

Banana Shire Council and Coexistence Queensland

## **DRAFT Terms of Reference**

# **Banana Shire Local Reference Group**

August 2025

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## Background

Banana Shire Council is experiencing a significant increase in renewable energy development while balancing the sustainable coexistence of other major industries across the region. This presents significant challenges and opportunities for the long-term development and prosperity of the region. Collaboration that prioritises community input is critical to ensure the voices of local residents are at the heart of decision making when seeking to maximise positive outcomes and mitigate negative impacts that might result from this activity.

In 2024, the Queensland Government announced \$5 million in seed funding for a Community Legacy Fund to support the energy transition in the Banana Shire. This announcement was made with an expectation that renewable energy project developers in the region would also contribute to this fund, which would deliver projects that ensure enduring legacy benefits to support the region as prioritised by the community through a formal Local Reference Group.

In addition, amendments to the *Planning Act 2016* introduced a requirement for wind and large-scale solar projects to have a Community Benefit Agreement with councils, informed by Social Impact Assessments and stakeholder engagement including impacted communities. This requirement will likely increase the number of project developers looking to engage with the same communities, and a streamlined and coordinated approach is recommended to maximise outcomes and reduce the burden on communities.

Banana Shire Council is considering its long-term planning approach to maximise opportunities from the energy transition and support its regional communities with a 10 Year Legacy Plan that will be co-designed with local residents, industry and government. This Plan will identify a shared vision for the region and list the short, medium and long-term priorities needed to achieve that vision.

In March 2025, Coexistence Queensland and Banana Shire Council delivered a Community Leaders Council in partnership, bringing stakeholders together to discuss how traditional and emerging industries can sustainably coexist with communities and landholders in the region to support the energy transition. The concept of a Local Reference Group was also raised in this forum as an opportunity to provide a structured, strategic and collaborative approach to addressing regional coexistence issues. The necessity for direct input from the local community was highlighted, in order to realise meaningful long-term benefits that best serve the needs of the communities that host renewable energy projects.

A partnership between Banana Shire Council and Coexistence Queensland has been developed to facilitate local input supported by independent expertise through a Local Reference Group, supporting a transparent and constructive exchange of information to support the energy transition in the region.

**This draft Terms of Reference provides a basis for the establishment of the Banana Shire Local Reference Group (BSLRG).**

## Purpose and scope

The Banana Shire Local Reference Group (BSLRG) will be an advisory committee to Banana Shire Council (BSC) who will consider the group's advice as part of its decision-making processes in relation to the Community Legacy Fund. The BSLRG will be co-chaired by BSC and Coexistence Queensland.

The BSLRG will provide a forum to identify, discuss and recommend priorities to deliver community benefit and coexistence outcomes within the region, and advise on broader

coexistence and community engagement issues relating to renewable energy. The group will be responsible for providing a communication channel between Banana Shire residents and BSC that enables community priorities to be gathered to guide the development and delivery of the Banana Shire 10 Year Legacy Plan and proposed Community Legacy Fund.

The group will not be responsible for making decisions and there is no requirement for consensus among members. Each member will have an equal opportunity to contribute to the activities and outcomes of the group, for consideration by BSC.

Pursuant to the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, a Quorum for meetings of the BSLRG will be a simple majority of members.

BSC will encourage project developers to engage with this group to support community engagement requirements for the benefit of local communities under Community Benefits Agreements and to contribute to the Community Legacy Fund.

## Objectives

The objectives of the BSLRG are:

- to contribute to the development of the Banana Shire 10 Year Legacy Plan;
- to support the delivery of actions within the 10 Year Legacy Plan where appropriate;
- to draw on local knowledge and provide informed advice that helps BSC, state and federal government agencies, project proponents, and others understand community priorities and challenges related to the energy transition;
- to provide a formal channel for project proponents to seek guidance about community engagement approaches, and support for engagement activities where appropriate;
- to provide a formal channel for community members to provide feedback about current and future challenges and opportunities, including sustainable coexistence, relating to the energy transition;
- to advise Council and Coexistence Queensland on advocacy to government and industry bodies relating to the energy transition where appropriate;
- to contribute to the ongoing review of the 10 Year Legacy Plan, including alignment with broader regional priorities following each Local Government election; and
- [once a Legacy Fund is confirmed] to provide recommendations to Council on the priorities and allocation for capital investment from the Legacy Fund, including consideration of the implementation and impact of such investment.

