

Conversation Guide

We know that the energy transition is a hot topic in many communities around Australia. Below is a practical conversation guide to help you chat with neighbours, friends, and family about how the transition to new energy can benefit your local community.

It focuses particularly on why we need new pathways to move electricity from where it's generated to where it's needed. Feel free to adapt the language or add your own local examples that resonate with the people you're talking to.



1. How To Have Good Conversations on Energy Pathways: Start With Common Ground

Emphasise Shared Values

- **Community Pride:** Many people in regional Australia have a strong sense of community and want to see their towns thrive. Open conversations by highlighting this shared goal.
- **Reliability:** Everyone wants dependable, affordable power to run farms, businesses, and homes.

Positive Futures: Focus on building an optimistic outlook for the next generation—new energy can help secure future jobs and economic opportunities in the regions.

2. Tips for Having Productive Conversations

Listen Before You Speak

- Ask open-ended questions: “What have you heard about new energy and new energy transmission lines? Do you have any concerns?”
- Let them share their perspective first, so you can understand where they're coming from.

Use Local Examples

- If there's a nearby project, talk about how it's benefited your community.
- Share positive stories of people you know who have benefitted, like a neighbour who leased land for a project or a local business that landed a construction contract.

Address Common Concerns Openly

- People may express to you commonly held concerns, such as visual impact, noise, or land access. Acknowledge their concerns before you offer your opinion. This helps open both parties' minds that another perspective is valid.
- For example, acknowledge that people may worry about changes to the landscape before you emphasise that projects in Australia must meet strict noise and environmental regulations. Acknowledge that there can be uncertainty before explaining that energy companies compensate landholders if lines cross their property, there are legal guidelines to ensure fair negotiations, and that there can be financial benefits for local communities.

Focus on Solutions and Benefits

- When people raise problems, pivot to how solutions are being found—like improved technology, community benefit schemes, and clear planning processes.

Stay Respectful and Patient

- Some people might be sceptical or strongly opposed. Respect their point of view and aim to keep the conversation calm and factual.
- If you're not sure about an answer, offer to find more information rather than guessing.

3. Social Media Tips: How You Can Help the Conversation

Your voice matters — People's opinions are often influenced by their friends and peers, so don't be afraid to join the conversation. Different perspectives help shape better discussions and stronger communities. The loudest voices aren't always right—everyone's perspective counts, including yours.

Engage with positive content — Social media is full of great stories about how new energy pathways are benefiting communities. Share, like, and comment on the positive posts you see to help spread the word and amplify the good work being done.

Share thoughtfully — If you come across something that resonates with you, chances are your friends, family, and community will appreciate it too. But before you share, take a moment to make sure the information is accurate and trustworthy. Consider sharing local stories or updates about how energy projects are making a difference in your community.

Pause before posting — A lot of unreliable and harmful information is shared on social media unintentionally. Simply pausing before you post can make a big difference. Ask yourself: Do I trust this source? Have I checked other sources? Does it seem too extreme?

Ask questions and stay curious — Not sure about something? It's okay to ask questions! Engaging with reliable sources and community members to learn more is part of building a stronger, better-informed community.

Be respectful — It's easy to forget manners online, but it's important to treat people with the same respect you would in person. If you wouldn't say it to someone's face, don't say it online. Respectful dialogue helps build understanding and moves the conversation forward.

Speak up when needed — If you see something that's uncivil or inaccurate, don't hesitate to report it. Most social media platforms offer tools to flag inappropriate or misleading content. Just as important, support accurate and helpful information to help it reach more people.

4. Why We Need New Energy – Some Thought Starters

- **Cheaper and Cleaner Electricity**
 - **Lower Power Bills Over Time:** New energy sources like wind, solar, and storage are becoming cheaper to produce. Old forms of energy like coal are becoming more expensive and unreliable.

Once infrastructure is built, running costs are typically lower than older coal-fired stations.

- **Cutting Pollution:** Renewables reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is particularly important in rural and regional areas affected by changing weather patterns, increased bushfire risk and extreme weather.

- **More Local Jobs**

- **Construction and Maintenance:** Building new energy projects and new energy pathways creates jobs in construction, trades, engineering, and ongoing maintenance — for the long term, not just during construction.
- **Stimulating Regional Economies:** Workers spending money locally means more business for hospitality, retail, and service industries.
- **Opportunities for Farmers:** Hosting projects can provide additional income. “Hosting fees” or “land leases” can supplement farming revenue.

- **Community Investment**

- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** New projects often come with improved roads, mobile phone reception, and better services—benefitting local residents.
- **Support for Local Projects:** Many energy companies invest in community programs, such as grants for sports clubs, local events, or environmental initiatives.

- **Reliability and Security**

- **Urgency and Reliability:** As aging forms of energy production (coal) breaks down, there is a greater chance of outages, blackouts and higher bills.
- **Diversified Energy Mix:** Having multiple energy sources (wind, solar, hydro) reduces vulnerability if one source goes offline.
- **Energy Independence:** New forms of local energy are less prone to global price shocks, such as when Russia’s invasion of Ukraine drove up coal prices.
- **Modern Grids:** Upgraded energy pathways can reduce blackouts and disruptions, especially in remote areas.

- **Opportunity for Regional Australia**

- **Showcasing Innovation:** Regional Australia can lead the way in demonstrating how clean energy projects can integrate with agriculture and other local industries.
- **Attracting Future Industries:** With reliable, clean power, regions become more attractive for new businesses—manufacturing, data centres, advanced agriculture, and more.

- **Carrying Energy from Where It’s Made to Where It’s Needed**

- **Bridging Distances:** Large-scale wind and solar farms are often built where conditions are best—like open, sunny plains or windy ridges. New energy pathways are essential to transport that electricity to where it’s used.
- **Regional Benefit:** Improved pathways also help bring power to smaller towns and remote areas that previously might have had unreliable supply.

- **Upgrading Ageing Infrastructure**

- **Modernising the Grid:** Many existing pathways are old and weren’t designed to carry the amount of energy we can now generate and need.

- **Reducing Transmission Losses:** Efficient pathways reduce the amount of energy lost over long distances, which means lower overall costs.

- **Backing Up Local Generation**

- **Ensuring Flexibility:** If there's high demand locally, new energy pathways can bring in extra power. If there's a surplus, it can be sent elsewhere — potentially boosting local revenue.

5. Helpful Phrases and Conversation Starters

“We all want our towns to keep thriving, and new energy projects can bring in more jobs and business.”

“Lines that carry new energy are like highways for electricity: they connect us to more reliable, cheaper power sources.”

“I understand it can be worrying, but many regions that have invested in new energy pathways are seeing benefits — more funding for local projects and upgrades.”

“We can't rely on old infrastructure forever. Upgrading new pathway lines now will help us avoid disruptions in the future which will harm our community.”

By having respectful, constructive conversations, we can ensure people feel heard, understand the facts, and see the opportunities a well-managed new energy transition can bring to regional communities across Australia. Focus on finding shared values and goals—cheaper, cleaner electricity and more secure local economies—and end every chat on a note of optimism and collaboration.