



# Beyond Zero Emissions: 2025 Annual Impact Report

Local Solutions, National Coordination

## Contact us

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## Recognition of Traditional Custodians

Beyond Zero Emissions acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

Beyond Zero Emissions maintains offices on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, the Wonnarua people, the Worimi people and the Jagera and Turrbal people.

We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present. We recognise that Aboriginal people's sovereignty over their land was never ceded and the impact of this ongoing dispossession continues to this day.

We acknowledge and appreciate their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

We are a proud supporter of Seed Mob with our workplace giving program.



*Cover image: BZE's Matt McKee and Dr Heidi Edmonds at Alpha HPA's Gladstone facility.*

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## We would like to thank all our generous partners and supporters, including:

- ACME Foundation
- Australian Communities Foundation
- Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network
- Australian Ethical Foundation
- Australian Philanthropic Services Foundation
- Barry Thompson
- Boundless Earth
- Bunderra Foundation
- Charles Warman Foundation
- Community Impact Foundation
- Cybec Foundation
- Ethinvest Foundation
- Giving Green
- Height Morris Foundation
- Hope Family Foundation
- James N. Kirby Foundation
- Just World
- Milkywire
- Net Zero Fund (via The Gift Trust NZ)
- The Myer Foundation

Our work this year has also been made possible by the generosity of our individual donors and regular givers. Every contribution, large or small, helps accelerate Australia's transition to a prosperous, zero-emissions economy. Thank you for investing in our mission, and making real impact possible.

Our thanks also to our staff team, expert volunteers, partners and other supporters who power our work.

# Chair's Welcome

As global momentum accelerates toward clean industry and electrification, Australia has a choice: lead, or lag. The transition is already underway, but whether we capture the economic and community benefits depends on what we do next.

Beyond Zero Emissions is showing what leadership looks like. In 2025, our work turned bold ideas into shared plans. We helped governments, industry, and communities move from fragmented efforts to coordinated action, and from policy ambition to practical delivery.

That is the power of the National Action Plan, and the impact of our work in the Hunter and Gladstone. These are not just reports. They are blueprints for prosperity, created in partnership with the people and places shaping Australia's zero-emissions future.

I am proud of what our team and expert volunteers have achieved. And I am grateful to every donor and partner who has backed this mission. Your support is driving results. Together, we are building the pathways Australia needs, not just to reduce emissions, but to create opportunity, rebuild trust, and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

[Geoff Summerhayes](#)  
Chairperson  
Beyond Zero Emissions



**“BZE’s report cuts through the noise with clear, actionable insights that policy-makers and investors can trust.”**

**Justin Page**

Coordinator

Hunter Jobs Alliance



*Image of Newcastle, Australia. Photo courtesy of Klodien*

# The Messy Middle – Why This Work Matters Now



*Pictured Left: BZE's Heidi Lee speaking at Engineering Australia's Climate Smart Engineering Conference 2025*

None of us came into this work thinking it would be easy. But many of us hoped it would get easier by now. Instead, the work of delivering Australia's industrial transition has become more contested, more emotionally loaded – and more urgent.

In many regions, the risks of delay are rising. Yet, local voices calling for action often need stronger backing to be heard. That is where BZE comes in.

With your support, BZE stepped into the “messy middle” – the space between policy ambition and on-the-ground delivery. We created a national, open-source methodology in partnership with dozens of partners that delivers a practical framework that shows what needs to be built, in what order, and why.

It is the only tool of its kind that is not locked behind commercial paywalls, and that is the power of philanthropy. It allows us to make this work freely available to those who need it most.

This year, our National Action Plan (NAP) moved from idea to implementation. It became a practical tool for community leaders, local councils, state

agencies and industry – helping identify priority infrastructure, close system gaps, and move projects from announcements to delivery.

You will hear more from the people who made that happen. Because this report is not just a summary – it is a chance to share firsthand stories from the team and volunteers who turned a bold idea into real impact.

