



Striking a new deal for Uralla Shire

A shire wide conversation: community insights
for Uralla Shire's energy future

October 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work.

We recognise and appreciate their deep connection to this land, waters, and our community.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call Uralla Shire home.

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The Next Economy (TNE) works with regions, government, industry and civil society leaders to build climate-safe, regenerative and socially just economies.

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About Uralla Shire Council

Uralla Shire is a rural Council that covers an area of 3125 square kilometres on the New England tablelands of NSW. It is located on the New England Highway 545km northwest of Sydney. The main township, Uralla is located 22km south of Armidale and 89km north of Tamworth. The resident population is around 6400 people.

About Striking a New Deal

The Striking a New Deal Project has been working with community leaders across Australia to find a better way to develop renewables in regions and test a new pathway for transparent agreement making between the renewables industry and regional communities. Striking a New Deal is a collaboration between The Next Economy, RE Alliance, Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal, and ProjectsJSA.

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Executive Summary

The Uralla Shire, like many regional communities across Australia, faces both significant opportunities and complex challenges, with the development of the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), which targets up to eight gigawatts of new wind, solar and storage by 2034.

This transformation promises economic growth, infrastructure investment, and new jobs, but also raises concerns about housing affordability, pressure on essential services, and the preservation of the Shire's unique character.

The scale and pace of change raise important questions for Uralla Shire: how can development strengthen, rather than undermine, what residents value most? How can benefits be shared fairly across the Shire? And how can the community have a meaningful voice in decisions that will shape the region for generations?

The Striking a New Deal (SaND) project led by the Next Economy in partnership with the Uralla Shire Council, engaged over 150 residents between December 2024 and June 2025. Through workshops, interviews, and surveys, community members considered these questions and shared their aspirations, concerns, and ideas for shaping a fair and inclusive energy future.

The community expressed a strong and unified desire for a renewable energy transition that is transparent, coordinated, grounded in local values with long term outcomes for the community. Residents called for early and honest communication about proposed developments, alongside meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. There was a clear emphasis on investing in lasting infrastructure and services that meet the needs of a growing population, while protecting the Shire's biodiversity, farmland, and rural character. Affordable housing and inclusive growth were seen as essential to maintaining community cohesion, especially as new workers and residents arrive. Locals also stressed the importance of creating stable jobs and training pathways, particularly for young people, to ensure long-term benefits. Above all, the community wants to preserve Uralla Shire's unique identity and heritage, ensuring that change enhances rather than erodes what makes the region special.

A consistent message underpinned these insights, Uralla Shire must navigate the energy transition in a way that strengthens what makes it liveable, resilient, and uniquely itself. The community is ready to adapt but not at the cost of cohesion, affordability, farming or environmental integrity.

These community insights directly inform Uralla Shire Council's Renewable Energy Strategic Plan. The plan considers the strategies and actions that are needed for the Uralla Shire to address the challenges and realise the opportunities, to Strike a New Deal, where the benefits are shared fairly.

By grounding planning in community voices, Uralla Shire has the opportunity to navigate the renewable energy transition in a way that protects its character, builds resilience and creates lasting value for current and future generations.

Community voices

In almost a year of engaging with the Uralla Shire community, one thing has become abundantly clear: locals are deeply proud of what already exists.

The region's natural beauty, strong sense of community, active volunteer networks and rich heritage are all seen as assets worth protecting. With large-scale renewable energy developments now planned for the region, many locals are asking how these changes will impact their lives – and whether they will have a meaningful role in shaping what comes next.

People have different views about what the energy transition should bring. Some see it as a chance to create jobs, train young people, and build new industries. Others are more cautious. They want growth to be steady and planned, not disruptive. Many value Uralla Shire's quiet character, open landscapes, and close-knit feel, and are worried about losing what makes the place special. Some are concerned about visual impacts from wind and solar farms, as well as changes to land use and water availability.

There is widespread concern the scale and speed of construction will place too much pressure on housing, roads, water, and already stretched health and emergency services. Some people worry they will be priced out of their homes, or that local roads and infrastructure will not cope with heavy traffic and new demands. Others are not convinced promised jobs and benefits will reach the local community. They fear decisions will be made behind closed doors, with profits going elsewhere and lasting responsibilities falling to the community.

From the engagement activities it was clear that people wanted early, honest communication about what is coming. They want a real say in decisions. They want investment in things the community needs, such as better healthcare, safer roads, housing that locals can afford, and strong protections for nature and farmland. And they want developers and government to commit to long-term outcomes that benefit the whole region, not just short-term construction targets. These sentiments are summarised in the overarching outcome statement.

Overarching outcome statement

Uralla Shire is planning for renewable energy development in a way that strengthens local services, protects farmland and biodiversity, keeps housing and business costs fair, creates good jobs and training pathways, and supports a connected, inclusive community. The community is ready to adapt but not at the cost of what makes Uralla Shire liveable, affordable and uniquely itself.

See the snapshot, below, for a summary of key opportunities and challenges raised by the community during engagement.

STRIKING A NEW DEAL FOR URALLA SHIRE



The community set a strong vision for their future, through engagement activities.

Credit: Lyndsay Walsh/ The Next Economy

Snapshot: Community voices on opportunities and challenges

'We need to ensure that there are long term benefits so that, post-development, this is a town and region we can be proud of.'
– workshop participant

Key opportunities

- **Improving local infrastructure and essential services**
Repeatedly, people saw the REZ as a chance to upgrade roads, water systems, waste services, and telecommunications as well as to expand healthcare, childcare, aged care, and mental health services. These were the most consistent and urgent opportunities raised.
- **Creating more diverse and affordable housing**
Participants stressed the need for long-term housing solutions – not just temporary builds for workers. Ideas like modular homes, rent-to-buy schemes, retrofitting, and zoning changes were frequently discussed.
- **Expanding local jobs and training for youth**
There was strong support for apprenticeships, school-to-work pathways, and renewable industry careers: with a focus on long-term, meaningful work that keeps young people in the region.
- **Investing in community connection and pride**
The REZ was seen as a chance to reinvest in community halls, festivals, neighbourhood centres, and shared spaces. Branding the region as an artisanal hub, revitalised parks, and better public events came through strongly.
- **Protecting and enhancing nature**
While concern was high, many also saw opportunity: to restore vegetation, create wildlife corridors, and design nature-positive development that respects biodiversity.

'My hope is that the town looks back and is happy it went ahead, not divided by it.'
– workshop participant

Common concerns

- **Pace, scale and coordination of change**
Many expressed anxiety at the scale of the development proposed and the lack of coordinated planning. Concerns included fragmented agricultural land, limited nature protection and restoration and poorly sequenced infrastructure upgrades.
- **Strain on essential services and infrastructure**
Community members consistently flagged that existing services (especially health care, housing, water, and roads) are already under pressure. Many worried these would become overstretched or degraded without major investment and developer accountability.
- **Loss of identity, heritage and cohesion**
Across themes, people feared the Shire's village character, natural landscapes, and close-knit community could be lost to overdevelopment, Fly-In Fly-Out (FIFO) workforces, and generic planning that ignore what makes Uralla Shire unique.
- **Uneven distribution of benefits**
A frequent concern was that economic gains from the REZ would be shared unfairly – either geographically (e.g. Invergowrie missing out), socially (e.g. youth or First Nations people excluded), over time (short-term versus lasting legacy), or in terms of who hosts the infrastructure and impacts on neighbour/those adjacent.
- **'Communication, transparency and trust'**
Many participants expressed uncertainty about what's happening and who to trust. Misinformation, a lack of project information, and the use of Non Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) have led to confusion and a lack of trust.

