

Shape Your Energy Future Program

The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation has been approached by a student, Rachelle Cooper Kulkarni, who is studying at the [Centre for Alternative Technology](#), Wales, UK.

Rachelle is located in Brisbane and is completing a Masters of Science: Sustainability and Adaptation. Rachelle's draft dissertation title is: **A just transition in Regional Queensland. Understanding the systemic challenges and opportunities in the Western Downs and South Burnett regions using Participatory Systems Mapping.**

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to better understand the energy transition in Queensland, specifically the Western Downs, Southern Downs and South Burnett regions which are key zones for Queensland's energy transition. The research aims to identify opportunities and barriers that exist within the community during the transition.

Queensland has the highest per capita emissions and energy use of all Australian States and Territories and historically has had an abundance of fossil fuels and heavily carbon intensive industries. A transition to renewable energy will see job losses, changes to affordability and security of energy supply and changes in land use and associated impacts. All of these could have disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities.

The study will incorporate 'Participatory Systems Mapping (PSM)' – a collaborative method for understanding the connections (causes and effects) between different system elements. The system consists of the cultural, political, social, environmental, economic, and technological factors. The system boundaries are set as the geographical boundaries around the Western Downs, Southern Downs and South Burnett regions, and will consider broader factors that affect the system within these boundaries, e.g. governance and regulation. The PSM method integrates well with the facilitator's draft program, which is being collaboratively shaped together.

By understanding and mapping the system, the study aims to identify potential levers for system change for a successful transition. System mapping processes can be of great value to participants by creating a space for stakeholders to discuss complex subjects and generate shared understanding for collective action. One of Rachelle's research outcomes is for participants to gain knowledge, skills, and tools that will help them leverage opportunities for energy transition.

Proposed Outcomes

This is a collaborative, co-designed research process with the purpose of directly benefiting and empowering the participants. The research will culminate in the production of a systems map, which participants can refer to, in order to aid their understanding and comprehension. Rachelle will further analyse and discuss the system map while completing her dissertation, including potential leverage points for influencing the system. The research will be completed no later than May 2024. A copy of the dissertation will be shared with all participants, including the digitised system map.