

Renewable Energy Action Plan – Responses to Submissions

Submitter	Council Staff Comments and Recommendation
<p>Sustainable Living Armidale</p> <p>Authors: Helen Webb, Annette Kilarr & Dr Sanaz Alian</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Summary: Acronym CAPEX expanded Capital Expenditure in contents page and Executive Summary. Referred to CAPEX thereafter. • Executive Summary: ARC have amended the report to use “transition to 100% renewable energy” where appropriate such as in the Executive Summary and on Page 11. • Leadership: ARC notes SLAs support for Leadership in the region and alignment to the Restore and Thrive journey. • The REAP is a document that has identified a number of renewable energy options for Council. To include a statement to become “a leading renewable energy provider in partnership with the community” (whilst desired) is perhaps a little premature at this point. Energy options are still very much dependent on cost and councillor endorsement. • Section 2.0: ARC notes the feedback to include a specific program of community engagement and the benefits to reducing overall carbon footprint and less reliance on large scale energy infrastructure. We further note the City of Darebins engagement program. • Section 4.1. Street lights as a large scale consumers of energy will definitely be considered a priority for renewal energy power • ARC notes the endorsement of metering to enable monitoring and control • Section 4.3 ARC recognises the omission of the solar array at the Monkton Aquatic Centre from the REAP. Installation and connection of the panels was occurring simultaneously with the report preparation - no data was available. Benefits of the solar will be felt this summer when the centre reopens. • Section 4.3 ARC acknowledge the desire to extend initiatives that service the community in addition to its own energy consumption. • Section 4.3.1 – ARC acknowledges SLA support for the installation of a mid-scale solar array near the sewerage treatment plant. We note the Re Power Shoalhaven example provided and the power purchasing agreements via Flow Power. Very exciting and a great case study to research further.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 5.4 Bio Energy Generation: ARC thanks SLA for the referenced case study from Latrobe City Council and ARC notes the preference not to use unsustainable sources such as utilisation of native forest waste should this option be taken. • Section 6: Working with large scale renewable Energy Developers: ARC notes the benefits of large site aggregation and indeed, aggregating councils to negotiate power purchasing agreements. ARC are currently aggregated with Local Government Procurement with a group of other councils to purchase energy at a discount rate. We also note and understand the desire to weight toward renewable energy producers in the region that contribute to our economic base. • Additional points: ARC takes on board the observations for the support for low income earners to help them transition to electricity. Incentives for purchasing heating and cooling products will be considered as part of the community to transition. This could also be means tested and scaled to ensure larger incentives are provided to those on lower incomes. • Suggestions for improvement – minor edits: All suggested edits have been made. Thank you.
Patsy Ash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #1. Unfortunately ARC do not have dates next to the commitments on the midscale solar array? It’s an option that will be for consideration when the report is adopted, and will require an associated budget to commence. We will discuss timings and budget commitment to this initiative internally once the report is adopted. • #1. ARC notes your support for a solar array near the sewage treatment plant. • #5. I can confirm ARC are have committed not to sign any long term energy contracts • #6. ARC recognises your support for a collaborating with an energy retailer from a local grid • #12. ARC acknowledges and understands concern for the potential environmental damage for pumped hydro. • #14. The decision to use discrete project vs community engaged approach with incentives to achieve 100% renewable energy is not an either/or. The key word here is the “degree” to which council chooses. ARC acknowledge they can do both, but to what degree they focus and investment of resources on what they can control over what they have less control is the key. • #1, #3, #4 and #6: ARC note your observations on the need to monitor progress, give consideration to procurement practices and review of the BASIX for building retrofits. I can confirm that there is a recommendation: #11 <i>“That ARC adapts procurement policy to preference electric plant and equipment for replacement and new purchases.</i> We will be sure to review and monitor. • Wood Heaters: ARC could consider incentives for installation of electric heating and cooling systems however, such incentives would be subject to improvements in ARC finances for funding.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education: ARC note the desire for communication of progress around this plan and understand its importance in demonstrating leadership and inspiring community action to follow suit.
Jeannet van der Lee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC note endorsement of the Plan • We note the desire for communication of progress around this plan and understand its importance in demonstrating leadership and inspiring community action to follow suit. • Thank you for your observation about reducing air travel. I foresee that there will be many emission reduction initiatives surfacing like this one once this plan is adopted and embedded into the ARC operations. They'll be reviewed and prioritised in order of impact and cost. I am unaware of the amount consumed on air travel or what proposition of staff choose to offset their flights. While I don't think it will be huge, we'll ensure this is included. • ARC acknowledges and understands concern for the potential environmental damage for some renewable alternatives. Each (wind, solar and pumped hydro) vary in impact and consideration will be given to this. • Weighting and rankings of priorities have not yet been applied to the assessment framework. It's likely that this will be determined in the next phase once the overarching REAP is adopted.
Elizabeth Ellis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC have a commitment to reduce their own emissions as well as contribute to reducing the emissions of the community as part of the Project Zero 30 initiative. I am aware that there is a group looking at initiatives to help reduce wood smoke however I am presently unaware of the actions. What I can offer is that ARC could consider offering community incentives for installation of electric heating and cooling systems however, such incentives would be subject to improvements in ARC finances for funding.
One Wifi and Infrastructure Author: Gary Tsang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Street Lighting: Replacing halogens with LED is a project that ARC have been undertaking for some years. Most of the lights are now operating with LEDs although the program continues in small pockets such as the Armidale Regional Airport. • EV charging: A strategy for this is on the horizon. CAPEX will likely be shared with willing third party partners. ARC's EV charging strategy will seek to combine third parties (such as NRMA, Tesla, Service Stations, etc) with strategically located 'on premise' sites that are Council owned. Thank you for the tips on the EV Charging stations (slow and fast). Definitely something to consider as part of the EV Charging Station strategy. • Small scale wind turbines: Thank you for the analysis and direction to revisit this as a viable option. We will evaluate wind based on compensating/supplementing some of the disadvantages of solar only generation as well as the cost per

