

Tracking clean energy projects

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The First Nations Clean Energy Network has developed a Project Tracker to track projects where First Nations groups are engaged in partnerships in clean energy projects based on equity and participation involvement.

The Project Tracker can be found at: <https://www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/energy-projects#map-column>.

Fifteen projects are currently featured on the tracker on the basis that they are projects which have been negotiated through partnerships agreements. Three of the projects are featured below:

- the East Kimberley Clean Energy Project;
- the Marlinja Community Solar Project; and
- the Yoorndoo Solar Project.

East Kimberley Clean Energy Project¹

In July 2023, the East Kimberley Clean Energy Project was announced by clean energy investor, Pollination, who has partnered with three Indigenous organisations of the East Kimberley region: the Balangarra Venture Corporation; the Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrgeb Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation (**MG Corporation**) and the Kimberley Land Council. Together, the four corporations comprise the Aboriginal Clean

Energy Partnership, in which each partner has an equal share.

The East Kimberley Clean Energy Project is intended to produce green hydrogen using solar energy. Expected to cost approximately \$3 billion to develop, the project will see a 2,000-hectare solar farm established near Kununurra on land owned by MG Corporation.

The power generated by the solar farm will be combined with hydrogen currently being produced by the Ord River Hydro Power Station at Lake Argyle, creating 'green hydrogen'. The hydrogen will then be transported by pipeline to Wyndham, in Balangarra Country, where it will be converted to green ammonia to be sold locally and overseas.²

Phase one of this project involves a feasibility study that commenced in March this year and is expected to be completed by August 2024. If proven feasible, construction is set to begin in late 2025 and, once constructed, the facility will be one of the largest renewable hydrogen and ammonia production facilities in Australia. All going well, first production is expected in late 2028.²

Marlinja Community Solar Project³

The Marlinja community in the Northern Territory is located on the traditional lands of the Mudburra and Jingili people and is home to approximately sixty residents who face regular power outages and inflated costs associated with using diesel for power.⁴

The Marlinja Solar Community Centre has partnered with Original Power⁵ for the Marlinja Community Solar Project which began in December 2023 with the connection of solar panels to the community centre. Intended to ensure residents have more reliable access to energy, particularly in wet season with extremely high temperatures and poorly designed houses, Original Power hopes this project is just the beginning of the Marlinja community moving towards 100% renewable energy.

In phase one of this project, a number of residents received training in electrical technology and carpentry, whose feedback on that training is being used to design a Certificate II in Renewable Energy Pathways.⁶ Residents also participated in the project planning and installation of the solar panels as part of this project. Local school students learnt about how solar power will work for their community in a 'Solar Schools Day'.

Phase two of the project consists of the transition from the community relying on a diesel-gas hybrid power station to the locally produced solar power (with the help of a 100-kilowatt battery). The solar power is intended to be able to provide the majority of residents' electrical needs.

The Marlinja Community Solar project is set to be the Northern Territory's first grid-connected, First Nations' community-owned renewable energy project and will hopefully see the Marlinja community using 100% renewable energy from their own power supply in the near future.

Yoorndoo Ilga Solar Project⁷

The Yoorndoo Ilga Solar project is a partnership between the Barngarla People and Yoorndoo Ilga Solar. Located 13 kilometres north of Whyalla in South Australia, on freehold land owned by the Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation (BDAC), the project will be spread over 665 hectares and will include battery storage in addition to the 300-megawatt solar system. Yoorndoo Ilga Solar will lease the required land from BDAC.

Power produced by the solar farm will connect to the South Australian and National Electricity Market.⁸ The project will generate enough electricity each year to power over 115,000 South Australian homes. Additionally, the project will create considerable employment for the entire Whyalla region, not only during the construction and operational phases, but beyond. The project will also encourage further investment in the area.⁹

Yoorndoo Ilga was chosen by the Barngarla People as the name of the project, and it means 'having or possessing' the sun in Barngarla language.



Mountains in Far North Queensland

Where to next?

With the increasing global interest in renewable energy, it is vital that First Nations be involved in the development and management of such projects. A 2022 study found that approximately 54% of Australia's renewable energy projects will take place on or near land subject to native title or Aboriginal freehold title.¹⁰

Such projects must provide benefits to communities through opportunities for investment, employment and contracting, as well as the chance to have a say in what development is occurring on Country. Clean energy corporations need to be aware of their cultural, environmental, social and governance impacts, especially where those impacts are felt most by the people on whose lands the projects are occurring. Partnering with Indigenous communities and corporations is one way to ensure that renewable energy projects are being carried out responsibly.

If you are interested in learning more about these or other renewable energy projects, please visit: www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au.

- ¹ First Nations Clean Energy Network, 'East Kimberley Clean Energy Project', (webpage) https://www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/East_Kimberley_Clean_Energy_Project.
- ² Pollination, 'World-first partnership to deliver Australia's first clean energy export hub' (webpage) <https://pollinationgroup.com/media-post/world-first-partnership-to-deliver-australias-first-clean-energy-export-hub/>.
- ³ Original Power, 'Marlinja Community Solar Power' (webpage) https://www.originalpower.org.au/marlinja_community_solar_project.
- ⁴ First Nations Clean Energy Network, 'Marlinja Community Solar' (webpage) https://www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/marlinja_community_solar.
- ⁵ As above n 4.
- ⁶ Clean Energy Council, 'Building the clean energy workforce of the future' (webpage, 10 August 2023) <https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/news/building-the-clean-energy-workforce-of-the-future>.
- ⁷ First Nations Clean Energy Network, 'Yoorndoo Ilga Solar' (webpage) https://www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/Yoorndoo_Ilga_Solar.
- ⁸ As above n 7.
- ⁹ Yoorndoo Ilga Solar, 'Welcome to Yoorndoo Ilga Solar' (webpage) <https://www.yoorndooilgasolar.com.au/>.
- ¹⁰ Deanna Kemp, Jown Owen and Kado Muir, '54% of projects extracting clean energy minerals overlap with Indigenous land, research reveals' (webpage, 5 December 2022) <https://smi.uq.edu.au/article/2022/12/54-per-cent-projects-extracting-clean-energy-minerals-overlap-indigenous-lands>.