



Renewable
Newstead

Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy





Purpose of this strategy

This Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) outlines how Renewable Newstead (RN) will engage with the community and consult with stakeholders during the development of the RN Community Solar Project (the Project). This Strategy will apply until the end of construction – it will then be updated to be inclusive of the operational phase.

This Strategy will integrate with the planning application process and the customer sign-up campaign.

The RN Community Solar Project is unique in that it has been conceived and developed by the community, is focused on joint problem solving and integrates the establishment of commercial partnerships. Its aim is to deliver an outcome focused on 'community benefit'. From the start, this project has been about what the community wants, therefore, this Strategy is also based on what the community wants to know, learn, hear and see.

In developing this Strategy, we collaborated with the community. Rather than roll out a template, this Strategy is based on what works well for this community - the Newstead community.

This Strategy is not a one-person plan but rather owned, managed and implemented by the Renewable Newstead Committee.

The RN Committee understands the success of the Project is dependent on the development of genuine, ongoing and trusted relationships with the community, the park builder, energy retailer, the energy distributor and State Government.

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Introduction

1.2 Our Journey

The RN Community Solar Project concept was developed following a well-attended, enthusiastic community summit in 2008.¹ The overall objective of the summit was to engage the community in a proactive approach to solving problems and challenges relevant to the Newstead community – this summit was the birth of Newstead 2021 Inc.

Since then, Newstead 2021 has supported the development of a vibrant, informed and sustainable community in the town and surrounds. The group, which comprises interested community members, supports the discussion and implementation of ideas and projects that benefit the Newstead community; seeks to communicate relevant information about issues concerning the community; supports actions that improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Newstead community; promotes two-way dialogue with Local Government and actively seeks resources that can contribute to the development of the town.

Renewable Newstead (RN), was formally established in 2011, under the auspices of Newstead 2021 Inc, to pursue future energy options for the town. That year, RN worked with Central Victoria Solar City (CVSC) on a project focused on energy audits and behavioural change. This project found that individual households could only go so far in remedying Newstead's energy needs through retrofitting solutions such as rooftop solar and that there was a continuing dependence on firewood and gas for heating.

The project gave RN the confidence to investigate a collective community solution and after further community consultation it determined to develop a technology-agnostic, renewable energy project that delivered a positive environmental impact while potentially reducing household energy prices.

The focus was on doing it right, not doing it quickly.

In 2014 RN had a clear direction and a goal. It wanted to develop, document and implement a model for moving the town towards 100% locally generated renewable energy in a commercially viable way that would benefit everyone in the community - no-one was to be left behind.

In 2015, RN received \$200,000 from the Victorian Government to develop this model. Under the grant agreement, RN committed to creating a partnership with the local energy distributor (Powercor), and to assess the technical and commercial constraints of pursuing its goal within three years. Through extensive engagement with the community, Powercor and energy market stakeholders including regulatory authorities, RN developed a model based on the desired outcomes of it being: opt-in, do no harm, be 100% renewable, deliver community benefits and be grid-connected.

The outcome - a solar photovoltaic farm on the town's outskirts with capacity to generate at least 2MW of energy.

A further \$1 million was earmarked in 2019/20 towards a 10MW solar farm for Newstead. Since its inception, RN has demonstrated a strong desire to do what is best for the Newstead community; they have a track record in promoting and building community projects including the

¹ <https://newstead2021.wordpress.com/our-2020-summit/>



recreation reserve, community garden, pirate-shop playground and redevelopment of the disused railway station as a community arts precinct.

But they want much more.

Having garnered community support and enthusiasm for the delivery of local, reliable and renewable energy to the town, RN see the establishment of a local grid-connected solar farm as a means of supporting sustainable growth and development in Newstead and surrounds and of instilling greater community pride in what residents can achieve by working together for a common cause.

The plan is to install up to 10MW of solar power in the local distribution grid. This will ensure Newstead, which requires up to 2 to 3MW, can transition towards 100% renewable with excess generation available for offtake agreements.

RN knows other communities have been closely monitoring the Project's progress and are keen to see the model replicated in other communities. RN is providing advice and direction to these communities based on its own experience.

RN is proud that it is the first community group in Victoria to negotiate an agreement and tariff with an energy distributor (Powercor) and the first such group to aim to share the benefits of generating solar power with the community.

Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Powercor has provided data, advice and approach to network tariffs in order to provide greater cost certainty for the Newstead community. A trial opt-in residential network tariff is proposed commencing 1 July 2018. This tariff is available to all retailers for residential customers located in postcode area 3462, which includes Newstead. Due to its location within an unconstrained area of the network, the tariff has a high fixed charge to encourage greater utilisation of the network. The tariff is comprised as follows:

- a fixed charge, being 80% of the average network bill for a Powercor residential customer; and
- a per month demand charge, roughly recovering the remaining 20% of the average network bill for a Powercor residential customer.

The MoU expired in 2018 and is currently under review.

1.3 Acknowledgement of country

Renewable Newstead acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land where the Project is located, the Dja Dja Warrung people and wishes to pay respect to Elders, past and present and emerging. We acknowledge the ongoing connection between the Dja Dja Warrung people with land and waters.



