

2018

A large group of people are seated at tables in a conference room, many with their hands raised in the air. In the background, a screen displays the text "CALL TO ACTION". The room is brightly lit with overhead lights. The overall atmosphere appears to be one of active participation and engagement.

# VOICES FOR POWER: GATEWAY REVIEW

PREPARED BY

**SYDNEY ALLIANCE**

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# OUR PURPOSE

*"It's amazing how high energy bills and the issue of power can bring our communities together" - Sheikh Adid Arubai (Mount Druitt)*

## **THE SYDNEY ALLIANCE**

The Sydney Alliance is a commonly owned coalition with 40 members of Sydney representing diverse community organisations, unions and religious organisations working together to advance the common good and achieve a fair, just and sustainable city. Founded in 2011, the Alliance has trained over 2500 leaders in community organising, run successful campaigns across the city and has changed the fabric of organisational relationships and civic collaboration in NSW.

Our recent listening efforts have uncovered that the Alliance has a shared interest to organise for more affordable and clean efficient energy for all!

## **UNJUST TRANSITIONS**

One of the dangers of moving to a renewable energy economy is that low income communities will be left "holding the mains". An ever dwindling group of people forced into bearing the load of the network while richer Sydneysiders invest in private batteries and energy systems and move "off grid".

Those communities feeling the pressure from rising energy prices (not to mention the above average heat) are in Western and South Sydney. The complexity of transitioning to renewable power may be beyond migrant and low income communities unless a concerted effort is made to connect with the organisations at the centre of those communities that are bastions of connection and trust. Renewable power needs to be credible. Stories of exploitation caused by dodgy installations will harm the long term trust from the community. Ethnic and working communities need to be fully informed about the transition and leading that process on their own terms.

## **UNREPRESENTED MOVEMENT**

The leadership and participation of the environment movement largely reflects its constituency – white, upper-middle class, tertiary educated. Concerted efforts to increase diversity have started taking shape in the last few years. As with expanding the diversity of all movements, organised money has been critical in enabling this process.

This lack of diversity has exaggerated the rift falsely characterised by conservatives as between migrant communities who care about “bread-and-butter” issues and inner city ‘elites’ who care about environmental concerns. The growing prominence of climate change in all political decisions means that comprehensive knowledge of climate change and renewable energy is critical “insider knowledge” for the next generation of civic leaders. The current configuration of many of these communities place significant barriers for both women and young people to exert leadership. Knowledge of clean efficient and affordable power offers an opportunity for renegotiation of these dynamics.

### THE SOLUTION: VOICES FOR POWER

Under the leadership of 7 community organisers with language and cultural skills across the diversity of Western and South-West Sydney, the Voices for Power Project sees 7 migrant/ religious and ethnic communities in organise for AFFORDABLE & CLEAN EFFICIENT ENERGY!

Through the discipline of community organising, this project will bring together community leaders and activists to come in a culturally- appropriate way and discern both practical opportunities for transferring to affordable and clean efficient energy as well as political solutions.



*"[I'm concerned] about the living condition of Vietnamese Australians in Sydney as we have to deal with increasing electricity prices"*  
- Susan Phuong Ho (Parramatta)





# PROJECT OUTCOMES

## PROJECT GOAL

*A powerful, diverse and cohesive base of community advocates.  
Cheaper Power bills for all.  
Better access to clean efficient energy for low-medium income households.*

### □ Year 1 (July 2017 - June 2018)

- August 2017 - August 2018 Training & developing 7 Community Organisers and over 10 community leaders/advocates (from Western Sydney) in Community Organising and energy;
- 5/7 Core Teams of Community leaders have been established and hosting culturally appropriate table talks (listening campaigns);
- Over 550 people from Western and South West Sydney participated in Voices for Power table talks;
- 3 table talks done in Vietnamese language;  
2 table talks done in Arabic language;  
2 table talks done in Punjabi and Hindi;  
(remaining) 7 done in English across Vietnamese, Pacific, Jewish, South Asian, Middle Eastern and Muslim Communities
- After learning what the main issue-themes of Energy were, a team of 8 community leaders/advocates and Energy and Policy experts from within the Sydney Alliance formed the *Voices for Power Research Action Team* - and together met with Policy and Energy experts to form the **"Voices for Power Roadmap of Solutions"**;
- Over 130 Voices for Power community leaders and allies from Sydney Alliance partner organisations gathered at our first Annual Voices for Power Conference on 23 June 2018 and together publicly and officially endorsed the Voices for Power Roadmap;
- OVERALL, we've been meeting our Year 1 Outcomes goals.

□ See *"Voices for power: Journey to Here"* video.

