

9.2. Environment Reference Group Minutes - 16 May 2023

AUTHOR	Peita Rose, Governance Officer
ENDORSED BY	Marcelo Occhiuzzi, Director Community, Planning & Environment
ATTACHMENTS	1. North Sydney Council Environment Reference Group Community Batteries [9.2.1 - 11 pages] 2. Environment Reference Group Minutes - 16 May 2023 [9.2.2 - 5 pages]
CSP LINK	5. Our Civic Leadership 5.2 Strong civic leadership and customer focussed services 5.3 Community is engaged in what Council does

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to report the proceedings of the Environment Reference Group to Council, and for Council to consider any recommendations from the Reference Group.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- This report presents the recommendations of the last meeting of the Environment Reference Group held on 16 May 2023.
- The Minutes are attached for the information of Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1.THAT** Ms Jansen van Vuuren from Ausgrid be thanked for attending and making a presentation on the community battery proposal.
- 2. THAT** Council note the North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability Festival finale has been re-scheduled for Sunday 29 October 2023.

Background

The Charter of the Environment Reference Group states:

10.4 A report on the proceedings of Reference Group meetings are to be submitted to the next available meeting of Council for endorsement, including all recommendations. Any Councillor, irrespective of whether that Councillor is a member that Reference Group, may be the mover or seconder of a motion to confirm the proceedings of a Reference Group meeting.

Report

Section 7.2 of the Reference Group Charter states that:

The Reference Group does not have the power to bind the Council.

This report presents the recommendations of the last meeting of the Environment Reference Group held on 16 May 2023.

The Reference Group recommendations for action to Council are considered below.

Ausgrid Community Battery Proposal

The Reference Group made the following recommendation:

1. THAT *Ms Jansen van Vuuren from Ausgrid be thanked for attending and making a presentation on the community battery proposal.*

This recommendation is supported.

3.2. North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability Festival

The Reference Group made the following recommendation:

2. THAT *the North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability Festival finale be re-scheduled for Sunday 29 October 2023.*

As the Festival has already been rescheduled to October 2023, this recommendation of the Reference Group is supported, amended as follows as a recommendation to Council:

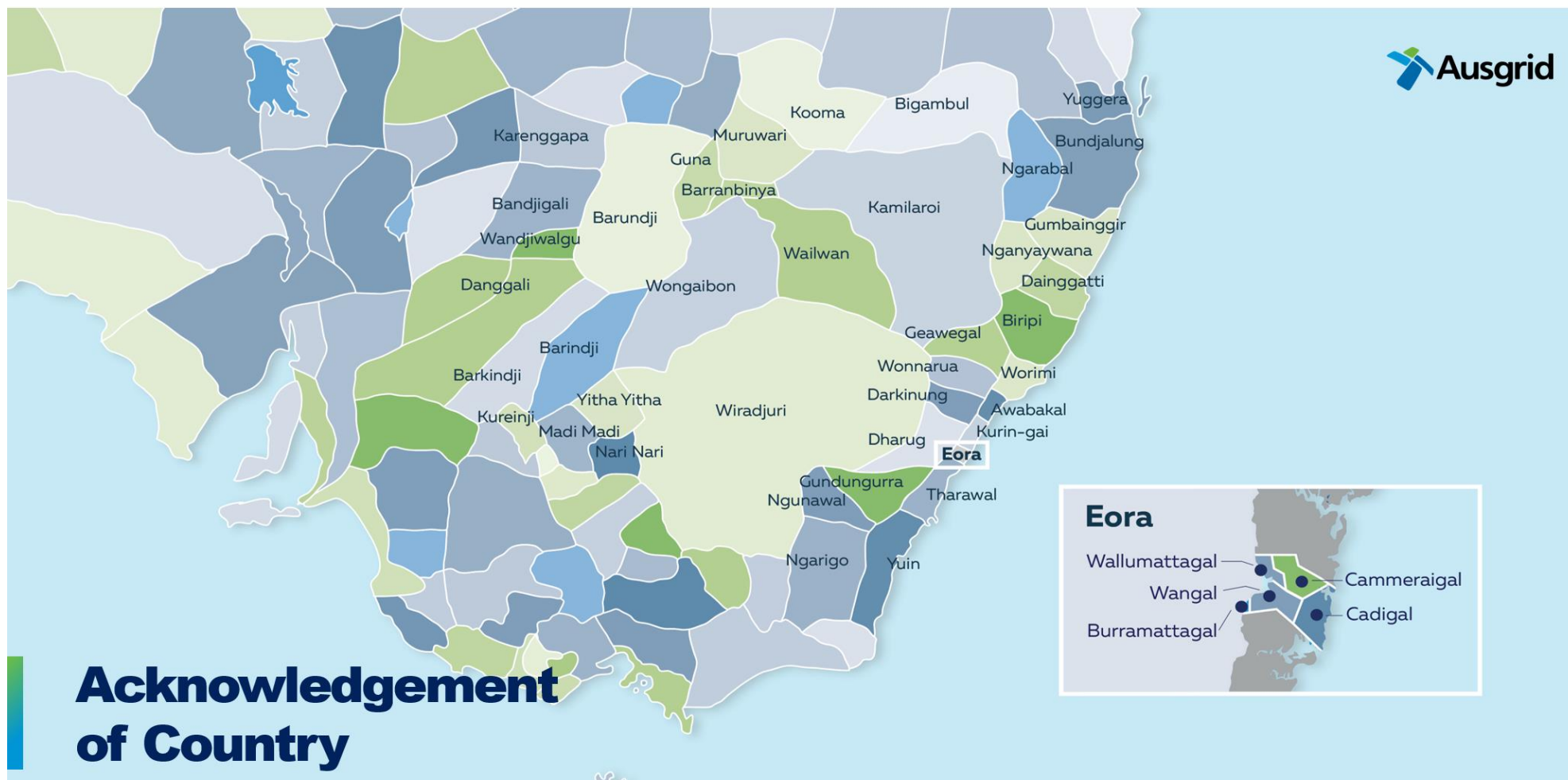
2. THAT *Council note the North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability Festival finale has been re-scheduled for Sunday 29 October 2023.*