## Heidi Lee

CEO

Beyond Zero Emissions

*Heidi lives and works in Melbourne (Naarm), on the land of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people.*



# Confidence through Coordination



3

Applications of Critical Success Criteria (CSC) to key industrial regions



95 +

Expert contributions into CSC and NAP



15

Presentations to NAP progress at major industry events



6

Government agencies use the NAP and CSC in their work

At the start of this journey, we asked: how can industrial regions fast-track decarbonisation in ways that are coordinated, credible and fair?

This year, with your support, we answered that question. We launched Australia's first transparent, open-source blueprint for clean industrial transformation and then applied it in three regions: the Hunter, Gladstone and now starting in South-West WA.

Together, these assessments:

- Identified infrastructure bottlenecks and opportunities
- Brought industry, councils, unions, and communities together
- Turned fragmented efforts into aligned action plans

Our National Action Plan is a globally unique regional readiness framework, now being shared widely as a practical tool for aligning policy, infrastructure and investment.

These are more than reports. They are practical roadmaps. In the Hunter, the NAP helped focus attention on the region's transmission needs,

prompting stronger alignment from government and industry alike. In Gladstone, it helped stakeholders navigate policy uncertainty and unite behind shared goals. And in Kwinana, it is already laying the groundwork for what comes next.

**Thanks to your backing, coordination is no longer a theory. It is a tested model that is moving real projects forward. And we are just getting started.**

**Matt McKee**  
Chief Researcher

*Matt lives and works in Brisbane (Meanjin), on the lands of the Turrbal and Jagera People.*



# Building Momentum in the Hunter



Pictured above: The BZE team launching *Powering Up the Hunter* at the Hunter New Energy Symposium in May 2025

In 2025, we launched *Powering Up the Hunter* – the first full regional assessment under BZE’s National Action Plan. It was the product of a year of intense collaboration, expert volunteer contributions, and community engagement. We developed the region’s Critical Success Criteria, tested it against 19 readiness indicators, and built momentum behind the Hunter’s decarbonisation journey.

With donor support, we planned a four-day launch in the Hunter showcasing the strength of regional collaboration. Despite catastrophic flooding that disrupted our plans, the community rallied. We pivoted online, secured national and regional media coverage, and hosted keynotes and stakeholder briefings with leading voices in industry, unions, and government.

Dr Chris Oughton joined us from WA to share lessons from Kwinana, and I stepped in to deliver our keynote at the Hunter New Energy Symposium. Public support poured in. Local businesses like Ampcontrol and YZ Consulting backed our report, which put the Hunter Transmission Project front

and centre as a “make-or-break” for the region’s energy future. That project is now moving forward, with political and community alignment.

One stakeholder summed it up perfectly:

**“No one else is taking a holistic view across the energy transition and identifying the bottlenecks. It’s exactly what we need.”**

This was coordination in action, and your support made it real.

**Sam Mella**  
Senior Project  
Manager

*Sam lives and works in the Hunter, on the lands of the Worimi, Awabakal and Wonnarua people.*



# Backing Gladstone's Ambition and Will



21

External contributors



11

High-profile voices amplified our messages



Pictured above: BZE's Dr Heidi Edmonds and Matt McKee briefing Central Queensland University on Powering Up Gladstone in October 2025

**Powering Up Gladstone** marked the second full regional assessment under our National Action Plan, and it could not have come at a more critical moment. We launched the report at Gladstone Engineering Alliance's flagship industry forum, where it was the only presentation to show the full picture of industrial decarbonisation.

Our findings were grounded in years of engagement, supported by your investment. The plan identified barriers, prioritised projects, and laid out practical, evidence-based actions. Days before our launch, the Queensland Government released its Energy Roadmap – requiring us to quickly adapt our message that provided a sense-making reality check. We acknowledged its positives while voicing concerns about lingering fossil fuel reliance.