*"My home was one of the first to switch (onto Solar power). I noticed how drastically our electricity bill went down as a result...This change means that I have huge savings to support my family's basic needs. I have more freedom, less stress ... Getting access to renewable energy has made difference to my life and my family"*  
*- Ani Son (Filipino Diaspora Community)*



#### **ISSUES WE'VE HEARD:**

1. Upfront cost of solar are a major barrier
2. Already installed solar but not benefiting the people.
3. Cost of living pressures as bills rise
4. Don't know enough about technical side, or subsidies available.
5. Renters have no control over energy efficient solutions or renewable options.
6. Public housing, living in strata similar
7. Batteries are too expensive
8. Fees due to late payment of bill or disconnection for non-payment of bills.
9. Language barrier prevents capacity for negotiations with Energy retailer
10. No incentives for solar for landlords
11. Australia going backwards on renewables
12. Access to solar increase the gap between rich and poor
13. People being scammed by dodgy solar operators
14. Changing behaviour to save electricity but bills still increase
15. Physical access to rooftop solar i.e. trees being in the way, or shaded by neighbours.

The project outcomes will be achieved through a combination of new policy/ legislation, a regulatory reform and grant schemes, as outlined below.

#### **SUMMARY OF ROADMAP OF SOLUTIONS**

*(Discernment Outcomes - Subject to be modified and refined throughout year 2)*

1. Funding for a Community Energy Hub in Western Sydney (State/ Federal);
2. Tax Incentives for Landlords for efficiency upgrade on their property negatively geared (Federal);
3. Grant Scheme for Landowners to make energy efficient upgrades (State & Federal);
4. Mandatory Efficiency Standards for Rental Property (State & Federal)
5. Community Organisational Housing Providers to access grant funding to make energy efficient upgrades (State)
6. Review & Reform currently existing Government Assistance Programs (State)



# YEAR 2 STRATEGY

As an Alliance, we are fully aware that we haven't developed enough power to engage Federal issues, yet. This then shapes up our second year of the Voices for Power Project to focus on: ***Building more people power*** (growing our constituencies of advocates), ***Refining our Roadmap of Solutions to specific Asks on decision makers*** and ***taking action by calling on State and opposition leaders to make commitment in working with the Alliance, and securing their support and implementation of policy and regulatory changes.***

## YEAR 2 WORK PLAN

### □ AUGUST 2018 - SEPTEMBER 2018: TRANSITION TO YEAR 2 STRATEGY

- Last Tranche Invoice for 2017 - 2018 - \$26, 378.10 - Outstanding
- 8 August - 14 September 2018: Community Core Teams meet to plan Round 2 of Table Talks: With a focus on ***Deeper Listening***
- 30 August 2018: VFP Research Action Team met begin process of refining the current Voices for Power Solutions Roadmap and devised a strategy for ***deeper research***;
- 4 September 2018: VFP Organisers Workshop on VFP Year 2 Strategy for endorsement by VFP Leadership Team;
- 12 September 2018: VFP Political Engagement Team met to redo ***Power Analysis*** to add to new Strategy;
- 24 September 2018: **Voices for Power Leadership Team Meeting** to discern and endorse the Voices for Power Strategic Plan for Year 2;

□ **Short-Term Outcome 1:** Prioritising energy issues that are felt across the 7 communities and refining Voices for Power Roadmap of Solutions.

**Process:** Hold focused table talks and consultations with community advocates for deeper discernment and listening, Take Roadmap to our Research Action Meetings with decision makers.

**Success Indicator:** Document with refined specific Asks for policy/ regulatory changes and endorsed by the VFP Leadership Team.

## Short-Term Outcome 2: Development and training of community energy advocates from CALD communities

Process: Coordinate 2nd Energy Training with Tony Westmore (ECA referral) for late 2018, provide subsidised (50%) advanced Community organising training for up to 10 community leaders and have leaders sign up to specific roles, (eg *Becoming a Core Team Co-chair, becoming member of the VFP Leadership Team, Research Action or Political Engagement Team, leads logistics for an upcoming Assembly etc*)

**Success Indicator:** Number of advocates trained; in leadership/ campaign teams; Number of advocates attending MP visits and pre- election Assembly.

