

MEDIA RELEASE: FEDERAL POLICY PROPOSAL

FEDERAL POLICY PROPOSAL Regional Royalties from Clean Energy Projects

This policy proposes the introduction of a mandatory community return mechanism tied to the profits of renewable energy projects—such as wind farms, solar installations, hydro developments and battery storage—operating in the Riverina and similar regions. The goal is to ensure that the communities hosting these developments receive a fair and direct share of the financial benefits.

Renewable energy is playing a critical role in Australia’s energy transition. However, many of these projects are located on rural or regional land, often near small communities that experience significant disruption during construction and operation. While some developers voluntarily contribute to local initiatives, there is currently no consistent or enforceable mechanism requiring them to do so.

Under this proposal, a fixed percentage of profits from large-scale renewable energy projects would be returned to the communities in which they operate. These funds would be distributed through a locally managed community trust, with investment directed toward services such as regional hospitals, childcare, local road upgrades, education initiatives, and disaster preparedness.

The establishment and governance of these community trusts would be designed to ensure transparency and local decision-making. Each trust would be administered independently of the project operator, with participation from local government representatives, community leaders, and subject-matter experts. Annual public reporting would be required to maintain accountability and build long-term trust.

To support implementation, federal legislation would set the minimum royalty rate, define qualifying projects, and establish national standards for trust management and reporting. This could be modelled after existing frameworks in the resources sector, where mining royalties are shared with regional development authorities.

Legislation could be developed in 2025–26, with phased implementation beginning in 2026–27. Pilots could be run in high-development areas across regional NSW, including the Riverina and Snowy Valleys, with national rollout thereafter.

This policy supports both economic fairness and social licence for renewable energy. By giving communities, a tangible stake in clean energy infrastructure, it strengthens support for the transition while addressing concerns about equity, disruption, and regional investment.

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