

# Reducing Energy Hardship Conference

Building equity into our communities

**EVENT PROGRAMME**

**20-21 May 2024 | Wharewaka Function Centre, Wellington**



hosted by



# Programme

MONDAY 20 MAY - DAY ONE	
8am – 9am	Registrations
9am – 9.10am	Mihi Whakataua Housekeeping and overview for the conference   MC - Victoria Crockford
Session 1 – Energy hardship in a cost of living crisis	
9.10am – 10.30am	Keynote   Deborah Hart - Chair, Consumer Advocacy Council Ministerial update   Minister Simeon Brown, Minister for Energy (Pre-recorded) Panel - What does an equitable energy transition look like? Facilitator: Victoria Crockford Alana Ruakere - Pou Tū Kūrae/CE, Tui Ora Sumaria Beaton - General Manager, Awarua Synergy Michelle Pawson - Policy Analyst, Rewiring Aotearoa
Morning Tea: 10.30am - 11.00am	
Session 1 continued – Energy hardship in a cost of living crisis	
11.00am – 12.20pm	Nau Mai Rā   Ezra Hirawani, CEO & Co-Founder, Nau Mai Rā Expert Panel Report - what we should be focusing on   Keri Brown - Chair, Energy Hardship Expert Panel <b>Bernard Hickey</b> - Journalist Breaking the cycle - reducing energy hardship for Māori   Alana Ruakere - Pou Tū Kūrae/CE, Tui Ora
Lunch: 12.20pm - 1.20pm	
1pm – 1.20pm	Breakout session in Mokopuna - The Support for Energy Education in Communities (SEEC) Programme. The SEEC Programme includes funding to build and expand the network of services to support people experiencing energy hardship achieve warmer, more energy-efficient homes and lower their energy bills. This mini breakout session is for the successful FY2023/2024 SEEC Programme providers to develop regional and professional connections, share learnings, and uplift each other.
Session 2 – Building partnerships to create regionally bespoke programmes	
1.20pm – 2.40pm	Community Energy Network: Overview of regions   Habitat for Humanity Northern Region, Sustainability Options, WISE Charitable Trust, Sustainability Trust Meridian Energy Wellbeing Programme   Lorna Coll - Energy Wellbeing Manager, Meridian <b>Sumaria Beaton</b> - General Manager, Awarua Synergy Canterbury Community Energy Collective   Hinerangi Pere - Head of Community Energy Services, Orion
Afternoon tea: 2.40pm - 3.10pm	
Session 3 – Research and Evaluation	
3.10pm – 4.45pm	This session will include a number of short presentations from researchers and professionals who are working on a range of issues related to energy wellbeing such as health outcomes, quality of our homes and energy use. Vicki White - Research Scientist, BRANZ Dr Kimberly O'Sullivan - Senior Research Fellow, Otago University Zainab Rizvi - Auckland University Dr Nevil Piers - Department of Public Health, Otago University Dr Michael Baker - Department of Public Health, University of Otago Daniel Griffiths - Policy manager - Retail and Networks, Electricity Authority Te Mana Hiko
Day 1 – Wrap up and close	
4.45pm	Wrap up and close
5pm	Networking drinks at The Boatshed (next to the main venue): 5pm - 6pm Dinner: 6pm Dinner speaker: Paul Rangiwahia

## TUESDAY 21 MAY - DAY TWO

9am – Welcome | MC - Victoria Crockford  
9.15am Ministerial update | Scott Willis, Green Party spokesperson for Energy

### Session 4 – Innovation in Community Energy

9.15am – Rewiring Aotearoa | Mike Casey - CEO, Rewiring Aotearoa  
10.40am Our Energy - Kia Whitingia project | John Campbell - CEO, Our Energy, Atawhai Tibble  
Kāinga Ora - MTT solar sharing trial | Jenny Van Der Merwe - Renewable Energy Lead, Kāinga Ora  
Briony Bennett - Energy Innovation Manager, Ara Ake  
Tū Mai Rā Energy | Matiu Taurau - CEO, Tū Mai Rā Energy  
Community Energy Guide: One year on | Jonathan Young - Head of Industry & Government Engagement, Ara Ake

