

Energy needs of First Nations communities in regional Queensland

Based on research conducted during 2022 and 2023



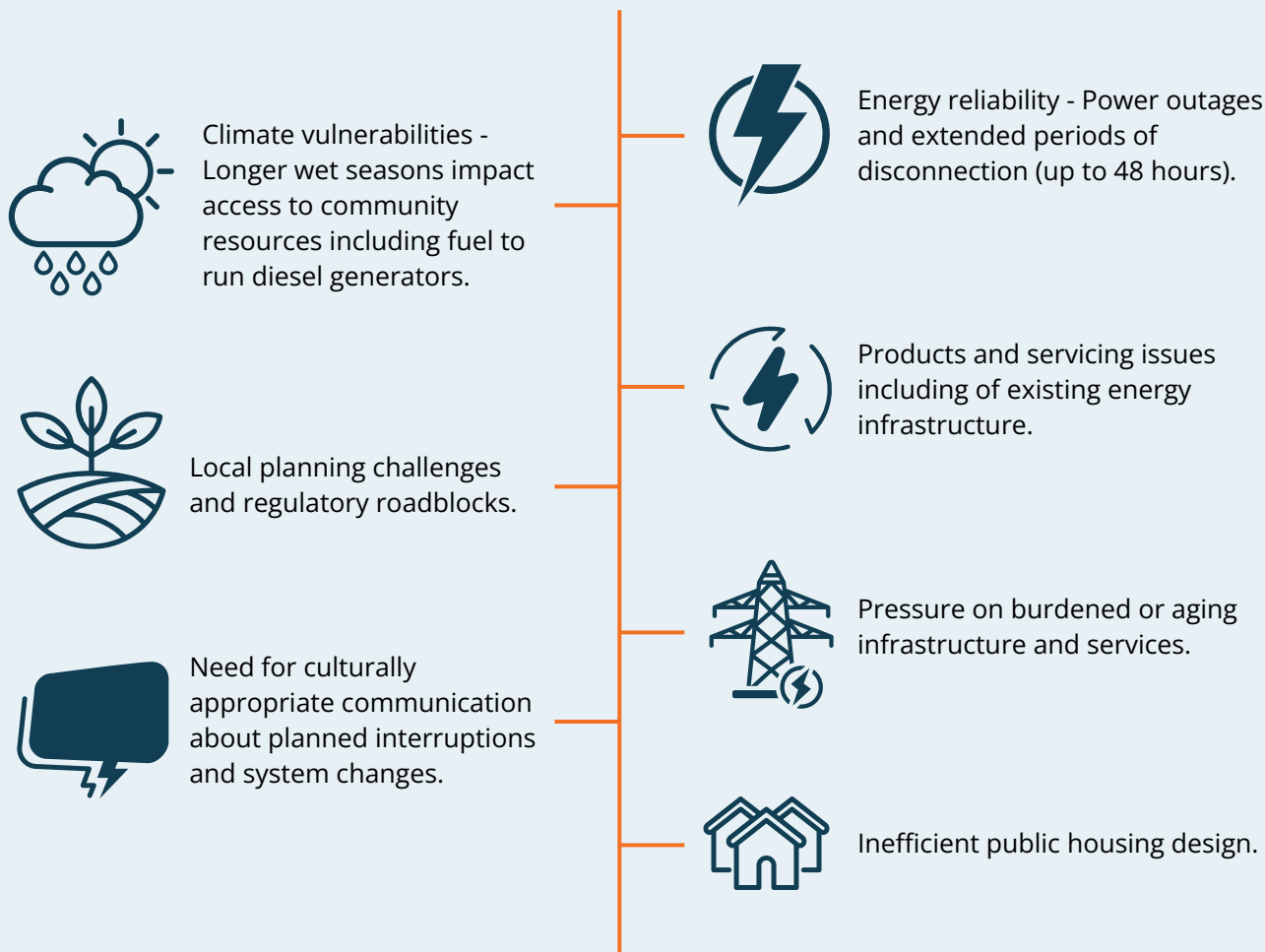
Background

Aboriginal Shire Councils were surveyed as part of the Queensland Farmers' Federation's market research into community-owned decentralised energy projects in regional Queensland. The study, Localised Energy in the Regions, was conducted during 2022 and 2023 and aimed to understand the perspectives of key stakeholders in regional areas in relation to community owned energy projects. The full findings can be found in the [Localised Energy in Regions Project Report](#).

