

Energy Resilience and Affordability Conference

EVENT PROGRAMME

8-9 October 2025

Harbourside Function Centre, Wellington



hosted by



Programme

TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER – PRE WORKSHOP

1pm – 4pm Energy Sector Explainer: Community level explainer for those wanting to know more about the basics of the energy sector | Stephen Batstone. Sponsored by the Electricity Authority. *Room: The Loft*
HPA professional development. *Room: Waterfront Room*

4pm – 6pm Networking and canapes

WEDNESDAY 8 OCTOBER – DAY ONE

9am – 9.10am Mihi Whakatau
MC intro | MC - Victoria Crockford

Session 1 – Setting the theme

9.10am – 10.30am Engaging communities and community resilience from an Australian perspective | Dr Amanda Cahill, Founder and CEO, The Next Economy
What does regional resilience look like - an Aotearoa perspective | Tammy Tauroa, Co-Chair Ngati Kuri Trust Board
Panel one: What does regional resilience look like? A discussion from real-world experiences of building resilient energy systems across diverse regions.
Panellists: Dr Amanda Cahill, Tammy Tauroa, Russell Shaw, Chief Executive, TOP Energy.
Facilitator: Victoria Crockford

Morning Tea: 10.30am - 11.00am

Session 2 – Innovation and regional approaches to energy affordability

11.00am – 12.30pm Community Energy Activator, the Christchurch experience - insights and learnings
Hinerangi Pere, Head of Community Energy Services, Orion
Supa Energy | Luke Blincoe, CEO, Supa Energy
Flexible energy solutions in rural areas | Andrew Pegler, Founder, Blackcurrent
Energy resilience in Northland - challenges and opportunities: Lessons shared from a region facing significant infrastructure and resilience challenges | Russell Shaw - Chief Executive, TOP Energy
Community Energy Network: Members of CEN share practical solutions and models being implemented in both urban and rural contexts | James Davies, Habitat for Humanity

Lunch: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Session 3 – Energy sector collaboration

1.30pm – 3pm Economists view – energy's role in today's households | Cameron Bagrie, Economist
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) – an update on recent developments | Dr Marcos Pelenur, Chief Executive, EECA
Electricity Authority (EA) | Sarah Gillies, Chief Executive, EA
Panel two: Energy sector collaboration
Facilitator: Briony Bennett, Senior Innovation Manager, Ara Ake.
Panelists: Marcos Pelenur, Sarah Gillies, Cameron Bagrie, Page Crahan, General Manager, Tapestry - GoogleX

Afternoon tea: 3pm - 3.30pm

Session 4 – Interactive afternoon

3.30pm – 5pm The afternoon will be made up of two topics, which will be followed by table discussions where each table will discuss the theme of the presentation. Session is closed with a group wrap-up and reflections from the tables.
1) The Ratepayers Assistance Scheme | Mike Casey, CEO, Rewiring Aotearoa
Dave Karl, Director of Policy, Research and Data, Rewiring Aotearoa
2) A joint kōrero between the EA and Dr Sea Rotmann, discussing the issue of hard-to-reach energy users and hidden energy hardship, and the importance of collaborating with frontline and community navigators to identify and engage those priority consumers
Dr Sea Rotmann, CE, Sustainable Energy Advice | Electricity Authority

Day 1 – Wrap up and close

5pm Wrap up and close

5pm – 6.30pm Networking and canapes

THURSDAY 9 OCTOBER – DAY TWO

Session 5 – Government Corner

9am – 10.30am	Healthy Homes Initiative Bronwyn Petrie, Group Manager, Te Whatu Ora Dr Nevil Pierse - Department of Public Health, Otago University
	Community Energy Network: Members of CEN share practical solutions and models being implemented in both urban and rural contexts Lee Siegle, Sustainability Options Paul Scouller, WISE Charitable Trust ImpactLab Maria Owen, CEO, ImpactLab
	Panel three: What are the best policy settings to improve energy resilience and affordability for whānau and communities Facilitator: Victoria Crockford Gareth Cartwright, Executive Officer, Community Energy Network Will Edwards, Head of Māori Partnerships, Ara Ake Maria Owen, CEO, ImpactLab Sam Elder, Founder and Director, Climate Navigator