Our approach

The overall approach to consultation and engagement for the RN Community Solar Project will be open, relaxed, flexible and responsive. This Strategy is therefore a 'live' document and will be updated progressively throughout the course of the Project, specifically at the beginning and end of each phase of the Project. It will also be continually informed by community feedback. This will ensure that the communication and engagement activities remain:

- True to the core underlying principles of the project
- Relevant to the outcomes required by the Project
- Creative and adaptive to respond to the community's needs
- Responsive to the needs of the Newstead community
- Tailored to best reach, consult and communicate with the Newstead community

Supported by a team of consultants, RN committee members will take the lead in delivering and implementing the Strategy, understanding the importance of local knowledge, 'on-the-ground' engagement and trusted relationships.

1.4 Community engagement objectives and guiding principles

Clear communication and consultation with the local community as well as key stakeholders is vital to the success of this project. Aligned with RN's core principles for the project:

- Be opt in
- Do no harm
- Be 100% renewable
- Deliver community benefits
- Be grid connected

The **community engagement objectives** for the Project are to:

- Clearly articulate to the local community how they can participate in the project and the benefits from participating
- Develop and maintain a social licence to develop, design, construct and commission the RN Community Solar Project through best practice stakeholder and community engagement
- Increase awareness and understanding of the RN Community Solar Project, including its benefits and the process of project development, approvals, design, construction and commissioning
- Ensure stakeholders and the community understand how and when they can provide input and/or feedback to the Project team
- Minimise impacts to stakeholders and community by providing responses to their concerns in a timely manner via easily accessible communication channels
- Encourage Newstead residents to sign up to the retail offer and tariff
- Foster trust in RN's ability to deliver the RN Community Solar Project
- Demonstrate to key government stakeholders proactive, meaningful engagement with other relevant stakeholders and the community
- Provide regular and transparent updates about the Project to government stakeholders
- Facilitate timely funding, approvals and regulatory support for the RN Community Solar Project



This Strategy will be guided by the following **communication and engagement principles**:

Table 1: Principles of engagement

Principle	RN engagement approach
Responsiveness and awareness.	Keep the community and stakeholders informed about RN Community Solar Project through the provision of accurate, timely and factual project information and provide opportunities for ongoing two-way dialogue.
Transparency, integrity and openness	Identify and address community and stakeholder concerns and maintain transparency during each of the project phases by fostering an honest and open approach and ensuring 'no surprises' for the local community
Accountability	Maximise benefits and minimise adverse effects by listening to the community, incorporating their needs where possible and being accountable for decisions
Inclusiveness	Involve key stakeholders and the community so they have the opportunity to play a part in decisions that affect them directly
Longevity	Ensure relationships and partnerships are long-term and ongoing

About the project

3.1 Project description

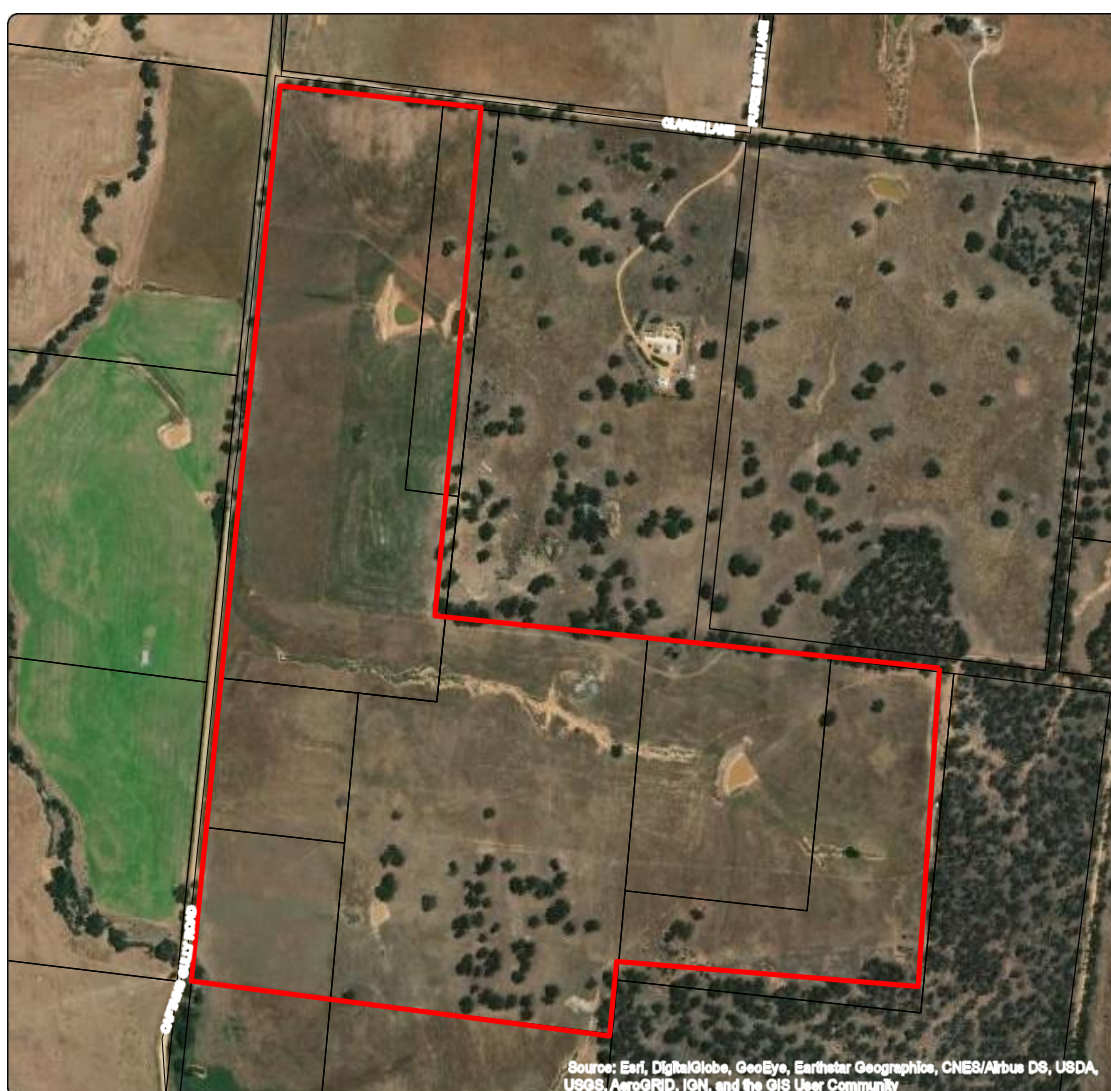
The project area comprises the property at Captains Gully Road, Newstead, which consists of several land parcels. It covers approximately 73 hectares and is bound by Clarke Lane to the north, private property to the east and south, and Captains Gully Road to the west.

