, Amy Northwood, Janette Matthey, Libby Hosking

### 3. Meeting minutes – December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024

Accepted without change. Moved Kevin, seconded Zaylee.

### Business arising

Jenny volunteered to contact Carole Hammond at GMCA to find out more about Solar Savers and whether other councils such as Wodonga can be encouraged to join the program in 2025. Carole has been asked to give a one-hour climate change and local government induction in February to Wodonga council which is encouraging. Cr Michelle Cowan is the Wodonga rep on the GMCA Board.

### 4. Correspondence

Lindsey Pettifer from Sustainability Victoria sent a message to NERSA introducing Kate Shaw. Kate is the new Hume Regional Engagement Lead for Sustainability Victoria, taking over from Lindsey whose secondment finished in December. See Item 10.2.

### 5. Group updates

#### 5.1 Beechworth Urban Landcare and Sustainability - BULS – Libby Hosking

Where has January gone? The BULS team has been busy watering some of the more vulnerable recent planting along Upper Spring Creek and in the Beechworth Bush Botanic Garden over the last 3 months as the dry persists. Working bees continue fortnightly in the BBBG and recent signage has been installed. Working bees have also occurred on the rail trail, and the Glades. We are planning some planting in the Autumn...

#### Beechworth Landcare Newsletter January 2025

<https://mailchi.mp/ea57dabc602d/beechworth-landcare-january2025-newsletter>

#### Shortcuts

[Beechworth Landcare events this month](#)

[Beechworth Landcare events in upcoming months](#)

[Regional Events](#)

[News](#)

[Resources](#)

[Update on past Beechworth Landcare events](#)

[Other agency magazines & newsletters](#)

[Become a BULS member](#)

#### 5.2 Benalla Sustainable Future Group – BSFG – Kevin Smith

BRCC has announced another Community Consultation for a new Council Plan and BSFG will be putting in submissions. The BRCC CEO has resigned, and we expect it will be a few months before a new appointment is made.

Our secretary and others are spending an inordinate amount of time on the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission ACNC registration to satisfy the ATO requirements. This will be ongoing for months.

### **Food co-op**

This is progressing well after a short break over the holiday period. Sonia, our new co-ordinator is looking at a promotion to attract new members.

### **Greening and cooling**

3 successful workshops have been run to encourage younger people to connect and engage with nature and the environment. The group is planning to approach BRCC again about increasing the shade trees in several reserves.

### **Swanpool Environmental Film Festival SEFF – June 14<sup>th</sup>**

Background work continues in sourcing funding, speakers and films. Put in your diaries Saturday 14 June.

### **Submission: Federal Labor Great Outdoors Taskforce**

BSFG submitted a group submission. The conditions were very restrictive making submissions extremely difficult.

### **Creating Community Connections Expo**

BSFG is supporting this Expo on 21<sup>st</sup> February organised by the Benalla and District Social Inclusion Group. The aims are to foster community connection, inclusion and participation.

### **Benalla Wastewise – Kay Blore**

This subgroup is very active with every changing re-cycling scene. Kay is promoting a public awareness program with some help from the local paper. Benalla Wastewise continues to collect recyclables from our filing cabinet located in the Senior Citizens and Community Centre. Frustrating for a lady who came from Oxley, ready to recycle, only to find the Seniors was not open this morning.

Kay has launched a Waste Wise Benalla Facebook page to post a weekly recycling hint, starting by highlighting the businesses in Benalla who offer a recycling service. Our first was Sportspower. Hopefully this approach with weekly hints will ease some of the confusion. By the end of the year, we should have some amazing recyclers.

## **5.3 Wangaratta Landcare and Sustainability – WLS – Tony Lane**

### **Warby Ranges**

On Fri Dec 6th, WLS partnered with Friends of Warby National Park to run an evening event focused on the Warby Ranges Grass Trees at the Uniting Church Hall. The outstanding photography of Jan Osmotherly was a main feature and around 80 people attended. It was both a very informative event and a great social gathering with many new faces in the crowd.

### **Bush regeneration**

The Bush Regeneration group withing WLS was successful in gaining a \$4,500 grant from Glenrowan Solar Farm. The funds will be used to do more work to clear various weeds from the Bullawah Trail which runs alongside the Ovens River. The Land mates crew from Beechworth will again be engaged to assist this project. WLS is also liaising closely with RCoW.

### **Revegetation**

WLS will undertake a project at “The Terrace” retirement village to revegetate around a large dam and also undertake breeding of native fish. Last year WLS was unsuccessful with Landcare grants for this project, however approval has been received from NECMA to redirect some other funding towards this project. It will be done in partnership with “Respect”, a NFP aged care service provider who now operate what was previously known as “St Johns”. Local school students and the Victorian Fisheries Authority will also be involved. Electrofishing (self-funded by an optimistic WLS) was undertaken last September to remove carp from the dam in preparation for the project.