The result? Strong public backing. Our language was echoed in state announcements. Industry leaders told us, **"You've said what we can't."** This is the value of BZE: independent, trusted, and anchored in real-world progress.

The launch drew major media coverage, including from WIN TV, ABC Radio, and The Energy, and was acknowledged in speeches by Senator Tim Ayres and other senior leaders across industry and government. Momentum is now growing. We are continuing formal briefings in the region, and the important conversations we have started with state and federal officials to unlock priority projects in the region.



Pictured above: BZE's Matt McKee launching Powering Up Gladstone at Gladstone Engineering Alliance's Major Industry, Energy and Manufacturing Conference in October 2025.

What makes this work special is how it brings people together. Industry, government, and community leaders now share a common action plan. Because of you, this region has a path forward that is credible, coordinated and ready for action.

## Dr Heidi Edmonds Senior Researcher

Heidi was raised in Gladstone, on the lands of the Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng & Taribelang Bunda Peoples.



# Volunteers: Our Superpower



**100+**

Volunteers working on the CSC



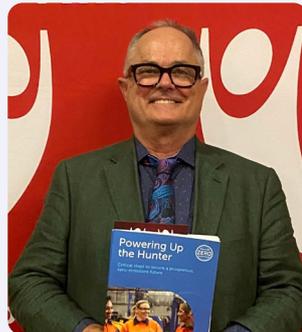
**3,000+**

Total volunteer hours spent

## A snapshot of the volunteers behind the impact



**Simone Kealey**, Copywriting volunteer, taken on 18 Sept 2025



**Nigel Stace**, Research volunteer, taken on 22 Oct 2025



**Afrina Samain**, Research volunteer, taken on 12 Aug 2025



**Hope Stoney**, Research and communications volunteer, taken on 28 Jul 2025

BZE's volunteer network is a core part of our delivery model. Our unique approach has always included volunteers, and I am lucky to be working with such skilled and dedicated individuals. This year, our volunteers have demonstrated exceptional value across all aspects of our work. Our volunteers contribute deep technical expertise, regional knowledge and industry experience across every major program area, from the NAP and CSC to communications, design and corporate support.

This year, BZE volunteers included engineers, planners, economists, researchers, analysts, writers and designers. Many hold senior or executive roles in industry, government and academia. They bring first-hand insight into the real constraints facing Australia's industrial transition, and practical experience of what has worked elsewhere.

Volunteers contribute in different ways and at different stages of delivery, allowing BZE to scale capacity when needed while maintaining independence and technical rigour.

This year, we welcomed Dr Anna Boin and Beth Mitchell as new Expert Advisors, joining Michael

Lord and Dr Dominique Hes. Together, our Expert Advisors strengthen methodical quality, test core assumptions and help ensure our work remains grounded in real-world evidence and technical rigour. Anna and Beth have each shaped major pieces of our work, and we are grateful to keep learning with them as part of the BZE community.

In 2025, our volunteers contributed **more than 3,000 hours** across BZE's workstreams. To every volunteer who has been part of our work this year: thank you. You are the quiet heroes of the energy transition, and our progress is a testament to your skills and contribution.

### **Madeline Townsend** Volunteer Manager

*Madeline lives and works in Ballarat (Ballaarat), on the lands of the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People.*



# Clearing the Path for Policy and Practice

Having been on some of BZE's listening tours around the country, I value hearing firsthand the sentiments of regional communities and Australian manufacturers at the frontlines of change brought on by the energy transition. I heard stories of both challenges and success, of beating the odds but also progress stalling. Being able to then take a step back and look at the big picture of how policy and practice impact the lived experiences of those I have met on the ground is a special part of this purpose-driven work.



*Pictured left: BZE's Tejesh Kashyap holding Powering Up the Hunter outside the Australian Parliament House in July 2025*

This year, your support enabled us to focus on addressing the structural bottlenecks that delay the delivery of key infrastructure and projects that will accelerate the energy transition. Our work provides a clear, practical path to decarbonisation by replacing fragmented decision-making with shared priorities for governments, industry and communities. Through our NAP, we cut through complexity to identify the critical projects needed to unlock each region's potential.