Morning Tea: 10.30am - 11am

Session 6 – Innovation, Education and Research

11am – 12.30pm	Energy education initiatives: Overview of community- and nationally-led efforts to raise energy literacy and empower households. Vicki Cowan, Co-manager, Home Performance Advisor programme Jo Wills, Co-manager, Home Performance Advisor programme
	Research spotlight: HEEP2 Vicki White, Senior Research Analyst, BRANZ Advice mapping and education strategy Sally Blackwell, Co-manager and consultant, Beacon Pathway Addressing energy poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand Jodi Gardner, Brian Coote Chair in Private Law at the University of Auckland; Jessica Wilson, Principal Adviser - Media Content in Communications, Marketing and Engagement at Victoria University

Lunch: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Session 7 – Roundtable conversations with experts

1.30pm – 2.50pm	This afternoon session involves breaking out into multiple expert-facilitated roundtables. A selection of tables will host an expert on a specific topic. Participants can join any discussion, with the option to move between tables. Be prepared to move around, change tables and get involved in the discussions!
	Table 1: Community Energy Network and Sustainability Options/ Healthy Home Initiative Gareth Cartwright Table 2: Community Energy Activator – a chance to deep-dive into this programme Hosted by Jonathan Young, Head of Industry and Government Engagement, Ara Ake Table 3: Selwyn Energy Plan – The Waikirikiriri Selwyn Energy Plan outlines a model to support integrated, locally-led energy transitions. We will share key components of the model and explore how it compares to work underway in other regions Hosted by Sam Elder, Founder and Director, Climate Navigator Table 4: Multiple Trading Relationships – peer-to-peer trading, energy sharing, community battery schemes and community virtual power plants may soon be possible under New Zealand electricity regulation. MTR specialist Briony Bennett will discuss the evolution of MTR Hosted by Briony Bennett, Senior Energy Innovation Manager, Ara Ake Table 5: School Pools to Energy Hubs – A \$3.5m Trust programme equipped four East Coast schools with 928 solar panels and 40 batteries (848 kWh), extending swim seasons with heated pools and growing community use, while keeping schools operating for at least ten days during outages and opening a path to local energy sharing John Campbell, Founder of Our Energy and Sarah Homer, Commercial Manager, Trust Tairāwhiti Table 6: Electricity Authority – open Q&A session Table 7: Better Explanations: Effective Communication for Healthy Homes System Change – Wellington Regional Healthy Housing Group (WRHHG) launched a 3-year Communications Action Research project in late 2022. The project manager and two members of the Communications Working Group that has driven the project will share some of what we've learned, and how it has changed the way we communicate about the 'why and how' of achieving decent homes for all – including examples of high-level messaging and explanations developed as part of the project Hosted by Amanda Scothern, Executive Officer, WRHHG; with Ella Morris (Communications Lead, Habitat for Humanity Northern) and Damien McGill (Director – The Healthy Home Corporation Ltd). Table 8: Community Navigators Sea Rotmann

Conference – Wrap up and Close

Speakers



Victoria Crockford

MC

Victoria has a diverse professional background, working across the housing, energy, social enterprise, and screen sectors for not-for-profits, large corporates, and start-ups in communications, government relations and regulatory affairs, executive leadership, and governance. Her most recent full-time role was advocating for the right to a decent home for all as CEO of Community Housing Aotearoa-Ngā Wharerau o Aotearoa, a national peak body for the community housing sector. She is currently consulting in the Māori housing, electricity, and public health sectors. She hails from Heretaunga/Hastings and lives in Tāhuna/Queenstown with her young family where she has recently been appointed to the Queenstown Lakes District Council's Climate Reference Group.



Dr Amanda Cahill

Founder and CEO, The Next Economy

Amanda is the founder and CEO of The Next Economy. She is an author, sought after media commentator, and trusted advisor to communities, government and industries navigating the complex transition to net zero emissions. She has over two decades experience working on economic development, public health, gender equality and climate adaptation across Australia, Asia and the Pacific. She is an editor of the recently published book Regional Energy Transitions in Australia: From impossible to possible.