Community Batteries

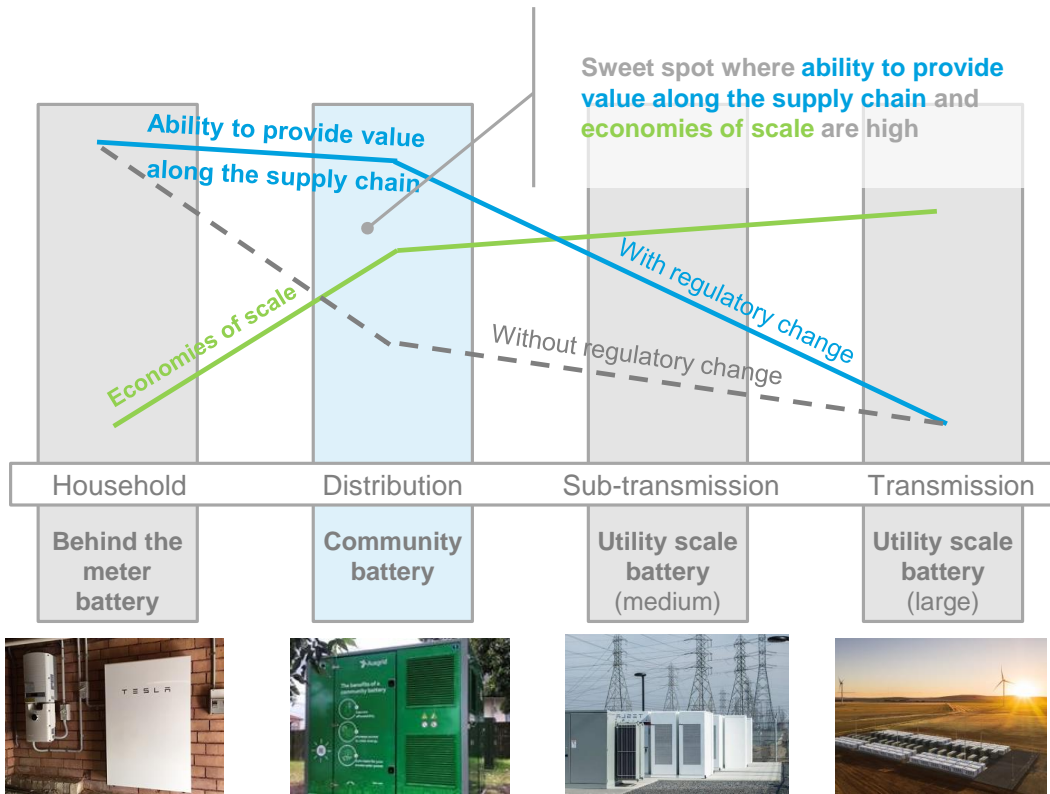
Alida Jansen van Vuuren



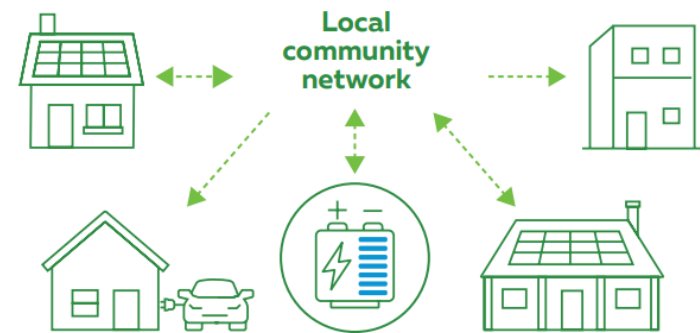




What is a community battery?



Community Battery Concept





Ausgrid's Community Battery Trial



- Ausgrid's Community Battery trial is a flagship project within our Network Innovation Program and was co-designed with the Network Innovation Advisory Committee (NIAC).
- The trial was set up to test how three benefit streams could be unlocked in one shared battery:
 - Customer storage as a service
 - Strengthening the local network
 - Supporting wider system stability
- The trial started in 2021 and is due to wrap up towards the end of 2023.
- Over this time, significant support has been building for local energy solutions amongst customers, communities and government.



Ausgrid 2024-29 Reg Reset Customer Engagement

What customers have told us on community batteries

Customers valued Ausgrid delivering community batteries because they support wider renewable energy development and replaced investment in traditional network solutions.

Our customers told us:

‘Supports the drive to net zero carbon’

‘More the merrier’

‘If we are moving to net zero, we need to start here’

‘Good to see you are working on this’

‘Look back 20 years ago with how solar panels were and look at now with where they are. The technology has gotten better, cheaper, and more reliable. Community batteries are new like solar was decades ago’

‘Suggestion to prioritise community batteries in areas with high density, heritage limitations, lots of renters, ... so that they can benefit from renewables and reduced cost.’





Key learnings from our community battery trial

- **Community engagement:** proactive upfront engagement with councils and communities and considering their feedback in our design is key.
- **Safety and clearance:** batteries must be accessible and have a certain clearance zone around the immediate vicinity of the battery.
- **Road traffic:** where possible, our preference is to locate the battery in low-traffic zones or install barriers to minimise risks of vehicle collisions. We also take care to ensure the battery does not obscure vehicular traffic view.
- **Noise:** we maintain ambient battery noise levels below the thresholds set by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- **Environmental and heritage considerations:** we prefer to minimise vegetation clearance, consider water ingress risks and assess sites for potential cultural or heritage significance.