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Introduction

Uralla Shire, meaning 'meeting place' in the language of the Anaiwan people, is a rural local government area in the New England region of New South Wales, home to just over 6,000 people. Its communities are spread across the main township of Uralla and surrounding villages including Bundarra, Invergowrie, Kentucky and Saumarez. Known for its peaceful lifestyle, village character, and strong community spirit, Uralla Shire's economy is anchored in agriculture, complemented by artisan industries, tourism and emerging renewable energy. The Shire has a rich heritage, with over 50 heritage-listed buildings and significant Aboriginal cultural sites.

The renewable energy transition is poised to reshape Uralla Shire's economy, land use and infrastructure. As part of the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), up to eight gigawatts of new wind, solar and storage are planned for development by 2034. Bringing construction activity, operational jobs and infrastructure investment. For Uralla Shire, this presents both opportunity and challenges, potential for economic growth and improved services but also pressure on housing, roads, water, waste management and community cohesion.

Through a comprehensive community engagement process, including interviews, workshops, school sessions and an online survey, the Striking a New Deal (SaND) Uralla Shire project provided a platform for residents to share their aspirations, concerns and ideas for the future.

Between December 2024 and July 2025, over 150 community members participated in three stages of engagement. This included representatives from First Nations organisations, local businesses, farmers, educators, youth, health and social services, and community groups. Together, they explored how development could strengthen what matters most to Uralla Shire—its character, resilience and community spirit.

Six key themes emerged from these conversations:

- Nature, land use and agriculture
- Health, aged care and community services
- Local economy, business and innovation
- Jobs, skills and training
- Infrastructure, roads, water, waste and housing
- Community spirit, inclusion and heritage

The chapters that follow present a summary of community conversations for each theme, outlining the community's desired outcome, together with the opportunities and common concerns the community raised regarding renewable energy infrastructure. Details of community considerations, together with identified investment priorities, form the foundation of the Renewable Energy Strategic Plan for Uralla Shire Council, translating community insights into practical, forward-looking action.



Over 150 people participated in a mix of workshops and drop-in sessions held across the Uralla Shire. **Credit:** Lyndsay Walsh/ The Next Economy

1. Nature, land use and agriculture

Many community members have selected to live in the Uralla Shire, because of its rural character and beautiful natural surrounds. The Shire's open landscapes, biodiversity, and natural features like lagoons, Mount Duval, and dark night skies are valued for their beauty and tranquillity. People spoke of clean air, green surroundings, and the rural lifestyle, with a desire to maintain these qualities.



People are keen to protect the rural landscapes and biodiversity that attracted them to the region. **Credit:** View of Bulagaranda (Mount Yarrowyck), Uralla Shire Council

Most community members support renewable energy if it is designed to protect biodiversity, respect rural identity, and engage local knowledge. However, a smaller number of community members hold strong opposing views against visible infrastructure (especially wind turbines), worry about urban overdevelopment and inappropriate development near sensitive areas. Some want growth and investment, while others fear losing the qualities that brought them to Uralla Shire.

Desired outcome

Uralla Shire is protecting its biodiversity, farmland, and rural way of life - with any development shaped by care for the land.

Key opportunities

- **Community-led planning and biodiversity stewardship:** Community members were eager to contribute local biodiversity knowledge to guide project siting and offset planning and to conduct ongoing monitoring to improve biodiversity outcomes.
- **Create wildlife corridors and investment in revegetation:** People saw a significant opportunity to invest offset plantings strategically to improve native vegetation buffers or riparian zones and create a nature-positive model for REZ development.
- **Farming and renewable models:** The ability to maintain grazing while hosting energy infrastructure, was considered a great opportunity to keep land in agricultural production.

Common concerns

- **Lack of coordinated or participatory planning:** Concerns projects are developer-led not community-shaped, resulting in poor siting of projects that did not consider cumulative impacts across the New England tablelands.
- **Destruction of biodiversity and ecosystems:** Many concerns were raised that poorly planned renewable energy development would result in tree removal, habitat loss and the loss of wildlife corridors.
- **Environmental risks from poor offset governance:** There was scepticism about the effectiveness and accountability of current offset schemes.
- **Visual and landscape impacts:** The scale of development in the New England REZ raised concerns about changes to Uralla Shire's rural character, with many citing the visual impact of turbines and solar farms and the loss of open views.
- **Impact on agricultural land use:** Concerns were raised about land fragmentation from renewable energy developments, disruptions to farming operations due to altered roads and increased biosecurity risks, and social tensions between host and neighbouring landholders, affecting community cohesion.



People are keen to keep land in agriculture production and explore multiple land uses.
Credit: Saideh Kent/The Next Economy

Community voices

'What we have left in terms of biodiversity is precious and irreplaceable.'

'We want to see that, at the end of this renewable energy rollout, the environment is in a better place than before.'

'My friends visit from the city to get away from all the development. They love the wide expanse of the paddocks, the mature trees and the abundance of nature.'

'The landscape and scenery are beautiful. I don't want to be able to see wind farms, especially not from my house.'

'So far, the CO₂ levels worldwide [are] still going up at the same rate, despite worldwide use of so-called renewable energy. Why are we doing this?'

* Direct quotes from participants of SaND's engagement activities

2. Infrastructure, roads, water, waste and housing

In Uralla Shire Council, the essentials of daily life are closely tied to the services and infrastructure that connect people across the Shire. Roads are more than transport links: they keep townships connected, bring visitors along the New England Highway, and shape how safely people travel to work, school and services. Housing reflects the character of the community, with a mix of homes that support families, workers and older residents, while affordability remains central to keeping the area inclusive. Water is seen as a lifeline, valued for both household needs and farming, with many people conscious of protecting supply for future generations. Waste services, too, are recognised as a core part of how the community looks after its environment and each other. Together these elements underpin Uralla Shire's quality of life and provide the base from which the Shire can grow and adapt.



The New England Highway, which runs through the centre of Uralla, is a major transport route with significant truck movements. **Credit:** Saideh Kent/The Next Economy

Many community members shared concerns regarding the impact the New England REZ would have on local infrastructure and the burden that may be placed on Council and residents. Others saw infrastructure as a clear opportunity to lift the town's standards, especially if REZ investment could be directed into better road surfacing, reliable water systems, and new amenities. While many wanted better and more affordable housing, some worried that overdevelopment with 'cookie cutter' style subdivisions would erode Uralla Shire's rural character. Some welcomed change, but most were clear: the transition must be coordinated, planned and consider the long term interests of the community.

Desired outcome

Uralla Shire's infrastructure, roads, housing, water and waste services sustainably support community growth and daily life, protecting affordability, safety, local character, and environmental resilience.