The topography comprises low to moderate undulating slopes towards the south west.

The majority of the project area is used for agriculture (livestock grazing) and consists of exotic pasture interspersed with modified patches of native vegetation and scattered trees. A minor ephemeral waterway associated with Butlers Creek extends east-west across the southern section of the project area. Three farm dams are present.

The surrounding land use is predominantly agriculture.

1.5 Project map





Engagement approach

4.1 Level of engagement

Our approach to engaging stakeholders is based on the Public Participation Spectrum developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) and widely adopted as a framework for structuring consultation by the renewable industry.²

Table 2 shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate, depending on the goals, timeframes, resources and levels of interest/concern in the Project. At all levels of engagement, it is fundamental to define the promise and ensure it is clearly understood by both the decision makers and the stakeholders to be engaged. There is potential for expectations to not be effectively managed and dissatisfaction with the engagement process to occur if stakeholders or the community do not clearly understand the promise for each engagement event.

Table 2: Levels of Engagement based on IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

Level of Engagement	Our promise to you
Inform	We will keep you informed
Consult	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how your input influenced decisions.
Involve	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how you influenced the decision.
Collaborate	We will work with you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.
Empower	We will implement what you decide.

Stakeholder groups are likely to have differing communication and engagement needs. A level of engagement is therefore assigned to each stakeholder identified. It is possible for the level of engagement to alter at different milestones of the Project; as a consequence, some stakeholders will be assigned more than one level of engagement. Each level of engagement is a valid one, provided it is delivered in a meaningful way.

The Committee will engage broadly but understands there are stakeholders seeking different levels of engagement in the Project. Stakeholder level of interest will evolve over the duration of the Project and this analysis will be updated regularly to reflect changes and emerging issues or opportunities.

² Lane, T. and J. Hicks (2017) Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development. DELWP, Melbourne.



1.6 Project activities, Engagement Activities, Communication Activities and Milestones by stage

	Site selection & feasibility	Planning application	Public notification	Tender process	Customer sign-up	Construction
Proposed timing	Jan 2020 – March 2020	March 2020 - May 2020	June 2020 – July 2020	Sept 2020 – Nov 2020	Sept 2020 - March 2021	Early 2021 – Mid 2021
Project activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preliminary site analysis - Meet and engage with host landowners - Enter Non-Binding Letter of Intent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further design development - Detailed site selection and technical studies - Preliminary project design - Mapping of site constraints - Submit DA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exhibit planning documents - Liaise with State Government to promote the public exhibition of planning documents - Review planning decision - Await 28 days for VCAT lodgment (if objections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop Tender construction & retailer contract - Tender process - Award successful tender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sign up customers - Explore PPA agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilise on site - Installation - Commissioning - Generation commences
Engagement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host landowner engagement (one-on-one) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council & MP briefings - Neighbour (2km) briefing prior to lodgment - Community briefing - Q & A via webinar – once DA is lodged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community drop-in session (online) - Community ambassador program - Feedback forms - Provide access to planning documents via public places - Respond to inquiries - Panel hearings (if required) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One-on-one engagement - Industry briefings - Feedback forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community drop-in session x 2 - Community ambassador program - Community events - Community briefings - Stakeholder meetings (PPA) - Shop fronts - Feedback forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministerial opening - Community celebratory event - One-on-one engagement (neighbours, host landowner)
Communication activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media (milestone) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website (re-launch) - Social media - Media (milestone) - E-Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website & Social media - Media campaign #1 - Advertising - E-Newsletter & FAQs - Letter box drop - Posters, facts sheets & brochures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - Social media - Media campaign #2 - E-Newsletter - Direct mail (industry) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website & Social media - Media campaign #3 - E-Newsletter & FAQs - Letter-box drop - Posters, facts sheets & brochures - Customer Info Pack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - Social media - Milestone media - E-Newsletter
Milestones	Option lease signed	Planning application lodged	Planning application approved	Tender awarded	50% (or 200 residents) of community sign-up in 3462 postcode	Construction commences



Stakeholder identification and analysis

Key stakeholder groups are listed below. Stakeholder groups will have a different level of engagement during different phases of the project.

