

QUEENSTOWN ELECTRIFICATION
ACCELERATOR

Impact Report

2025/2026



OUR MISSION

The QEA accelerates the electrification of homes and businesses, and works to ensure no one is left behind on energy. We bring forward the benefits of lower bills, lower emissions, and higher resilience to the whole community, while making Queenstown a lighthouse for New Zealand and the world's energy future.

LOWER BILLS

LOWER EMISSIONS

MORE RESILIENCE

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Year One, by the Numbers	5
The Team	6
A Year of Impact	7
Businesses	8
Households	9
Solar for Renters	10
Vehicle-To-Grid Trial	11
Group Discounts for the Community	12
Community Engagement & Events	13
News & Media Exposure	14
Also Underway	15
What People say about QEA	16
Looking Ahead...	17
Funders, Collaborators and Supporters	18

Introduction

The Queenstown Electrification Accelerator (QEA) was established to help accelerate the region's transition to a cleaner, more affordable and more resilient energy future.

Our mission is to lower energy bills, reduce emissions and strengthen energy resilience across the Queenstown Lakes district. We achieve this by combining practical, on-the-ground support for households and businesses with work that helps shape the wider energy system. This means working alongside communities, local government, regulators, electricity distribution businesses, policymakers, industry partners and financial institutions to remove barriers to electrification and unlock lasting change.

Over the past year, QEA has delivered a diverse range of initiatives, from supporting individual households and businesses with energy advice to launching nationally significant programmes and contributing to conversations that will help shape New Zealand's future energy system.

This report highlights the impact of that work and the progress made during QEA's first year. It showcases the projects delivered, the outcomes achieved and the lessons that will help guide the next phase of our journey.

LOWER BILLS

LOWER EMISSIONS

MORE RESILIENCE

Year One, by the Numbers

\$7.3M



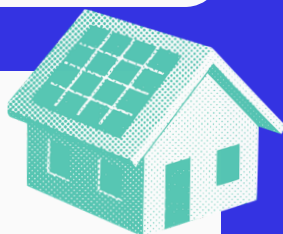
potential lifetime energy bill savings identified for households

\$14.2M



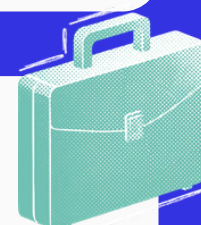
potential lifetime energy bill savings for businesses

41



households supported with independent energy advice including detailed analysis for eight homes

39



businesses supported with free energy analysis and advice

30+



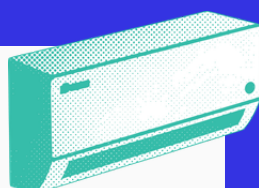
Vehicle-to-grid chargers planned across residential & commercial sites

1,180



people engaged through 26 events, workshops & presentations

200+



registrations across two Group Discount programmes for hot water heat pump and solar and battery initiatives

14



Local and national media stories, Raising awareness of electrification opportunities across the Queenstown Lakes District

The Team



Over the past year, QEA has built a multidisciplinary team with expertise across engineering, energy systems, data science, communications, community engagement and programme delivery. This blend of strategic and practical capability enables us to deliver meaningful impact across the Queenstown Lakes district.

Our approach combines



**Top
Down**

Working with the electricity industry, government, property developers and policymakers to influence systemic change.

**Bottom
Up**



Supporting households, communities and businesses to implement practical electrification solutions.

By combining these perspectives, QEA bridges policy and practice, accelerating electrification across the energy system while identifying opportunities for further innovation.



Dr Steve Batstone
QEA Co-Lead



Josh Ellison
QEA Co-Lead



Jade Baker-Edwards
**Community Energy
Lead**



Lowri Swygart
**Business
Electrification Lead**



Rachel Garlake-Louw
**Community Engagement
& Communications
Coordinator**



Lauren Fraser
**Contractor for Solar
& Battery Programme**



Ben Fahy
Communications



Jenny Sahng
**Senior Data
Scientist**

A Year of Impact

Working alongside local government, industry, community organisations and businesses, QEA has launched nationally significant initiatives and delivered practical support across the district.