### **Mullinmur Billabong**

At Mullinmur Billabong there was a release of 12 adult catfish (5 females, 7 males) in early November as part of a broader translocation of catfish from the Glenelg River in Western Victoria to the Northeast. NECMA also assisted by organizing a top up of environmental water into the billabong. No doubt this was the catalyst for a minor flood in the Ovens a few days later which filled the billabong. The following link is background to translocations of catfish  
<https://vrfish.com.au/2024/03/28/catfish-populations-boosted-in-northern-victoria/>

### **Cultural survey**

The partnership project with the Bangerang at Mullinmur has also stepped up a gear. A cultural survey of the site is now well in progress. In December, around 30 members of the Bangerang had a two-day gathering to familiarise themselves with the Mullinmur site and the tasks ahead. In mid-February work will commence on designing and building fish habitat. This project funded by Victorian Fisheries Authority will run till December 2025.

### **Native fish release**

In January WLS volunteers again assisted VFA with the release of 100,000 Macquarie Perch fingerlings. These went into the King River at Edi Upper, Ovens River near Gapsted and the Buffalo River above the dam. This was part of a larger exercise to support native fish in NE Victoria. In recent years native fish are becoming far more common in the Ovens River.

### **Carp removal**

Following some favourable breeding seasons, carp numbers have also increased in the Ovens River. In late February WLS will again partner with Arthur Rylah Institute in an electro-fishing program to survey native fish in the Ovens River, while also removing carp. WLS is also seeking separate funds so that additional electro-fishing for carp can be undertaken in some known hot spots in the Ovens River. The following link is relevant to the carp problem: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-26/electrofishing-herpesvirus-used-to-control-european-carp/104713366>

### **Equipment replacement**

It is now 12 months since the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal provide a \$5900 grant to WLS to replace equipment lost in the shed fire of October 2023. <https://frrr.org.au> WLS has now fully recovered from this fire event and would like to acknowledge the support received from the local community, our service partners and in particular FRRR.

### **Sustainable Housing and Electrify Wangaratta**

Sustainable Housing and Electrify Wangaratta are two closely related subgroups within WLS and discussions are now occurring that will probably roll them into one group.

### **“March Into Sustainability”**

“March Into Sustainability” is coming up and WLS will again partner with RCOW.

### **Other items:**

- Electrify Wangaratta is Sending Home Electrification Guides to people completing its questionnaire at <https://wlsi.org.au/electrify-wangaratta/home-electrification-guide/>
- recruiting applicants for AusNet Services’ Energy Resilience Community Fund. Applicants will be helped by Indigo Power with solar and battery system design and application support, and if successful, with supervision of installations to support facilities in emergencies. Two church communities have expressed interest. Pangerang Community Hub was successful in the last round and their installation will be completed in the near future.
- developing a series of articles on sustainability and electrification to be published in The Chronicle through 2025.
- exploring how we can help Beyond Housing electrify their housing stock with help from The Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative (SHEPI)

<https://minister.dccew.gov.au/wilson/media-releases/joint-media-release-cutting-power-bills-more-social-housing-tenants#:~:text=>

## 5.4 Yackandandah

### Environment – Yackandandah Folk Festival

<https://www.yackfolkfestival.com/about/environment/>

#### Folk Festival's Green Team

One of our biggest aims is to reduce reliance on single-use containers by people selling food. Thanks to a grant of \$10,000 from Indigo Shire Council to Plasticwise Yackandandah, we've been able to buy some brand-new, lightweight, environmentally friendly bowls, plates and keep cups for our 'Dish Pig' - which we can provide to stalls and businesses and will help us move much closer to this goal. Contact Penny Wright to join the planning meeting on Saturday, 15th February or if you'd like to be added to the contact list. [pennywrightvic@gmail.com](mailto:pennywrightvic@gmail.com) m: 0402 639 841

#### Yackity Yak February/March 2025

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60b1b4cc7b07d40f788b2e85/t/67995c130f61d5547ab3906e/1738103879090/Issue%2B118%2BFeb-Mar+2025+Yackity+Yak.pdf>

## 5.5 Albury-Wodonga - WATCH/Stop Adani AW Move Beyond Coal/Knitting Nannas

### 5.51 WATCH

At the last WATCH meeting, Lizette nominated Libby Rouse for the AlburyCity Environmental Citizen of the Year award. Libby has done a power of work for WATCH and other environmental organisations and was a worthy contender but up against some very stiff competition from nominees that have been volunteering for at least a decade. Congratulations to David Petrovic for winning this year's Albury Environmental Citizen of the Year award. David has dedicated more than a decade to improving biodiversity in Albury, particularly with the Woolshed Thurgoona Landcare Group.

### Residents express concerns about Albury's Australia Park proposal

The Australia Park plan will go ahead, but at least some compromises have been made in response to community feedback. Thank you to the WATCHWORD readers who objected to removal of trees and construction of an 80-space car park. More than 40 people echoed our submission, saying they wanted cool, shady trees, not a big, hot car park. Council's compromise? Reduced car parking (65 spaces or fewer), lighter coloured bitumen (to reduce radiant heat) and more plantings.

### Local participation in Victoria's Inquiry into climate resilience

The Parliament of Victoria's Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee held a public hearing in Wangaratta on Wednesday 4 December 2024. Thanks to John Naylor, Tony Lane and David Blore for representing NERSA - NE Regional Sustainability Alliance. WATCH member Libby Rouse helped coordinate a community photo shoot for Friends of the Earth 'Fund Community Climate Resilience' campaign outside Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre. Media release here:

[https://www.melbournefoe.org.au/wangaratta\\_resilience\\_inquiry\\_hearing](https://www.melbournefoe.org.au/wangaratta_resilience_inquiry_hearing)

### Facebook

Check the WATCH Facebook page for photos and comments.