Stakeholder	Details	Objectives	Level of engagement	Decision maker, Influencer, Supporter	Preferred communication channel
Host landowners (1)	Landowner hosting solar panels and associated infrastructure on their land	To contribute to the Project's progress, ability to provide local knowledge advice and input.	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Decision maker	One-on-one engagement
Neighbouring properties (12)	Residents within 12km radius of the project site have the potential to be impacted by the visual impact and heavy vehicle traffic associated with the construction phase	To keep neighbours informed of the project from early in the Project planning phase and provide opportunity to raise issues and provide feedback	Inform Consult Involve	Influencer	One-on-one engagement Community drop-in sessions Letterbox drops
Newstead and surrounding communities	A small diverse, community comprising multi agents, a mix of professionals and non-professionals and families. Newstead has more residents above the median age than the Australian average with the largest age group between 54 and 65 years old.	To keep them informed of the Project from early in the planning phase and provide opportunity to raise issues and provide feedback Inform them of personal, community and commercial benefits of the Solar Farm	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Influencers and Decision makers	Social media E-Newsletter Media campaigns Website Letterbox drop Community drop-in sessions Community events Posters, fact sheet & brochures
Customers	Newstead residents including homeowners and renters	To encourage them to sign-up to the retail offer (which includes the tariff)	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Decision makers	Social media E-Newsletter Media campaigns Website Letterbox drop Community drop-in sessions Community events



					Posters, fact sheet and brochures Customer info pack
Tenderers	Tenderers will be invited to tender for the delivery of the Project which will be divided into the following components: - Financier - Developer - Retailer Tenderers (consortia) can apply for one or all stages.	To attract a competitive, high quality group of organisations to submit a tender.	Inform Consult	Influencers	Tender process Media campaign #2 Direct mail
Powercor (distributor)	RN has signed a MOU with Powercor so community members can access a unique tariff that is tailored to the Newstead community	To partner with Powercor on the design of the solution which will enable up to a 30% reduction on whole of home energy costs	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Decision maker and influencer	One-one-meetings
Community groups	Community groups including, but not limited to: CFA, CWA, Men's Shed, football, netball and cricket clubs, school and kindergarten, Spinners and Weavers Club, Art's Salon, Walking Newstead Group, community garden, churches, shops, post office, Wheels and Walkers and playgroup	To understand the Project and be able to update members.	Inform Consult	Supporters	Community briefings E-Newsletters Media campaigns
Newstead businesses	Seek to engage and collaborate with local businesses on opportunities that may be available and to promote the project	To generate local business opportunities.	Inform Consult	Supporters	Shop fronts Community drop-in sessions
Environmental groups	Sustainability and environment groups	Discussion on community energy. Opportunity to assist in landscaping amenity	Inform Consult	Supporters	Community briefings
Federal MP	Federal Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters	To ensure the local member is kept up-to-date on the Project and its progress. To ensure she can respond to any constituents' concerns.	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Influencer	One-on-one meetings Email updates



State MP	State Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards	To ensure the local member is kept up-to-date on the Project and its progress. To ensure she can respond on any constituents' concerns.	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Influencer	One-on-one meetings Email updates
Planning Minister	Minister for Planning Hon. Richard Wynne	Will approve/not approve planning application	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Decision maker	Planning application
Environment Minister	Minister for Environment and Energy Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio	While not directly responsible for the planning application, she is the Minister responsible for the funding.	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Decision maker	Ministerial announcement and media events
Local Government	Mount Alexander Shire Council	To ensure a positive and collaborative relationship within the LGA that can support the long-term goals of the community and promote the initiative	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Supporter	Councillor/staff briefings
State Departments	DELWP	To provide advice and recommendations to the project and inform relevant stakeholders of the status	Inform Consult Involve	Influencers	Committee meetings Briefings
Aboriginal and cultural heritage	Dja Dja Warrung	Understand what elements of the Project are culturally relevant/sensitive Engaging with local Aboriginal groups beyond planning requirements such as Cultural Heritage Management Plans	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	Supporters	Community briefings
Power offtake partners	Organisation and industry groups who will potentially buy power from the RN Solar Community Project	To deliver outcomes for both groups.	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	Decision makers	One-on-one meetings
Interested community groups	Groups from outside Newstead interested in seeing how the Project evolves and its success or otherwise	To develop a model that has the ability to be replicated in other regions	Inform	Supporters	One-on-one meetings/briefings Presentations



Media	Local media, national media and industry media (refer to media database)	To be an effective communications channel in keeping the community and stakeholders informed	Inform	Influencer	Media releases Advertising
Project team	RN Committee, Energy Forms, Premier Strategy, project coordinator, Energy for the People	An effective team that plays a critical role in the Project's delivery and success	Inform Consult Involve	Supporters	Project team meetings



Project issues and risk

There are a number of community and stakeholder engagement risks present in the development of any large infrastructure project, and the RN Community Solar Project is no exception. These risks and the mitigation approaches are outlined in Table 4 below.

