

Newstead: Behind the Meter

Communication & Engagement Plan

*PREPARED BY ECOLOGICA, NOVEMBER 2015
FOR RENEWABLE NEWSTEAD*

**“Imagine an entire town running on renewable energy.
Then imagine that town being ours”**

Renewable Newstead 2011

“Imagine a town taking charge of local energy”

Renewable Newstead 2015

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1. Outline of Purpose

“Newstead: Behind the Meter” aims to develop, document and implement a plan for transitioning Newstead to 100% renewable energy, balancing commercial and social objectives.

The C&EP aims to:

- actively involve the Newstead community and other stakeholders in the Project activities
- communicate with key stakeholders about the vision, objectives and key Project stages, and provide regular updates on progress
- provide opportunities for the community and stakeholders to contribute information, ideas and input to the development of the Project

“In Newstead we have a long history of successfully engaging the community in issues and Projects that affect them. The core belief is that having a locally led and produced plan will better reflect community needs and draw on local knowledge, skills and expertise.”

Newstead Community Plan 2013

Projects such as establishment of the Newstead CFA, Newstead Swimming Pool, Newstead Preschool, Recreation Reserve, Newstead RTC, etc. have shown the community’s successful history identifying positive solutions to the challenges and change facing Newstead.

The earlier work of Renewable Newstead (RN) together with Central Victoria Solar Cities (CVSC) also demonstrated that a local engagement model can be extremely cost-effective in gaining participation and support for renewable energy Projects.

The principles of the C&E strategy are:

General key assumptions driving the strategy are to:

- encourage ownership and active involvement in the Project
- value local knowledge and skills at all levels and stages of the Project
- engage and communicate with honesty and integrity
- be clear and transparent about purpose, roles, expectations and outcomes
- provide clear, concise, timely and effective information
- provide opportunities for capacity building and learning at community and individual levels
- foster ongoing relationships and networks for the long term

In addition, the following principles apply:

- go to where people are at; use existing networks and community connections
- go beyond the 'usual suspects' and try to actively incorporate and include the widespread local demography
- appreciate the complexity and diversity of the Newstead community, including all of its time/energy challenges, levels of education and socio-economic circumstances
- value and respect all inputs, including differing views
- provide clear and detailed information, including pros and cons, using clear language and concepts
- include opportunities to create new - and build on existing - relationships, connections and learning within the community
- use a range of C&E methods and approaches, e.g. face to face, surveys, on-line, in-print, formal and informal
- review what works and what doesn't and incorporate changes

The Newstead Community Plan identified a range of successful approaches and principles for engaging residents in the development of the 2013 Plan and these have also been drawn on to inform this C&E Plan.

2. Identifying community and their values

The Newstead Community Plan (2013) provided a snapshot of the community, its values and aspirations.

“Newstead is a diverse, creative and cohesive community with a steadily growing population, an abundance of natural and built resources. We value our rich history and village atmosphere and have a high level of community participation and volunteerism. We also recognise the importance of outlying locales (Strangways, Green Gully, Sandon, Strathlea, Welshmans Reef, Clydesdale etc.) to our community life.”

Newstead Community Plan 2013

Newstead people value the town’s village and small rural town feel, its heritage and history, the quietness, the natural environment and open spaces, the good communication and links between groups and individuals, the strong and active community, its facilities and services, its creativity, and the friendly and inclusive feel. Newstead’s physical attributes ranked highest (22%), closely followed by its facilities and events (20%), community spirit (16%) and natural attributes (15%).

The challenges facing Newstead are no different to those facing other small rural towns in Victoria and further afield. However local values mean that some challenges are more pressing or specific to our community. Managing growth and development whilst preserving the spirit and sense of place, and maintaining our ethic of caring and volunteerism are examples.

Some saw the challenges as very close to home – noisy neighbours, gutters and road grading, having access to water or petrol, time to spend with friends and family, places to play. For others the challenges were local – being able to travel on public transport, knowing where to go when bushfire threatens, making an income, growing old here. Some saw broader, global issues the most crucial – climate change, economic and social restructure, and having input into government decision making.