<https://www.facebook.com/wodongaandalburytowardclimatehealth/>

### WATCHWORD

The next edition is out on February 19<sup>th</sup>. To subscribe to WATCHWORD please click [here](#).

### WATCH meetings

WATCH meetings occur every quarter and anyone is most welcome to attend. The next meeting is on Tuesday February 11<sup>th</sup> 2025. Please contact Lizette to be advised of the venue:

[lizette@salmonfamily.id.au](mailto:lizette@salmonfamily.id.au)

### 5.52 Albury Wodonga Knitting Nannas for Renewables

Albury Wodonga Knitting Nannas for Renewables continue to meet weekly, alternating between Sussan Ley's office in Kiewa St Albury and Bridget McKenzie's office in High St Wodonga, 12.30pm to 1.30pm on a Friday. Join us for a yarn, BYO chair, and write a postcard to your MP requesting better representation. Thanks for all your wonderful support. Contact Jen Huber for details:

[jenniferruthhuber@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferruthhuber@gmail.com) or 0410 074 900.

## **5.6 ACF Albury Wodonga – Phil Day and Netty Matthey**

### **Group planning meeting**

ACF-AWR has not been meeting over summer, but we are back with our 2025 group planning meeting on February 15th, which anyone interested is welcome to attend. The purpose of the meeting is to plan the group's focus for the year ahead and particularly the coming Federal election.

- When: 15 February 2024, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm
- Where: Hyphen, Meeting Room 1, 126 Hovell St, Wodonga, VIC, 3690 and Online

**Note:** This will be a 'hybrid' meeting (face-to-face and online) to cater for our outreach members.

There is an RSVP link sent out to all our registered supporters or see our group webpage:

[https://www.acf.org.au/acf-awr\\_planning\\_together\\_for\\_2025\\_f2f\\_and\\_online](https://www.acf.org.au/acf-awr_planning_together_for_2025_f2f_and_online)

### **National Agenda for Australia's Nature and Climate**

As we hit the halfway mark of this critical decade for solving the climate and extinction crisis, we must harness all of our power to engage the wider community and demand that our next Parliament acts urgently. The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has a plan and has produced a [National Agenda for Australia's Nature and Climate](#) that lays out exactly what the next parliament must do to solve the dual climate and extinction crisis. There are four things that we need to happen:

- Protect nature
- Say yes to renewable energy
- Say no to nuclear and
- Say no to new coal and gas

## **5.7 Wodonga Urban Landcare Network – WULN – Jo Vincent**

### **Funding**

We have been successful in gaining funding under BUPA/ Landcare Australia for Project SPROUT (Sustaining Parks, Restoring Our Urban Terrain) and we will be planting 5000 tubestock this Autumn across Wodonga.

### **Woody weeds**

WULN in conjunction with Council are undertaking follow up weed spraying for woody weeds following our Healthy Rivers project on House and Huon Creeks. We are targeting willow regrowth, Box Elder, Desert Ash, Privet, Vinca, Blackberry and other woody weeds. Landmates have also been engaged to undertake follow up woody weed control at Ward Morrison Park thanks to a VLG project-Restoration Connections.

### **Healthy Hectares**

We have been successful in a DAFF Climate Smart Agriculture Grant which will allow us to run the popular Healthy Hectares Program for small landholders in 2025 and 2026. We are collaborating with Ovens Landcare Network and an information session will be held in Wangaratta on Thursday, 6 March, from 7-8 pm at The Centre for Continuing Education, Wangaratta.

### **Pest and weed management workshops**

We are also improving education around pest and weed management for small landholders with the delivery of 6 workshops funded by a DEECA Partnerships against Pests grant. The 6 workshops will cover Rabbits, Foxes, Pigs, Blackberry, woody weeds and herbaceous weeds.

### **New network groups**

The network is continuing to grow, and we are thrilled that Leneva - Castle Creek Landcare is back up and running after they took a break post COVID. Lu Pellizarri has taken on the coordinator role and is keen to grow volunteering and develop local projects. We also have an upcoming information night for a potential group who will be volunteering on WREN land at Leneva. Both of these groups are critical given the extent of development activity in and around Leneva.

### **WULN Board**

WULN transitioned from a Committee of Management to a skills-based Board in November and we welcome our new Board of 8 enthusiastic community members. Julie Hind (Chair), Kate Sleeman (Treasurer), Elaine Jamieson (secretary), Simon Fisher, Peter Staley, Sam Hagen, Sharleen Sharp and Caitlin Lawrence.