Top Down

Community Energy Trust

Establishing a community-led model to support local clean energy projects.

National Energy Innovation

Leading projects that advance community energy solutions across New Zealand.

Solar for Renters

Developing models to make solar accessible for renters and leasehold businesses.

Council Strategic Planning Support

Providing guidance for strategic planning of district-level electrification

Low-Cost Community Charging Network

Expanding access to affordable EV charging across the community.

Discounts from Technology Providers

Securing exclusive discounts to make electrification more affordable.

Vehicle-to-Grid Trial

Testing how EVs can support the electricity network through two-way charging.

News & Media Exposure

Raising awareness through local and national media stories.

Solar on Schools

Helping schools lower energy costs while providing hands-on learning opportunities.

Aurora Investment Deferral

Demonstrating how electrification can defer costly electricity network upgrades.



Bottom Up

Business Support

Helping businesses to reduce energy costs and emissions through practical electrification support.

Household Support

Supporting households with trusted advice, programmes, and resources to electrify with confidence.

Community Engagement & Events

Building community confidence through workshops, events and conversations.

Community Organisation Support

Providing support to help organisations implement electrification technologies.

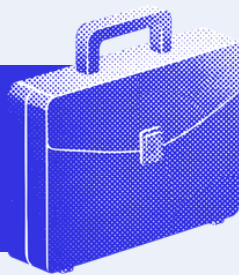
Electrification Resources

Offering free, independent resources to support homes and businesses to electrify.

EV Adoption Initiatives

Encouraging EV uptake through practical programmes and community support.

Businesses



Businesses are central to accelerating the transition to a lower-cost, lower-emissions and more resilient energy system. However, many organisations face uncertainty about where to start, which technologies best suit their operations, and whether electrification investments will deliver a strong business case.

QEA provides independent technical advice, feasibility assessments and strategic support to help businesses identify electrification opportunities and make informed investment decisions. To date, QEA has supported 39 businesses across the Queenstown Lakes District, spanning tourism, hospitality, retail, agriculture, recreation and commercial property.

This work has identified opportunities in solar energy, battery storage, electric vehicles, hot water heating, energy management and broader electrification strategies.

Progress & Impact

13

Business case & feasibility studies delivered

19

Businesses supported with tailored advice and information

6

Businesses given Solar for Renters info/advice; 1 completed install

7

Businesses connected to installers through the Solar Discounts

From the businesses we've worked with, we've identified:

\$950,000

of potential savings per year through electrification

\$14.2 million

of potential savings over the lifetime of electrification assets



Households



Many households are interested in electrification and the transition away from fossil fuels, but would like to be reassured which technologies right for their home, what their bill savings will be and where to start.

QEA provides independent, practical support through personalised advice, energy assessments and feasibility modelling, helping residents make informed electrification decisions with clear guidance on technologies, costs and potential savings giving households the confidence to move from investigation to action.

Progress & Impact

41

Household web enquiries supported with information and advice

82

Households given Solar for Renters info on how to get started

130

Connected to installers through Solar Group Discounts

78

Connected to installers through Water Heating Group Discounts

For the households we've supported, we've unlocked:

\$265,000

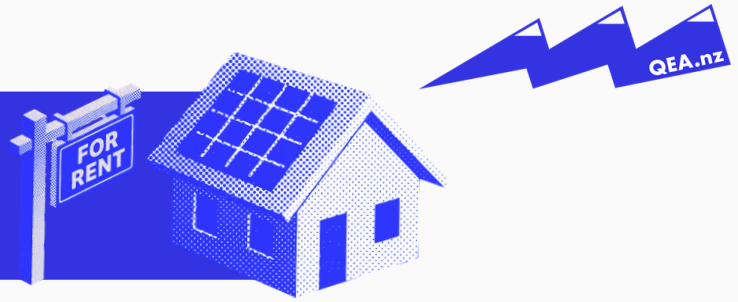
potential bill savings per year through electrification

\$7.3 million

potential bill savings over the lifetime of the electrification assets



Solar for Renters



Access to rooftop solar is often limited to homeowners, leaving renters and leasehold businesses unable to benefit from lower energy bills and increased energy resilience. QEA's Solar for Renters initiative aims to remove this barrier by developing practical models that enable rented properties to install solar, creating benefits for both landlords and tenants.

