New England Solar

Renewable Energy from ACEN

Social Investment Program

Community Reference Group Guidelines

ACEN Australia is continuing its support of the New England region, through its New England Solar grants, sponsorships and donations in 2027.

To help administer those grants, we're inviting expressions of interest to become members of the Community Reference Group (CRG) for our New England Social Investment Program (SIP).

The New England SIP provides funding for initiatives that contribute to building thriving and resilient communities and economies in Uralla Shire. The CRG is valuable in providing local insight to how SIP grants, sponsorships and donations can make the most effective contributions to the Uralla district and surrounds.

It comprises five community members and is facilitated by ACEN Australia's Communications and Community Engagement Specialist - New England. It will consider applications for two rounds of funding in 2027.

Two members on the 2026 panel have reached the maximum two-year term and we are seeking expressions of interest to fill those places. The other four panel members are staying on board for their second year.

Expressions of interest to be a new member of the CRG in 2027 are open until 11 December 2026.

Click here to submit an Expression of Interest

Emphasis on **Diversity**

The CRG will benefit from a diverse range of community knowledge and experiences. **Panel members should represent the community as broadly as possible, from various parts of the Uralla district and surrounds, and including a variety of ages, cultural and business backgrounds and interests.**

Young members of the community, aged 15 and over, are particularly encouraged to apply.

Everyone living or working within the Uralla Shire Council region is eligible to apply to join the Community Reference Group, as well as Kelly's Plains and Dangarsleigh residents within 5km of New England Solar Farm. Applications to join are also encouraged from members of the Anaiwan community.



The 2026 New England Solar Social Investment Program Community Reference Group.

Fostering **Strong Connections** with Community

Since its inception in 2020, the New England Solar SIP has been a key tool in fostering the partnership between New England Solar and the Uralla community.

Our New England SIP has contributed more than $1 million to groups in Uralla Shire, including the New England stock horse club (pictured below).



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Roles and responsibilities for CRG members

The panel will consider two rounds of funding in 2027. The first will open in January and the second in July.

CRG members will be required to meet at least twice for each of the two rounds for 2027 (minimum four meetings per year), with additional meetings as members deem necessary.

Members can participate in these meetings either in person or virtually via video conference. Attendance in person is preferred where possible. Panel members also help spread the word about the Social Investment Program and encourage local groups and individuals to apply.

ACEN Australia will reimburse panel members for reasonable and agreed expenses in carrying out their roles with the CRG.

Each member has the option to continue for a second year.



The Round 1 grant recipients in 2026.



2025 Round 2 recipients.

2027 CRG & grants **schedule**

11 December 2026: CRG expressions of interest close
January 2027: CRG members confirmed

18 January: Applications open for SIP grants Round 1
26 February: Applications close
March: SIP Round 1 grant recipients announced

July: Applications open for SIP grants Round 2
August: Applications close
October: SIP Round 2 grant recipients announced


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Social Investment Program

Guidelines

Social investment is our voluntary contribution to communities.

ACEN Australia's Social Investment Program (SIP) provides funding for initiatives and partnerships that contribute to building thriving and resilient communities and economies. Preference for funding is given to activities that deliver benefits in at least one of ACEN's value areas. Our approach to social investment is also aligned with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Who can apply

1. Groups within Uralla Shire, Dangarsleigh, Kelly Plains, and Analwan communities
2. Not-for-profit (NFP) organisations and charities (a not for profit organisation is an organisation that is not operating for the profit or gain, either direct or indirect of its individual members)
3. Incorporated community-based organisations
4. Social enterprises, including Indigenous organisations
5. Government entities and profit organisations where a project demonstrates a strong contribution to the local community

Demonstrating value

While each community is unique, our experience however tells us that benefit sharing and social investment must take place throughout the full project lifecycle, commencing at Development stage so that regional communities can actively participate in the benefits that a growing renewable energy industry can provide.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

VALUE Community enhancement and resilience

FOCUS Activities that enhance communal lives, cohesion, and resilience through improved access to technologies and economic opportunities.

VALUE Education and work

FOCUS Activities that provide or enhance education, training and employment resources and opportunities.

VALUE Reconciliation

FOCUS Activities that address Indigenous disadvantage, promote shared understanding, and respect for culture, and promote reconciliation.

VALUE Environment

FOCUS Activities that support communities to improve environmental resilience and stewardship.

The Community Reference Group is a fundamental part of New England Solar's Social Investment Program, adding transparency and local insight to the allocation of grants, sponsorships and donations.

Panel members make recommendations and act in a manner to further interests of the broader community and the New England Solar Farm and consistent with ACEN Australia's values and standing as a good corporate citizen within the community.

Members will be required to disclose any perceived or potential conflicts of interest in their roles with the CRG and manage conflicts in accordance with a conflict of interest policy. The will act as representatives of the whole community and not as representatives of any special interest groups or organisations.