Key opportunities

- **Community-serving housing:** Participants expressed strong interest in ensuring temporary housing is repurposed post-construction (e.g. for aged care or families). They also emphasised the need for more modular, rent-to-buy, shared, and smaller housing models to serve long-term community needs.
- **Developer contributions for lasting infrastructure:** Many called for mandatory developer funding for essential infrastructure such as roads, water, waste, and public facilities. Suggested priorities included road upgrades, water security, increased community waste systems, digital connectivity and improved stormwater management .
- **Integrated planning:** Participants highlighted the opportunity to coordinate housing development and infrastructure upgrades, through joint developer and council planning to avoid piecemeal approaches. Some stressed the value of learning from other regions.
- **Expanded public and shared transport:** Proposals included a bus loop between Armidale, Invergowrie and Uralla, improved rail freight use, and more EV charging infrastructure, particularly especially at rural service hubs such as the Invergowrie store.

Common concerns

- **Housing stress from REZ development:** The most frequently raised concern was the shortage of affordable housing, especially for low-income residents, families, First Nations people, and young people. Rising rents and property prices driven by REZ worker demand and speculative investment were central concerns
- **Road damage and traffic risks:** Participants noted that many local roads are not designed for the volume of heavy vehicles associated with REZ construction. They raised concerns about deterioration, potholes, and safety risks for farmers, cyclists, and pedestrians, with Bundarra and Kentucky roads mentioned specifically.
- **Water insecurity and system strain:** Participants expressed deep concern about water scarcity, ageing infrastructure, and potential harm to local ecosystems from the increased water demands of REZ construction. Past drought experiences were frequently cited.

- **Waste mismanagement and infrastructure legacy risks:** Participants feared that construction waste would overwhelm local systems and that the Shire could be left with degraded or underused infrastructure once the construction boom ends.



Housing affordability was a key concern for many residents.

Credit: Saideh Kent/The Next Economy

Community voices

'I have concern about uncoordinated land use change from overlapping development without proper infrastructure planning.'

'Where is the temporary workforce going to live? Housing availability [is low], rental prices [are] increasing, additional people will place a strain on the existing housing stock.'

'Community benefit payments [from developers] could fund legacy housing projects ongoing.'

'Given the amount of traffic the New England Highway is subjected to and the truly horrendous potholes, patchwork repairs and lack of shoulders, the road is already dangerous without adding more large machinery movements.'

'De-commissioning how will this be managed? Who is responsible [and] where will the waste go?'

3. Local economy, business and innovation

Uralla's vibrancy is driven by small, often multi-business households – not by big business or chains. The community values the independent shops and cafes that give the main street its character along with the lively and distinctive events and festivals that draw weekend visitors and tourists. An artisanal focus to the town reflects the local skills and identity, the entrepreneurial spirit and low cost of business. While many residents across the Uralla Shire access retail stores and services in Armidale, local retail services are well-supported and valued. For settlements, for example in Invergowrie the Invergowrie Store serves as a vital hub of local activity – offering fuel, general supplies, and takeaway food including pizza.



The Invergowrie store is a vital hub for Invergowrie residents, providing essential retail services for the settlement and a great employment opportunity for local teenagers.

Credit: Saideh Kent/The Next Economy

There's real energy behind building a unique identity for Uralla Shire as a place known for innovation, craftsmanship, and community-based enterprise. While many are excited about new economic opportunities, others worry about losing the character of Uralla Shire's economy. Some fear it could become over-commercialised or filled with chain stores that don't reflect the town's values. Others are concerned that REZ-linked growth might benefit outside companies more than locals, unless there's careful planning and proactive support.

Desired outcome

Uralla Shire's economy is diverse, locally-owned and innovative. We have thriving main street businesses, new industries and career pathways, and have kept the cost of living and doing business affordable for residents.

Key opportunities

- **Infrastructure Investment:** Participants agreed that investment in infrastructure, such as water, digital connectivity and roads could support long term economic activity across the Uralla Shire.
- **Stronger local procurement and supply chain development:** Participants want to see Uralla Shire businesses benefit from the REZ through programs to develop capability and capacity and structured 'buy local' programs.
- **Business and industry diversification:** Opportunities identified include:
 - Solar, battery and turbine recycling
 - data centres
 - community-owned renewable energy
 - new village-scale industries in Kentucky and Invergowrie

Common concerns

- **Rising commercial rents:** Business and community participants raised concerns that commercial rent increases could price out small, independent businesses and reduce the appeal of Uralla's main street. Chain stores and short-term worker-driven demand risks eroding the towns local artisan identity.
- **Boom and bust cycles:** Concerns about the sustainability of economic growth tied to REZ construction were raised. The community was keen to avoid business closures and vacant shop fronts, through longer term planning that avoids boom and bust cycles experienced elsewhere.
- **Shortage of skilled trades and professionals:** Limited access to builders, electricians and other skilled trades may delay local projects even those unrelated to the REZ.
- **Cost of living pressures:** Competition from REZ workers may drive up rents and fuel prices, making it harder for existing residents and small businesses to cope
- **Uncoordinated procurement and sourcing:** Without structured local procurement plans, external companies may dominate supply chains, leaving local businesses excluded.



Attracting workers to buy local is easy if you are the region's premier pie shop.

Credit: Saideh Kent/ The Next Economy

Community voices

'There is no reason why Uralla Shire has to repeat the FIFO mistakes of the mining boom.'

'We want companies and workers to buy locally as much as possible, we want workers to shop at Foodworks and drink at the local pubs.'

'Risk that business [and] shopping will be imported rather than sourced locally.'

'Developers driving up commercial rents, inflating the market and pushing out other small businesses.'

'New businesses made for population influx but then when people leave businesses will go out of business and the town is left with empty shops.'

4. Jobs, skills and training

Many people in the community are self-employed through farms and small retail businesses. The local Phoenix Foundry, a bronze plaque manufacturer, employs a small permanent workforce. The Uralla Shire Council, the Uralla Central School, McMaugh's residential aged care and other community services provide other permanent employment opportunities.

Uralla Shire offers a range of schooling options. Small schools are located in the townships of Rocky River and Kentucky. Uralla Central School provides education from kindergarten through to Year 12. St Joseph's Primary School offers Catholic primary education. There is a strong connection with the University of New England (UNE) and TAFE NSW, both based in Armidale. They offer specialist rural and agricultural science courses that support the surrounding farming community.



Residents welcome opportunities to build pathways for young people to remain in the district and gain meaningful employment. **Credit:** Saideh Kent/The Next Economy

While there is an overwhelming enthusiasm for building lasting job and training pathways, people remain cautious about jobs being exported, overstated or mismatched with local needs. Some people were focused on the need to create roles for school leavers, while others emphasised systemic reform such as partnerships between developers, landholders, and training providers. A few raised the need for cultural safety and support for migrant workers, showing a broad understanding of the complexities involved in workforce development in a changing region.

Desired outcome

There are stable, meaningful jobs in Uralla Shire supported by accessible local training pathways, ensuring youth stay in the community and benefit directly from renewable energy growth.

Key opportunities

- **Job Readiness:** Participants strongly supported developers directly investing in job readiness programs, where specific programs were proposed for youth, First Nations people and those facing disadvantage.
- **Local workforce development:** Participants emphasised the importance of developing the local workforce, through attraction and retention programs and local development pathways.
- **Stronger links between schools, TAFE/UNE, and employers:** Participants proposed education-to-employment pipelines through training, apprenticeships and degrees that support all economic activities in the region, including agriculture, construction, engineering, renewable energy infrastructure operation and maintenance.
- **Job creation:** Providing opportunities for local residents to apply for jobs was important to participants, it reduced the number of FIFO workers needed and provided opportunities for locals to benefit from the REZ development.

