

Renewable Energy Community Benefit Sharing Policy



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Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer / Director Development and Community Services
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- 1.1 that renewable energy projects within the Mid Murray Council area deliver clear, positive, and equitable benefits to the broader community.
- 1.2 a framework for securing, allocating, and managing community benefit contributions from renewable energy projects, ensuring these benefits are distributed fairly across current and future generations and go beyond those properties or individuals in proximity to Renewable Energy Infrastructure.

2. Background

- 2.1 Mid Murray Council region is experiencing significant growth in renewable energy projects, including wind, solar, and battery storage developments.
- 2.2 There are no set guidelines around Community Benefit Sharing for projects in South Australia pursuant to the *Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023* or other legislation governing approvals. Still, Proponents must demonstrate to have clear benefit sharing through social programs, support of local industry and employment, compensation or other economic benefits.
- 2.3 As the infrastructure for renewable energy developments is exempt from rating due to historic legislative exemptions, the Council views community benefit sharing as an essential way to ensure local communities still receive tangible benefits from these developments.
- 2.4 Council provides financial assistance and support to the community through its Community Grants Program. Council's Community Grants Policy demonstrates a commitment to allocate funding to assist community organisations and individuals in a manner which is effective, transparent, and equitable, whilst achieving the aims and objectives of Council.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Community Benefit Sharing:** involves sharing the rewards of renewable energy developments with the communities that host them. These programs are designed to deliver positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes for local residents and communities impacted by renewable energy infrastructure. Community benefits may include providing or contributing towards infrastructure for the community, making a financial contribution towards identified needs of the community, or a combination of both.

- 3.2 **Community Benefit Agreement:** an agreement between a Proponent and Council, intended to ensure that renewable energy projects deliver tangible Community Benefit Sharing to the host community - leaving a positive legacy.
- 3.3 **Community Grants Assessment Committee:** established pursuant to Section 41 of the *Local Government Act 1999* for the purposes of assisting Council with the assessment and allocation of the community grants, pursuant to its Community Grants Policy. Members of a Committee is set by the Terms of Reference, as amended.
- 3.4 **Community Grants program:** Funding allocation made available to encourage and develop local community projects, support community groups that make a positive contribution to community and cultural life and recognise the personal achievement of individual residents in the district.
- 3.5 **Host Community:** Residents, landowners, traditional owners, and businesses in the immediate vicinity of renewable energy infrastructure who are directly impacted by its development. (e.g., access roads, transmission connections).
- 3.6 **Infrastructure Agreement:** entered between a Proponent and the Council to cover the ongoing operational and maintenance costs associated in maintaining assets external to a project site.
- 3.7 **Council Managed Fund:** a dedicated restricted cash reserve account established for a Proponent's agreed contribution.
- 3.8 **Proponent:** An entity seeking approval for renewable energy projects within the Mid Murray Council area pursuant to *Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023* or other legislation governing approvals.
- 3.9 **Renewable Energy Infrastructure:** consists of the assets required to generate, store, and transport energy from a renewable energy resource.
- 3.10 **Public Purpose:** Uses of community benefit funds, as identified through Community Action Plans, and other Council-approved initiatives.

4. Scope

4.1 The Policy

- 4.1.1 applies to renewable energy projects within the Mid Murray Council, including wind, solar, and battery energy storage developments with an electricity output of ten (10) megawatt or more.
- 4.1.2 does not prevent Proponents from establishing arrangements with individual landholders or a Host Community that are directly impacted by Renewable Energy Infrastructure.
- 4.1.3 ensures that all residents share in the benefit of the renewable energy transition.

5. Policy

As well as Proponents providing benefits to local communities in proximity to Renewable Energy Infrastructure, a set percentage of Community Benefit Sharing funds may be placed in a Council Managed Fund (CMF), negotiated via a Community Benefit Agreement to provide for a more equitable distribution of benefits across the council area.

5.1 Community Benefit Agreements

- 5.1.1 Community Benefit Agreements are voluntary and must complement, not replace, statutory obligations or Infrastructure Agreements associated with a project.
- 5.1.2 Council is committed to ensuring Community Benefit Agreements adhere to the following principles:
- collaborative
 - transparent
 - community focused
 - proportionate
 - delivers a positive outcome
- 5.1.3 Community Benefit Agreements may be periodic or for the life of a project, and may include provisions to vary the annual contribution, by agreement between the parties.