Working in partnership with Octopus Energy, the programme has been designed with the ambition of creating a scalable solution that can be replicated across Aotearoa New Zealand, making solar more accessible to households and businesses nationwide.

Progress & Impact

100+ registrations to date, around 80 landlords and 20 tenants

15 landlords currently seeking installation quotes

\$3M potential net energy bill savings for participating households

The trial is testing two delivery models:



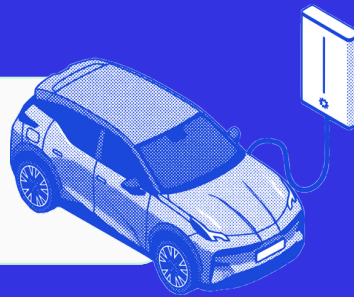
Fixed-price model: The cost of the solar system is incorporated into the tenant's rent.



Volume-price model: Delivered with Octopus Energy, providing access to a volume-based electricity pricing structure.

Early findings show strong landlord interest in reducing tenants' energy costs and supporting environmental outcomes, while highlighting barriers including landlord-tenant confidence, retailer participation, cost certainty, tenancy changes and communication challenges.

Vehicle-To-Grid Trial



Electric vehicles have the potential to become more than just a transport solution. Through vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology, EVs can also act as flexible energy resources, allowing electricity stored in vehicle batteries to support homes, businesses and the wider electricity system.

QEA is supporting New Zealand's first large-scale V2G trial in partnership with EECA, testing how this emerging technology can be integrated into everyday household routines, business operations and vehicle fleets across the Queenstown Lakes District. The trial aims to build understanding of the technical, commercial and user requirements needed to support wider adoption of V2G technology in New Zealand.

Progress & Impact

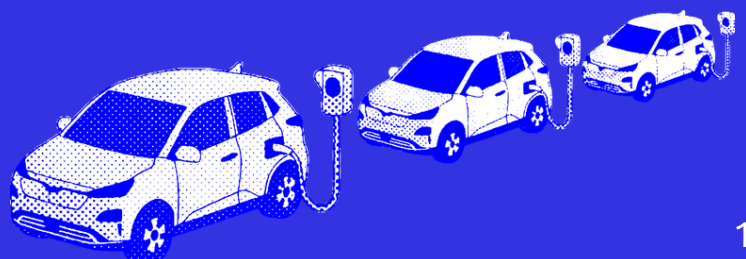
300+ households and businesses applied to take part

30+ V2G chargers planned across residential & commercial sites

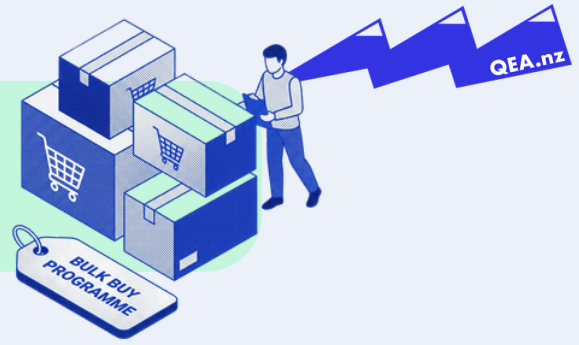
7 chargers installed and in active testing

20 EV test rides/experiences facilitated

5 EV & V2G community engagement events



Group Discounts for the Community



QEA's group discount programmes reduce the cost and complexity of electrification by connecting households and businesses with group discounts, trusted suppliers and simpler pathways to adoption. By aggregating demand, QEA helps make technologies such as heat pumps, solar and batteries more accessible while supporting local installers.

Hot Water Heat Pump Group Discount

QEA's programme makes high-efficiency electric hot water systems more affordable through discounted pricing with manufacturers and installers.

Impact to Date

\$1K

Discount for each product

78

Registrations

4

Confirmed installs, with 20 still progressing through the process.

Solar & Batteries Group Discount

Building on the success of the Hot Water Heat Pump group Discount, QEA launched a Solar & Batteries Group Discount to make solar and battery systems more affordable.