## Catalysing regional breakthroughs

In the **Hunter**, our research identified the Hunter Transmission Project as the primary bottleneck holding back clean-energy investment and a key enabling project for industrial decarbonisation. It was significant to see the NSW Energy Minister and state government reflect the priorities identified in our assessment and fast-track this essential infrastructure, reinforcing the project's status as a leading state priority. We also highlighted the urgency of delivering renewable energy to

Newcastle by 2028 to help secure the long-term future of the Tomago smelter. This urgency is now reflected in federal policy discussions and ongoing engagement with industry on practical pathways for Tomago and the wider Hunter region.

In **Queensland**, your support helped us inform the new Energy Roadmap. BZE provided evidence supporting the prioritisation of the new transmission lines into **Gladstone**, now a prominent feature in the official plan and one of two priority infrastructure projects.

## Shaping the national agenda

Thanks to our donors and volunteers, our regional work is backed by rigorous policy engagement. This year, we delivered critical evidence to key federal inquiries to ensure national frameworks support regional realities. Some of the key engagements included:

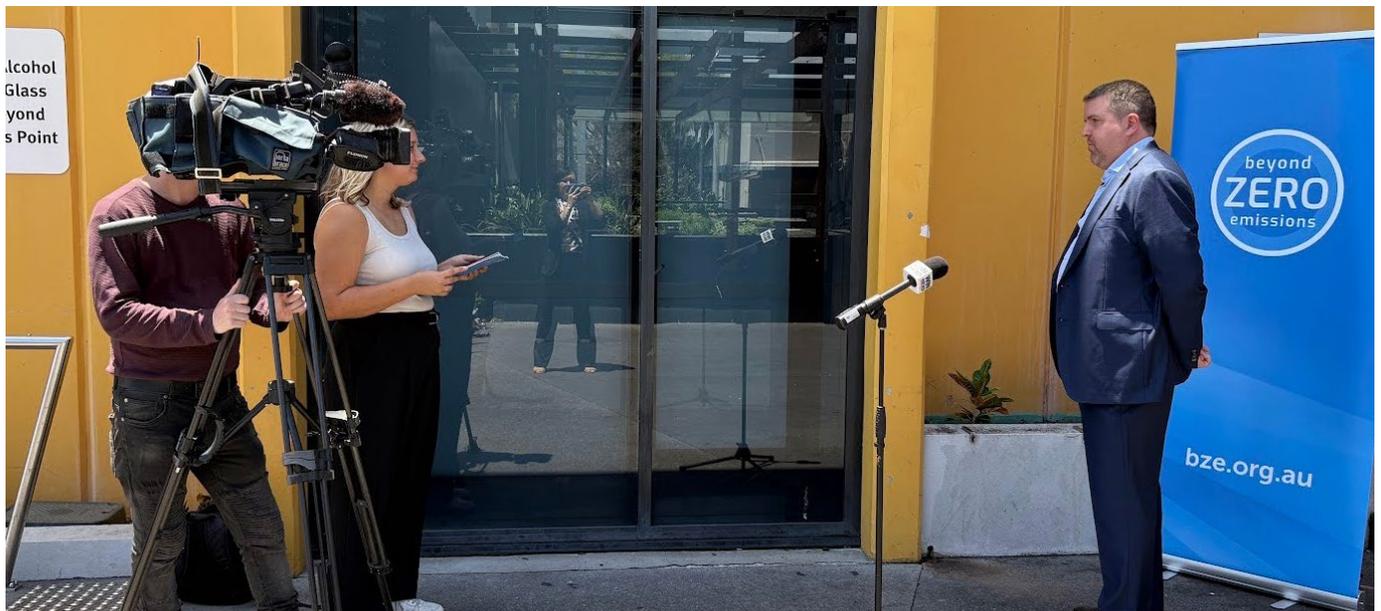
- **Net Zero Economic Authority**, who use BZE's NAP framework in their energy transition mapping work (and our CEO is also on the Stakeholder Advisory Panel).
- **2025 Electricity Network Options Report Consultation**, advocating for grid infrastructure that meets future industrial demand.
- **Energy Industry Jobs Plan Review (Net Zero Economy Authority)**, ensuring workforce transitions are equitable and effective.
- **Net Zero Fund Design Consultation**, pushing for investment structures that catalyse real-world projects.
- **Senate Inquiry into the EPBC Act**, arguing for environmental reforms that provide clarity and speed for responsible development.