	<p>KWh. Noting that these are just options for consideration at this point.</p>
<p>Joy Bowles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The point you raise about capital investment, increasing cost and rises in Council rates is a good one. Many of the energy reduction initiatives will come at a cost (in the first instance), however they are designed to reduce energy costs and have a payback period for council and ultimately rate payers. Therefore, assessment will be made on cost/benefit (CO2 reduction) and linked back payback timeframes. In the long run, council operations and the rate payers will benefit.
<p>New England Greens Armidale and Tamworth</p> <p>Author: Elizabeth O’Hara</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape is evolving rapidly and ARC will proceed with caution on the mid-scale solar array option. Any movement toward developing the mid-scale solar array option would be certain to include prices (current and forecast) and a detailed business case including the site choice and size. • While the REAP deals with ARC energy reduction initiatives for its own operations, ARC have a commitment to contribute to reducing the emissions of the community as part of the Project Zero 30 initiative. This would involve community engagement and education around energy use, including the encouragement to switch to day time water heating. We would be happy to work with Essential Energy to help this transition. • Similarly, thank you for the case study from the Victorian Government on Efficient Air. ARC could consider offering community incentives for installation of electric heating and cooling systems however, such incentives would be subject to improvements in ARC finances for funding. Watch this space. • The desire to reduce the green power target to 2025 may be a little ambitious however there is nothing to stop us trying. Electricity contracts will run out by then and renewable power will be a key part of purchasing moving forward. • EV charging: A strategy for this is on the horizon. ARC’s EV charging strategy will seek to combine third parties (such as NRMA, Tesla, Service Stations, etc) with strategically located ‘on premise’ sites that are Council owned. We will look out for government grants and subsidies to assist with capital expenditure. • ARC notes your support for the negotiations with energy generators in the REZ and we will continue to do so where practicable. • Distributed storage (BTM): ARC will certainly consider this as part of the Zero 30 commitment for the community. • Energy Awareness: Agree that initiatives like this will contribute, ARC note the need for communication of progress around this plan and understand its importance in demonstrating leadership and inspiring community action to follow suit.

James Vicars & Angela Earth	<p>Supported the plan with no specific feedback. Standard response issued below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for the support that you have provided for Councils Renewable Energy Action Plan (REAP) that was placed on public exhibition in September of this year. The time taken for you to review and critique it is truly appreciated. I will endeavour to prepare a report for Council to adopt the Plan this month at the Ordinary Council Meeting on November 23.
Robert Baker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the mid-solar array option is pursued, we note your advice to space and raise the panels to avoid creating an ecohydrological dessert, thereby preserving the landscape, soil quality and vegetation. • I thank you for your offer to assist in the implementation of the plan as an independent consultant, however at this point ARC has no plans to engage beyond that of the services of the author of the report - Constructive Energy. • ARC also notes your credentials and accompanying thesis to your submission. Well done on this piece, I commend you on your efforts. Thank you for sharing.
Guyra Resident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC note your objection to the Plan and your desire for government to better understand catchment management in Guyra and surrounds. • If I may, your reference to this document as a “Renewable Intensive Agriculture Plan” is somewhat misconstrued. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify that this is a “Renewable Energy Action Plan” for Armidale Regional Council. Its objective is to reduce reliance on power that has been produced with fossil fuels. This intern reduces ARCs contribution to CO2 in the atmosphere and reduces the impact our operations have on climate change. It also aims to reduce operating cost in the longer term which will provide a benefit to rate payers in the region. This plan is not for intensive agriculture in the region. • Furthermore, your observations that the plan has been written and prepared by an ‘energy company’ are inaccurate (however I do understand how this conclusion may be drawn with their business name as Constructive Energy). Constructive Energy are an experienced consulting group who help organisations reduce energy consumption and transition to renewable sources such as solar and wind – they are not energy producers themselves.