Impact to Date

10%

Discount on residential & commercial solar & battery systems

132

registrations

11

Confirmed installs, 67 still progressing through the process

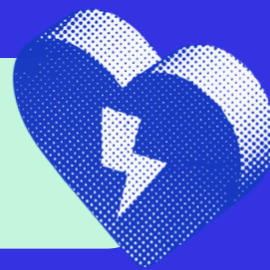
Estimated Lifetime Benefit

(Included within the total household & business benefit shown on pages 8 & 9 above)

Households: Potential \$4.1 million in energy bill savings over the full asset life

Businesses: Potential \$1.7 million in energy bill savings over the full asset life

Community Events & Engagement



Accelerating electrification requires more than technology, it requires awareness, confidence and collaboration across the community.

QEA has delivered or contributed to more than 25 events, workshops, webinar events, and industry conferences that provide practical advice, showcase local success stories and help residents, businesses and community organisations explore electrification with confidence.



News & Media Exposure



14 stories published across leading local and national media outlets

Including the NZ Herald, RNZ, Air New Zealand's Kia Ora magazine, Otago Daily Times, Lakes Weekly Bulletin, Mountain Scene and Newstalk ZB.

Landlords sought to plug in to solar

Tracey Roxburgh
Saturday, March 21, 2026



The Queenstown Electrification Accelerator's about to start a 'solar for renters' trial in the Queenstown-Lakes. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Quake wake-up call

GUY WILLIAMS

LAST week's startling earthquake is a wake-up call for Queenstown's energy independence, an electrification advocate says.

Queenstown Electrification Accelerator (QEA) co-lead Josh Ellison says the quake occurred at a time when home solar and electric vehicles are increasingly a "dinner table conversation" topic because of the surge in petrol and diesel prices caused by the conflict in the Middle East.

Ellison hopes last Thursday night's magnitude 5.9 earthquake near Te Anau, which produced the strongest shaking many Whakatipu residents have felt in years, will amplify that conversation.

He says it's a reminder that a magnitude 8-plus earthquake on the Alpine Fault — of which scientists estimate a 75% probability within the next 50 years — could leave the area isolated for "weeks or even months".

"We've only got one transmission line coming in through a gorge, and all our road access traverses the sides of steep mountains."

If the line came down and road access was cut, the area's diesel generators could run out of fuel well before the line was restored, particularly if widespread damage throughout the South Island made



Queenstown Electrification Accelerator (QEA) co-lead Josh Ellison.

the emergency response slow.

There are now about 1000 households in the Whakatipu with rooftop solar, "which leaves a lot of households without power if power's out for a long period".

QEA, an offshoot of national non-profit Rewiring Aotearoa, carries out research, practical trials and group discount schemes as part of its mission to encourage homes and businesses in the Whakatipu to electrify their appliances and vehicles.

Ellison says a solar and battery system will lower the energy bills of an average household more than any other step, especially if it electrifies its appliances and vehicles.

It also happens to be the best way for a household to achieve energy resilience.

Although community centres and emergency evacuation centres

“We've only got one transmission line coming in through a gorge, and all our road access traverses the sides of steep mountains.

will provide support during a prolonged power outage, people living in households that can produce some of their own power to stay warm, cook meals and keep their lights on will cope best, he says.

The biggest challenge is making solar and batteries accessible to households who can't afford the upfront costs, so he's excited by the two major political parties recently adopting election policies aimed at dramatically increasing residential solar uptake.

Both National and Labour are promising government-backed low-interest loans for rooftop solar and batteries, with no upfront payment, while the latter's also promising a means-tested subsidy of up to \$3000 for lower-income households.

However, getting solar to renters remains a "dilemma", Ellison says.

guy.williams@scene.co.nz

Discussing initiatives including vehicle-to-grid technology, solar energy, community electrification programmes and the wider opportunities presented by electrification. Media coverage has increased awareness of electrification and showcased local leaders.