**Upcoming events:** Follow WULN's Humanitix - <https://events.humanitix.com/host/wuln>

- **25th Feb** - An Evening Wetland Walk at David Winterbottom Park
- **27th Feb** - Melanie Massaro - Secret Life of Backyard Birds
- **8/9th March** - we will be at Gardenesque
- **23rd March** - Landcare Community information Day and BBQ.
- **30th March** - Grounds for change - planning your restoration project with Sue Brunskill

**Website** More news and events are available on our website: <https://wodongalandcare.org.au/>

### **5.8 Wooragee Landcare Group – Karen Bowley**

Recently the committee met to plan the year's events and projects. As usual we always have lots of ideas but insufficient funds as we did not apply for a VLG grant for this year. We also have a lot of ongoing projects such as our Tree Giveaway Day, the newsletter, our archiving project, maintaining our Warden Lane site, a part of the Rail Trail and the Wooragee Hall garden.

We want to update the constitution and recruit a new secretary. We also have a nest box project, Karen Retra's Nature Studies at the Wooragee Primary School, orchid walks, a stall at the Wooragee Easter market, and our Snow Gum project where we want to propagate then plant 25 plants this autumn. The cataloguing team in our archiving project would like some cataloguing training from Victoria Collections in the coming year so that we can complete cataloguing our 30 years of newsletters. We have other ideas for small events and larger projects that we have as aspirational, all conditional on obtaining funding. It will be another busy year for Wooragee Landcare.

### **5.9 Friends of the Earth NE Vic – Cam Walker**

#### **Snow gum summit - February 14 – 16, 2025**

The first ever 'snow gum summit' has a spectacular lineup of experts in the fields of First Nations knowledge, fire, ecology, climate change and land management as it relates to high elevation forests. You can see the program here: [https://www.melbournefoe.org.au/snow\\_gum\\_summit](https://www.melbournefoe.org.au/snow_gum_summit)  
[https://www.melbournefoe.org.au/snow\\_gum\\_summit\\_tickets](https://www.melbournefoe.org.au/snow_gum_summit_tickets)

#### **Speakers include:**

**Russell Mullett**, GunaiKurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), on bushfires, archaeology of the high country and biodiversity

**Assoc. Prof. John Morgan**, Head of Department, Environment & Genetics, La Trobe University, on Snow Gums and fire

**Dr. Philip Zylstra**, Adjunct Associate Professor, Curtin University School of Molecular and Life Sciences, on fire and land management and implications for snow gum communities

**Dr Matthew Brookhouse**, Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU, on snow gums and dieback

**Dr Susanna Venn**, Associate Professor of Plant Ecology, Centre for Integrative Ecology, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Deakin University

**Dr Tom Fairman**, FLARE Wildfire Research, The University of Melbourne

**Associate Professor Leah Moore**, Land and Water Science, Fenner School of Environment and Society, FSES, ANU

**Aaron Kennedy**, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Director Forest and Fire Operations, Hume, FFMV

**Uncle Shane Monk**, male cultural lead and lead tour guide, Taungurung Land and Waters Council

**Dave Crea**, Australian Alps National Parks Program Manager

**Anthony Sharwood**, journalist and author of *From Snow to Ash*

**Karl Just**, ecologist, on the health of, and threats to, snow gum populations in low land areas

**Matt Ruchel**, executive director, Victorian National Parks Association

**Acacia Rose**, mountain ecologist and lifelong lover of nature and conservation

**Mike Edmondson**, alpine photographer and guide

**Simon Watson**, Principal Scientist Forest and Fire Ecology | Knowledge, Planning and Risk, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

**Dean Heinze and Ian Mansergh** on animals of the snow gum country

A new film from **Stephen Curtain**

**Cam Walker**, Campaigns co-ordinator, Friends of the Earth - [cam.walker@foe.org.au](mailto:cam.walker@foe.org.au) Facebook page: <https://m.facebook.com/FoENorthEastAlps>

### **5.10 Indigo Regen – Anne Jovaras 'Cool Seat'**

We have recently installed the first 'Cool Seat' at Quercus Community Centre in Beechworth which has been generously donated to us. We expect to commence worm production some time in the next two months once the weather cools down a bit and we have had an opportunity to train the kitchen staff.

### **Community environment grant**

We have been successfully awarded a Community Environment grant to develop and expand the Cool Seat Project. This project is designed to educate our communities in disposing of their organic waste sustainably and create compost for gardening. Through our relationships with Quercus and Indigo Shire we expect to identify the amount and type of food waste that is currently going into landfill locally, then work with local households and cafes to sustainably manage it. Our aim is to create safe and inclusive practices to share skills, build social networks, and promote sustainable actions and circular economies. By growing and sharing food, sharing local resources, supporting local food networks, and reducing waste (food, plastics, textiles etc.) we can reduce methane emissions and improve our natural environment to create a healthier community for future generations, together. This is our response to the challenges triggered by the changing climate.

### **Halve Waste visit**

On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February we will be doing a tour of the Halve Waste facility in Albury to better understand the recycling processes and apply them to our community. Thank you to Michelle and others in the Halve Waste team.

### **5.11 Sustainable Upper Ovens – Brian and Petula Edwards**

We are a small but active group and had our Annual General Meeting at Bright Brewery last Sunday afternoon. We have a close liaison with Alpine Shire Council and the Mayor, Sarah Nicholas, addressed the meeting, telling us that all Council operations are now at net zero. We have a small problem with neutralising the methane which is being produced at our enclosed ground-fill sites.

Our group is currently focusing on a microgrid for Harrietville which sits at the base of Mount Hotham, has one high voltage electricity line and is very vulnerable to storm and bushfire events. We are also working with the Council on sites for the 3 community batteries we are hoping to get.

