

Social Investment Program

Community Reference Group Guidelines

ACEN Australia is continuing its support of the New England region, through its New England Solar grants, sponsorships and donations in 2026.

To help administer those grants, we're inviting expressions of interest to become members of the Community Reference Group (CRG) for our New England Social Investment Program (SIP).

The New England SIP provides funding for initiatives that contribute to building thriving and resilient communities and economies in Uralla Shire. The CRG is valuable in providing local insight to how SIP grants, sponsorships and donations can make the most effective contributions to the Uralla district and surrounds.

It comprises five community members and is facilitated by ACEN Australia's Communications and Community Engagement Specialist - New England. It will consider applications for two rounds of funding in 2026.

A majority of members on the 2025 panel have reached the maximum two-year term and we are seeking expressions of interest to fill those places. The other two panel members are staying on board for their second year.

Expressions of interest to be a new member of the CRG in 2026 are open until 12 December 2025.

[Click here to submit an Expression of Interest](#)

Emphasis on Diversity

The CRG will benefit from a diverse range of community knowledge and experiences. Panel members should represent the community as broadly as possible, from various parts of the Uralla district and surrounds, and including a variety of ages, cultural and business backgrounds and interests.

Young members of the community, aged 15 and over, are particularly encouraged to apply.

Everyone living or working within the Uralla Shire Council region is eligible to apply to join the Community Reference Group, as well as Kelly's Plains and Dangarsleigh residents within 5km of New England Solar Farm. Applications to join are also encouraged from members of the Anaiwan community.



The 2025 New England Solar Social Investment Program Community Reference Group.

Fostering Strong Connections with Community

Since its inception in 2020, the New England Solar SIP has been a key tool in fostering the partnership between New England Solar and the Uralla community.

The New England Solar SIP has contributed more than \$500,000 to groups in Uralla Shire, including Kingstown Pony Club (pictured below).



Roles and responsibilities for CRG members

The panel will consider two rounds of funding in 2026. The first will open in February and the second in July.

CRG members will be required to meet at least twice for each of the two rounds for 2026 (minimum four meetings per year), with additional meetings as members deem necessary.

Members can participate in these meetings either in person or virtually via video conference. Attendance in person is preferred where possible. Panel members also help spread the word about the Social Investment Program and encourage local groups and individuals to apply.

ACEN Australia will reimburse panel members for reasonable and agreed expenses in carrying out their roles with the CRG.

Each member has the option to continue for a second year.



The Round 1 grant recipients in 2025.



2024 Round 2 recipients.

2026 CRG & grants schedule

12 December 2025: CRG expressions of interest close
January 2026: CRG members confirmed

19 January: Applications open for SIP grants Round 1
27 February: Applications close
March: SIP Round 1 grant recipients announced

July: Applications open for SIP grants Round 2
August: Applications close
October: SIP Round 2 grant recipients announced



The Community Reference Group is a fundamental part of New England Solar's Social Investment Program, adding transparency and local insight to the allocation of grants, sponsorships and donations.

Panel members make recommendations and act in a manner to further interests of the broader community and the New England Solar Farm and consistent with ACEN Australia's values and standing as a good corporate citizen within the community.

Members will be required to disclose any perceived or potential conflicts of interest in their roles with the CRG and manage conflicts in accordance with a conflict of interest policy. The will act as representatives of the whole community and not as representatives of any special interest groups or organisations.