Common concerns

- **Lack of structured pathways for young people:** Participants highlighted that without apprenticeships or early engagement with employers, local youth are forced to leave the region. The absence of coordinated school-to-work pipelines was a repeated concern.
- **Overpromising and underdelivering on local jobs:** Participants expressed scepticism about job opportunities linked to REZ development. They warned that if jobs go to outsiders or are too short-term, it risks alienating the local community and fuelling mistrust.
- **Workforce pressure:** Participants saw fly in and fly out (FIFO) and drive in and drive out (DIDO) workers as a cultural and economic strain. These workforce practices push up wages and rents worsen labour shortages in essential sectors, such as trades and weaken community cohesion.
- **Barriers for First Nations workers and marginalised groups:** Participants pointed to systemic barriers such as the lack of transport, accreditation, and culturally safe engagement, which continue to limit participation. They noted that existing job services are failing to adequately address these issues.

Community voices

'While the industry is booming and money is flowing, there's a real opportunity to invest in local kids – not just the apprentices companies need today, but a future workforce. If they're already training their own, why not widen the net? That's how you win hearts and leave something behind.'

'I can see things have got to change. But my concern is the soul of Uralla. [We] have to handle the construction period properly or risk a two tier economy, where high paid workers can afford rent and local services and locals or those self-employed are left wanting.'

'[There is concern for] access to skilled labour, [already we] struggle to get trades now like electricians, plumbers and mechanics.'

'[Let's get] long-term benefits by training of local people or people who will stay. [We want] more skills and skilled workers to stay in area and add to Uralla area.'

'How do we ensure local workers get preference [for jobs]?''

'Welcome pack for temporary workers so they feel included and encouraged to become part of the community.'

5. Health, aged care and community services

There was widespread agreement that health and community services are struggling to meet current demands, let alone accommodate future growth.

Uralla township is the central point for the delivery of allied health and emergency services with a neighbourhood centre, a manned fire station and a police station that now has a permanent police officer. However, most people access general practitioners (GPs) and medical services in Armidale, which offers a hospital equipped with emergency, surgery, medical and maternity care. To ensure the continued availability of aged care in the region, Council has assumed responsibility for operating the McMaugh's Garden Aged Care Centre, allowing older residents to remain in the community as they age.



Residents welcome the opportunity to strengthen health and safety across the region.

Credit: Saideh Kent/The Next Economy

While most see the REZ as an opportunity to strengthen services through coordinated funding and planning, some are sceptical about whether Council or developers will deliver. A few worry the influx of male construction workers could increase crime or social disruption, though this was a minority view. Overall, people agree that health, aged care, and wellbeing should be central to REZ-related community investment, not an afterthought.

Desired outcome

Uralla Shire has reliable, well - resourced health, aged - care and community services that keep pace with a growing and changing population, with development actively supporting local wellbeing, safety and emergency readiness.

Key opportunities

- **Strengthen health and community services:** The opportunity to develop innovative health service models to meet the needs of the community and temporary workers was highlighted numerous times. With the focus on developing models that can provide ongoing services for the community.
- **Targeted investment in allied health, youth and family services:** Many saw opportunity to attract investment into vital services including emergency housing, family support, mental health care and youth programs like Backtrack as essential to support the development of the REZ.
- **Repurposing infrastructure for long-term community use:** There was strong agreement amongst participants that infrastructure, particularly workforce housing should be planned for long term community use and benefit.
- **Coordinated emergency services:** To ensure emergency services can respond appropriately to incidents associated with the REZ development and operation, opportunities to work with developers to plan, develop protocols and conduct training was considered essential. Noting that NSW Rural Fire Service have developed protocols that need to be integrated with local solar and wind farm operators.

Common concerns

- **Limited access to health services:** Concern regarding the existing shortages of GPs and specialists was raised often. There was concern this would get worse with the increase in population associated with the REZ construction phase.
- **Strain on community services:** Demand for mental health support, drug and alcohol services, and emergency housing is expected to increase. These services are poorly resourced and may not meet future community needs.
- **Safety and emergency readiness gaps:** Electrical fires present a different and dangerous hazard for local emergency services. Concerns regarding site access, protocols, training and equipment were raised.



Uralla Shire Council provides services such as Tablelands Community Transport, to support aged/ disabled people to access medical services across Armidale, Uralla, Walcha and Guyra.
Credit: Saideh Kent/The Next Economy

Community voices

'Medical services are already massively over- stretched.'

'My parents were considering moving here, but I am not sure whether they should because of the lack of services, especially health services, this will only get worse with an influx of workers.'

'We want REZ projects to bring services that stay.'

6. Community spirit, inclusion and heritage

People described Uralla Shire as a friendly, welcoming place where 'everyone knows everybody' and newcomers are welcomed. An active volunteer base supports popular events like Uralla Thunderbolts Festival, the high country markets, and the Uralla Fairy Festival. The heritage streetscape, bushranger and goldrush history, vibrant arts scene, and artisan businesses were all named as part of the town's character, with notable mention of the importance of First Nations heritage.



Celebrating the regions creators, makers and producers, the Seasons of New England Expo showcases 160 local businesses. **Credit:** Uralla Shire Council.

While many residents want to preserve Uralla Shire's small-town feel, there is no single vision of what 'community' means. Some value heritage and quiet familiarity; others see diversity, vibrancy, and change as strengths. Concerns were raised about FIFO workers and cultural fragmentation, while others viewed new arrivals as vital to the Shire's future. Still, a common thread emerged: a united and inclusive Uralla Shire is possible -- if engagement is genuine, benefits are widely shared, and the town's identity isn't traded for short-term gain.

Desired outcome

Uralla Shire is a united, inclusive community deeply connected to its heritage, celebrating First Nations custodianship and a strong shared identity.



Uralla Shire's heritage is an important part of the region's identity.

Credit: The Bolt Inn

Key opportunities

- **Reinforce identity and togetherness:** There is strong appetite for more community events, shared spaces, and participatory programs that bring people together. Suggestions included everything from local clean-up days to arts workshops, seasonal celebrations, and community gardens.
- **Newcomer inclusion and integration:** Several participants noted that new people bring new skills, energy, and diversity, but proactive integration strategies (like welcome packs, buddy systems, youth-friendly venues, and school events) are needed to sustain cohesion.
- **Celebrate and strengthen First Nations presence:** Proposals included truth-telling events, Anaiwan-led heritage governance, cultural mapping, and benefit-sharing aligned with Anaiwan leadership and boundaries.

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- **Pride in place:** Residents suggested branding Uralla Shire as an artisanal hub, supporting heritage signage, and funding to renew built heritage. In other words, ways to amplify identity and build shared pride in what makes the community special.

Common concerns

- **Social division and fragmentation:** The most common concern was that the scale and style of incoming REZ development could divide the community: through short-term workforces (FIFO), uneven benefit sharing, or isolated deals like NDAs. Many feared loss of cohesion, volunteer burnout, and mistrust if engagement isn't early, respectful and inclusive.
- **Heritage and local identity at risk:** Community members voiced a strong desire to protect Uralla's heritage streetscape, village feel, and unique arts and cultural scene. Concerns included overdevelopment, 'cookie-cutter' housing, and loss of distinct local character to generic chain stores.
- **First Nations exclusion:** Several respondents raised the lack of cultural governance, delayed consultation, and risk to culturally significant sites as concerns. The need for Anaiwan-led processes was noted, alongside jurisdictional mismatches and tokenistic consultation.