### Tejesh Kashyap Policy and Research Officer

*Tejesh lives and works in Melbourne (Naarm), on the land of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people.*



# Inspiring Action: Outreach, Media and Regional Voices



Pictured above: BZE's Matt McKee being interviewed by WIN News in Gladstone, sharing insights from Powering Up Gladstone.

Thanks to your support, our communications strategy has proven itself in a crowded and fast-moving media environment. This year, we focused on what we know works: clear messages, credible evidence and practical calls-to-action, while our ongoing test-and-learn approach continued to strengthen how we communicate our work and reach key audiences.

With your support, BZE's communications played a pivotal role in promoting our research and encouraging action, complementing targeted engagement with key decision makers from government and industry.

We have created the conditions for our evidence to be heard and backed by those with influence – trusted voices from regional communities and industry leaders. With two regional insights reports launched under the NAP and a third in progress, our targeted campaigns are helping build support for the specific around the specific actions needed to reduce emissions and support Australia's clean industrial future.

**Michelle Lee**  
Communications Manager

*Michelle lives and works in Melbourne (Naarm), on the land of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people.*



Pictured above: BZE's Dr Heidi Edmonds being interviewed at Alpha HPA's facility in Gladstone.

# Our Storytelling Reached Target Audiences

6.3M+ social media impressions

Up to 6.6M reached via media coverage of BZE's work.



Our LinkedIn audiences by industry

18 high profile stakeholders repeated our messages

- ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
- UTILITIES
- RENEWABLE ENERGY EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING
- GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION
- RENEWABLE ENERGY SERVICES
- HIGHER EDUCATION
- RENEWABLE ENERGY POWER GENERATION



Growth in LinkedIn followers

Increased engagement on our Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct work

 + 12%

+ 55% 

Based on time spent on BZE's Renewable Energy Industrial Precincts webpage.

# Critical Enablers Behind the Scenes



Pictured above: The BZE team in March 2025.

This year, we significantly strengthened the foundations that allow BZE to deliver impact with confidence.

Our clear vision, strong purpose and well-regarded reputation attracted extraordinary interest in governance leadership. Our recent Board Director recruitment campaign drew 245 high-quality applicants for two roles. Even candidates who were not appointed have remained engaged, offering forward-looking strategic insights and ongoing support – an endorsement of BZE’s credibility and influence.

We also redesigned our risk management framework, embedding regular review and accountability across the organisation. This was no small feat, and we are really proud of the progress we have made this year.

**“BZE has proactively embedded a disciplined, best-practice approach to risk management.”**

**Neil Brodie**, BZE’s volunteer Risk Advisor; Chief Financial Officer at Hazer Group Limited

Sustaining our people was a major focus, which produced outstanding results that demonstrated the uplift we saw across organisational performance. Our staff engagement survey showed that 100% of our team are proud to work at BZE and recommend it as a great place to work.

We continue to be careful custodians of donor funds, strengthening budgeting, monitoring and financial oversight to ensure every dollar is used where it achieves the greatest impact.