Key points/concerns/issues relating to the C&E plan are:

- low energy housing, especially for people as they age
- planning for higher energy and resources costs in the future and to provide alternatives
- can Newstead provide employment/income opportunities beyond butcher, baker, etc.
- Sustainability as a community; food, water, waste, energy, communication
- how do we keep our values and the things we love about the place yet embrace the future?
- Decision making at a distance - ensuring community has input into policy and decisions that affect them

One in four residents were involved in the development of the community plan, so the values and issues outlined in the plan fairly reflect the community.

To look specifically at renewable energy issues and Newstead, the earlier work by RN around energy audits and behaviour change as a part of the Central Victorian Solar City (CVSC) Project (in 2011) produced a positive uptake and response from the community, with 200 household energy audits completed and a significant number of solar PV panel installations (the Powercor Map - see *Appendix D* - shows 69 homes with panels though these may not all relate to the CVSC project). 25% of homes in Newstead have solar installations, compared with the Victorian average of 12%.

The CVSC/RN Project also carried out a survey of residents to find out their thoughts on Newstead's Energy Future. Granted that many of the 74 respondents would have had a favourable view of renewable energy to begin with, and the small sample size (and lack of supporting demographic info to compare against census data for the community), the survey showed a strong support for Newstead embracing renewable energy, albeit in very general terms.

The statement that most resonated with respondents was that: **'100% Renewable Newstead will show that small towns can produce great Projects and inspire other towns to take on other similar challenges'**. The statement that elicited the most disagreement (10%) was that: **'100% Renewable Newstead will improve my understanding of energy'**. Obviously this will be a key concern to address through the C&E Plan.

When presented with a list of possible Projects, the renewable energy Project that was of most interest to respondents was a solar park, followed by geothermal, tree planting, wind farm, biomass and lastly buying Greenpower.

There is a high degree of volunteerism in the Newstead and district community, with 71 per cent spending at an hour or more volunteering in the community during the past 12 months. Of those who responded to the survey, 36% (or 26 people) were very or extremely interested in volunteering for a renewable energy project. A key step in the C&E strategy would be to identify whether this is still the case and to tap into this cohort of interested people.

There was substantial interest in investing money in a Renewable Newstead Project if the investment was expected to return more than regular bank interest at that time.

The most important considerations for a renewable Newstead energy project were ranked in the following order: Environmental, Financial Benefit to Householders, Ensuring Energy Security for Newstead Residents, Local Economic Benefits e.g. jobs, business, ecotourism, Financial Benefits for a Community Fund, Financial Benefits to Shareholders.

While participants involved in this earlier renewable energy project will be vital to supporting and spreading the message for the current Project, it would be important to verify/explore these community perceptions and values with/in a larger (and more representative) community sample and to further test these assumptions, before using this information to guide specific engagement activities**.

The C&E strategy will aim to further explore community values in relation to renewable energy, the changing nature of the energy industry and its players, and RN's aim to develop a model for transitioning to 100% renewable energy, within a local energy grid. The schedule of engagement provides more information on specific strategies.

***(A summary of the CVSC project can be found at http://www.sustainableregionalaustralia.com.au/images/reports/University_of_Ballarat_Presentation_Summary_-_Final_Launch_Event_18_June_2013.pdf)*

3 Schedule of Engagement

It's over four years since RN's last community/public Project in partnership with CVSC. It is safe to say that most of the community have no idea of the behind the scenes efforts of the group since, nor the details of this Project, despite articles in the Echo and seeing a media release or few.

“I know they are doing something” ... “is it a solar farm?” ... “no idea what they are doing; it's seems a bit secret” ... “going it alone?” ... “no idea what they are doing, but I see the same faces in the Echo” ...

There are many complex concepts and ideas around *Behind The Meter*, even though at this stage the immediate Project is to investigate the feasibility and viability of an embedded community-scale electricity grid.

Given people's lack of awareness about RN and the conceptual nature of the Project, boring down into Project details at the start of the engagement process will be too big a step for most people, especially those who have no previous connections with RN's work.

A first step might be to focus more broadly on “100% renewable” and “local energy” - why the transition to 100% renewable is important for Newstead and Newsteadians. What % are we at currently? What are the implications if we do nothing? What would it take to get to 100%? What might that look like and how this Project aims to address that?

Some immediate action is required in order to bring the community on board and to renew connections with the work of RN, including awareness of this Project and its implications for transitioning to a 100% renewable energy future. Keeping the community informed on what is happening - even if nothing is happening - should be a part of the C&E approach and assist in managing community expectations, misperceptions, etc.