Morning Tea: 10.40am - 11.10am

### Session 5 – Where the industry sits within innovation and change

11.10am – Panel session: What should be the priorities for the energy sector and industry to enable an equitable  
12.45pm transition  
Facilator: Victoria Crockford  
James Kilty - CEO, Powerco  
Bridget Abernathy - CEO, ERANZ  
Aamer Daji - Group Manager Kouru Whakahaere, Raukawa  
Tracey Kai - CE, Electricity Networks Aotearoa

---

Dr Philippa Howden-Chapman | Professor of Public Health, University of Otago  
Raukawa Energy Innovation Project | Aamer Daji - Group Manager Kouru Whakahaere, Raukawa  
Warmer Kiwi Homes initiative | Henry Nepia, Manager Warmer Homes, EECA

Lunch: 12.45pm - 1.45pm

### Session 6 – Building new partnership models in the energy sector

1.45pm – Mercury - Hidden Hardship Report and next steps | Jo Christie - Regulatory Strategist, Mercury  
3pm ENA and the Future Networks Forum | Sam Elder - General Manager Energy Futures, Orion  
Hidden Hardship research national and international | Dr Sea Rotmann - CEO, Sustainable Energy Advice  
CE research and climate change transition | Dr Anna Berka - Massey University  
Key messages and next steps

### Conference – Wrap up and Close

# Speakers



## **Victoria Crockford**

### **MC**

Victoria has a diverse professional background, working across the housing, energy, social enterprise, and screen sectors for not-for-profits, large corporates, and start-ups in communications, government relations and regulatory affairs, executive leadership, and governance. Her most recent full-time role was advocating for the right to a decent home for all as CEO of Community Housing Aotearoa-Ngā Wharerau o Aotearoa, a national peak body for the community housing sector. She is currently consulting in the Māori housing, electricity, and public health sectors. She hails from Heretaunga/Hastings and lives in Tāhuna/Queenstown with her young family where she has recently been appointed to the Queenstown Lakes District Council's Climate Reference Group.



## **Deborah Hart**

### **Chair, Consumer Advocacy Council**

Deborah Hart is the chair of the Consumer Advocacy Council which advocates for residential and small business electricity consumers. She is also the independent chair of the Retirement Villages' Residents' Council and the chair of the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand. She serves on the formation board of the Grocery Action Group.

Deborah is a member of the Human Rights Review Tribunal. A solicitor by training and the former executive director of the Arbitrators' and Mediators' Institute of New Zealand she chaired Aotearoa New Zealand's independent electoral review and she undertook the last independent review of the Banking Ombudsman Scheme. She is a former member of the government's Small Business Advisory Group.



## **Honourable Simeon Brown**

### **Minister for Energy, Local Government, Transport, Auckland and Deputy Leader of the House**

Prior to entering politics, Simeon completed Law and Commerce degrees at the University of Auckland and worked in Commercial Finance at the Bank of New Zealand, as well as serving as an elected Local Board member at Auckland Council. He is the MP for Pakuranga.



## **Alana Ruakere**

### **Pou Tū Kūrae/Chief Executive, Tui Ora**

Alana Ruakere (Taranaki, Te Atiawa) joined Tui Ora in January 2023. Prior to taking up her position as the first new Chief Executive at Tui Ora, Alana was Director of the Crown Response Unit to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care.

Alana has had a distinguished career in the public sector and boasts particular expertise and experience in health and Māori hauora. She has held managerial positions in operations and policy at the Ministry of Health, the Ministry for Social Development and Te Puni Kokiri, where she was the Manager for Whānau Ora Commissioning.