**Sustainable Upper Ovens website** - with information about the various sub-groups:

<https://sustainableupperovens.org.au/>

### **SUO Annual Report 2023 -2024**

[https://sustainableupperovens.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Sustainable-Upper-Ovens-Annual-Report-2023-2024\\_web.pdf](https://sustainableupperovens.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Sustainable-Upper-Ovens-Annual-Report-2023-2024_web.pdf)

### **6. Presentation: "*Electrification - good for the pocket, people and the planet*" – John Naylor Electrify Wangaratta**

John Naylor introduced Electrify Wangaratta's Home Electrification Guide. To help people understand the good for the pocket aspect, Electrify Wangaratta with funding from the Glenrowan Solar Farm Community Benefit fund has created a website where you can tell us a little about your home, and we'll send you a Home Electrification Guide for it.' <https://wlsi.org.au/electrify-wangaratta/home-electrification-guide/>

Here's a link to John's presentation.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1GvmRs5603v3LBtf\\_galCy1Tx5s0PATPQbIP59grSCo/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1GvmRs5603v3LBtf_galCy1Tx5s0PATPQbIP59grSCo/edit?usp=sharing)

### **7. North East Wastewise Alliance – NEWA - Kay Blore**

NEWA continues, with our meetings moving around the North East so everyone gets a chance not to travel. The next meeting is on Thursday 20th February at Ruby Blue Cafe Benalla at 10 am. NEWA has adopted Jenny Davies' idea to have everyone send in their agenda items with a synopsis.

A question was asked at the meeting re what happens to all the waste collected in the green bins. Michelle Wilkinson at Halve Waste says that the green waste from bins is aggregated in Albury and then sent to Carbon Mate outside Wagga for composting. <https://carbonmate.com.au/>

## 8. Community Energy Network

### 8.1 Community Energy Network in 2025 – Heather Smith

Heather has been toying with a range of ideas for running the network so please let her know what you think of any of the following:

- We are still looking for a local convenor
- Heather is keen to run monthly online events to supplement our face-to-face gatherings. That leaves 4-6 face-to-face events in 2025. Would your town/location host one of these? Would you be willing to offer additional help when the event is local? eg arriving early, helping setup, welcoming guest speaker and welcoming the other visitors?
- Heather is happy to vary times or offer additional evening/weekend slots for those who aren't retired or flexible with work - would you engage more if we offered this?
- If you are not in NE Victoria, should we find a local sponsor and run some local face-to-face gatherings in your region too?
- Who would you like to hear from?
- Do you have something to present to a wider audience?
- What would you like to learn?
- What would you like us to achieve together beyond learning and connecting?

It would help Heather if you could [fill out the survey](#) (and an email response is also great).

### Heather Smith Chair, Coalition for Community Energy

M 0417 862 206 E [heather@c4ce.net.au](mailto:heather@c4ce.net.au) W [www.c4ce.net.au](http://www.c4ce.net.au)

### 8.2 Neighbourhood Battery Training 2-day course (February 2025)

- Yarra Energy Foundation (YEF) is providing a [two-day advanced training course](#) on the 18th-19th February 2025 in Melbourne, Fitzroy, to help community groups, local governments and other organisations learn about these systems. Contact Tim Shue ([tim.shue@yef.org.au](mailto:tim.shue@yef.org.au)).
- Read the [whole eNews](#) or [sign up here](#).
- YEF training links are [here for registration](#) and [here for information](#)
- If you can't afford it, they have been known to support community energy groups so please contact [Tim Shue](#).
- And if time or travel is the issue, check out the [mini-course online](#). Zaylee says this is well worth watching.

### 8.3 Glenrowan Solar Farm Community Benefit Fund Grants – John Naylor

2024 Grants were announced earlier in 2025. Sustainability applications did well:

- **Warby Ranges Landcare** - Native Vegetation Management Training for Landholders in the Warby Ranges
- **Wangaratta Landcare and Sustainability Inc.** - Upgrade of Bullawah Cultural Trail
- **Wangaratta Bowls and Sports Club Inc, Da Vinci Social Club Inc, and Beyond Housing** - Solar Panel Systems for each.

The Community Benefit Fund managers are happy to have John Naylor continue to represent NERSA on the Community Reference Group. Thanks John!

### Discussion

Narelle commented that it would be useful to promote the community benefit derived from solar farms. Where does the money go? Who benefits? The question remains as to how to best promote this to the wider community, especially in the light of some negative publicity in recent months.

We remembered that Simon Duncan had made a video about the Beyond Housing project in Wodonga so here it is: **RAW Beyond Housing** <https://vimeo.com/365442711>

## 8.4 Totally Renewable Yackandandah TRY – Clare Bishop

This is the current status of TRY's projects.