It appears that within the RN group itself there are differing views and opinions on elements of the Project and its future directions. It is important that the group themselves are able to put forward a clear and shared vision and message about the Project, if it is to have traction within the community and not put success at risk. At the same time, the range of skills, experience and knowledge and wide ranging motivations for being a part of the Project are of great benefit to the Project and will be a key factor in its success.

Attention is needed to ensure the way that the RN group itself works reflects the processes and intent of the C&E plan. Governance and operational issues should be given as much focus as key messages and community activities if the Project is to resonate widely. For example, publicising regular monthly meetings of the group and making minutes and draft reports available, actively inviting key individuals to participate in the project management group or working/steering groups, establishing decision making processes, etc.

Another key consideration is that at this stage, the Project is a discrete piece of work to establish relationships with the key stakeholders/partners Powercor, the State Government and the Newstead Community, and to research and document a potential model for 100% renewable energy.

There is much still unknown. We are attempting to engage the community around an idea or a concept, rather than in any real on-ground outcomes. We are asking the community to imagine, alongside with us, possible future scenarios.

While concepts, possibilities and future visions may appeal to some sectors of the community, it will be daunting/repellent to others, hence the importance of having both the security, reliability and corporate history of Powercor, and considerable backing of the State Government working with us.

Thus, the primary focus of the C&E plan will be to inform the community about the Project, get them 'up to speed' on what has been happening. Then the focus will be on providing regular updates and more detailed information as it becomes available. Because much of the work of RN to date has been unseen or unknown, much work and energy should be invested in getting people up to speed before we look at any more detailed engagement activities.

Rather than focussing on C&E for this specific Project, I feel bringing the community on board through a process of telling the broader story of the work of RN and its track record (inc benefits for the community) will give greater credibility to the Project. It could also more actively engage a group of people involved in the earlier energy assessments (200 households) and solar panel bulk buy (50+?) through the CVSC Project - all potential ambassadors for this Project who have supported the concept of 100% Renewable at a household, if not community, level. **The success of this approach is dependent on whether the earlier Project resulted in positive benefits and outcomes for participants.**

Some of the successful C&E strategies in the earlier CVSC Project can be applied here. Namely the production of a video featuring 'everyday' Newsteadians; the type of folk you wouldn't expect to be associated with solar or renewables. As well, "cold calling" outside the general store, low key street talks, and targeting individuals resulted in high rates of engagement for both the CVSC and Newstead Community Plan.

Using the video approach to introduce the concepts, key messages and people associated with the Project will continue a (more familiar ?) narrative for the work of RN and its history. Using primary school and preschool students to narrate the video/interview participants would also bring another level of engagement (*and if a primary schooler can clearly explain the Project, more hope that everyone will understand it!*). Key stakeholders would also be involved in the video.

A public information session should be held as early as possible/practical in the C&E strategy to get people 'up to speed' and thus appreciate the nature of the Project and its ongoing dialogue. It will also be an opportunity for the community to get together, be more informed and thinking about our/their energy future and our/their ability to shape it. (Footage for the video could possibly be made at this event.)

From there, more targeted and in-depth discussions and community events can be held, such as the series of "Power Walks" - providing further information, and seeking information and ideas to assist the development of the business case as needed.

A key aspect of both these phases will be to identify and encourage more locals to volunteer their energy, skills and ideas to the RN group.

A follow-up video at the end of the Project could further embed the ideas and direction for RN and continue to garner support for future RN Projects.

Using a visual means to talk about and explain the Project will be the key to understanding for many in our community, for example in explaining the concept of an embedded network/microgrid, and in using maps of power generation and distribution for the township as a starting point for discussions. This would include the video, but also using visual prompts and diagrams where possible to explain/illustrate project aspects.

Giving people a sense of ‘where Newstead fits’ in relation to other communities around renewable energy will also be an important factor for those in the community who do not freely embrace change or potential ideas and Projects. By showing examples of other communities around the country and around the world who are embarking on the same pathway, as well as showing where Newstead ‘fits’ in terms of energy use and generation in comparison to other towns, will also be a way to provide context and security/support for those more conservative view of energy. It’s not a case of Newstead going alone, but of being proactive about managing the inevitable; having/taking control of our energy futures.

