



## **Liz Young, Research Director, Queensland Decarbonisation Hub**

When the Queensland Decarbonisation Hub team began planning this year's Forum, we had a clear aim: to spark interesting and important conversations about what decarbonisation means for Queensland and how to navigate an inclusive path forward for all Queenslanders. The Forum drew on a diverse range of perspectives.

Held at UQ on 29 September, the Forum brought together around 140 people from research, government, industry and community. We wanted to explore how a decarbonising economy is changing Queensland, from shifts in markets and investment to new demands on land, infrastructure and skills, and what this means for businesses, communities and regions. The discussion considered how people are responding to the transition and what would help them engage and influence the changes shaping their futures.



Suzanne Thompson FTSE (Founder, YACHATDAC)

Whose knowledge and priorities guide those choices was a critical question from the outset. Suzanne Thompson FTSE, Chair of the Hub's Advisory Committee, opened with an Acknowledgement of Country and emphasised the importance of Indigenous knowledges and leadership in shaping the transition. Her contribution asked us to consider how different understandings of the transition should influence its direction.

Julie-Ann Campbell, Federal Member for Moreton, opened the broader discussion by placing the transition within the context of Australian Government policy and the challenges facing people in their everyday lives. She highlighted the importance of government leadership in ensuring that the transition is just and responsive to the needs of communities.



Julie-Ann Campbell (Federal Member for Moreton)



Bec Halliday (Director, First Nations Clean Energy Network)

Bec Halliday, Director at the First Nations Clean Energy Network, brought these questions of leadership and participation into sharper focus through community consent, ownership of energy infrastructure and access to reliable, affordable power. Clean energy development offers First Nations communities opportunities to exercise greater control over projects on their Country and share in the economic benefits. Realising these opportunities requires policies and processes that support First Nations leadership and self-determination, with implications for everyone involved in planning, funding and delivering projects.

Throughout the Forum, we heard how people are already getting on with delivering positive change. In his morning keynote, Robert Potter, Head of Policy and Advocacy at the Smart Energy Council, highlighted how households and businesses are driving the energy transition. His



Robert Potter (Policy and Advocacy at the Smart Energy Council)



challenge to the room was direct: policymakers need to make participation easier, researchers need to provide evidence ahead of the headlines, and industry needs to keep building commercially viable projects.

Lizzie Webb and Saideh Kent from The Next Economy shared examples of communities working to shape their economic futures. Having that experience to draw on helped us discuss what is making progress possible in particular places and what others might learn from it.

Timing matters too. Justine McLeod, Chief Executive Officer of CHRRUP, highlighted the need to plan for change in Central Queensland while there are still assets, investment and capacity to support new uses of land and infrastructure. Waiting until an operation closes can narrow the choices available to the whole community.



Lizzie Webb (CEO) and Saideh Kent (Program Director – Energy) from The Next Economy



Kylie Porter (CEO, Queensland Farmer's Federation)

Kylie Porter, Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Farmers' Federation, made a related point in her afternoon keynote. Her call to support farmers through change, rather than relying on their resilience to absorb its consequences, resonated with the room. She highlighted opportunities to diversify farm revenue alongside the importance of protecting high-value agricultural land and maintaining viable farm businesses. Her contribution left us with a practical question: is support coming early enough for farmers to prepare and make informed choices?

Joining online from the University of Aberdeen, Professor Tavis Potts connected these experiences with international research on just transitions, before Professor Jeremy Moss from UNSW spoke about how first principles need to inform the sharing of burdens and benefits associated with the transition. Both Jeremy and Tavis emphasised the



need to build trust and participation from the outset, and the problems that arise when policy, finance and infrastructure pull in different directions. These are issues that local initiative alone cannot resolve.

Building on these themes, Rachelle Cooper Kulkarni, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Sustainify, and Leanne Phillips, Founder and Managing Director of The Sanctuary of Embracing Difference, explored what a just transition means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Queensland communities. Their discussion reinforced the importance of placing justice at the centre of transition policy and decision-making, recognising that without deliberate efforts to address existing inequalities, the transition risks reproducing or deepening the disadvantage and inequity already experienced by some communities.



From left to right: Rachelle Cooper Kulkarni (Founder and CEO of Sustainify), Leanne Phillips (Founder and Managing Director of The Sanctuary of Embracing Difference), Justine McLeod (CEO of CHRRUP), Professor Jeremy Moss (University of New South Wales), and Professor John Rolfe (Central Queensland University)

These questions of equity, participation and the capacity to manage change also have practical implications for how new technologies are introduced and adopted. Professor Belinda Wade and I explored these issues through our research on technology in Queensland's transition, in discussion with Dr Liz Fellows from Queensland Treasury and Queensland Chief Scientist Professor Kerrie Wilson. We considered where technologies can contribute, what holds back their adoption and what those barriers mean for policy and investment. Understanding whether a technology can work within a particular industry or region is essential to knowing where effort and funding will make a difference.



From left to right: Professor Belinda Wade (University of Queensland), Dr Liz Fellows (Executive Director - Emissions Policy and Analytics, Queensland Treasury), Professor Kerrie Wilson (Queensland Chief Scientist), Dr Liz Young (Hub Research Director), and Professor Felicity Deane (QUT)

The closing questions and discussion with members of the Hub's Advisory Committee and other sector experts gave participants an opportunity to test these ideas against their own experience. Hearing the implications for different sectors helps us refine our research questions and examine assumptions that might otherwise go unchallenged.

What stays with me from the forum is the value of bringing these different voices into the same conversation. We wanted people to be able to explore questions together, including where their views differed, without feeling they had to defend a position or win an argument. The willingness to listen and engage helped us understand more about the choices facing Queensland and what they mean for the people affected.

Creating that kind of space is an important part of the Hub's role. It means making room for perspectives that are sometimes overlooked and recognising the knowledge and leadership all people bring to navigating the transition. Suzanne's emphasis on Indigenous knowledges leading the transition was a reminder that First Nations peoples have a role in setting its direction, as well as a stake in its outcomes. I'm pleased the Forum brought these perspectives into a shared conversation. Thank you to our speakers, participants, Advisory Committee and organising team for making it possible.



From left to right: Jason Nielsen (Director Strategic Initiatives at Climate KIC Australia), Andrew Chamberlin (Project Manager - Energy, Queensland Farmer's Federation), Richard Hoolihan (Board Member, North Queensland Dry Tropics), Chris Norman (CEO, NRM Regions Queensland), Dr Philippa England (Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Griffith University), Suzanne Thompson FTSE (Founder, YACHATDAC), and Dr Greg Leach (General Manager - Policy and Industry Development, Timber Queensland)