**Yack02 Project (Yackandandah Sports Park)** Construction has begun!

### AusNet data

- One of our committee members, Blake, is attempting to obtain correct data from AusNet to help us pinpoint what areas of electricity usage we should be targeting to reach 100%
- This has been very difficult! Obtaining the info is complicated and Blake has found errors in the transformer data and negative flow reporting. He is liaising with AusNet to understand these issues.
- A useful outcome is the fact that there are clearly still many houses that heat their hot water at night, a relic of the old system. Potentially an education campaign may induce folks to change this to heat during peak solar generation times

### Strategy Meeting

- TRY is having an intensive strategy planning session across February and March separated into two workshops

### Resilience

- Generators remain an ongoing project
- Require more training days to ensure multiple community members are able to pick up, tow and plug in generators when required
- Some wiring issues when generator was plugged into the Public Hall (caused load to be unbalanced). Switchboard to be rewired

### EV Charger repair

- Discussions ongoing, most likely will be replaced not repaired

### Energy Efficiency and Literacy program

- Basically, we're running a pilot Energy Efficiency and Literacy program across Yack with the aim to increase engagement and literacy around energy efficiency and energy in general. For example, helping people how to understand their bills and what tariffs are and how they affect you, how to increase the energy efficiency of your home, what renewable energy means and answer any questions about it to reduce misinformation, where to go to find out what green loans you may have access to, how solar savers schemes work and how you can access them, how to assess your energy retailer, etc.
- We are hoping to run an online and poster campaign targeting Yack, as well as information sessions and workshops covering these topics. We're really hoping to have lots of people available to answer specific questions from individuals to understand their unique situation and avoid spending long periods talking about a topic of great interest to some people and no interest to others.

**Contact Clare Bishop for further information.** [clare.eleanor@hotmail.com](mailto:clare.eleanor@hotmail.com)

## 8.5 Renewable Energy Benalla REB (a sub-group of BSFG) – Kevin Smith

Discussions are continuing with BRCC for a loan scheme for Plug in Induction Cooktops. BRCC is consulting with Mitchell Shire about how their scheme ran, the take up, and what risks and logistics are.

REB is still looking at suitable sites for extending our revolving fund for solar PV installations and keeping an eye on Community Battery progress as applicable to Benalla.

## 9. Regional councils and shires

### 9.1 Rural City of Wangaratta - Zaylee Saint-James Turner

- We're in the final stage of developing Council's Climate Adaptation Plan. A draft 10-year plan has been developed and is currently open for public exhibition. Three drop in sessions are

being held for community to ask questions about the draft, and a survey is open for feedback also.

- Drop in session, Wangaratta Kiosk, Tues 21 Jan, 11am-1pm (completed)
- Drop in session, Wangaratta Library, Fri 7 Feb, 11am-1pm
- Drop in session (online), Mon 10<sup>th</sup> Feb, 6-7pm
- Survey can be found online here: <https://connect.wangaratta.vic.gov.au/climate-adaptation-plan>
- Environment & Sustainability team are thrilled to launch our first issue of *Eco News*, our own quarterly newsletter. Our small but passionate team works on a wide range of projects – from tackling climate change and hosting educational events to managing bush reserves, weeds & pests on rural roadsides and monitoring waterway health. This newsletter is a way to share some highlights with our community. Anyone can sign up to receive the quarterly newsletter here: <https://mailchi.mp/wangaratta/eco-news-sign-up>
- We have a list of events coming up for *March into Sustainability*:
  - Autumn Harvest Festival with Sustainable King Valley, Sat 15 March, Cheshunt Hall, 10.30am-12.30pm
  - Perfect Patterns workshop (for under 5's), Tues 18 March, Wangaratta Library, 10.30-11.15am
  - Wonderful weeds (edible weeds walk & talk), Sat 22 March, Sydney Beach Wangaratta, 10-11am
  - Climate Chat Hour, Tues 25 March, Wangaratta Library, 11am-12pm
  - Native fish event (details in discussion) with NECMA, location, date and time TBC (details will be launched on our website shortly)
  - WLS/Electrify Wangaratta are developing 'Sustainability Matters' articles in the Wangaratta Chronicle as additional engagement this year.
- The NRM team are currently in propagation-mode, growing native species from seed ready for the 2025 planting season. Our annual target is 7,000 plants.
- The NRM team are also working on their annual weed & pest control program around the municipality currently.
- We are hosting a one-day Youth Environmental Leadership course in May for young people (12-25) who want to develop essential skills, motivation and inspiration to take meaningful action on climate change and build community resilience. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please ask them to reach out to us directly – [environment@wangaratta.vic.gov.au](mailto:environment@wangaratta.vic.gov.au). Places will be limited to allow for a meaningful experience.
- Still investigating a Community Battery at the Wangaratta Showgrounds with Indigo Power who have secured funding to deliver 11 community batteries across Victoria.
- We have submitted a budget proposal to be involved in Solar Savers next year (this will only occur if our budget makes it through the bidding process at Council)
- We are looking for partnerships with local community groups for Sustainable House Day (webinars, workshops, etc.)

