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Creating a Community Electricity Retailer for the Northern Rivers

An exciting initiative to create Australia's first community owned electricity retailer has been given the green light.

A community retailer offers energy to local customers at competitive rates, supports local renewable generation and allows residents to participate and own the business. It is similar to a normal retailer which sells electricity and issues bills but differs in where the electricity comes from and who shares in the ownership of the retailing entity. Examples are common overseas but not yet tested in Australia.

To kick start this initiative a call for tenders to develop a business plan will be announced in August, with the plan to be developed by mid 2015. The business plan will need to provide a fair price for renewable generation matched to local demand, create local enterprise and provide energy security for the Northern Rivers. The plan will also address how a community retailer could help overcome structural and economic barriers to regional renewable energy.

The advantages of a community energy retailer can include:

- delivering renewable power to customers at competitive rates
- actively supporting customers who wish to generate their own renewable energy
- encouraging customers to share in ownership offering products that tap into the desire of regional residents to buy and support renewable energy
- preparing for the introduction of virtual net metering or peer to peer energy trading where energy is generated and consumed in the same network area
- offering consumers innovative energy products that create ways to manage energy use and costs
- addressing affordability issues for disadvantaged/vulnerable members of the community, supporting local community organisations and employment



The project is led by a consortium of Councils, Southern Cross University, Total Environment Centre, Starfish Initiatives, Sustain Energy, NSW Trade and Investment, Office of Environment and Heritage and the North Coast Energy Forum. The Consortium has secured funding for the preparation of the business plan to be accompanied by an application to the regulator for a retail licence, with the expectation that a retailer could be up and running within 12 months

For more details of the initiative and on the timing and content of tenders contact

Mark Byrne at the Total Environment Centre on 02 9211 5022 or 0403 070 442, or visit the North Coast Energy Forum www.ncef.net.au