We are the same, but different. The partnership with State government and Powercor are the other key factors that make this Project unique and a fantastic opportunity (and also fantastic security) for our community. It will be important that the community see Newstead as an equal partner in the Project, and not as a tool for ‘branding’ or ‘politicising’.

Concepts of “electricity”, “generation”, “distribution”, “tariffs”, “metering”, “embedded”, “watts”, “loads” etc are not easily digested, seem overly technical, and many Newsteadians will be turned off or feel intimidated by this language. By keeping the broad focus on “Newstead working towards 100% renewable energy” and terms like “local energy grid”, “local energy supply” we are more likely to keep people engaged.

Improving ‘energy literacy’ across the community will be critical if the Project is to reach a wide demographic and further the aims to move to 100% renewable. Some understanding is required - for example, of what 100% renewable means, how energy is generated, supplied and distributed to Newstead homes (in both current and potential future scenarios), etc. - if the community are to meaningfully engage in the Project, understand the implications and pros and cons of any potential scenarios and ultimately ‘sign on’ or ‘opt in’ to a local energy entity. The community information event will be an important platform to achieve/instigate this.

Using strategies such as a “glossary” (eg. on the RN website, fact sheets, etc) and employing visual and other ways to provide information will all contribute to educating about energy. However, improving “energy literacy” should also be seen as an aim of the Project itself, if the benefits of the Project are to be ongoing. Drawing upon the resources and experiences of EMBARK (<http://www.embark.com.au/>) and adapting them for our local situation and may also be useful (eg. community tool kits).

Along with the provision of basic and general information, there are those in the community that will be seeking a higher-level, more complex and technical information around the project, as well as opportunities to discuss concepts, options and analysis.

A central point for information and contacts about the Project will be important, both on-line and physically. On the ground, this could be an “energy noticeboard” at a prominent location (substation? prospective/current gateway/meter site?) and also a physical presence at a designated time and place (eg. 2 hours/week stint at RTC/Artshub/Dig cafe). On-line this central point would be the RN website (eg. providing a narrative of the work of RN, focussing on providing information about the Project, including supporters and stakeholders involved, posting drafts and other key documents for locals in a password protected or log in format, etc.)

Using local energy infrastructure as a feature/backdrop for events and activities will also increase awareness and understanding of the local energy picture and create new opportunities for connection across the community.

Suggested C&E Approach:

Realities, as well as time and budget constraints will determine the depth and breadth of the C&E approach. RN will need to determine which of these suggested priorities and strategies will be most effective and achievable.

In terms of actually rolling out the C&E Plan, it may also be more effective to have two or three local project workers sharing the tasks, rather than employing a single consultant. Involving more locals in the project will expand its reach and also draw on a more diverse range of skills, expertise and community networks. This will be particularly important in the early stages of the C&E plan, as RN aims to inform the community and get them ‘up to speed’ as soon as possible (particularly in light of the MOU signing with Powercor).

Greater energy and time spent in this early stage will pay dividends in later phases of the project:

- as the business plan is developed and more (and more specific) information becomes available; the likelihood of community engagement and support will be greater
- RN will have built credibility and accountability within the community through its earlier engagement and information activities

STAGE 1: DECEMBER 2015 - MARCH 2016; Set the Scene. Inform.

AIMS:

1. Clarify RN group messages for Project
2. Build group governance and involvement around RN operations and communication
3. Get community up to speed on RN and the Project
4. Bring the community together to provide more and deeper information on the Project and initiate broader discussion
5. Establish benchmark community values
6. Strengthen connections and relationships amongst stakeholders

WHO FOR:

- RN group (Aims 1, 2)
- General community wide approach (and see Appendix B) (Aims 3,4,5,6)
- Primary stakeholders (see Appendix A) (Aims 4,6)
- Secondary stakeholders (Council, local media, other RE groups etc - see Appendix A) (Aims 4,6)

WHO BY:

- RN group members, C&E Project worker/s, Primary and Secondary stakeholders

HOW/WHEN:

- RN group meeting/s to clarify Project, key messages and governance (externally facilitated) - *DEC 2015/JAN 2016*
- Develop communication materials (printed fact sheets, video, noticeboard signage) and survey (with assistance from ATA/Uni/CVGA, etc). Pilot test with selected individuals to refine - *DEC 2015 - MAR 2016*
- Set up/refine on-line presence via social media accounts/platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc) - *DEC 2015*
- Set up a steering group to organise community information event (with stakeholder reps) and develop materials and program, publicise, in conjunction with above - *JAN 2016*
- Hold a community-wide event (see Appendix C) to present Project details and status, involve stakeholders to present information, seek community input and discussion. The event would focus more broadly on transitioning to 100%RE and look at local generation, local distribution and local supply/use aspects of community-scale power, involve other RE communities around the state to share stories to give broader context to the Project, provide practical resources and support for individual households and groups to increase energy literacy (e.g. ATA, RE incentives). Screening or filming of the video at this event. Opportunity to launch/promote survey of attitudes and intent. Provide 'next steps' to continue discussion, engagement after the event. - *LATE FEB/EARLY MARCH 2016*
- Launch survey to set benchmarks of values and understanding and involvement and to help refine the messages. Offer incentives through ATA (subscriptions, etc) and local businesses, etc to increase response rate - *LATE FEB/EARLYMARCH 2016*

- Revisit/remind community of earlier RN work and broad concept of 100% renewable and introduce Project through Video. Video produced with primary and preschool and other community members, hold a 'feature/launch' screening at school, and share through social media, as well as distribute to groups and individuals, alongside printed materials - FEB/MAR 2016 - OR IN STAGE 2
- Complement video and info session with general 'street talk' about 100% renewable, the Project, identify local ambassadors through CVSC Project, spread the word about what the Project is/what we think it is via community groups, events, informal and formal settings; provide printed/on line material, engage local media - FEB - MAR 2016

TOOLS/METHODS:

- **In Person:** community gatherings and meetings, info stall at large events (eg. Newstead market, Newstead Live, etc) local radio (Castlemaine and ABC) - see Appendix B,C
- **On-Line:** RN website, Facebook (and link with other local Pages), Twitter, Instagram,
- **In Print:** Echo, local newspapers, fact sheets, direct mail invitations, posters/flyers

EVALUATION:

- comments/hits on line
- survey responses
- numbers at community gathering
- evaluation/feedback from gathering
- numbers of individuals, groups and events involved
- numbers at video launch/downloads of video

Note: More information on surveys - <http://www.embark.com.au/display/public/content/Surveying+the+community>

STAGE 2: MARCH 2016 - JUNE 2016; Inform, Educate, Engage.

AIMS:

1. Continue to get community up to speed on RN and the Project
2. Strengthen connections and relationships amongst stakeholders

WHO FOR:

- Primary Stakeholders (see Appendix A)
- Secondary stakeholders (Council, local media, other RE groups etc) (see appendix A)
- General community wide approach
- Specific community groups and sites (see Appendix B)

WHO BY:

- RN group members, C&E Project worker/s, Primary and Secondary stakeholders

HOW/WHEN:

- Continue to provide regular updates and distribute communication materials including survey and physical presence (as per Stage 1)
- Establish a central point for information and contacts about the Project. On the ground, this could be an “energy noticeboard” at a prominent location (substation? prospective/current gateway/meter site?) and also a physical presence at a designated time and place (eg. 2 hours/week stint at RTC/ Artshub/Dig cafe). On-line this central point would be the RN website (eg. providing a narrative of the work of RN, focussing on providing information about the Project, including supporters and stakeholders involved, posting drafts and other key documents for locals in a password protected or log in format, etc.)
- Continue to complement info session with general ‘street talk’ about 100% Renewable, the Project, identify local ambassadors through CVSC Project, spread the word about what the Project is/what we think it is via community groups, events, informal and formal settings; provide printed/on line material, engage local media (as per stage 1)
- Launch video (if not done at info session) with feature screening at the school, invite stakeholders, distribute video to community groups (See Appendix B), businesses and others. Have video available for download on website and You-Tube/Vimeo, etc

TOOLS/METHODS:

- **In Person:** community gatherings and meetings, info stall at large events (eg. Newstead market, Newstead Short Story Tattoo, etc) local radio (Castlemaine and ABC) - see Appendix B
- **On-Line:** RN website, Facebook (and link with other local Pages), Twitter, Instagram, etc.
- **In Print:** Echo, local newspapers, fact sheets, direct invite/mail

EVALUATION:

- comments on line/downloads
- set up noticeboard/feedback
- survey responses
- numbers at video launch
- evaluation/feedback from launch
- numbers of individuals, groups and events involved

STAGE 3: JULY 2016 - APRIL 2017; Inform, Educate, Engage.