Risk matrix

Probability	High	3	4	5
	Med	2	3	4
	Low	1	2	3
		Low	Med	High
	Impact			

Table 4: Potential risks and mitigation measures for community engagement program

Potential Issue	Details	Level of risk	Mitigation measures undertaken by the committee
Opposition to the Project	Some community members may oppose the Project. While some may not necessarily support the Project or project site; they do not oppose it but are rather disinterested. Some members of the community initially opposed the Project but are now engaged and keen	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informing them of the process Promote the benefits Keeping them informed Ensure transparency over decision making processes including site selection
Opposition to the model	They may potentially not be eligible (outside the catchment area) or do not support the model	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letting them know it is voluntary and optional Reaffirming the core objectives and principles (especially opt-in nature)



Land is not appropriate	If technical studies show the land is not appropriate or too costly, thereby delaying the process	2	<p>Delay informing the community of the potential site until technical studies are complete, and there is certainty about site suitability</p> <p>Identify land options</p>
RN's reputation be associated with external partners	RN reputation be associated with its varying partners and if they have a negative reputation could reflect poorly on RN	1	Continue to build the RN brand and promote demonstrated capabilities through communications and constructive engagement
COVID-19	Makes community consultation difficult. In order to build trust, face-to-face engagement is important and has proven successful previously	4	<p>Flexible in the way we engage. Examine online options.</p> <p>Investigate social distancing channels such as telephone calls and letterbox drops. Be prepared for when restrictions are lifted</p>
Lack of government/regulator support	Project does not proceed or is significantly delayed	2	Engage early and ensure clear messaging on the design, need and benefits of the Project
Inconsistent messaging and information	Unclear and mixed messages and confusion among stakeholder and community	2	<p>Establish an agreed set of key messages, terminology and what's 'negotiable' for each stage ensuring all the Project team and RN committee are aligned</p> <p>Respond to concerns in a timely manner</p> <p>Develop a consultation register</p>
Not enough customers	Inability to sign up enough customers to reach milestones	4	<p>Undertake pre-market testing to understand demand</p> <p>Implement media and engagement campaign #2 which would be targeted at customers</p> <p>Build trust amongst the community</p>



Inability to attract tenderers	The Project is considered too big or too small and not financially viable. Model is deemed to be too high-risk or not financially rewarding	3	Start engagement early – once PA is submitted implement media campaign #2 which is targeted at attracting tenderers
Community fatigue	The Project has been on the community agenda for many years, some community members may have lost interest or are tired of hearing about it	1	Engage/communicate only when we have something to say Demonstrate action and progress
Political environment	Change in political environment i.e.: new minister/Government who doesn't look at the Project favourably	2	To be successful, the Project at this stage, needs little government support. Funding has already been committed
Not able to deliver 10MW project	While Newstead only needs 2MW; in order for the Project to be financially attractive developers will want it to be up to 10MW	4	Engage with stakeholders about potential offtake agreements such as local government, water authorities and health services
Transmission line capacity	There is not enough capacity on the line for 10MW	2	Timing is critical in order to build the solar farm before other renewable projects utilize capacity
Don't meet government milestones	RN is unable to meet government milestones	3	Continue to keep the Department informed of progress. Identify any risks and mitigation measures
Impacts during construction	Traffic, noise and dust impact during construction	1	Continue to inform neighbouring properties of construction impacts Have a nominated Project Manager with contact details readily available



Key messages

Key messages assist in providing information in a clear and consistent way that allows the community to become aware, gain understanding and provide meaningful input. The messages will be updated as the Project develops. Some messages will be relevant throughout, while other messages, specific to a particular phase of the Project or emerging issue, will be developed as required. Initial key messages for the Project are as follows:

Theme	Key messages	Supporting messages
Community benefits	<p>Extensive research and community consultation over nine years has resulted in RN designing a 100% renewable energy model that will deliver the best outcomes for the Newstead community – socially and economically.</p> <p>This ground-breaking solar farm project will provide benefits to households, and potentially businesses, whether properties are owner occupied or tenanted.</p> <p>The solar farm is the least expensive way of transitioning Newstead's power supply to renewable energy.</p> <p>It will provide reliable, renewable energy through the existing grid. It will allow residents to reduce their carbon footprint while having little impact on their current lifestyles.</p> <p>A community solar farm is more inclusive by providing alternative options to houses unable to have solar panels. A community solar farm provides an affordable option for the socially vulnerable who would otherwise not have access to other energy solutions, and may also end up having to bear the increased distribution cost for those remaining on the grid.</p>	<p>Direct benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a reduction (up to 30%) in daytime energy costs everyone can tap into this renewable power supply no upfront investment required – simply sign up no investment in infrastructure required – no need for solar panels on individual roofs use of existing infrastructure – minimal need for new infrastructure; none for individual households households will remain on 'the grid' guaranteeing back-up reliability <p>It spreads the distribution costs across all users and uses existing infrastructure – poles, wires and connections.</p> <p>RN will negotiate all agreements with the landowner, developer, financier, retailer and distributor on behalf of the community.</p> <p>Should the Project make a profit, part of this profit will be distributed back to the Newstead community. However, the RN committee has said feedback from the community has identified cheaper power as the priority, not necessarily making a profit.</p>
Solution to a problem	<p>At the behest of the Newstead community, RN was committed to establishing a renewable energy source that everyone could access.</p>	