## Membership and responsibilities

The BSLRG will consist of 11 members.

Membership will reflect the diversity of the Banana Shire, and will include the following representation across community:

Co-Chair - Mayor (ex officio)

Co-Chair - Mr Warwick Squire (CEO Coexistence Qld, ex officio)

2 Community Members (North and South)

2 Business Owners

2 Landholders

2 Councillors (ex officio)

1 Indigenous Representative

All members excluding Co-Chair Mr Warwick Squire are required to be permanent residents of the Banana Shire.

The following agencies will provide advice on relevant matters and will be included in all meeting related agendas and minutes, include representatives from:

1. Queensland Treasury
2. Office of the Co-ordinator General
3. Net Zero Economy Authority

Other agencies and developers may be invited to participate in BSLRG deliberations as required from time to time by the Co-Chairs without requiring endorsement by Council.

Community members will have a thorough understanding of community values, opportunities and challenges, and be prepared to seek input from their community as well as advocating for their interests. Members representing local and state government agencies must also be familiar with the regional context and be able to provide relevant guidance to inform decision making.

Participation will be on a voluntary basis with no remuneration payable to members.

### **Appointment**

Members will be appointed through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process for a 24-month appointment as agreed by the Co-Chairs, with half-spill rotations every 12 months to maintain continuity of knowledge within the BSLRG. Standing members may nominate to be elected for subsequent terms.

Ex officio members and agency representative appointments will be ongoing subject to a recommendation from the Co-Chairs to change membership.

If a member requests to withdraw from the BSLRG, the Co-Chairs will recommend a suitable replacement to Council for appointment for the remainder of the term.

### **Responsibilities**

When appointed to the BSLRG, members agree to:

- truthfully and transparently represent the interests and values of the community, including seeking input from community members to share with BSLRG;
- ensure that recommendations for fund allocations benefit communities most affected by developments and deliver legacy benefits for the Shire community and economy
- uphold Council's position as the decision-maker in relation to project selection and funding oversight
- actively and respectfully contribute to BSLRG activities, including attending scheduled meetings and completing agreed actions;
- fairly and genuinely collaborate with fellow BSLRG members and other stakeholders and contribute to building community trust in fund allocations;
- truthfully and transparently represent the BSLRG,;
- maintain all confidentiality requirements;

- declare conflicts of interest in line with BSLRG guidelines; and
- adhere to the BSLRG Terms of Reference.

## Meetings and communication

Communication with BSLRG members will be primarily via email from the secretariat. Ongoing communication protocols, including inter-group communication, will be agreed to by members at the beginning of each membership term.

BSLRG meetings will be held in person each quarter. A request for agenda items will be circulated four weeks prior to the meeting, and members are able to request items for inclusion. The agenda will be set by the Co-Chairs and circulated two weeks prior to the meeting, clearly outlining any expected inputs from members during the meeting.

Minutes will be taken by the secretariat and circulated within two weeks of the meeting.

Where required, out-of-session meetings may be convened with advance notice and justification to members.

Communication with external stakeholders about matters discussed at BSLRG will be defined by the co-chairs at the conclusion of each meeting. In general, members should discuss any plans to communicate BSLRG business to external parties with the Co-Chairs and/or secretariat prior to doing so.

All media enquiries are to be directed to BSC's Media team under their existing media protocols. Members are not permitted to speak on behalf of the BSLRG or BSC unless prior approval is given, including sharing information verbally, online, or in print.

## Governance and secretariat

Representatives from BSC and Coexistence Queensland will Co-Chair the group, and BSC will provide secretariat support.

Any questions or concerns about the BSLRG should be directed to the Co-Chairs.

Recommendations to Council about members, including retaining membership, replacing members, managing conflicts of interest, performance management, or cancelling membership, will be made in agreement between the Co-Chairs.

## Resourcing

Financial and other resourcing to support BSLRG will be managed by the Co-Chairs.

Members will be required to fund travel expenses to attend the meetings and conduct general business (such as phone calls or internet access). Expenses to conduct other activities on behalf of BSLRG, such as hosting events or printing materials, will be managed by the Co-Chairs. No other expenditure by members will generally be required, except in specific circumstances as permitted by the co-chairs with prior written approval.

Membership of the BSLRG is a voluntary position. No meeting fees are proposed to be paid to members.

## Review

This Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually as part of the membership review process to ensure it remains aligned with the objectives of the group.

## Contact details

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