**Melissa Heyhoe**  
Chief Finance and  
Operating Officer

*Melissa lives and works in Melbourne (Naarm), on the land of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people.*



# The Road Ahead: Tools for All Regions, Delivery in WA



*Pictured above: BZE's Matt McKee (left) and Heidi Lee with Kwinana Industries Council CEO David Harrison in November 2025.*

Thanks to our donors and supporters, BZE has developed a distinctive and increasingly influential approach to regional transition planning. Our transparent, open-source framework is unique in the decarbonisation space and is already informing planning and coordination across multiple regions.

Developed with the support of our funders and the expertise of engineers, planners, industry and community leaders, the National Action Plan framework helps identify what enables decarbonisation projects to progress – and what holds them back. These tools are designed for sharing, improvement and reuse. By the end of next year, we expect to expand from 20 to more than 30 practical assessment criteria.

What we learn in one place is valuable in another. While every region has its own opportunities and challenges, many barriers are shared and the lessons travel well.

## Westward focus

Western Australia has shown growing interest in this approach. During my visit there with our CEO Heidi Lee, stakeholders highlighted the value of learning from other industrial regions. There is clear interest in how the National Action Plan methodology might be applied in WA's distinct context and many stakeholders were keen on BZE's role of independent, practical analysis in supporting coordinated decision-making.

WA has strong potential to lead in clean exports

(particularly steel, alumina and critical minerals) given its resource base, renewable energy advantages and global market exposure. There is a growing appetite for coordinated planning that moves from ambition to delivery, backed by credible, independent analysis. With your help, BZE is well placed to help align industry, communities and government around evidence-based pathways that prioritise delivery over debate.

## In 2026, we will:

- **Apply and deepen our proven regional model:** building out WA case studies with discipline and local partners, while maintaining momentum in the Hunter and Gladstone where trust is already established.
- **Clear the key blockers to delivery** – addressing policy and narrative gaps, infrastructure and sequencing risks, and decision-maker constraints, supported by credible industry voices and real-world cleantech examples.
- **Strengthen the national backbone** – expanding our open-source NAP tools and connecting volunteer and expert networks so insights and lessons can travel between regions.

## Help supercharge our impact

In contested regional spaces, credibility does not come from glossy documents or big-name panels. It comes from locals seeing people like them roll up sleeves and help solve the work on the ground. Our citizen-science model (experts, retirees, students, workers, all contributing) is not just a feel-good story. It creates a unique type of social licence. It creates champions who stay after we leave. It shifts hearts and minds about what is possible.

Your funding will keep this momentum going. With your help, every region can access the tools and insights needed to build a strong clean industry and secure jobs for those who call these regions home.

**Matt McKee**  
Chief Researcher

# Why We're Ready



*Pictured above: BZE's Matt McKee and Dr Heidi Edmonds with representatives from Gladstone industry, including Gladstone Engineering Alliance and Alpha HPA.*

We are not a traditional think tank. We do not sit in the head office and write reports for someone else to implement. **Our work only lands because we build capability with communities, industry and local leaders from the start.**

Our methods, partnerships and people have been built for exactly the “messy middle” mentioned earlier – the point where Australia’s success depends on coordination, courage and trust all working together. In a contested public square, many industry players still have strong decarbonisation targets that align with climate science. They may not shout it from the rooftops, because staying quiet feels safer. They deserve the support to protect their competitive edge, and in so doing, build a prosperous, zero-emissions future for Australia.

**This work demands stable funding and capable regional partners.** It takes intention and presence. That means people on the ground who can listen with their hearts and minds to understand the big picture, in order to produce robust analysis that gives decision makers the confidence to act with courage. Our team combines experienced engineers, scientists and policy experts with new colleagues and partners who see possibility where others see barriers.

As Australia enters the most delivery-intensive phase of the transition, we stand ready to help you prove what is possible.

**Want to fund this vital work?**

 [bze.org.au/donate](https://bze.org.au/donate)

 [donations@bze.org.au](mailto:donations@bze.org.au)

 +61 444 589 866.





Ready to help realise Australia's  
clean energy future?

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[donations@bze.org.au](mailto:donations@bze.org.au)  
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