	<p>By partnering with Powercor to find a solution, including the use of existing infrastructure and development of a unique tariff, and engaging closely with the Newstead community throughout the process, RN is ready to implement 'the solution':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a solar farm on the outskirts of town which will produce up to 10MW of power – more than meeting the town's energy requirements of 2 to 3 MW - transitioning Newstead to 100% renewable energy - and, most importantly, giving every resident the opportunity to be part of this solution. 	
<p>Who is Renewable Newstead</p>	<p>Renewable Newstead is a group of volunteer residents operating under the umbrella of the community organisation, Newstead 2021 Inc. The committee has a long history of volunteerism and has delivered on a number of community projects.</p> <p>Over the past nine years, RN has consulted widely with the Newstead community, the network distribution company Powercor, energy market stakeholders and regulatory authorities to develop a model that will deliver 100% locally generated, renewable, low-cost energy in a socially acceptable way to Newstead.</p> <p>RN members have demonstrated their desire to do what is best for the Newstead community over many years - they have a track record in promoting and building community projects including the recreation reserve, community gardens, pirate-boat park and redevelopment of the railway building.</p> <p>But they want much more.</p> <p>Having garnered community support and enthusiasm for the delivery of local, reliable, sustainable, renewable</p>	<p>RN has generated Victorian Government interest and financial support in the Project which, along with thousands of hours of volunteer work, resulted in the delivery of a commercial model and business plan to the Victorian Government in June 2018.</p> <p>In 2015, the project received \$200,000 from the Victorian Government to develop the model. A further \$1 million was earmarked in 2019/20 towards a 10MW solar farm for Newstead.</p> <p>RN knows other communities have been closely monitoring progress and are keen to replicate this model in their own communities. RN is providing advice and direction to these communities based on its own experience.</p>



	<p>energy to the town, RN sees the solar farm as a means of drawing new, green business to Newstead and of instilling greater community pride in what residents can achieve by working together for a common cause.</p> <p>RN is proud that it is the first community group in Victoria to negotiate an agreement and tariff with an energy distributor (Powercor) and the first such group to share the benefits of generating solar power with the community without the need for ongoing government subsidies.</p>	
<p>Customers</p>	<p>Every household, whether an owner occupier or renter, has the opportunity to tap into the renewable power supply and share the benefits. However, sign-up is optional – no-one will be forced to switch to the Newstead solar farm energy retailer.</p> <p>The renewable energy will be cheaper than bottled gas or wood and enable customers to switch from their current energy sources for heating/cooling.</p> <p>Newstead customers will be able to use more energy without paying higher distribution charges.</p> <p>No upfront investment is required - it is simply a matter of signing up to receive the power via existing infrastructure.</p> <p>The solar farm makes it easy for residents to tap into renewable energy without investing time, effort and finance into solar panels and batteries.</p> <p>Residents will reduce their carbon footprint by using power from the solar farm.</p>	<p>Buildings do not need rooftop solar panels, although these remain an option, to benefit from this project. Delivery of this energy will be via existing infrastructure, eliminating the need to install new wires, connections etc.</p> <p>The more residents who switch to the solar farm energy retailer, the greater overall benefit due to the spread of distribution costs.</p> <p>The earlier residents sign up to the solar farm, the more competition it will generate between prospective developers which could well result in cheaper power and, possibly, profits being generated back to the community.</p>
<p>Working with Powercor</p>	<p>Early in this process, RN partnered with Powercor to deliver this project on the understanding that while Newstead 2021 Inc. has a proven track record in community problem solving, Powercor's expertise lies with it being</p>	<p>Powercor has shown a preparedness to adapt how it operates to facilitate the Project and is keen to see how the Project evolves and how the model can be replicated in other communities.</p> <p>The solar farm will use existing Powercor infrastructure to deliver power.</p>



	<p>one of Australia's largest electricity distribution companies.</p> <p>RN has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)³ with Powercor and has been working closely with the power distributor with regard to pricing (which has resulted in the development of a unique tariff), building the infrastructure required and delivering the power.</p>	
<p>How to support this project</p>	<p>Confirm your support for the Newstead solar farm by committing to signing up with the solar farm's energy retailer when the farm comes on-line in 2021.</p> <p>The more residents who commit to the solar farm, the more interest and competition will be generated between prospective developers which means a better outcome for Newstead. Better outcomes are defined as cheaper power and, if applicable, profits being returned to the town. Reliable, sustainable energy at a CHEAPER PRICE for all residents is the priority for this project.</p>	<p>Sign up with the solar farm's energy retailer as soon as the retailer is appointed.</p>
<p>Project opportunities</p>	<p>It is envisaged that delivering 100% renewable power to Newstead will draw new businesses and those committed to using renewable energy to the town.</p> <p>The solar farm is seen as part of a bigger picture to improve the attractiveness of Newstead as a destination for families and businesses.</p> <p>Its development will further demonstrate to the Newstead community just what it can achieve when residents and groups work together for a common cause.</p> <p>By working with Powercor, RN has developed a model that uses existing infrastructure and a first-of-a-kind network tariff trial to provide this affordable energy.</p>	<p>Powercor, DELWP and several towns and renewable energy groups and municipalities are closely monitoring the Project. Should it be deemed successful, the Newstead solar farm model could be replicated in other communities.</p> <p>RN is proud that it is the first community group in Victoria to negotiate an agreement and tariff with an energy distributor (Powercor) and the first such group to share the benefits of generating solar power with the community without the need for subsidies.</p>

³ The MoU expired in 2018 and is currently under review.