- 5.1.4 Community Benefit Agreements may consider any cumulative impacts of multiple operators within proximity and implications on communities, other local governments and proponents. Accordingly, a Community Benefit Agreement may include multiple parties.
- 5.1.5 A proponent's contribution would be acknowledged ensuring the proponent is credited for their community investment.

5.2 Contribution Formula

- 5.2.1 The following figures are considered the minimum threshold amounts for negotiating contributions (indexed to CPI):
 - Solar: \$850 per installed megawatt capacity
 - Wind: \$1,050 per installed megawatt capacity
 - Battery: \$150 per installed megawatt hours (stand-alone systems only)
- 5.2.2 Contributions are to be paid annually on an agreed date as outlined in the Community Benefit Agreement.

5.3 Mid Murray Community Benefits Fund

- 5.3.1 Council to establish the Mid Murray Community Benefits Fund (MMCBF).
- 5.3.2 All donations and contributions received will be placed in a restricted cash-backed reserve specifically created for the MMCBF and be administered by Council in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1999* and relevant financial regulation.
- 5.3.3 Interest earned on the reserve will be retained within the fund.
- 5.3.4 Unexpended funds in any given year will be carried forward to future years, building a cumulative balance if appropriate.
- 5.3.5 Council may invest a portion of the fund to create a Future Fund.
- 5.3.6 Public Purpose
 - 5.3.6.1 Funds are to be dedicated to Public Purposes aligned with Council's Community Development Strategy/Community Action Plans.
- 5.3.7 Community Grants Program
 - 5.3.7.1 Funds will be made available annually for local community projects and support community groups through Council's Community Grants Program.
 - 5.3.7.2 Criteria and guidelines for the funds will be assessed annually in partnership with proponents to ensure alignment across all benefits sharing programs, where practical.
- 5.3.8 Reporting
 - 5.3.8.1 All funds received will be accounted for in the Council's annual budget (as restricted funds) and reported as part of Council's Annual Report.

5.4 Renewable Energy Coordinator Contribution

- 5.4.1 As part of a Community Benefit Agreement, an agreed percentage of benefits provided by a Proponent may be allocated to fund a Renewable Energy Coordinator role, serving as a primary contact to foster communication, organise activities, and ensure community perspectives are represented to both renewable energy companies and Council during construction and operation phases.
- 5.4.2 Council and the renewable energy proponent(s) may opt to explore the establishment of a Community Consultative Committee to provide a forum to facilitate open discussion, provide feedback, and strengthen relationships between proponent(s) and the community regarding project impacts, environmental performance, and community concerns.

5.5 Authority

- 5.5.1 Mid Murray Council is responsible for:
 - Early notification to Proponents about the Policy.
 - Establishing and supporting the Community Grants Assessment Committee.

- Exercising sound governance and accountability, and maximising returns on investment for community betterment.
- Final approval of funding allocations.

5.5.2 The Chief Executive Officer is authorised by Council to:

- negotiate and execute Community Benefit Agreements on behalf of Council, provided the agreement is in accordance with this Policy and any relevant legislative requirements
- monitor compliance with agreement conditions.
- the CEO may delegate responsibilities associated with the development of a CBA to relevant executives, managers or officers, where relevant or necessary.

5.5.3 Community Grants Assessment Committee is responsible for:

- reviewing and assessing grant applications.
- interviewing applicants where appropriate; and
- making recommendations for funding to Council.

5.5.4 The Community Grants Assessment Committee acts in an advisory capacity only and has no authority to approve or distribute funds.

5.6 Communication

5.6.1 All staff are to be notified of this Policy and associated Procedures and kept informed of any updates and/or changes. Relevant staff are to be trained in the use of this Policy and associated Procedures.

6. Policy Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer and Director – Development and Community Services are responsible for ensuring the proper operation of this Policy.

7. Availability/Accessibility

7.1 This Policy and Council's [Fees & Charges Register](#) are available to be downloaded free of charge from Council's website: www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au.

8. Legislative Framework / Other References

8.1 [Local Government Act 1999](#)

8.2 [Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023](#)

8.3 [Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016](#)

8.4 *Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council (July 2024) National Guidelines Community engagement and benefits for electricity transmission projects*

8.5 *NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (November 2024) Benefit-Sharing Guideline*

8.6 *Service Provision Policy*

8.7 *Community Development Strategy*

8.8 *Community Action Plans*

9. Document History

This Policy shall be reviewed at least every four (4) years or more frequently if legislation or Council requires.

Version	Adopted	Minute	Description of Change
1	18 August 2026	C08-26/018	Adopted