- **Network configuration:** where possible, minimal upgrades to the network to connect the battery are preferred. The intention is to install batteries to mitigate the need for traditional network augmentation.
- **Network support:** given the above considerations are met, we select locations where batteries provide maximum network support – selecting initial regions for assessment based on likely network benefits (e.g. where the battery can avoid or delay future network upgrades) helps to optimise this.
- **Storage as a service:** this is not a scalable model yet due to current market settlement processes and regulatory arrangements.

Community battery trial sites:
Beacon Hill, Bankstown, Cameron Park



Community consultation



Noise



Water ingress



Communities' perceived value in community batteries

From focus group research



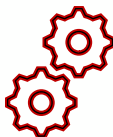
Financial benefits and cost savings were the strongest motivators



Environmental considerations were a close second and often intertwined, or a balanced trade-off, with financial benefits



Social outcomes were less important although usually underpinned the financial and environmental motivations



Overall, participants from all groups did not fully understand community batteries and wanted more information about them, including knowing how they operate on a day to day basis

'Community and customer values in community batteries', RPS Group findings, February 2023



Community value framework to be tested in pilot

	<p>Transparency Develop an information hub (website) to engage communities with key information about the impact of their community battery and create a sense of ownership</p>
	<p>Environmental Include emissions data and local solar consumption in information hub</p>
	<p>Visual amenity Wrap batteries in art developed in collaboration with council and local indigenous artist. Size of battery may change in light of community feedback</p>
	<p>Shared financial benefits</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Community Solar: A grants program for installation of rooftop solar PV on community buildings, or EV charging: Co-location of an EV charger with special offer for local community members

Our ambition is to continue to use the pilot period to explore viability of alternative commercial models that could unlock further value and enable customer storage service at scale.