Residents are keen to maintain Uralla Shire's friendly, inclusive nature.

Credit: Saideh Kent/The Next Economy

Community voices

'Uralla has a very strong identity, it is an amazing town and people have a strong sense of what it means to live here and who we are.'

'Newcomers may have a lot of gifts to contribute to the community.'

'The influx of 1,700 people will change the nature of the community, unless there is an ability to integrate those folks into community life.'

'Communication [about renewable energy and the REZ development] is mixed and it is worrying that it misinformation might lead to division.'

'[There is an] opportunity of greater access to Country for First Nations [with] reimagined access like rights of way.'

Turning insights into action

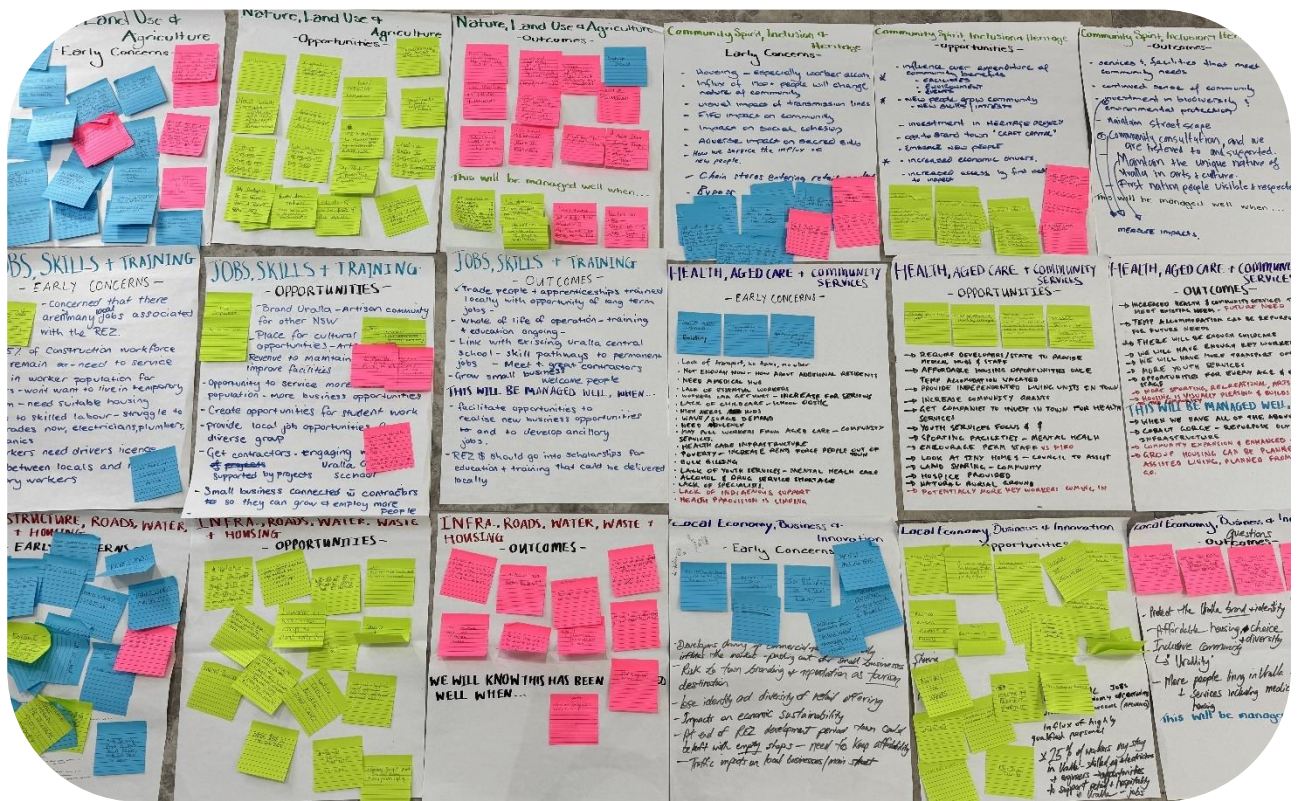
The insights gained through our community engagement highlight both the pride people feel in Uralla Shire and the real concerns about the pace and scale of change ahead. A number of common threads run through the conversations.

Across the workshops and discussions, people spoke about the importance of protecting nature, making sure housing stays affordable, strengthening health and community services, and ensuring that roads, water and waste systems can keep pace with growth. They also called for jobs and training that give young people a future in the Shire, investment in community spaces that build pride and connection, and development that reflects Uralla Shire's own identity rather than a template from elsewhere. Underpinning all of this was a consistent message, people want early, open communication and a real say in decisions so that benefits are shared fairly and lasting value is created.

These insights have informed the Uralla Shire Council Renewable Energy Strategic Plan. The plan takes the outcomes expressed by the community and translates them into clear strategies and actions for Council, State Government, EnergyCo and developers. It sets out how to move from vision to practice, from stronger procurement rules and local training pathways, to planning for housing that can be repurposed, to embedding biodiversity protection into project design.

The release of the plan later this year will mark an important step. It will give the community, government and industry a shared framework for action and accountability, ensuring investment and decision-making are guided by what the Uralla Shire has said matters most.

This process does not end with the plan. Continued participation from residents, businesses and organisations will be essential to test solutions, refine priorities and hold all parties to account. To stay up to date and contribute to the next stages, visit <https://yoursay.uralla.nsw.gov.au/sand> or contact Uralla Shire Council at council@uralla.nsw.gov.au.



Data captured at the community workshops.
Credit: Saideh Kent/The Next Economy.

Annex 1. Community Engagement Process

Striking a New Deal was developed in partnership with Uralla Shire Council to engage the local community in shaping a shared vision for the region's future. The project aimed to define what "good development" looks like in the Uralla Shire and to co-create a Renewable Energy Strategic Plan that reflects community aspirations and guides Council in its interactions with government and developers.

The project unfolded in three stages:

- Stage 1 provided regional context through initial interviews, which helped identify common themes.
- Stage 2 built on these insights through targeted community engagement, exploring opportunities, concerns, and desired outcomes.
- Stage 3 consolidated the findings into a Renewable Energy Strategic Plan, grounded in the community's input and designed to support informed decision-making by the Uralla Shire Council.

| Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 |
|--|---|---|
| Background Research Co-design with Council staff & Councillors 16 Stakeholder interviews | 5 community sessions (in person) 1 school session (in person) Online survey | Publish community insights paper Present community insights to Council Develop a renewable energy strategic plan in conjunction with Council and the community. |
| Outcome | Outcome | Outcome |
| 6 common themes identified | Desired outcome, opportunities and common concerns outlined for each theme | Community insights Renewable Energy Strategic Plan |

Community engagement

Local residents were invited to participate in a series of engagement activities, held at different locations in the Uralla Shire Council, including the Uralla Central School, Uralla Bowls Club, Invergowrie Store, Uralla Courthouse and Kentucky Hall. These activities were held at different times and in different formats, to provide the opportunity for a wide cross section of the resident population to attend.