LAKES WEEKLY

Building the real-world blueprint for a better energy future

2 MINUTES READ POSTED 27 JANUARY 2026

COMMUNITY

READ THE LATEST ISSUE

If you're into lower bills, lower emissions and higher resilience, then it's time to go electric. That's the

WAKATIPU WATCH

5.30pm. To register, visit tinyurl.com/4ktzfuz3

Matariki market

FRANKTON'S Country Lane's holding a Matariki Market, full of culture, kai and creativity, this Saturday, from 10am till 3pm. There'll be Māori carving, kapa haka, food trucks and live music — all stallholders are independent growers, makers and creatives.

Kids' art comp

THE Kukupa Collective, at Frankton's Country Lane, is running a school holiday art competition, themed around Matariki, or Māori New Year. Budding artists are tasked with drawing what Matariki means to them — the tamariki winner (5-12) will get art supplies courtesy of Queenstown Art Supplies, while the rangatahi winner's piece will be embroidered by TIKKI Studio. Entries need to be sent to the Kukupa Collective, based in the School House Studios at Country Lane, by July 18.

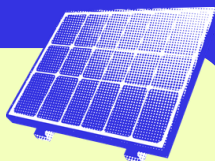
Star trail

A SPECIAL Matariki Star Trail and Community Glow Ride's being held in the Queenstown Gardens tomorrow night. Organised by Queenstown Electrification Accelerator, Lightfoot Initiative and Sustainable Queenstown, participants can decorate their bikes and follow a glowing 2.2km loop trail to discover the nine stars of Matariki, while riding through glowing "light pods". Along with free kai, there'll also be electric car light shows, a solar-powered scooter and e-bike displays, while the Queenstown Tennis Club rooms will be open for people to warm-up. People can ride any time between 4pm and 6pm — the last riders must start the route by

Also Underway

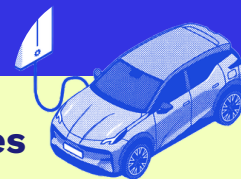


Solar on Schools



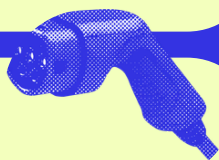
QEA's Solar for Schools initiative helps schools assess, fund and install solar systems to reduce energy costs, improving resilience and create new revenue streams (e.g. EV charging). The programme also includes developing opportunities for students and teachers to learn about solar energy and electrification.

EV Adoption Initiatives



QEA's EV Engagement helps overcome barriers to EV adoption by providing real-world experiences that build confidence in electric transport. In partnership with Nordeast, QEA has facilitated 20 EV test drives that showcase the benefits of EVs and address common misconceptions.

Low-Cost Community Charging Network



QEA is developing a network to improve EV charging access for households, businesses and visitors. Progress includes securing Aurora Energy funding for 20 pole-mounted charger installations, assessing suitable locations, and gaining community support for a charger in Arrowtown.

Community Energy Trust



QEA is exploring a Community Energy Trust to improve energy equity, strengthen resilience, and support community energy initiatives across the district. The concept and governance framework have been developed through legal advice, stakeholder engagement and discussions with QLDC.

Strategic Planning & implementation support



QEA provides independent technical advice to support the Queenstown Lakes District's electrification transition. Through planning, strategy support and modelling collaborating with Rewiring Aotearoa, QEA helps inform decisions that reduce emissions, lower energy costs and strengthen resilience.

Electrification Resources



QEA develops free, independent digital and printed resources to help households and businesses make informed decisions. These include practical guides, local case studies and community stories covering solar, EVs, energy efficiency and electrification, providing trusted information to support the transition to a low-emissions future.

What People say about QEA



Right now the whole district is looking to electrify, be it for environmental, financial or resilience reasons. QLDC is proud to support the QEA because they are leading the charge locally.

John Glover
District Mayor, Queenstown Lakes District Council

The Queenstown Electrification Accelerator is a highly impactful initiative that is accelerating this transition. Importantly, the QEA is not just supporting individual businesses - it is strengthening the economic resilience and sustainability of the entire Whakatipu region.

Sharon Fifield
Head of Business Chamber

By helping residents reduce costs, strengthen resilience, and make more sustainable energy choices, QEA is building the knowledge, confidence and community capability needed to create a thriving and sustainable future for the Whakatipu region.