AIMS:

1. Continue to get community up to speed on RN and the Project
2. Facilitate more focussed community discussion, ideas around the Project and support for RN
3. Gather additional information as needed for business plan
4. Strengthen connections and relationships amongst stakeholders

WHO FOR:

- Selected specific sites/groups (see appendix B)
- Key stakeholders (see Appendix A)

WHO BY:

- RN group members, C&E Project worker/s, key stakeholders

HOW/WHEN:

- Continue to provide regular updates and distribute communication materials including survey and physical presence, video, noticeboard (as per Stages 1, 2)
- Follow up the community-wide event event/video with a series of 'Power Walks' or 'Street Substation Meetings' or 'Energy Exchanges' around the township/local energy grid (based upon the Powercor map - see Appendix D) to focus discussions around the details of the Project, gather info for business case, examine scenarios suggested by business case, and seek further RN support/ volunteers.
At each substation (and/or selected powerpoles) an info sign/paste-up could be displayed with facts about Newstead's energy use/transitioning to 100%RE (based on the fact sheets and information developed) or as a series of Q&As. The signs could link to fact sheets via QR codes or website links, be the focus of a series of stories in the Echo, and on-line.
Walking the whole route will generate a narrative, or see a story emerge, around the Project and also identify stakeholder roles, how individuals and groups can contribute, etc. A community bus-powered tour for those who aren't able to walk, ride or wheel the route.
People could walk the route individually and in their own time. Alongside, guided walks would be led (facilitated by RN members and/or key stakeholders) for household/neighborhood clusters/ community-of-interest groups (eg businesses, specific community groups, school, Newstead Walks group, exercise groups, etc - see Appendix B) to generate more focussed discussion.
The walk/s would be color coded according to the Powercor map and start/finish at the RN noticeboard site or a similar energy infrastructure site of focus - the walk could also incorporate sites of other community project successes, community PV, etc - and include both sides of the river.

TOOLS/METHODS:

- **In Person:** focus groups or self selected groups, neighbourhood clusters, individuals
- **On-Line:** RN website, Facebook (and link with other local Pages), Twitter, Instagram,
- **In Print:** Echo, local newspapers, fact sheets, noticeboard and signage

EVALUATION:

- comments on line
- noticeboard/feedback, comments
- survey responses
- numbers involved in organised power walks/responses from power walk events

STAGE 4: APRIL 2017 - JUNE 2017; Inform, Engage, Evaluate.

AIMS:

1. Follow up evaluation of the Project to assess attitudes and intent
2. Inform of the Project findings and next steps

WHO FOR:

- General community wide approach
- Selected specific sites/groups (see Appendix B)
- Primary Stakeholders and Secondary stakeholders (Council, local media, other RE groups etc) (see Appendix A)

WHO BY:

- RN group members, C&E Project worker/s, Key Stakeholders/Partners

HOW/WHEN:

- Analyse surveys and make results available
- Hold community information session to provide summary of Project outcomes, input from stakeholders, and further discussion about 'next steps' for the transition to 100%RE beyond the Project.
- Provide final report for community and stakeholders

TOOLS/METHODS:

- **In Person:** community gathering/session
- **On-Line:** RN website, Facebook (and link with other local Pages), Twitter, Instagram,
- **In Print:** Echo, local newspapers, fact sheets, direct mail out/invite

EVALUATION:

- Comments on line/downloads
- Set up noticeboard/feedback
- Survey responses
- Numbers at gathering

The Key Messages

The initial survey results will assist to develop key messages for the Project and guide engagement activities. The survey will also aim to verify/explore community perceptions and values in relation to renewable energy, the changing nature of the energy industry and its players, and RN's aim to develop a model for transitioning to 100% renewable energy, within a local energy grid. It could also verify potential support for, and 'opting in' to, the Project scenario/s.

RN should work with ATA/Swinburne University and Central Vic Greenhouse Alliance to ensure any survey is able to draw statistically valid demographic, qualitative and quantitative information that will be of use to the Project and Project stakeholders, as well as able to be used for further research and communication that will assist RN.