THE NEXT ECONOMY

The engagement activities were planned to:

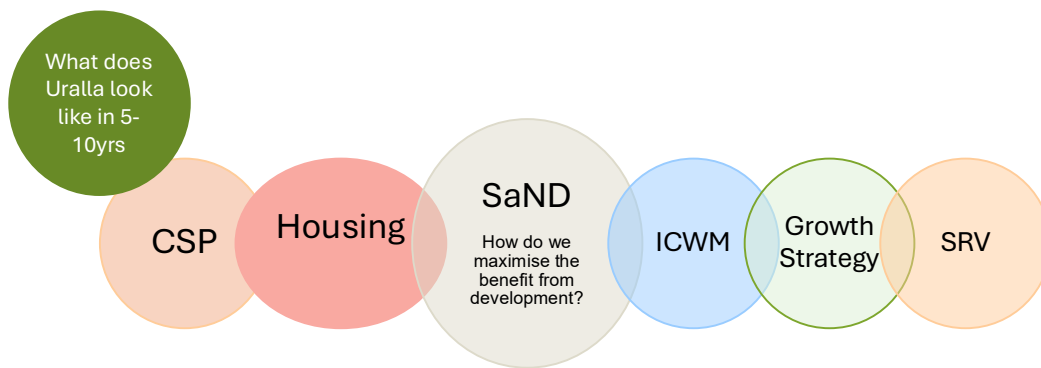
- Provide the opportunity for the community to be heard
- Support respectful discussion between community members with differing views
- Focus on the future the community wants
- Focus on solutions – seek the best outcomes without dismissing the impacts
- Support community cohesion by building collective commitment to agreed outcomes

More than 150 members of the community participated in these engagement activities, including members of the following community, business and interest groups:

| Sector | Organisation/group |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| First Nations | Moych Aboriginal Corporation Iwatta Aboriginal Corporation |
| Environment | New England Landcare ZNet Stringybark ecological services |
| Local Business Community | Uralla Business Chamber Main street businesses Seasons Of New England Sunhill Dairy Goats Townes Contracting |
| Agriculture | NSW Farmers Federation |
| Young people | Uralla Central School |
| Health and social services | New England Family Support Service |
| Community groups | Rotary Uralla Historical Society Red4NE |
| Uralla Shire Council | Councillors Staff |

The Renewable Energy Strategic Plan sits alongside other strategic planning projects the Uralla Shire Council is undertaking, including the Housing Strategy, Integrated Catchment Water Management Plan, the Growth Strategy and the Special Rate Variation. This report together with the Renewable Energy Strategic Plan will inform the Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP).

Relationship to other projects



Annex 2. Detailed community considerations

1. Nature, land use and agriculture

Desired outcome

Uralla is protecting its biodiversity, farmland, and rural way of life - with any development shaped by care for the land.

Community Considerations

| Themes | How can renewable energy development support the desired outcome? | How could it work against that outcome? | Mitigations proposed by community members |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Biodiversity protection | <p>Developers can avoid high - value ecological areas;</p> <p>Community groups can lead revegetation and create biodiversity corridors informed by local knowledge;</p> <p>Using bird - safe infrastructure can reduce wildlife harm;</p> <p>Coordinated bioregional planning can integrate climate and ecological goals;</p> <p>Local ecological knowledge and land stewardship can guide biodiversity design and oversight</p> | <p>REZ projects may lead to habitat clearing, light pollution, and fragmentation;</p> <p>Bird and bat deaths remain a concern ;</p> <p>Lack of coordinated planning may result in piecemeal, ineffective biodiversity protection</p> | <p>Mandate standard bird - safe designs; support regional biodiversity planning involving councils and community groups;</p> <p>Prioritise avoidance of high - value sites;</p> <p>Fund local revegetation and corridor efforts tied to long - term ecological goals;</p> <p>Embed local ecological knowledge into planning processes</p> |
| Farming and agriculture | <p>Hosting renewable energy infrastructure can provide farmers with stable supplementary income, enabling greater investment in regenerative</p> | <p>Poorly located projects may disrupt biosecurity, limit farm access, reduce agricultural productivity, or create uneven impacts between hosting and neighbouring landholders;</p> | <p>Reform siting guidelines to protect productive agricultural land;</p> <p>Ensure early and ongoing consultation with farmers and neighbours;</p> |

STRIKING A NEW DEAL FOR URALLA SHIRE

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| | <p>practices and long - term land care;</p> <p>Dual - use models (e.g. grazing under solar) may support ongoing agricultural use</p> | <p>Strong pushback to worker camps near farms due to land use and lifestyle concerns</p> | <p>Assess cumulative impacts on agricultural operations;</p> <p>Design land use plans that integrate farming and energy infrastructure</p> |
| Biodiversity offsets | <p>If well - designed and grounded in local knowledge, biodiversity offsets can support both farming and ecological goals, especially when focused on on - site or nearby restoration;</p> <p>Some community members support the idea that offsets should leave biodiversity in a better state than before</p> | <p>Current offset schemes are seen as disconnected from place, poorly enforced, and often failing to deliver genuine ecological restoration;</p> <p>Some landholders feel the payments are not worthwhile and don't compensate for real impacts</p> | <p>Design offsets collaboratively with local communities; prioritise local, measurable outcomes with long - term monitoring;</p> <p>Apply the principle of leaving biodiversity in a better state than it was found;</p> <p>Align offset funding with community - led stewardship initiatives;</p> <p>communicate offset decisions transparently to build trust</p> |
| Other | <p>Opportunities for university partnerships to monitor ecological outcomes and contribute to evidence - based improvements;</p> <p>Renewable energy development could support broader climate and land stewardship goals if planned transparently and inclusively</p> | <p>Landscape change from visual and noise impacts was a concern for many;</p> <p>Cumulative effects of multiple projects raised fears of 'impact overload';</p> <p>Erosion and failed grazing trials linked to some solar farm designs;</p> <p>Concern about how ecological risks are communicated and governed</p> | <p>Improve cumulative impact assessments;</p> <p>Apply clearer visual impact planning standards; invest in erosion control and land rehabilitation during and after project life;</p> <p>Enable community input into the placement and design of infrastructure;</p> <p>Improve transparency around ecological risk management</p> |

Ideas for strategic investment

The following table captures the most common ideas for strategic investment raised during community engagement activities.

| Theme | Idea | Scale of investment | Legacy impact | Potential funding sources | Notes |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Nature, land use and agriculture | Tree planting along solar farm roads and town streets | Small – seedlings, labour, watering costs | Long – trees provide shade, amenity for decades | Landcare or Greening Australia | Framed as visual screening for RE infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement |
| | Botanic park or botanical garden for Uralla | Medium – land preparation, planting, infrastructure | Long – public asset with generational value | | Combines tourism, education, and biodiversity values |
| | Wildlife corridors integrated into REZ infrastructure | Medium – design changes, fencing, revegetation | Long – lasting habitat protection | Offset funds from development | Linked to koala conservation and east–west corridor needs |

2. Infrastructure, roads, water, waste and housing

Desired outcome

Uralla's infrastructure, roads, housing, water and waste services sustainably support community growth and daily life, protecting affordability, safety, local character, and environmental resilience.