Federal Government's Community Batteries for Household Solar Grants

- The Federal Government has committed \$224.3 million to help install up to 400 Community Batteries across the country.
- The Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) released the initial funding streams:
 - Stream 1 (56 eligible locations) and Stream 2 (2 eligible locations), submissions opened 31 January 2023 and closed 24 February 2023.
 - Grant applications submitted 24 February 2023.
 - We applied for the six eligible locations within Ausgrid's footprint – Bondi/Bondi Beach, Breakfast Point/Cabarita, Cammeray, Narara, Warriewood, North Epping.
 - **We are testing our proposed battery locations with the community before committing to a site.**
- Final streams will administered by Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).



Cammeray community battery session on 29 April 2023



Why was Green Park proposed?

Green Park met all technical aspects for hosting a community battery including:

- **Community**
 - provide support to around 250 local households.
 - currently approx. 8% solar penetration, high potential for solar growth in area.
 - high potential growth for electric vehicle charging.
- **Environmental**
 - low risk of vehicle collisions and does not obscure driver visibility.
 - no tree trimming or removal.
 - low risk of flooding.
- **Network**
 - can connect into existing network with minimal upgrade and trenching.
 - the battery can avoid or delay future network upgrades.





Alternative sites considered not feasible

Site 1 – Park Ave & Grasmere Rd

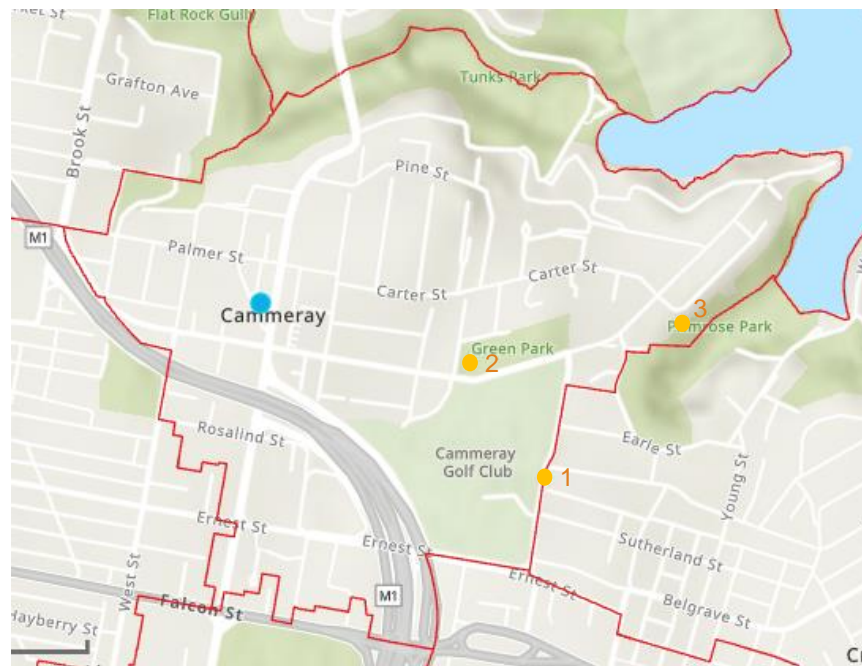
- Underground services.
- Obscures driver visibility.

Site 2 – Cammeray & Warringa Rds

- Flood basin / high risk of flooding.

Site 3 – Primrose Park

- No suitable area within the eligible boundaries.
- No road access.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021 ABS Suburbs and Localities Map, <https://maps.abs.gov.au/>



MINUTES

The Minutes of the **Environment Reference Group Meeting** held in the Ros Crichton Pavilion, 200 Miller Street, North Sydney on Tuesday 16 May 2023.