Tammy Tauroa

Co-Chair Ngāti Kuri Trust Board; Director Te Ara Whānui Research Centre, Chairperson Pā Kāinga Housing.

Tammy has significant experience in organisational and programme performance and had dedicated 13 years to working in Kaupapa Māori research spaces. In 2018 Tammy successfully completed an MBIE Placement project where she worked alongside iwi, Ngāti Koroki Kahukura to build, identify, and uplift future opportunities through alternative land uses and grow commercial assets. She has been instrumental in building a new National Māori Housing Leadership programme 'Mana Kainga' for Te Matapihi he tirohanga mō te iwi Trust.

Tammy is an independent consultant and Director of Miere Limited and is the Co-Chair for Ngāti Kuri Trust Board Incorporated. Tammy leads a range of portfolios for the Board but has a key focus on building a new multi-site pā kāinga programme in the Far North over the next 2 years. At the heart of her mahi is always working for her whānau, hapū and iwi.



Russell Shaw

CE, Top Energy

Russell Shaw is the Chief Executive of Top Energy Group, he joined the company in December 2008. Top Energy is owned by the 34,000 customers it services, it owns and operates geothermal power stations as well as the distribution and transmission networks in the Far North of New Zealand. The company employs 200 staff and provides net carbon zero electricity to all the consumers of the Far North.

Russell is an electrical engineer with over 30 years' experience in the electricity and water utility sectors. He has significant experience in utility strategy, management and operations. He also has extensive experience in both electricity and water asset management, performance improvement and engineering.



COMMUNITY ENERGY ACTIVATOR SPEAKERS

Luke Blincoe

CEO, Supa Energy

Luke brings deep experience in launching and scaling businesses, including as former CEO of The Energy Collective, the parent of Electric Kiwi. At Supa Energy, he's working to democratise the benefits of decentralised energy assets through proprietary technology.

Andrew Pegler

Founder, Blackcurrent

Pegs is an experienced Founder with a demonstrable history of success in marketing and market development for companies such as Spark, Meridian Energy and Flick Electric. Pegs has a strong operations background which is complimented by his experience and expertise in Business Planning, Team Building, Product Development and Renewable Energy.



COMMUNITY ENERGY NETWORK SPEAKERS

Dr Marcos Pelenur

CE, EECA

Marcos is Chief Executive of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority, the New Zealand Government agency responsible for supporting, encouraging and promoting energy efficiency, conservation and renewables. Previously, Marcos held a number of leadership roles across energy markets, natural resources and science, including stewardship of New Zealand's national science system. Before joining EECA, Marcos led the energy and sustainability practice for the Behavioural Insights Team, North and Latin America.

Marcos holds a PhD in Engineering from the University of Cambridge and is a registered Chartered Professional Member of Engineering New Zealand and the UK Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET).



Cameron Bagrie

Economist

Independent and unflinchingly direct, Cameron Bagrie is one of New Zealand's most recognisable economic voices. With more than two decades of experience analysing financial markets and government policy, Cameron has earned a reputation for cutting through the noise and delivering sharp, practical insights into the forces shaping the economy. Cameron's career includes over 18 years with the National Bank and ANZ, where he served as Chief Economist for 11.5 years. Today, Cameron leads Bagrie Economics, a boutique research consultancy providing independent economic insight across business, government and the media. From inflation and interest rates to housing, global trends, and fiscal policy, Cameron brings a pragmatic, real-world lens to every topic—refusing to be boxed in by ideology and always focused on what the data really means.



Sarah Gillies

Chief Executive, EA

Sarah Gillies is the Chief Executive of the Electricity Authority. She was appointed to the role in December 2022 and was previously the Authority's General Manager Legal, Monitoring and Compliance. Sarah is a lawyer by background. She has spent most of her career in-house in corporates in both legal and non-legal roles and has also worked in large law firms. She has an interest in technology businesses and has held governance roles, including on the board of a technology start up.