Lucy Guyton
Chair on the Board of Trustees, Sustainable Queenstown

The support we've received from the Queenstown Electrification Accelerator has been incredibly valuable. As we've explored opportunities around electrification and solar, their practical advice, expertise, and willingness to share knowledge have helped us build robust business cases and progress initiatives that may otherwise have struggled to gain momentum.

Goedele Van Cauteren
Sustainability Manager at Skyline

There's a massive opportunity to power the local economy with cheap, locally made electrons, many of them generated via solar on rooftops, rather than expensive foreign fossil fuel molecules that come from half way around the world. Queenstown globally recognisable as a leader in low cost, high resilience, and low emissions energy.

Mike Casey
CEO of Rewiring Aotearoa

One of the only ways we'll get there is to rapidly adopt existing electric technology in our homes and businesses. There is a first mover advantage and economic benefits for the region, and it is a chance for us to create a real visionary point of difference that strengthens Queenstown's place in the world through the energy transition.

Mat Woods
CE of Destination Queenstown

Looking Ahead

We are proud of what we have achieved in our first year, but it is only the beginning. Building on the momentum we've created, we remain committed to accelerating the energy transition across the Queenstown Lakes District. The following initiatives outline where we're heading next and how we'll continue supporting our community to reduce energy costs, improve resilience and lower emissions.

Key

- **ALREADY UNDERWAY**
Making impact today
- **LAUNCHING NEXT**
Rolling out in 2026-27
- **FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**
Exploring for our region
- ▼ **Bottom-Up Approach**
- ▲ **Top-Down Approach**

Businesses

Business Accelerator Programme ● ▼

Business Battery Project ● ▼

Workshops, Events & Webinars ● ▼

Households

Energy Help QT ● ▼

Community Electrification Events ● ▼

School Electrification & Energy Education ● ▼

Community

Electrification Marketing Campaign ● ▼

Group Discount Programmes ● ▼

Solar for Renters Development ● ▲

EV Experiences ● ▼

Resources, Guidance & Tools ● ▼

On-Call Electrification Advice ● ▼

Community Charging Network ● ▲

Vehicle to Grid Trial ● ▲

Regulatory Sandbox ● ▲

Funders, Collaborators & Supporters

Our Funders

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our funding partners. Their investment in the Queenstown Electrification Accelerator has enabled us to support households, businesses and the wider community in accelerating the energy transition. We sincerely thank them for their trust, collaboration and commitment to creating a more resilient, affordable and sustainable future for our region.



Our Collaborators

Thank you to all organisations that have partnered with us to bring our initiatives to life. Your support and collaboration have been invaluable, and we look forward to continuing to work together to create lasting impact for our community.

Collaborations:



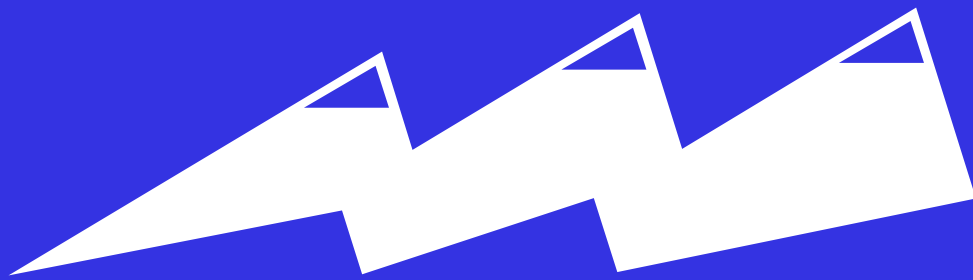
Programme Delivery Support:



Our Supporters

Finally, to our incredible community, thank you. This journey would not have been possible without the passion, encouragement and trust of those who've stood alongside us from the start. We're especially grateful to community champions such as Toni Glover and Trent Yeo, whose advocacy and support have helped inspire others, along with the Queenstown Energy Nerds community, Electrify Wanaka and our ever-growing network of supporters.

To every household, business, school, community group and organisation that has worked with us, shared your experiences, attended our events or trusted us to support your electrification journey, thank you. Your willingness to embrace change, ask questions and try new approaches is what drives meaningful progress. Together, we are building a more affordable, resilient and sustainable energy future for the Queenstown Lakes District.



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