### **Zaylee Saint-James Turner – Sustainability Officer**

[z.saint-jamesturner@wangaratta.vic.gov.au](mailto:z.saint-jamesturner@wangaratta.vic.gov.au)

### **9.2 Indigo Shire – Sam Niedra and Isla Fitridge**

- A 30kW ground-mounted solar PV system has been installed at Council's Beechworth offices, which is Council's biggest electricity-consuming facility. <https://climateaction.indigoshire.vic.gov.au/actions/5>
- Indigo has partnered with 5 neighbouring councils to launch Goulburn Murray Solar Savers (GMSS). The program was launched in November 2024 and has received over 30 enquiries from Shire residents so far. This is a Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance (GMCA) led-initiative. More info can be found in the GMCA update provided in the December meeting minutes, and <https://www.goulburnmurraysolarsavers.org.au/>
- In November 2024, Indigo hosted the North East Integrated Water Management (IWM) practitioner's forum. Participants were taken on a guided tour of Lake Sambell and constructed stormwater treatment sites in Beechworth and Yackandandah. The event was supported by a series of case studies developed by Council's Environment & Sustainability team. <https://www.indigoshire.vic.gov.au/Residents/Environment-and-Sustainability/Protecting-Our-Environment/Healthy-waterways>

- Council has recently updated our European Wasp website content, including our European Wasp Management Guide. European wasps are a regular nuisance across the Shire in Summer and Autumn. <https://www.indigoshire.vic.gov.au/Residents/Environment-and-Sustainability/Protecting-Our-Environment/Weeds-and-pest-animals/European-Wasps-and-Mosquitos>
- Council has recently joined the Sustainability Victoria 'Buy Circular Champions' program, which empowers and supports Victorian Councils to use more circular materials and products in infrastructure, landscaping, parks and gardens projects. <https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/circular-economy-and-recycling/for-councils-and-other-waste-recycling-operators/buy-circular-service/buy-recycled-champions>
- The Naturally Cooler Indigo Project is nearing completion, with the final report due to Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) in February 2025. A total of 1,000 street and park trees have been planted over 2 years, in excess of Council's typical planting program. This is a huge effort by our Municipal Operations teams. As part of the project, Council is developing an Urban Tree Canopy Strategy, which is in draft stage and will go to the March 2025 Council meeting for endorsement, before going on public exhibition. Find out more at <https://climateaction.indigoshire.vic.gov.au/actions/42>

**Sam Niedra, Coordinator Environment & Sustainability** [sam.niedra@indigoshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:sam.niedra@indigoshire.vic.gov.au)

**Isla Fitridge Climate Change & Environment Officer** [Isla.Fitridge@indigoshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:Isla.Fitridge@indigoshire.vic.gov.au)

## 10. Agencies and organisations

### 10.11 DEECA VicGrid

#### **Final Engagement Report for the draft Victorian Transmission Plan Guidelines and study area**

The Victorian Government, through VicGrid, has released its Final Engagement Report summarising feedback on the draft Victorian Transmission Plan Guidelines and renewable energy zone (REZ) study area. The report and public submissions are available by visiting:

[engage.vic.gov.au/victransmissionplan](https://engage.vic.gov.au/victransmissionplan)

#### **What we heard**

During the consultation, we received more than 1,300 feedback form responses and more than 170 submissions. We had more than 450 conversations with community members at 25 events across the state and held 150 meetings with local councils, community groups and community members. Thank you to everyone who gave their time to be involved and contributed to the process. Your feedback has provided valuable insights that have significantly shaped our approach.

The Final Engagement Report explains how feedback was taken into account in developing the 2024 Victorian Transmission Plan Guidelines, and how it will be used to help identify draft proposed REZs. The report includes 9 regional snapshots providing nuanced insights into what we heard across the state.

#### **Themes include:**

- Biodiversity and natural environment: We heard concerns about impacts on biodiversity and water systems, including endangered species' habitats.
- Agriculture and land use: Respondents stressed the need to protect valuable farmland and raised concerns about impacts to farming activities and farm productivity.
- Impact on regions: We heard concerns about the impact on regional areas to service city energy demands and community division linked to past experiences with renewable energy development.
- Natural hazard vulnerability: Feedback raised concerns about infrastructure development in relation to natural hazards, including bushfires and flooding.
- Engagement feedback: We received feedback about the nature and accessibility of engagement and doubts about the impact feedback would have on the Victorian Transmission Plan.

**Regional opportunity:** There was both support for how regions might benefit economically from hosting generation or transmission, and doubts about the actual benefits communities would receive

This feedback is now shaping VicGrid's approach as we work to narrow the study area to draft proposed REZs. There will be further opportunities to provide feedback on draft proposed REZs when they are released with the draft 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan in early 2025.

### **Get in touch**

If you have any questions, concerns, or want to have further discussions with our team, please email us at [vicgrid@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:vicgrid@deeca.vic.gov.au)

### **10.12 Climate Ready Hume Newsletter February 2025**

<https://t.e2ma.net/message/jzy5xk/zvq9tm0b>

### **10.2 Sustainability Victoria – Kate Shaw**

Kate Shaw is the new Hume Regional Engagement Lead for Sustainability Victoria, taking over from Lindsey Pettifer whose secondment finished in December. Kate has been at SV for the past few years now, working on the Circular Economy Councils and Communities Funds, and Community Power Hub projects. Prior to SV, Kate worked in international community development, with a focus on measuring the impact of community programs and understanding how to equip communities to deal with the effects of climate change as they disproportionately impact the developing world. Contact details: [Kate.Shaw@sustainability.vic.gov.au](mailto:Kate.Shaw@sustainability.vic.gov.au)

### **Community circular economy guides | Sustainability Victoria**

<https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/circular-economy-and-recycling/community-circular-economy-guides>

These are the different categories featured in the notes: [Repair Hubs and Cafes](#), [Bicycle Repair and Recyclers](#), [Food Rescue and Distribution](#), [Food waste organics/composting](#), [Hard Waste Recovery](#), [Textile Waste](#) and [Hard to Recycle Items](#).