Joining Tui Ora has enabled Alana to return home to her turangawaewae. Alana was born, raised, educated and started her career in Taranaki. She was a tutor in mental health support at WITT polytechnic and established the specialist community based mental health service Te Rau Pani.

Outside of mahi Alana is a keen painter, poet and singer. She and husband Rob have three children and one mokopuna.



## **Dr Philippa Howden-Chapman**

### **Professor of Public Health, University of Otago**

Philippa Howden-Chapman, sesquicentennial distinguished professor of public health at the University of Otago, Wellington, New Zealand, is co-director of two major long-standing research groups: He Kāinga Oranga/ Housing and Health Research Programme and the New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities, which both received major research grants in 2020. She conducts randomised community housing trials in partnership with local communities, which have had a major influence on housing, urban policy and health. Her work focuses on reducing inequalities in the determinants of health and wellbeing and she has received a number of awards, including the Prime Minister's Science Team Prize.

She is a director on the board of Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities and a fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand. For her contributions to public health, she has been awarded a Queen's Service Order and a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit.



## **Sumaria Beaton - Sikisini**

### **General Manager, Awarua Synergy**

Sumaria Beaton, General Manager of Invercargill's Awarua Synergy, has driven positive change for nearly two decades. Originally founded as a social enterprise based in Bluff at Te Rau Aroha Marae, Awarua Synergy has insulated over 10,000 Southland homes, businesses, and farms. Their mission, "warming and eco-powering our Deep South," extends beyond installations. Sumaria is a passionate educator, delivering the Hauora Homes HEMI program nationwide. This initiative emphasises the importance of energy-efficient, healthy homes. Sumaria's unwavering commitment to Southland's well-being, through education and action, has had a groundbreaking impact. In recognition Sumaria was awarded Southland Murihiku Kiwibank Local Hero Medallist 2024.



## **Michelle Pawson**

### **Policy Analyst, Rewiring Aotearoa**

Michelle leads policy work including, climate change, environment, strategy, risk, and governance. Over her public policy career, she has contributed to numerous projects and legislative reforms, including previously holding the roles of Principal Advisor, Office of the Chief Executive, Ministry for the Environment, and to NZ's Climate Change Adaptation Technical Working Group. She has led international collaborations between the NZ government and the Stockholm Resilience Centre (2019), and Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, UCL (2020-2021). Michelle's climate change interest is centred around socio-ecological resilience and rethinking public purpose to co-create a more inclusive and equitable future. Her academic background in science, sustainability, planning and resource management, with an interest in new economic thinking and anticipatory governance.



## **Ezra Hirawani**

### **Chief Executive Officer & Co-Founder, Nau Mai Rā**

Ezra Hirawani, a visionary entrepreneur and social advocate dedicated to eliminating power poverty. As the founder of Nau Mai Rā, a groundbreaking power company, he has revolutionised the energy sector by using the profits of those who can afford to pay for power to empower and support those in need. Ezra's exceptional leadership and impact have earned him prestigious accolades, including the Impact Award at the 2021 Aotearoa Impact Awards and the title of Young New Zealander of the Year in 2022. With no prior experience in the industry, Ezra fearlessly rallied power experts and inspired them to join his cause. Together, they have embarked on a transformative journey, symbolised by a metaphorical waka, to eliminate power poverty not just in New Zealand, but also on a global scale. "No matter who you are, we have a seat on the waka for you - get in or get out of the way." This rallying cry invites individuals with the ability to contribute to actively participate in this noble endeavour.