What is community owned energy?

Community-owned energy projects, referred to in the Localised Energy in Regions Project Report as 'Consumer Energy Resources' or 'CERs' (CERs), are community-owned energy projects where communities own, develop and distribute the energy produced by the locally owned clean energy project.

Key energy issues identified by Aboriginal Shire Councils



Key emerging questions

How can people in social housing benefit from the clean energy transition?	Can clean energy help solve energy reliability problems in a way that aligns with First Nations cultural and community priorities?
What community owned energy options could First Nations communities benefit from in regional Queensland?	How can First Nations communities build local expertise in clean energy?

What changes are needed to unlock better opportunities for First Nations to participate in the clean energy transition?



I just think ...we don't tie it to the environmental aspects well enough... You bring an electrician and... set it up, you put a pole in the ground...But there's that other cultural paradigm side around energy from the land.



Energy literacy campaigns connecting energy transition to cultural, community and social benefits.



Capacity support to allow First nations organisations and communities to dedicate time to better understand clean energy opportunities.



Clear information about costs and regulatory pathways for community energy projects.



Education about the opportunities and challenges of developing CERs.



Energy efficiency in social housing.

What are other stakeholders saying about clean energy challenges and opportunities in regional Queensland?

Findings include:



Generally, microgrids are the most popular type of project adopted so far. Preference for grid connected and privately financed projects.



Lack of knowledge about existing energy habits and costs.



Reluctance to implement or adopt a CER is mainly due to:

- lack of certainty about the financial performance of a project,
- regulatory uncertainty translating into market risk, and
- lack of local expertise to operate and maintain innovative CERs



The most important factors for consumers of energy are affordability, reliability and resilience.



There is a need for regulations that incentivise interventions which reduce energy costs and increase energy productivity, and which also offer flow-on benefits to the economic development of regional economies.

Recommendations for further work to support better outcomes for First Nations communities

The Localised Energy in Regions Project Report sheds light on the key issues which affect regional communities in relation to energy access and reliability in the regions and how these may be solved through the adoption of Consumer Energy Resources.

The report touches on some of the concerns unique to First Nations Councils but there is an opportunity for further consultation and engagement. Due to engagement challenges, including time constraints and community awareness, the study was only able to survey the views of four Aboriginal Shire Councils (referred to in the report as 'First Nations Councils').

There are a further 13 Aboriginal Shire Councils with whom future projects could seek to engage. The development of consultation processes, including through relationship building, could assist in broadening the engagement outreach and strengthening relations with First Nations organisations in regional Queensland including PBCs, Indigenous businesses and other First Nations communities.

Dedicated advocacy and research work focused on First Nations consumers should be conducted in consultation with First Nations communities including PBCs and First Nations community groups across different regions in Queensland.

This work should be aimed at:

Identifying trends in energy challenges facing First Nations consumers and organisations.

Building energy literacy to supporting First Nations communities to identify the most effective energy solutions for their community and cultural need.

Identifying (and advocating for) opportunities for feasibility studies on specific projects that would help improve knowledge about Consumer Energy Resources and demonstrate in a practical sense how Consumer Energy Resources could solve some of the energy issues faced by First Nations communities in regional Queensland.

Connecting First Nations communities and organisations with other consumer groups advocating for improving energy outcomes where social housing is a barrier to implementing rooftop solar.

Identifying the issues with current regulatory requirements and capacity constraints preventing First Nations communities from being able to explore community owned renewable energy projects in the regions.