Ready For Anything

QUEENSTOWN LAKES COMMUNITY RESILIENCE GROUP NETWORK

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY HUB

SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

Special edition CRG newsletter - Powered for Anything

March 2026

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There's so much happening in the solar, battery, and electrification space that we've put together this special edition newsletter *Powered for Anything* (it's electrifying!) to update you on opportunities across the district - and further afield - in this fast-growing industry.

Electricity is central to modern emergency response and community resilience. From charging radios and phones to powering medical equipment or keeping communications running, access to reliable energy becomes critical during outages or disasters.

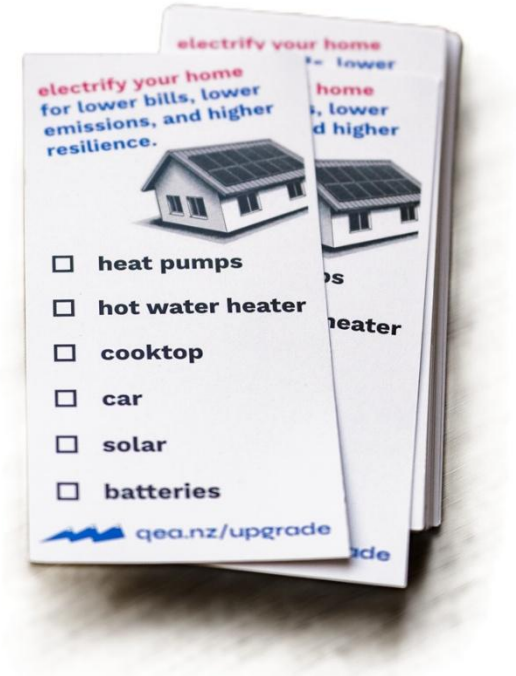
By staying informed locally and sharing knowledge with your communities, we can work together to develop practical solutions that reduce energy costs, cut emissions, and strengthen resilience across the district, helping communities to be better prepared for emergencies.

Local energy and electrification initiatives

Queenstown Electrification Accelerator

A major initiative is underway to accelerate electrification of homes, businesses, and organisations across the district.

The Queenstown Electrification Accelerator (QEA) is a non-profit with a bold goal - to make Queenstown Lakes the world's first electrified destination. The idea is simple - by getting solar on roofs and switching fossil-fuel powered systems to electric alternatives, homes and businesses can achieve lower power bills, lower emissions, and greater energy independence and resilience. Find out more.



Solar and battery storage is the key to boosting energy resilience in Queenstown Lakes homes - and saving money. EECA research shows local homes can earn some of the highest solar returns in New Zealand, often 9-10% per year, driven by good sunshine levels and relatively high electricity prices.

Take Pierre, for example: his power bill averages - $30 per month - yep, his electricity retailer pays HIM! Plus, his solar and battery setup keeps him powered even when the grid goes down. Read his full story.

What QEA is working on

QEA is developing practical resources and trials for homes and businesses to support electrification across the district, including:

- Bulk discounts for electrification products, such as solar and battery systems and hot water heat pumps
- Vehicle-to-grid trials (V2G) where EV batteries can power homes, businesses or the grid
- Independent advice, feasibility studies and business cases for electrification of homes, businesses and organisations.
- Solar options for renters.

More about the Solar for Renters trial

QEA has launched a Solar for Renters trial across the district to make solar accessible to both tenants and landlords. Benefits for tenants are lower power bills, reduced emissions and greater energy resilience, while for landlords it will be an opportunity to increase property appeal and earn a stable return from solar investment. Find out more or register your interest on the QEA website.

Solar working in your neighbourhood

Wondering whether solar works where you live? This interactive map shows solar installations street by street, helping people learn from neighbours and see what's possible locally. The QEA's step-by-step guides can also help you explore solar for your home or business. When you're ready to receive quotes, you can use their Solar Quote Template to easily compare them.