Further information from Powercor and Energy For The People will also be needed to develop specific messages around the Project, in collaboration with RN. As already discussed, the Project is asking people to engage with an idea or concept, rather than any on ground action. Messages need to be able to inspire and engage the community about what the Project might mean for Newstead/them in the longer term, but still be clear about it's actual current scope.

RN also needs to be clear about what specific support and involvement it is seeking from the community at each stage of the C&E plan.

The key messages should encourage:

- Awareness — what the Project is about and what its benefits are
- Support — the benefits and the cost of involvement in terms of money, time and commitment
- Action — what needs doing, and what others are doing to support the Project
- Achievements — including any awards or recognition.

At this early stage, key messages could draw upon these points:

- Our community is already (%renewable and/or households and community buildings are producing x power) well placed to make the most of the rapidly changing energy industry.
- We want to ensure the community is advantaged, not disadvantaged, by the inevitable energy industry changes - e.g. ensure no-one will be living in energy poverty in Newstead in the future, provide an economic boost, local job and economic opportunities.
- The Project is about developing a model to supply Newstead with 100% Renewable Energy through a local energy grid, in partnership with Powercor and the State government we don't know exactly what it looks like and exactly how might happen yet (!) ... but we are developing ongoing relationships that will help our community manage the inevitable transition to a new energy economy.

- The unique partnership is a first - Powercor (bring longevity, security, reliability, infrastructure) and State Government (bring funds, resources, legislation, regulation, a commitment to supporting local communities and renewables) and Newstead community (bring local knowledge, skills, a proactive, switched on community and other unique and special traits about our community that people relate to, plus our track record of successful projects to benefit the community, eg pool, CFA, racecourse events, garden, mens' shed, etc)
- The RN Project is different from bulk buying schemes and other community Projects who want to get off the grid and be self sufficient. We are looking at a local energy grid, still connected to the national network, but where all aspects of power - supply, distribution and generation - are managed locally.

More work will be needed on developing specific messages (and tailoring these messages to resonate with different groups in the community), together with input from Stakeholders, and through the RN group clarification process, as discussed earlier.

4 Management of community expectations

As discussed, the principles of engagement (outlined in section 2) if followed, should enable RN to clearly communicate and engage with the Newstead community around the Project limitations and constraints and scope.

Each phase of the strategy provides opportunities to evaluate and modify messages and process. The plan should remain flexible to accommodate changing or unforeseen expectations.

A key aspect at this stage of the Project is that it is a scoping and modelling/feasibility Project, with no on-ground outcomes, but plenty of opportunity for input and ideas from the community, as well as an opportunity for education around local energy and power as well as to forge ongoing relationships and connections within the renewable/energy industry.

RN should be able to manage community expectations by:

- ensuring internal group processes are in line with external communications and activities and that the group is clear about the project framework (eg. geographic spread of project, key messages, etc) and the expected goals/outcomes of each phase
- being clear about which phases of the project require a community response/community engagement, and what it is specifically that RN are asking the community to respond to/engage in
- providing information that will cater for levels of comprehension, from basic to more advanced, and from general to more specific, particularly as more information becomes available and as the project progresses (without overwhelming people)
- working with key stakeholders and project partners to ensure C&E activities outside this plan (eg Powercor MOU) are taken with the context/background of this plan in mind
- providing opportunities for information and discussion as early as possible/practical in the Project
- Considering the timing, nature and accuracy of information that is provided at each stage of the Project, particularly if information is introduced that may create expectation or concern.
- Being consistent in how RN describes the project.

Key communication tools, such as the RN website and online platforms, as well as information generated by RN (fact sheets, video, briefings, etc) should provide clear messages on the Project scope. Information should be available in both print and on-line forms and use both traditional and more contemporary media platforms.

Providing regular briefings to other primary and secondary stakeholders (eg Council, media) should also assist to manage expectations around the Project.

5 Community feedback and concerns

The Engagement Strategy provides ways to involve and engage the community early in the project and provides a number of ways for people to air concerns.