### SEPTEMBER 2018 - JUNE 2019: ACTIONING STRATEGY

- 12 September 2018: VFP conducted a *Research Action Meeting* with **Hon. Adam Searle MLC, Shadow state Minister for Energy**; Sydney Alliance talking with **Hon. Don Harwin's Office** and **Hon. Ben Franklin MLC's Office** to align a meeting to establish working relationship and discuss solutions for *Affordable and Clean-efficient Energy* before next State election with VFP Leaders ;
- 27 September 2018: Sydney Alliance holding Broad-Based Organising Master Classes with leaders;
- September - October 2018: 1. VFP will be talking to ECA, PIAC, CANA, Community Power Agency, PINGALA, Solar Citizens (*and possibly others*) about VFP Roadmap and possible Campaign Asks;
- 2. Sydney Alliance Affordable Housing and VFP teams working on tri-partite Mass Assembly with Vinnies and "Everybody's Home" for 14 March 2019 (*Tentative Date*);
- October 2018 - Sydney Alliance to coordinate with Tony Westmore an Energy workshop/ "Train the Trainers" Energy Training workshop with community leaders for 2019;
- 6 October 2018: Cross Community Table Talk hosted by PACSI (Philippines-Australia Community Services Inc) in Blacktown with over 100 South Asian, Pacific and Filipino community members(*Tentative Date*);
- **Tranche 1 – 12 October 2018 - \$50,000 on agreement of a detailed project plan**
- October 2018: Muslim TableTalk to be scheduled and Jewish Table Talk event with Dr. Alan Finkel to be scheduled after Yom Kippur;
- 29 October 2018: Pacific Leaders Talanoa (Dialogue) to be held with over 50 Pacific Leaders at Parramatta Mission





**Short/Medium Term Outcome 3:** Energy users in CALD communities understand how to get a 'better' energy deal for themselves

Process: Conduct training modules in energy and energy use in Table Talks.

Success indicator: No. of stories collected from table talks, no. of leaders committed to join the VFP Campaign

#### SEPTEMBER 2018 - JUNE 2019: ACTIONING STRATEGY cont.

- Sydney Alliance Christmas Shut down - 24 December 2018 - 14 January 2019
- 28 January 2019: VFP Research Action Team to finalise *Housing related energy Ask for Assembly*;
- *Tranche 2 – 1 Feb 2019 - \$45,000 on submission of a satisfactory progress report and relevant project materials*
- 4 February 2019: VFP Leadership Team Meeting to discern and endorse plan for March Housing Assembly and 2nd Voices for Power Conference;
- 14 March 2019 - Tri-partite Assembly with over 2500 at Sydney Town Hall with all three levels of Government to call on Political decision makers to commit to champion our Local, State and Federal Asks on Affordable Housing & Energy (Housing Related).
- April - June 2019 - All Core Community groups to continue running Table Talks with Energy Info & Training and organise to meet local MPs;
- *Tranche 3 – 1 May 2019 - \$45,000 on submission of a satisfactory progress report and relevant project materials*
- 26 May 2019: VFP Leadership Team to meet and discern & endorse Year 3 Strategy

**Medium Term Outcome 4:** Energy users in CALD communities get a 'better' energy deal for themselves and start exploring Community 'energy efficient' projects to adopt.

Process: Voices for Power Research Action team to research and meet with experts to discern on practical community energy-efficient solutions

Success Indicator: Viable Community Project plans drawn up and Communities/ Sydney Alliance partner organisation anchoring these projects.



## JUNE 2019 - JUNE 2020: YEAR 3

- June 2019 - Milestone Event: 2nd Annual Voices for Power Conference (possibly with Decision Maker)
- August 2019: VFP Leadership Team to meet and evaluate Year 2 and start setting Vision for Year 3 and Conference;
- *Tranche 4 – 19 September 2019 -\$10,665 on completion of a satisfactory gateway review and a detailed project plan for the following year*

**Long Term Outcome 5:** Energy users in CALD communities feel more empowered to participate in the energy market to find the best outcomes for their needs, and have no hesitation to reach out to available advocates for advice.

Success Indicator: Commitment from Decision makers to champion our campaign Asks & number of community projects.





*"[Despite suffering from a critical health condition, my wife still won't use the heater or air conditioner because of our energy bills] Electricity should be affordable!"*  
*- Nirmal Joy (South Asian Core Team & Research Action Leader)*

## **PROJECT TEAM**

**LIUANGA PALU**  
**CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR & COMMUNITY ORGANISER FOR PACIFIC COMMUNITIES**

**THUY LINH NGUYEN**  
**COMMUNITY ORGANISER FOR VIETNAMESE & FILIPINO COMMUNITIES AND LEAD ORGANISER FOR RESEARCH & ACTION**

**SHEIKH ABDULNASSER ABUMUSTAFA**  
**COMMUNITY ORGANISER FOR MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**

**SUHKJIT KAUR-DEO**  
**COMMUNITY ORGANISER FOR SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES**

**EVE ALTMAN**  
**COMMUNITY ORGANISER FOR JEWISH COMMUNITIES**

**ALOYSIUS CAÑETE**  
**COMMUNITY ORGANISER FOR FILIPINO COMMUNITIES**

**LEAH EMMANUEL**  
**COMMUNITY ORGANISER FOR MIDDLE-EASTERN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND LEAD ORGANISER OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT**

**CHANTELLE OGILVIE-ELLIS**  
**CAMPAIGN MENTOR**

## **APPENDIX**

- A. VOICES FOR POWER: JOURNEY TO HERE VIDEO
- B. VOICES FOR POWER ROADMAP OF SOLUTIONS
- C. VOICES FOR POWER TIMELINE
- D. BUDGET