Councillor Bourke in the Chair, Councillors Baker, Beregi and Welch

Staff: Peter Massey, Acting Director Open Space and Environmental Services
Danielle Birkbeck, Sustainability Programs Coordinator
Gareth Debney, Bushland Management Co-ordinator
Bo Karaula, Acting Manager Environmental Services
Shivann Kumar, Waste Management Officer
Peita Rose, Governance Officer (Minutes)

Citizen Members: Wendy Pryor, Community Member
Philip Worrall, Community Member
Tony Stanley, Community Member
Jane Theau, Community Member
Anne Edwards, Community Member

Visitors: Alida Jansen van Vuuren, Ausgrid
Bryn Hernandez, Ausgrid
Gerry Haines, Resident

Apologies were received from the General Manager and Bruce Handmer, Resident

1. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 March 2023, copies of which had been previously circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Nil.

Ausgrid Community Battery Proposal

Alida Jansen van Vuuren from Ausgrid addressed the Reference Group on the community battery proposal.

A Motion was moved by the Mayor and seconded by Councillor Welch

1.THAT Ms Jansen van Vuuren from Ausgrid be thanked for attending and making a presentation on the community battery proposal.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1.THAT Ms Jansen van Vuuren from Ausgrid be thanked for attending and making a presentation on the community battery proposal.

3. Committee Reports

3.1. Sustainable Business Program Review

AUTHOR Daniella Mac Dowell, Sustainable Business Officer

This report provides an overview of Council's Sustainable Business Programs (CitySwitch, Better Business Partnership and Environmental Upgrade Agreements) and identifies opportunities to further assist North Sydney businesses on their sustainability journey.

- Sustainability is a core value of Council and is reflected in several of our strategic documents. These include the North Sydney Vision 2040 – Community Strategic Plan, which recognises climate change as a threat to the future of our community, and the North Sydney Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030, that establishes clear targets in 7 areas including carbon footprint, water conservation, water quality, sustainable transport, urban ecology, resource recovery and community engagement.
- This report provides information on Council's Sustainable Business Programs and suggests opportunities to improve outcomes and increase their impact, as well as align the programs with targets set out in the North Sydney Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Sustainable Business Program report be received and noted.

The Motion was moved by Phil Worrall and seconded by Councillor Welch

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. THAT the Sustainable Business Program report be received and noted.

3.2. North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability Festival

AUTHOR Rebecca Farrell, Events and Engagement Officer

To provide an overview of the North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability Festival in April 2023, as well as an update for the finale festival date scheduled for 29 October.

- Seven of the eight events comprising the inaugural North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability festival were successfully delivered between 24 – 28 April 2023;
- The festival finale due to take place on Sunday 30 April to an anticipated crowd of over 5,000 visitors was postponed due to predicted severe weather conditions. This event has been re-scheduled to Sunday 29 October;
- Over 650 participants took part in the talk series which took place across seven

different locations across North Sydney.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability report be noted.
2. **THAT** the North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability Festival finale be re-scheduled for Sunday 29 October 2023.

The Motion was moved by Jane Theau and seconded by Anne Edwards

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. **THAT** the North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability report be noted.
2. **THAT** the North Sydney Living Futures Sustainability Festival finale be re-scheduled for Sunday 29 October 2023.

4. General Business

1. Jane Theau addressed the Reference Group on the following items:
 - installing more water bubblers in places where people buy bottled water, i.e., shopping centres, cafes, near harbour kiosks, at bus stops etc.
 - ensuring that easy-to-use and **easy-to-access** container recycling facilities are mandatory when shaping planning decisions for any business that sells bottles and cans (especially bottle shops and supermarkets).
 - situating container recycling and clothing recycling bins together (make it easy for people).
 - reducing the frequency of kerbside household waste collection.
 - consider participating in the Boomerang Alliance's Plastic Free Places programme: <https://www.plasticfreeplaces.org/>.
2. Phil Worrall addressed the Reference Group on the following items:
 - Recycling
 - soft and hard plastics.
 - Xrays.
 - Global Warming Issues
 - Carbon footprint of air travel.
 - Pet Ownership.
 - Cat Controls.

Peter Massey, Council's Acting Director Open Space and Environmental Services is attending his last meeting of the Environment Reference Group as he is retiring at the end of June 2023.

Bruce Handmer who couldn't attend the meeting advised that he has benefited from the Futureproofing Apartments program. He found it easy to participate and extremely beneficial.

He would like noted his building's comments and thanks, (Westbridge, Strata 4308. 30-40 Blues Point Road, McMahons Point).

5. Closure

The meeting closed at 7:05pm.