RN can actively seek community feedback at each phase/stage of the project through the specific strategies outlined in this plan. Having clear avenues for people to express feedback and/or concerns:

- in-person, through the RN group members, at RN monthly meetings, or at community events/meetings/gatherings during the C&E phases;
- on-line, through the website <http://www.renewablenewstead.com.au/>, Facebook Page (and other social media platforms) or email;
- in-print, via a pigeon-hole at the RTC.

As discussed previously, having a clear decision making process and attention to group governance will assist RN to manage community concerns and other risks associated with the Project.

Providing minutes of RN meetings on the RN website and making draft reports available for public comment will also ensure transparency and alleviate potential concerns.

Attention to both process and content during the project; i.e. that there is no disconnect between the messages being given and the messaging/messenger will be a key element of the C&E Plan.

A Project Engagement Log or Comments Book could be kept to document any community concerns and how that RN addresses them.

Setting up a community Reference Group in the later Phases of the Project could also be another strategy to ensure RN are informed and in touch about community responses and potential concerns about the Project.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

Each phase of the Schedule of Engagement outlines suggested ways to monitor and evaluate the specific strategies. These will form the basis of an overall evaluation of the project, which would also include follow-up interviews with key stakeholders and community members at the end of the project.

7. Review of Community Engagement Plan

This C&E Plan should be reviewed on a regular basis (at least quarterly) by RN and as required by the State Government.

8. Appendices

- A. Stakeholders Table**
- B. Newstead Groups and Events**
- C. Community Event Draft**
- D. Map of Newstead (Powercor)**

NOTE: Appendix D. KEY FOR MAP OF NEWSTEAD (POWERCOR)

Green Dots – Substations

Purple/Blue Lines – 22,000 high voltage lines

Red Lines - 66,000 sub transmission high voltage line

Yellow Lines – 12,700 Single Wire Earth Return voltage lines

Gold Stars – Solar installations (59)

Newstead Echo

Wednesday, March 5, 1913

The attempt to instal the electric light in Newstead has not been abandoned. Enquiries are being made with the view of ascertaining the price of plants, and a public meeting will shortly be called to try and float a local company.

Wednesday, April 23, 1913

Newstead has lately been shaking itself up. After last week's dissipation the folk seemed to have kept awake fairly well, for the meeting on Monday night to consider the better lighting of the town resolved itself into three before concluding. The lighting question was the first discussed. It will cost the council £140 to put in acetylene gas and plant to light the streets, and £240 to supply the public. It would cost trades people about £28 to have it laid on to their premises and householders for five lights, £14. Such being the case several present thought it would be cheaper for those who wanted it to put in a plant of their own, and let the council do as they please with regard to the lighting of the town.

December, 2015

Will 2016 provide for a renewed - and more renewable - Newstead?

Remember the energy audits and solar panel bulk buying scheme back in 2011? Some 200 Newstead households were involved in the audits and now around 25% of local homes have solar panels installed (compare that with the Victorian State average of 12% of homes).

Renewable Newstead hasn't forgotten. A few locals have been working on the next steps - a community, rather than household, solution to solve our future energy needs. You might have seen local State MP, Maree Edwards, and State Government Minister Lily D'Ambrosio talking about Newstead in photo ops and press releases, making general statements and lauding Newstead, without being specific (then again, we all laud Newstead, without being specific!) alongside a \$200,000 grant.

This is Renewable Newstead's next project. The gist of it is about keeping energy local, aiming for 100% renewable sources, whilst still having the support, through the existing poles and wires infrastructure and the regulatory safeguards, at state and national levels (we're currently in discussions with Powercor about how this might happen). Current, rapid, changes in the energy and power industry is making everyone uneasy about the future.

At face value, the funding is to produce a report for government and to develop a business case about whether it is possible for this to happen, and what that might look like. We see more opportunities for the community. Look out for more information and more opportunities for discussion in 2016.

We'd also like to hear from you about the earlier Renewable Newstead project - have you benefited from those energy audits? Installing the cheaper, bulk buy solar PV panels? Did it make a difference to your power bills? Change the way you use, or don't use, energy? Was it all worth it? Your views will help us plan the next stage.

We'd also welcome people with energy, enthusiasm and keen to be at the heart of this journey, to join us at our monthly meetings. Contact Andrew Skeoch on (03) 5476-2609, or visit <http://www.renewablenewstead.com.au/>.

Have a re-energising Christmas and New Year.