Page Crahan

General Manager, Tapestry – GoogleX

Page leads Tapestry, a project at X, Alphabet's innovation lab. Tapestry is building AI-powered tools to make the world's electric grid visible so everyone can access reliable, affordable, and clean energy.

Before joining X, Page held roles as a go-to-market and commercial leader and advisor at several start-ups, two of which attained unicorn status: Sunrun in rooftop solar energy in the U.S., and Konfio in financial services in Mexico. She was previously co-CEO and founder of Clarus Power, a venture-backed residential solar customer acquisition platform. Page is a co-inventor of several U.S. patents in the energy domain. She earned a certificate from the Stanford GSB Summer Institute for General Management and holds a Bachelor of Science in Economics from Santa Clara University. She was recognized as one of the top 50 Climate Tech Operators in the 2021 Climate Draft and won Fin Earth's 101 Women in Climate Award in 2024.



Briony Bennett

Senior Energy Innovation Manager, Ara Ake

Briony started her career as an electricity trading systems analyst at the European Power Exchange after completing a Masters in energy economics and policy at Sciences Po in Paris, France. She went on to work as a renewable energy policy analyst at Bloomberg New Energy Finance in London, U.K. before returning home to Aotearoa to make her contribution to the energy transition here. She has worked across both government and business to drive for change and innovation in our energy sector.



Mike Casey | Dave Karl

Rewiring Aotearoa

Mike Casey is an entrepreneur and cherry orchardist from Central Otago who has electrified all the machines on his farm and demonstrated how the transition away from diesel can save farmers tens of thousands each year and significantly reduce emissions. He is also the CEO of Rewiring Aotearoa, a New Zealand charity dedicated to electrifying millions of fossil fuel machines across the motu as quickly as possible. Rewiring Aotearoa's Electric Homes report proved New Zealand had reached the electrification tipping point, where electric appliances and vehicles were cheaper than their fossil fuel equivalents over their lifetime, even with upfront costs and finance built in. The Electric Farms paper proved there are similar benefits for the rural sector if we can turn farms into power plants.



Dr Sea Rottman

CE, Sustainable Energy Advice

Dr Sea Rotmann is an energy justice and behaviour change researcher based in rural Mohua / Golden Bay. She runs a research consultancy called SEA - Sustainable Energy Advice Ltd, and has 20+ years experience working in and with national and local government, industry, and the community sector in Aotearoa, and overseas. She has led two global research collaborations under the Users-Centred Energy Systems Technology Collaboration Programme (Users TCP) by the International Energy Agency (IEA) since 2012: the first focused on Behaviour Change in Demand-Side Management, the current one (since early 2019) on Hard-to-Reach (HTR) energy users, energy injustice and hidden hardship. She believes that a truly just and sustainable energy transition is only possible if we prioritise the most vulnerable energy users and remove the current structural injustices from the energy system.



Bronwyn Petrie

Group Manager, Te Whatu Ora



Dr Nevil Pierse

Department of Public Health, Otago University

Professor Nevil Pierse is co-leader of He Kāinga Oranga – Housing and Health Research Programme. Originally a statistician by training, his current work is done in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders including government and community organisations and is focused on the design and implementation of natural experiments to improve the home and community environments.

He is currently working on the Healthy Housing Initiative, which looks at home interventions to prevent re-hospitalisation of children with housing-related disease. This programme has accessed and remediated over 30,000 homes in New Zealand and resulted in a decrease of nearly 10,000 hospital admissions. The Healthy Housing Initiative was awarded the Prime Minister's Spirit of Service Award in 2019.



Maria Owen

CEO, ImpactLab

Maria is the CEO of ImpactLab. ImpactLab connects decisionmakers in the social sector with data that helps them do good, better for their communities. Since launching in 2019, ImpactLab has estimated the impact of over 250 social interventions reaching 300,000 New Zealanders across diverse sectors including youth development, housing, education and financial wellbeing. Maria has a BA in Politics, Psychology and Sociology from Cambridge University, an MBA from Stanford University and was New Zealand's Hi Tech Young Achiever of the Year in 2021.



