

Media Release

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First NSW council partners with *Better Building Finance* as part of expanded ARENA funded project

Kyogle Council in regional New South Wales has become the first council outside Victoria to partner with the Sustainable Australia Fund's *Better Building Finance (BBF)* program, to offer affordable environmental finance to local businesses in the municipality.

Environmental upgrade finance, also known as building upgrade finance, is a government enabled funding mechanism for upgrading existing building stock to be more environmentally friendly. Business owners can take out a long term loan for the works, which is then repaid through their local council's rates system. Council's involvement means businesses can access favourable and affordable finance terms.

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) today announced that it was providing funding for BBF to expand its highly successful program into NSW and SA, with Kyogle the first of a targeted 23 new council partners, to join the existing 34 council partners in Victoria.

This is the second project between BBF and ARENA. Between 2016-2019, ARENA supported BBF to establish the environmental upgrade finance market in Victoria. The initial agreement was for 15 Councils established, however due to the strong uptake in the first year (13 Councils), the agreement was expanded for a further 15 Councils.

This project has had remarkable success. In 2018 BBF worked with its council partners to facilitate 26 environmental upgrade projects at an investment of \$10.5 million, generating 2.4MW of solar power, which will lead to the abatement of 178k tonnes of emissions over the life of the projects.

Shay Singh, Executive Manager of BBF, welcomed Kyogle to the program:

"We're really excited to welcome Kyogle as our first NSW council partner. With the success we've had in Victoria, we know that this program can have a huge impact in supporting local businesses and helping councils deliver on their economic development and sustainability goals."

Danielle Mulholland, Mayor of Kyogle Council said:

"Kyogle Council has recently adopted its Sustainable Councils and Communities Action Plan which includes a series of renewable energy targets, as well as a commitment to encourage and support the use of renewable energy by the community. The partnership with the Better Building Finance program will provide an opportunity for Council to support its local businesses and primary producers and offer them an opportunity to invest in energy, waste and water efficiency projects that provide both

environmental and economic benefits. It's a win-win for us and our community, and we look forward to working with Better Building Finance in this partnership."

Graham Kennett, General Manager of Kyogle Council said:

"This program offers us an opportunity to help our local businesses and industry groups to deliver projects that they may not have been able to realise without the program. The three way partnership between Council, its community and the Sustainable Australia Fund is a great example of how the administrative operations of a local council can be harnessed to help provide sustainable improvements to existing facilities that will also benefit the local economy in the longer term."

Background

Sustainable Australia Fund is Australia's leading provider of environmental upgrade finance – loans for building upgrades, repaid through council rates. Originally established by the City of Melbourne in 2002, in 2019 the Fund was significantly recapitalised and scaled, through a partnership with Bank Australia, to drive environmental upgrades across Australia.

The Better Building Finance (BBF) program was established to work with all Councils to adopt the environmental upgrade finance program and administer it with them, opening up the market for more sustainable buildings.

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