

Media Release

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ILLAWARRA SHOALHAVEN JOINT ORGANISATION RECEIVES NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT TO HELP COUNCILS WORK TOGETHER TOWARDS NET ZERO

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation (the ISJO) is the umbrella organisation that brings together the local government areas of Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and the Shoalhaven to enable the development and implementation of regional strategies, the creation of intergovernmental partnerships and the promotion of regional leadership and advocacy.

Our offices are located in Kiama and our Chairperson is Cr Gordon Bradbery AM, Lord Mayor of Wollongong.

Funding announcement:

On 14 February 2023 it was announced that the ISJO had been successful in its bid for capacity building funding under the NSW government's Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Grant. As a result the ISJO will receive \$155,000 to employ a staff member who will be responsible for assisting local government in our Region to progress towards the achievement of Net Zero emissions targets by 2050.

Over the past few years the region's Councils – Wollongong City, Shellharbour City, Kiama Municipal and Shoalhaven City – have worked tirelessly in developing Climate Change and Net Zero policies and strategies and delivering emissions reduction projects across their communities.

With the current transition to clean and low-carbon energy, the Illawarra Shoalhaven region is anticipating large scale investment in hydrogen production, gas-fired power generation, offshore wind farms and gas pipeline infrastructure. These transformative projects will support emissions reduction and require a strategic framework for benefits to be realised.

A key priority in delivering under this grant program will therefore be a building of alignment between the various stakeholder programs working on energy initiatives within and for the region. In facilitating collaborative working arrangements with key stakeholders and partners, the ISJO will deliver a Regional Energy Strategy to guide net zero options and pathways. Councils across the region will be actively supported in planning and aligning their emissions reduction programs to progress the regional net zero journey trajectory. This will also include delivery of identified projects including a plan to transition to low emission fleet, community energy resilience models and opportunities aligned with the proposed Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone (REZ).

According to the ISJO's CEO, Roger Stephan, the resources from the JONZA grant will allow us to deliver a regional net zero framework in close collaboration with our member Councils, State Agency partners and major industry within the Illawarra Shoalhaven. He said, "Our Councils have been heavily focused on reducing emissions within their organisations, our communities are rightly requesting changes in energy policy and the pace at which technology and industry is adapting, requires us to be strategic and innovative in our approaches. The

development of a Regional Energy Strategy and the suite of programs and projects which will flow from it, will assist in building resilience and progressing the Illawarra Shoalhaven's net zero journey."

The Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration grant is a capacity-building pilot program established to help regional councils reduce their carbon emissions to achieve their part in the State's Net Zero target of 50 per cent reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

The program is delivered by the NSW Office of Energy and Climate Change (OECC) to address chronic resource constraints in regional areas by funding full-time employees within JOs to lead and coordinate net zero activities for their member councils.

Director of Sustainability and Circular Economy Partnerships, Emily Yip, said the Government funding for the pilot program for the nine groups which cover 65 regional councils, will enable them to each employ a staff member for up to a year to drive net zero outcomes for the region. "Projects will include developing a regional Electric Vehicle (EV) plan, implementing emissions reduction plans and establishing Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) for renewable energy purchase for member councils," Ms Yip said.

"Supporting all nine applicants means about 70% of regional NSW council areas will receive support through the program, demonstrating a strong commitment to cutting emissions in the regions."

"The grants are part of the Sustainable Councils program which helps local governments in regional NSW save energy and money, cut emissions, and set a path to net zero."

Joint Organisations strengthen collaboration and engagement between State and local governments and improve infrastructure and service delivery to regional communities. There are now 13 regional Joint Organisations covering 87 NSW councils.

By combining resources and focusing on the unique challenges and strengths of their region, joint organisational members can drive better outcomes for local communities and deliver outcomes on a regional scale.

Detailed notes on the JONZA grants may be found here:

<https://netzeronsw.smartygrants.com.au/jonza>

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