Gareth Cartwright

Executive Officer, Community Energy Network

Gareth has been the Executive Officer for the Community Energy Network for the last 8 years. Over that time Gareth has grown his understanding on what makes community enterprises tick and how valuable they are to the energy wellbeing sector. A fair chunk of his time is taken up working with Government agencies, researchers and sector partners to provide a community sector voice in policy development and funding decisions. The latest significant engagement has been as a member of the Energy Hardship Reference Group that has supported the EH Expert Panel in their deliberations over the last 18 months. Gareth also represents CEN on the Board of the Home Performance Advisor Training programme as well as working alongside the Zero Waste Network, Environment Hubs Aotearoa and Pare Kore on developing a collaborative community leadership response to climate change.



Dr Will Edwards

Head of Māori Partnerships, Ara Ake

Will has extensive and diverse governance experience in the iwi and education sectors, as well as skills in research, analytics and data. His rural upbringing is complemented by broad academic training in public health, Māori development, Māori language and horticulture. Now living in South Taranaki, as a past Chair of Te Korowai o Ngāruahine, Will brings strategic Māori community and well-grounded perspective to Ara Ake, as well as proven leadership experience in the application of the Treaty of Waitangi to contemporary New Zealand.



Sam Elder

Founder & Director, Climate Navigator

Sam is the Founder and Director of Climate Navigator, a member of the Energy Wellbeing Evaluation Consortium; and a Director at the Gas Industry Company. She is also co-Chair of the Electricity Networks Aotearoa (ENA) Future Network Forum. Sam started out as a Spacecraft Thermal Systems Engineer in the UK, before moving to Aotearoa NZ with her kiwi husband and young sons in 2006. Since then she has held a range of leadership roles including Orion Group's General Manager Energy Futures, Retail Insight Manager with Meridian Energy; South Island Director with the Ākina Foundation (supporting the growth of social enterprise); and Senior Strategy Manager with Environment Canterbury (responsible for Council portfolios on Hazards, Risk & Resilience; Transport & Urban Development; and Air Quality).



Vicki Cowan | Jo Willis

Home Performance Advisors

Jo and Vicki have been involved in HPA since day one (in 2012) and now co-manage the training programme. Jo brings her knowledge and vast experience of working with whānau and community as part of her “day job” at Sustainability Options to help keep HPA courses relevant. Vicki applies her 20 years of research work with Beacon Pathway to ensure HPA's training has robust foundations. We love working with our incredible team of passionate trainers to build the capacity of advisors across Aotearoa – we want every household to be supported with good advice on their pathway to a healthier home.



Vicki White

Senior Research Analyst, BRANZ

Vicki White is a Senior Research Scientist at BRANZ (Building Research Association of New Zealand). Her research interests focus on healthy homes and energy hardship. Since working at BRANZ she has been involved in delivering and analysing key national housing surveys, including the BRANZ House Condition Survey and Household Energy End-use Project 2 (HEEP2). Prior to coming to Aotearoa New Zealand, Vicki was a Research Project Manager at the Centre for Sustainable Energy, in Bristol, England, where her research focused on understanding the impacts of energy and climate change policies on consumers.

Sally Blackwell

Co-manager and consultant, Beacon Pathway

Sally Blackwell is a Senior Research Consultant at Beacon Pathway and is currently leading a BRANZ-funded project to understand the Home Energy Advice sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research aims to inform future work to co-design solutions to strengthen the sector.

Sally has a long-standing interest in ways to support households to make decisions that means their homes do their job better. Over the past two decades, she has worked across government, community, and in research settings to explore this challenge from multiple angles—developing policy and delivering programmes for central government, helping establish community-led responses, including the establishment of Community Energy Network and the Home Performance Advisor training programme, and leading applied research at Beacon Pathway. She is known for taking a big-picture view and trying to bridge the gap between research, policy and what's happening on the ground. Sally has also worked in forestry and waste policy.



Jodi Gardner | Jessica Wilson

Brian Coote Chair in Private Law at the University of Auckland

Principal Adviser - Media Content in Communications, Marketing and Engagement at Victoria University

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