Events

Electrify Queenstown, 17-19 May, Queenstown Events Centre
Interested in electrification and the future of New Zealand's energy systems? Electrify Queenstown a must-attend event for practical ideas and technologies for homes, businesses, and communities. Highlights include:

- The How-To Hub, hosted by the QEA
- Demonstrations of emerging electric technologies
- Field trips to local electrification projects
- Information on government policy and green finance.

Photo caption: Electrify Queenstown, credit Will Nelson

Preparing the grid for the future

Electricity demand in the Queenstown Lakes district is expected to grow significantly over the coming decades as homes, transport and businesses electrify. One of the key challenges for the electricity system is managing peak demand, which is the short periods when electricity use is at its highest, particularly during winter evenings.

Network companies plan infrastructure upgrades based largely on these peak demand forecasts. If peak demand grows quickly, larger and more expensive upgrades to transmission lines, substations and local networks are required. These investments ultimately flow through to electricity prices paid by the community.

Transpower, Aurora and Powernet are currently planning for this investment upgrades through the Energising Queenstown project. They recently announced that the preferred option is a new 110 kV transmission connection from Cromwell to the Wakatipu Basin, along with upgrades to substations. More details here.

However, there's also an opportunity to defer the timing of this investment by 3-7 years at least, according to Aurora. If households and businesses adopt technologies like rooftop solar, batteries, smart hot water systems, and

demand-shifting technologies, the growth in peak demand can be slowed. This can help make better use of existing infrastructure and delay the need for some major network upgrades which will save homes and businesses on their bills and make the town more energy resilient.

A number of organisations are now working together to help accelerate this transition, including the Queenstown Electrification Accelerator (QEA), Aurora Energy, PowerNet, EECA, Ara Ake and QLDC. Their work focuses on helping households and businesses electrify in ways that are smarter, more efficient and better aligned with the needs of the electricity system. If successful, this could help reduce long-term electricity costs, strengthen energy resilience during outages, and build a more flexible and locally supported energy system for our communities.

Why this matters for resilience - opportunities for CRGs

Solar and battery systems can help communities:

- Maintain communications during outages
- Power Emergency Coordination Centres and facilities that act as Community Emergency Hubs
- Support medical devices and refrigeration
- Reduce reliance on fragile fuel supply chains.

QLDC is piloting a range of energy projects at community facilities which are designated Community Emergency Hubs. The trial will help stress-test backup power systems during outages and support emergency communications and coordination. Depending on the outcome, this could open up opportunities for more resilient local energy solutions across our communities and strengthen emergency preparedness across our neighbourhoods.

More handy information and resources

- QEA has a range of resources which can help you personally step through the process of electrifying your home or business and share with your communities via your CRG networks. The team also offers free, independent advice to help you along your electrification journey.
- Want to know what QLDC is planning and doing? Check out its climate action site.
- NZTA has a handy map of EV charging stations across Otago and New Zealand.
- Find out how to dispose of batteries safely through QLDC recycling services.

What's happening around NZ?

Solar is growing rapidly across the country, complementing hydro and wind power. Examples include:

- Ardmore Solar Farm – 13 MW capacity
- Twin Rivers Solar Farm – 31 MW project
- Pāmu Rā ki Whitianga Solar Farm – 32 MW project

Large-scale solar will help stabilise electricity supply during low hydro lake levels and periods of rising demand.

Global trends to watch

1. Solar is now the fastest-growing energy source worldwide.
2. Australia installed over 100,000 household batteries in just 17 weeks, those households can now together output more power than NZ's largest power station, the coal-based Huntly.
3. Over 90% of new power capacity added globally is renewable
4. Rooftop solar is becoming as important as solar farms as it delivers the lowest cost electricity available to households.
5. Falling battery prices are accelerating adoption.

We hope you've found this edition energising! Please keep in touch and share your ideas, suggestions and news with us - email Jen Andrews at jen@flyingsquad.nz.