Kate has offered a presentation (date to be confirmed) about SV's [State of Sustainability Report 2024](#), which provides a statistically significant evidence base for investment in sustainability, showing Victorians attitudes and behaviours towards living sustainably and regional experiences of extreme weather. SV's social researcher Dianna McDonald can give a 20min presentation (dialing in online) on the findings, noting Victorians':

- increasingly common [lived experience of extreme weather events](#)
- continued [concern about climate change](#)
- increasing [awareness of circular economy](#)
- [participation in repair and recycling programs](#)
- uptake of [household energy efficiency actions](#) and [renewable electricity](#).

### **10.3 EPA – John Dahlenburg**

#### **EPA's Garden Safe program**

This program is free for households with the only cost being postage of the soil samples. It could be of interest to those people living in areas that were subject to mining in the past.

<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/get-involved/citizen-science-program/gardensafe>

### **10.3 North East CMA NRM Update 24 January 2025**

<https://mailchi.mp/necma/nrm-update-10-january-4949002>

## **11. Joint action/strategic planning**

**A coordinated approach to advocacy, state and national campaigns, contact with federal and state MPs, funding opportunities**

### **11.1 VicHealth food partnerships grant – Megan Hunt, Women's Health Goulburn North East**

A VicHealth food partnerships grant is now available and WHGNE is working towards an application for our region. It is early days and there are many steps to go through and we will know more about this grant at the end of this week. The funding is for \$700-\$900k that spans over a 3.5 year period and is regional wide focused. If anyone already knows about the grant or has interest in finding out more, please contact Megan.

**Megan Hunt, Women's Health Goulburn North East WHGNE** [M.Hunt@whealth.com.au](mailto:M.Hunt@whealth.com.au)

## 12. *Living Lightly*

### Update

*Living Lightly* is a collection of local stories about sustainable living. Use the link to find out how you can submit an article: <https://ecoportal.net.au/contribute-ll/>

### 13. Ecoportal – Karen Retra <https://ecoportal.net.au/>

**Ecoportal** is your online directory, listing groups and events for sustainable living in Albury-Wodonga, Northeast Victoria and Southern New South Wales. <https://ecoportal.net.au/events-calendar/> Here is a reminder to please add any upcoming events you wish to promote on the Ecoportal.net.au calendar.

### Email alerts to subscribers:

- Monthly event: email will be sent at the start of the month
- Weekly alerts: Distributed every Monday with upcoming fortnight of events

**Need a refresher?** Visit the help pages for [site instructions](#). If you need any assistance, please contact *Karen Retra*: [Ecoportal.net.au](https://ecoportal.net.au) | [info@ecoportal.net.au](mailto:info@ecoportal.net.au)

## 14. Upcoming events

### 14.1 The snow gum summit, February 14 – 16, 2025, Dinner Plain

Friends of the Earth are hosting a 'snow gum summit'. [Tickets are now available here](#). You can [find the full program here](#).

### 14.2 An Evening with Clive Hamilton - Living Hot: Surviving and Thriving on a Heating Planet

Thursday 20 February, 5:30pm - 7:30pm, Charles Sturt University, C D Blake Lecture Theatre, Albury <https://events.humanitix.com/an-evening-with-clive-hamilton-living-hot-surviving-and-thriving-on-a-heating-planet>

### 14.3 VICTORIAN CONGRESS 2025. Women Changing the Climate

A festival of women leading climate action, Castlemaine, Victoria, 28-30 March 2025  
Venue: Castlemaine Town Hall, 25 Lyttleton Street, Castlemaine. This is an in-person event, not available by Zoom. <https://events.humanitix.com/victorian-congress-2025>

### 14.4 Sustainable House Day 2025, Sunday May 4th

Our focus is on recruiting homeowners, with applications open until 23 February. We are particularly keen to showcase ordinary older homes that have retrofitted sustainability upgrades and electrification, although fancy all-electric 7-star+ newly built homes are also welcome

### How to apply

Complete an application form on the [Sustainable House Day website](#) to express your interest in participating in Sustainable House Day 2025. Applications must be submitted by Sunday 23 February 2025. Applications will be reviewed by a selection panel and homeowners will be notified by Monday 10 March 2025. Still unsure, email [shd@renew.org.au](mailto:shd@renew.org.au).

## 15. Any other business

### Presentations for upcoming meetings

Kate Shaw suggested one from SV and we would also like to hear more about Vic Grid.

*Action Rowan to contact Eliza Ginnivan re VicGrid*

## 16. Next meeting – Monday March 31<sup>st</sup>, CSU video conference room

Suggested dates for 2025:

- Monday June 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Monday August 11<sup>th</sup>
- Tuesday October 7<sup>th</sup>
- Monday December 1<sup>st</sup>

Thanks to CSU for hosting our meetings and to Anne Stelling for organising the zoom links. It is much appreciated.