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Media Release

THINK BIG: GO MICRO

A microgrid pilot project for Byron Bay Arts & Industry Estate was launched today by Enova Energy in collaboration with electricity network operator, Essential Energy.

The microgrid aims to trial ways to reduce participant's electricity usage costs through sharing renewable energy that is locally generated, stored and distributed, while reducing carbon emissions. It will also help keep money local with dollars circulating in the community, providing jobs, and helping fund local initiatives, rather than leaving the region.

In stage one of the pilot, participants generate energy from renewable sources such as rooftop solar panels to power their own buildings, and then supply excess to others who may not have the roof space or capital to buy panels. In stage two, when supply exceeds demand, excess power will be stored in a centralised super battery for reuse within the estate or sold externally. The microgrid remains connected to the electricity network to enable the sale of excess power, and to ensure continuity of energy supply.

"Community microgrids such as this are the way of the future," said Enova Energy Managing Director Tony Pfeiffer. "The Byron Arts & Industry Estate Microgrid is the first of what we hope will be many self-sufficient electricity microgrids Enova helps to roll out. We aim to develop a model that can be replicated by communities across NSW and ultimately Australia – starting with industrial estates and similar commercial areas, and eventually residential areas."

The pilot study will comprise 20 -30 participants and will take place over approximately two years. When finalised in October 2020 it is hoped that it leads to the formation of a wider, self-sufficient microgrid for the entire estate – so owners and tenants in the estate are encouraged to register their interest now.

Participants in the pilot will have individual devices installed to measure power inputs and outputs – this data will help work out a new pricing structure based on sharing locally-generated power.

"One of the aims of the pilot is to work out just how much cheaper it is to use local renewable power sources rather than bringing electricity from afar," Tony said. Eventually, the microgrid is likely to enjoy its own unique tariff structure, where new prices are set to be more attractive than current energy pricing.

The project is a partnership between Enova Energy, electricity network distributor Essential Energy, energy marketplace platform provider LO3 Energy, digital energy technology company Wattwatchers, and the University of NSW. It is also supported by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.

Arts & Industry Estate building owners and tenants can register their interest in the microgrid pilot project on Enova's website: enovaenergy.com.au/microgrid

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