<p>What it means for government</p>	<p>State Government has supported the Project from the early stages with a \$200,000 grant in 2015 to develop a master plan for the delivery of 100% renewable energy to Newstead within three years.</p> <p>It has subsequently committed \$1 million towards development of the solar farm.</p> <p>The success of this pilot project could see it replicated in other communities; boosting the state's chance of reaching its renewable energy target of 50% by 2030.</p>	<p>This project is a prime demonstration of what communities, no matter how big or small, can achieve when working together.</p> <p>The success of locally based renewable energy projects could underpin strong growth in 'green' industries and businesses committed to using renewable power leading to a growth in jobs and investment, particularly in regional areas.</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports smart local projects to fully harness the benefit of locally generated and storage renewable energy and build thriving sustainable futures.</p>
<p>The project – facts</p>	<p>To produce up to 10 megawatts of power – up to two to three megawatts are required to power Newstead with any additional power fed into the grid</p> <p>Locally generated, grid-connected, reliable and affordable energy</p> <p>Available to all households and businesses</p> <p>No upfront or infrastructure costs</p> <p>Planning application to be submitted in May 2020, tenders completed by November and construction to start in early 2021</p> <p>State Government has granted RN \$1M to develop the solar farm</p>	
<p>Development of the Project</p>	<p>RN will negotiate all agreements with the landowner, developer, financier, retailer and distributor on behalf of the community.</p> <p>RN will lease the site on which the solar farm is to be built and sub-lease the land to the developer.</p> <p>The landholder and neighbouring landholders will be kept informed of the construction timeline and what each phase will involve in the way of noise, dust, road usage and eventual connection to the grid. Transmission will be via a short section of new lines</p>	<p>RN has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Powercor and has been working closely with the power distributor with regard to pricing, building the infrastructure required and delivering the power. RN understands that while Newstead 2021 Inc has a proven track record in community problem solving, Powercor's expertise lies with it being one of Australia's largest electricity distribution companies.</p> <p>Powercor has shown a preparedness to adapt how it operates to facilitate the project and is keen to see how the Project evolves and how the model can be replicated in other communities.</p>



	<p>connecting the solar farm to existing transmission lines.</p> <p>A number of jobs are expected to be generated during construction but the exact type and number will not be determined until the Project goes to tender.</p>	<p>The solar farm will use existing Powercor infrastructure to deliver power.</p>
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Engagement tools and techniques

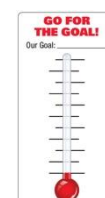
To provide the best opportunity for stakeholders and community to be involved, a wide range of activities and tools will be used. Some tools and approaches will be highly targeted and others will be more general in nature. The following section provides an overview of the communications and community engagement methods which could be used.

Engagement	
Site landowners	One-on-one engagement with site landowners
Council/MP briefings	Ongoing council/MP briefings to provide project updates
Community drop-in session (2)	Information sessions where the community can drop in to gather information and provide feedback on the project. Alternative options to be examined including an online webinar
Community ambassador program	Utilizing RN committee members to inform the community of the RN Community Solar Farm. This may be in the form of a telephone call or drop-in session. FAQs will be provided to ensure clear key messaging and minimise the risk of misinformation
Industry briefings	One-on-one meetings with potential tenderers
Community events	Attend existing community events to provide information on the project
Community briefings	Present to community groups (i.e.; Sporting clubs, Newstead School Council, CFA) about project and customer sign-up program
Community feedback forms	To promote two-way engagement. An opportunity for community to provide feedback to the project team
Shop fronts	Approach existing small businesses to display information on the Project
Stakeholder briefings	Potential Power Purchase Agreements
Ministerial opening	Ministerial events i.e.: turning of first sod, official opening
Community celebratory event	To celebrate success, a community picnic
Communications	
Media (milestone)	Proactive media releases informing the community about Project milestones i.e.: signing of contracts, commencement of construction
Website	Regularly updated website that includes Project progress and current status (i.e.: we are here), E-news, complaints register & media centre

E-Newsletter	Distributed electronically to database every two months. Posted on website
Direct mail	Distributed to stakeholder groups and industry
Posters, fact sheets and brochures	To be distributed at community drop-in sessions
Advertising	Advertise public notification periods (as required by government). Advertise community events
Media campaigns	A series of campaigns (3) to be developed for each of the Project phases, including media releases and social media posts. Campaign includes: Media Campaign #1: Planning Application Process Media Campaign #2: Tender Process Media campaign #3: Customer sign-up
Letterbox drop	Committee members to distribute information to residents via mailboxes
Reporting	Report to government on Project status
Customer information pack	Information for potential customers including registration form, cost comparison and Project benefits
FAQs	An internal copy of FAQs to be used by committee members when speaking to residents An external copy of FAQs to be posted on website and distributed at community events
Social media	Ongoing social media campaign via twitter, Facebook.

Other ideas to explore:

- A community competition
- 'Target' display – measuring customer sign-ups publicly so community can measure success
- Approach a high-profile ambassador to present at a community event i.e.: Mike Cannon-Brookes
- Social networking approach to local engagement (trusted sources)



Media campaigns

Premier Strategy recommends, in addition to milestone media releases, for RN to implement three media campaigns over the next 12 months. Using the key messages identified and a mix of the communication channels (i.e.: website updates, media releases, social media and direct mails) the details of the media campaigns include:

	Objective	Stakeholders	Details
Media Campaign # 1 May – July 2020	To inform the community on the current status of the Project.	Newstead community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-launch the website - Re-introduce the project after a “communications” hiatus - Provide current status on the project - Advertise public notification period, where the community can view the documents and how they can provide feedback - Outline proposed site and timeline - Inform the community of planning application process – what it means, how it works and how they can be involved.
Media campaign #2 September – November 2020	To encourage companies to tender for the Project.	Tenderers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearly articulate components of the tender - Focus on industry media and social media channels
Media campaign # 3 September 2020– March 2021	To encourage the Newstead community to sign up to the retail offer	Newstead community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build community support and excitement - Buy local and support the local community - Sense of pride and ownership