Community Considerations

| Themes arising from community engagement | Community suggestions for how it can get us to outcome statement? | How could it work against that outcome statement? | Mitigations proposed by community members |
|---|---|---|---|
| Housing Availability & Affordability | Modular, retrofitted, and diverse shared housing (including Indigenous - led models) to address affordability and attract families | FIFO workers and speculation drive rents up, displace locals, and strain tourism accommodation; temporary housing causes long - term demographic disruptions | Planned, staggered housing rollout; developer - supported housing diversification; restrictions or caps on short - term housing conversions |
| Road Infrastructure & Safety | Developer contributions funding sustainable road upgrades; planned heavy vehicle traffic coordination and curfews to reduce farm and community disruption | Heavy traffic causes road deterioration, dust, safety risks and disrupts farming operations; inadequate local resources for road maintenance and safety enforcement | Mandatory contributions from developers for road sealing and ongoing maintenance; enforceable curfews and timed traffic management plans around farming and residential schedules |
| Water Security & Environmental Protection | Long - term water infrastructure investment; shared and integrated water systems (e.g., wash bays) benefiting multiple sectors | High construction water use threatens scarce local supplies and ecosystem health; past droughts fuel deep community concern over water availability | Developer - funded water infrastructure upgrades and clear limits on water extraction; monitoring and enforced ecological safeguards on runoff and local water use |
| Waste Management | Developer - led waste systems and enforceable clean - up obligations for construction waste | Construction waste and materials not properly managed causing environmental and local resource pressures | Legally binding obligations for developer - managed waste recycling, site clean - ups, and reporting to local councils |
| Integrated & Coordinated Infrastructure Planning | Cross - sector coordinated infrastructure planning to ensure resilient long - term outcomes (roads, housing, water, waste) | Historically poor local planning coordination causes infrastructure gaps, delays, and ineffective use of resources | Establish joint council - developer planning frameworks, integrated infrastructure investment plans, and shared service hubs (water, recycling, transport) |

Ideas for strategic investment

| Theme | Idea | Scale of investment | Legacy impact | Potential funding sources | Notes |
|--|---|---|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Infrastructure, roads, waste, water, housing | Upgrade playgrounds (fenced, all-abilities, BBQ area) | Medium – equipment, surfacing, amenities | Medium – 5–10 year lifespan | Council capital works budget | Popular request for family-friendly facilities |
| | Bus service linking Armidale, Uralla, Invergowrie | Medium – vehicle purchase/leasing, driver wages | Short – benefits only while service operates | Public transport subsidy schemes | Addresses isolation and access issues for work, health, education |
| | Underground power in key areas | Large – major infrastructure works | Long – 30+ year service life | | Framed as reliability and amenity improvement; high cost |

3. Local economy, business and innovation

Desired outcome

Uralla’s economy is diverse, locally-owned and innovative. We have thriving main street businesses, new industries and career pathways, and have kept the cost of living and doing business affordable for residents.

Community Considerations

| Themes arising from community engagement | Community suggestions for how it can get us to outcome statement? | How could it work against that outcome statement? | Mitigations proposed by community members |
|---|--|--|---|
| Local Procurement & Supply Chains | Early, clear “buy - local” targets; long lead - times so businesses can gear up; benefit funds for infrastructure developers will need | Supplies trucking in from outside shuts locals out; short leases and timelines leave no room to scale up | Require transparent procurement plans; publish local - spend targets; give businesses forward schedules and support for accreditation |
| Local business | REZ worker spending could sustain local shops and fund better services if coordinated | Poor planning strains limited amenities, widens benefit gaps and drives up local prices | Link funding to lasting public infrastructure (e.g., upgrades for water, roads, digital) that help locals beyond construction |
| Labour pipelines | Back local labour pipelines, apprenticeships and land - based training for young people | Without paths, youth costs rise and school enrolments fall, deepening out - migration | Direct benefit funds and training levies toward apprenticeships, STEM programs and transport solutions for young people |
| New Industries & Innovation | Support solar - panel or glass recycling and biodiversity restoration businesses for long - term jobs | Lack of capital or anchor contracts leaves ideas on paper | Leverage developer commitments as anchor customers; provide seed - fund grants or low - cost land in industrial areas |
| Cost of Living & Resource Pressure | Set clear sourcing plans to avoid draining local reserves and spiking prices | No plan risks resource shortages and higher fuel, rent and grocery costs | Ensure developers assess local - resource impacts and contribute to cost - of - living relief or housing solutions |

Ideas for strategic investment

| Theme | Idea | Scale of investment | Legacy impact | Potential funding sources | Notes |
|--|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Local economy, business and innovation | Craft capital brand and permanent craft centre | Medium – fit-out, marketing, staffing | Medium – 5–10 years of tourism and local business uplift | Tourism and arts grants | Builds on existing artisan identity and events |
| | Community-owned renewable energy (solar farm locals can buy into) | Large – capital-intensive infrastructure | Long – 20+ year asset providing income and energy security | Community investment | Mentioned as way to retain value locally and reduce reliance on external operators |
| | Support for local retailers and longer trading hours | Small – coordination, promotion costs | Short – benefits depend on sustained participation | Business chambers and tourism bodies | Seen as enhancing main street vibrancy |

4. Jobs, skills and training

Desired outcome

There are stable, meaningful jobs in Uralla Shire supported by accessible local training pathways, ensuring youth stay in the community and benefit directly from renewable energy growth.

Community Considerations

| Themes arising from community engagement | Community suggestions for how it can get us to outcome statement? | How could it work against that outcome statement? | Mitigations proposed by community members |
|--|--|---|--|
| Local job readiness | Developer - funded programs for essential qualifications (white cards, first aid); targeted mentoring and career - pathway support | Current employment services failing to develop candidates with necessary qualifications; literacy and readiness gaps persist | Use RE construction phases to directly fund and coordinate training; focus on early job readiness and accreditation (white cards, first aid) |
| Youth career pathways | Developer - funded scholarships, apprenticeships, and early engagement programs tailored to renewable - energy and emerging sectors | Lack of training pathways causing youth out - migration and local demographic decline | Establish clear pathways from local schools and youth groups into apprenticeships and traineeships explicitly funded and supported by developers |
| Local employment opportunities | Strategic spreading of RE projects over time and clear communication of realistic local employment opportunities | Over - promising local jobs or short - term roles creating disillusionment and community scepticism; local candidates regularly overlooked due to skills gaps | Clearly match advertised roles to local skill profiles; transparent, realistic communication from developers about job duration, requirements, and total availability |
| First Nations Employment | Direct use of local contacts and networks to identify and recruit First Nations workers; ongoing training and roles linked to local heritage and ecological care | Underrepresentation and lack of genuine employment and career progression opportunities for local First Nations communities | Developers to proactively engage local First Nations leaders, tailor roles and training to community priorities (heritage, ecology), and sustain ongoing employment pathways |
| Sustainable workforce development | Strategic partnerships between landholders, developers, and training providers (like the ACEN shearer training program) to deliver targeted skills training and sustainable local jobs | FIFO and external workforces strain local communities culturally and economically; local labour shortages exacerbated by workforce instability | Create structured local training initiatives in collaboration with landholders, employers, and vocational providers, explicitly prioritising local hiring and long - term skills development |

Ideas for strategic investment

| Theme | Idea | Scale of investment | Legacy impact | Potential funding sources | Notes |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Jobs, skills and training | Scholarships for TAFE/university tied to local employment pathways | Small – annual grant pool | Medium – skills benefits last 5–10 years for recipients | Industry, NSW Education, Tafe, UNE | Seen as way to keep young people connected to Shire |
| | Skills training in renewable energy and trades | Medium – partnership program with TAFE, industry | Medium – 5–10 years if embedded in institutions | Developers, Tafe | Critical link between RE investment and local employment |
| | Support for youth employment programs (e.g. BackTrack, social enterprises) | Small – grants to existing programs | Short – annual benefits with potential renewal | State/federal programs | Addresses disengagement and retention of young people |

5. Health, aged care and community services

Desired outcome

Uralla has reliable, well - resourced health, aged - care and community services that keep pace with a growing and changing population, with development actively supporting local wellbeing, safety and emergency readiness.

