

# EXCELLENCE IN THE ENVIRONMENT AWARDS



## 52 Shades of Green: The Central NSW JO Net Zero Acceleration Program

### COUNCIL NAME

Central NSW  
Joint  
Organisation

### WEB ADDRESS

[www.centraljo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.centraljo.nsw.gov.au)

### SIZE

47,000 square  
kilometres

### POPULATION

157,686

The Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO) developed the 52 Shades of Green program to guide its 11 member councils towards a renewable energy future. The program identifies 52 activities designed to support councils as they transition to net zero emissions. Through collaborative governance and a shared resource model, the initiative promotes efficiency and innovation, with outcomes and strategies replicated across regional NSW.

### Background

Although local government reporting of greenhouse gas emissions is not mandatory, understanding and reducing emissions remains a priority for member councils. However, CNSWJO determined that councils across the region are at varying stages in their emissions reduction journeys.

CNSWJO also identified energy sustainability, security and affordability to be a key priority for the region. This was informed by feedback from member councils and communities, a review of each organisation's Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and the Business NSW Survey.

### Implementation

In collaboration with NSW DCCEEW's Sustainable Councils program, CNSWJO worked with each member organisation to identify their baseline emissions and to track these on an ongoing basis, using a new carbon inventory tool.

A plan is then developed tailored to each council's needs. CNSWJO assists councils with designing and implementing initiatives, for example identifying funding streams, providing funding application support and delivering aggregated procurement.

CNSWJO is also the conduit from state agencies and other key stakeholders into councils, and is supporting councils to integrate climate mitigation and adaptation activities into the the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework.

To provide overarching support and oversight of the program, CNSWJO facilitate a cross-council, cross-agency working group who develop and share leading practice. The group carries out quarterly maturity auditing and reports to the General Managers Advisory Committee and a board of eleven Mayors of the region.

## Outcomes

By May 2024, the program had already seen significant achievements:

- All eleven councils now have baseline emissions reported for scopes 1 and 2 (up from three), with three councils having measured scope 3.
- All eleven councils now have an emissions reduction plan (up from three), a renewable energy action plan (up from nine) and a fleet transition plan (up from one).
- Solar and battery projects have expanded from one to ten councils.
- Through a renewable energy power purchase agreement (PPA) which commenced in January 2023, 78% of the region's electricity now comes from renewable sources, resulting in almost \$6 million in cost savings.

CNSWJO also hosted region-wide events such as an EV Transition Day and developed key overarching strategies that set out its support offer to councils. Examples include a Regional Emissions Reduction Plan Opportunities Report and a Regional Fleet Transition Strategy.

## Key Learnings

The program exposed the barriers councils face in reducing emissions, which are principally insufficient funding and resourcing to implement projects and lack of robust and consistent state and federal policies.

CNSWJO found they were able to assist resource-constrained councils and alleviate pressure by centralising data collection and streamlining processes. This led to efficiencies and demonstrated the value of a collaborative regional model.

The development of the emissions reduction plans led to the identification of a portion of emissions that cannot be abated through technology and infrastructure improvements. CNSWJO is striving to support its member councils to address these through insetting (as opposed to offsetting), and plans to assist with securing funding and partnerships.

Moving forward, CNSWJO will also focus on distributed energy solutions, such as solar panels and virtual power plants, to address future grid constraints.





## Contact

Name: Ms Kate Barker

Position: Director Regional Programs

Phone: 02 6331 9246

Email: [kate.barker@centraljo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kate.barker@centraljo.nsw.gov.au)

**This project was the 2024 Overall Winner of the Towards Net Zero Emissions category at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards. This award was supported by our category partner NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.**