Proposed timing

	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020	January 2021	February 2021	March 2021
Activity												
Planning application												
Council & MP briefing		x										
Website (re-launch)												
Social media												
Media (milestone)												
E-Newsletter												
Public notification												
Community drop-in session			x									
Community ambassador program												
Feedback forms												
Website												
Social Media												
Media Campaign #1												
Advertising												
E-Newsletter												
FAQs												
Letterbox drop												
Posters, fact sheets & brochures												





One-on-one engagement												
Industry briefing												
Feedback forms												
Website												
Social media												
Media Campaign #2												
E-Newsletter												
Direct mail to industry												
Customer sign up												
Community drop-in sessions x 2												
Community Ambassador program												
Community events												
Community briefings												
Stakeholder meetings												
Shop fronts												
Feedback forms												
Website												
Social media												
Media campaign #3												
E-Newsletter												
Letterbox drop												
Poster fact sheets & brochures												
Customer information pack												
Construction												
Ministerial opening												
Community celebratory event												
One-on-one engagement												
Website												
Social media												
Milestone media												





Recording, Monitoring, Evaluating and Reporting

This plan will be continuously monitored and updated to reflect the themes and issues emerging from engagement. Ongoing research and media monitoring will be undertaken to better understand the underlying narrative in the community regarding the Project and to assess the key messaging and effectiveness of the communication and engagement activities.

The following section outlines how input (feedback, submissions, comments etc.) from stakeholders will be recorded, considered and addressed throughout the Project and **presented to relevant stakeholders including Government departments**. Evaluation is not a stand-alone or isolated process; it is an integral and on-going component of every communication and engagement activity or process. Consequently, evaluation at the beginning of the consultation planning process is as important as it is during and following implementation. Evaluation is a vital element for forward planning and can provide a strategic basis for decisions about issues, including the allocation of resources.

Engagement Objective	Measure	Target
Develop and maintain a social licence to develop, design, construct and commission the RN Community Solar Project through best practice stakeholder and community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback to be collated and reported to RN Committee • Engagement delivered in line with strategy, including evidence of responding to stakeholder feedback • Project team reflections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement plan evaluated at the completion of every phase and evidence of enhancements made in response to stakeholder feedback • Project team conducts at least monthly reflections and has evidence of incorporating lessons learned
Increase awareness and understanding of the RN Community Solar Project, including its benefits and the process of planning, public notification, tender process, customer sign up and construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community and stakeholders receive information on the Project, including timing • Engagement and communications have occurred within identified timeframes • Community provide feedback on the project • Analysis of stakeholder feedback regarding awareness of the Project and adequacy of information through engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All relevant local community members and stakeholders received Project information • All engagement activities occurred according to schedule or in line with protocols • Government stakeholder feedback indicates good awareness and understanding of the Project
Ensure stakeholders and the community understand how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community and stakeholders contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All local community and stakeholders contact Renewable



Engagement Objective	Measure	Target
and when they can provide input and/or feedback to the project team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewable Newstead as the first point of call Feedback form responses at planned engagement events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newstead (no contact to local council, MPs, etc) Feedback form responses indicate community and stakeholders know who to contact and how/when they can provide input/feedback.
Minimise impacts to stakeholders and community by proactively mitigating potential impacts and providing timely responses to issues via easily accessible communication channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder feedback is incorporated in the design and planning Questions and concerns are reported on and responded to by a member of the Project team in line with engagement protocols Maintenance of an issues and risks register, updating status of risks and identifying and implementing mitigations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of stakeholder feedback being incorporated into the design and planning Stakeholders are acknowledged within two business days as per the protocols and evidence of adequate resolutions for each enquiry/complaint Evidence of issues and risks register, including identification and mitigation of issues/risks
Foster trust in Renewable Newstead's ability to deliver the RN Community Solar Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of media and social media coverage throughout the Project lifecycle Level of support for the Project by government stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 70% of media and social media is positive or neutral towards Renewable Newstead Overall government stakeholders are supportive of the Project
Demonstrate to key government stakeholders proactive, meaningful engagement with other stakeholders and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder feedback is incorporated in the design and planning Questions and concerns are reported on and responded to by a member of the Project team in line with engagement protocols Maintenance of an issues and risks register, updating status of risks and identifying and implementing mitigations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of stakeholder feedback being incorporated into the design and planning Evidence of stakeholders being acknowledged within two business days as per the protocols and evidence of adequate resolutions for each enquiry/complaint Evidence of issues and risks register, including identification and mitigation of issues/risks
Reduce concerns with key government stakeholders by providing regular and transparent updates about the RN Community Solar Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement delivered in line with stakeholder engagement plan, including evidence of responding to stakeholder feedback Regular updates provided to government stakeholders in line with the engagement plan or as requested by the stakeholder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement plan evaluated at the end of each phase and evidence of enhancements made in response to stakeholder feedback All engagement activities occurred according to schedule or in line with protocols



Engagement Objective	Measure	Target
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information presented in a clear manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder feedback on information presented is clear and easy to understand
Facilitate timely funding, approvals and regulatory support for the RN Community Solar Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Required funding secured in line with Project timeframes• Required approvals secured in line with Project timeframes• Required regulatory support adequate and received in line with Project timeframes• Required customer-sign ups	Approvals secured by mid-2020