Community Considerations

| Themes arising from community engagement | Community suggestions for how it can get us to outcome statement? | How could it work against that outcome statement? | Mitigations proposed by community members |
|--|--|--|--|
| Fire & Emergency Services | Invest REZ funds in up - to - date RFS equipment and training; set clear emergency - access rules for solar and wind sites; coordinate emergency planning with developers | Solar - farm access restrictions and unprepared RFS units slow response times and erode trust | Make site - access protocols a condition of consent; require developer funding for gear, water points and regular joint drills |
| Health Services | Use funds to attract a resident GP, expand ambulance cover and create shared facilities such as a hydro - therapy pool | Loss of GP, limited ambulance cover and rising demand could worsen during construction | Commit a fixed share of benefit funds to recruiting health staff, upgrading clinics and embedding coordinated emergency - care plans with developers |
| Aged care | Pilot an elder - childcare centre and invest in accessible design to leave a lasting legacy for an ageing population | A growing older population and incoming REZ workers' families may strain already limited beds and home - care services | Tie aged - care expansion to REZ growth projections; secure developer or levy contributions for new facilities and workforce development |
| Youth and community facilities | Upgrade the under - funded neighbourhood centre; invest in youth programs; audit and address health concerns from legacy industrial activity | Without new investment, youth services and community hubs remain overstretched, risking disengagement and unmet social needs | Direct a portion of benefit funds to youth spaces, neighbourhood - centre renewal and environmental health assessments of former industrial sites |
| Crime, policing and safety | (No direct post - its, but safety was mentioned under "community services") - potential for REZ funds to support road - safety measures and ensure policing demand is assessed | Construction traffic and population influx could raise minor offences if unplanned | Include NSW Police in early planning; require a policing - impact scan and developer contributions for traffic - management and community - safety initiatives |

Ideas for strategic investment

| Theme | Idea | Scale of investment | Legacy impact | Potential funding sources | Notes |
|--|--|---|--|---------------------------|--|
| Health, aged care and community services | More bulk-billing GPs and visiting specialists | Medium – facility upgrades and service subsidies needed | Medium – improved access for 5–10 years if contracts retained | NSW Health | Major community concern; RE stimulus could supplement but not replace health funding |
| | Assisted living facility for ageing population | Large – significant capital build and staffing | Long – 30+ year facility lifespan | | Cited repeatedly as urgent gap for local ageing population |
| | Urgent care centre to reduce hospital pressure | Large – infrastructure, equipment, staffing | Medium – facility could operate 10+ years with ongoing funding | NSW Health | Would reduce travel to Armidale/Tamworth for emergencies |

6. Community Spirit, Inclusion and Heritage

Desired outcome

Uralla is a united, inclusive community deeply connected to its heritage, celebrating First Nations custodianship and a strong shared identity.

Community Considerations

| Themes arising from community engagement | Community suggestions for how it can get us to outcome statement? | How could it work against that outcome statement? | Mitigations proposed by community members |
|---|---|--|---|
| Community Cohesion & Dialogue | Early, open, and respectful consultation; collective negotiation and group - based planning to rebuild trust and unity | Poor consultation, isolated deals, NDAs and gag orders deepen divisions and mistrust, risking long - term community damage | Transparent, structured formats (Wordsworth, local forums); shared legal support and collective negotiations for landholders |
| Local Identity & Character | Inclusive and locally - driven development that respects Uralla's charm, heritage and community values | Scale and style of projects, chain - store influx and top - down decisions erode distinctive local identity, displace residents and businesses | Active protection of local character through clear planning frameworks; community - led initiatives for balanced and inclusive growth |
| First Nations Inclusion & Sovereignty | Genuine consultation, cultural mapping, and Anaiwan - led governance of benefit - sharing and heritage management | Delayed consultation, jurisdiction mismatches, lack of cultural governance, fencing or harm to sacred sites and cultural heritage | Early, proactive developer dialogue with Anaiwan representatives; culturally guided benefit - sharing agreements aligned with Anaiwan boundaries and leadership |
| Social Inclusion & Workforce Integration | Active measures for integrating newcomers, culturally aligned engagement activities (e.g., seasonal cultural programs, miniature keeping place) | FIFO workforce housed separately risks social exclusion, cultural isolation, community fragmentation | FIFO workforce housed separately risks social exclusion, cultural isolation, community fragmentation |
| Volunteer & Local Capacity | Developer - funded or council - supported measures to sustain volunteer groups, mitigate burnout, and reinforce community continuity | Volunteer burnout and high turnover undermine local support networks, reducing capacity to manage change effectively | Targeted funding, training, or support resources for volunteer groups; succession planning and enhanced recognition and incentives for local volunteers |

Ideas for strategic investment

| Theme | Idea | Scale of investment | Legacy impact | Potential funding sources | Notes |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| Community spirit, inclusion and heritage | Expanded annual festivals and events program (e.g. Thunderbolts, markets, arts festival) | Small – most costs are event coordination, marketing, insurance | Short – benefits are event-based but can repeat annually | Tourism funding | Builds on strong volunteer culture and existing event infrastructure; repeatedly mentioned as core to local identity |
| | Community garden network with beehives and shared produce | Small – requires modest set-up costs, volunteer labour | Medium – gardens can run for 5–10 years with good management | Landcare or community grants already available | Seen as social connector and food resilience initiative; beehives suggested as biodiversity measure |
| | Workshops on rural skills, water saving, disaster preparedness | Small – venue hire, facilitator fees, materials | Short – skills benefits immediate but fade without ongoing delivery | RFS, Landcare, DPI programs | Popular as practical, low-cost way to build resilience and connection |
| | Regular Council–community meetings in villages like Invergowrie | Small – staff time, travel, venue hire | Short – benefits tied to frequency and continuity | Council operational budget | Frequently requested for transparency and engagement, especially outside Uralla township |
| | Upgrade and activate heritage buildings and local halls | Medium – heritage compliance increases cost | Medium – upgrades last 5–10 years before major maintenance | Heritage grants or Building Better Regions Fund | Critical to maintaining small-town feel and supporting events |

Annex 3. Other ideas raised in workshops and surveys

While these were less frequently mentioned, the following ideas still reflect community aspirations and could offer unique, place-specific benefits if funding or partnerships emerge:

- Agroforestry demonstration sites
- Botanic park or botanical garden for Uralla
- Activation of Crown Land for recreation, tourism or nature use (e.g. camping areas, picnic spots)
- Glass recycling plant modelled on VicRoads' crushed-glass road base
- Renewable energy component recycling facility (e.g. solar panels, wind turbines, batteries)
- 'Buddy' systems for newcomers to support integration
- Rent-to-buy housing models to improve affordability and retention
- Blue Property Signs or tourism-style signage to support rural property visibility
- Bush school and rural skills workshops
- Hydrotherapy or thermal pool (as a standalone project or linked to a health precinct)
- Special rates levy for specific community projects
- Heritage train project for tourism