## **Keri Brown**

### **Chair, Energy Hardship Expert Panel**

Keri Brown (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Mahana) is a dedicated community leader and public servant, currently serving as a councillor at Hutt City Council. She is a strong advocate for social housing and has taken a leading role in developing strategies to address homelessness in her community. In her current role, she is also responsible for improving child outcomes, ensuring that all children in her area have the opportunity to thrive. As a Director of Urban Plus Ltd, a council-controlled development company, Keri works closely with Community Housing Providers and mana whenua to build high-quality social housing that meets the needs of her community. With her extensive background in public service, including her previous role as a senior national adviser for the Family Start programme, Keri brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her work. Keri is deeply committed to improving the health and wellbeing of whānau and communities. As a former Hutt Valley DHB board member, she has first-hand experience of the challenges faced by many. Through her work at Hutt City Council and beyond, Keri is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of those she serves.



## **Bernard Hickey**

### **Journalist**

Bernard is a journopreneur with a passion for building a sustainable news business that helps keep New Zealand's democracy and economy healthy and vibrant. He is editor of The Kākā, a newsletter and podcast about Aotearoa's political economy. He also co-founded and edited Newsroom Pro and Interest.co.nz. Bernard is based in Wellington and covers politics, the economy, the housing market and a myriad of other things from the Parliamentary Press Gallery.



## **Paul Rangiwhia**

### **Dinner speaker**

Paul Rangiwhia is a wellbeing advocate on a mission to help break down the stigma around mental health - to normalise the ups and downs of life that we ALL experience. Paul uses art and common sense language to encourage people and communities to take control of their levels of mental fitness.

Paul's style is authentic and fun and he promotes a proactive approach to mental health and wellness. He calls it awareness to action.

Paul both advisors and speaks to companies over a number of industries, Government agencies and sporting codes. He is also involved with a number of national and regional projects promoting the importance of good mental health.



## **Scott Willis**

### **Green Party spokesperson for Energy, Regional Development, Rural Communities and Dunedin Issues**

For years Scott has worked on community energy – developing and running Aotearoa's first peer-to-peer electricity retailer, attempting to build Aotearoa's first community wind farm, helping solarise communities – and was on an advisory group at the Electricity Authority. We can have cleaner, cheaper, smarter power, and I'll work for that. Healthy housing is a passion. Scott worked to deliver energy wellbeing since 2007 and conceived and built NZ's first Climate Safe House. Thriving rural communities, through farming, regional development, and rural health are in my DNA: I want our rural communities to flourish, with values not volumes, as we work for a post-growth economy ensuring climate justice as we adapt to the rough road ahead.



## **Mike Casey**

### **Chief Executive Officer, Rewiring Aotearoa**

Most recently, Mike established a Cherry Orchard in the heart of Central Otago that focuses on energy efficient and environmentally friendly food production. They have just under 10000 trees across 6ha using a trellis growing system called UFO.

Prior to horticulture, he was a Founder Director of GradConnection, a website dedicated to finding tertiary students the right graduate and internship programs in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore that was acquired by Seek in 2019. He was also the Founder and Director of Fishburners, a charity tech startup co-working space in Sydney that is home to over 100 companies. He also does small seed investments in early stage Australian and New Zealand Tech startups with a focus on renewable energy and agri-tech. Mike is also a keen multi-sport "athlete".



## **John Campbell**

### **Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Our Energy**

John Campbell leads Our Energy, creator and designer of an online local energy market platform. Our Energy's software and service matches small-scale generators of clean energy with customers in their local communities in real time, providing an easy way to buy, sell and gift clean, local energy. Our Energy stands for a better, fairer, cleaner and more local energy future and his team are passionate about creating a world where community-driven energy is affordable, reliable and sustainable for all. John is a committed advocate for more open, flexible and equal access electricity markets as a key part of New Zealand's transition to a low emissions economy. In 2015, a summertime run, a roadside box of butternut pumpkins, and a lifestyle block kitted out with solar panels and a small wind turbine led John to ask: if a farmer's pumpkins can be sold to the local community, why can't energy?



## **Matiu Taurau**

### **Chief Executive Officer, Tū Mai Rā Energy**

Matiu has a wealth of international and local experience in business. Matiu was a Chartered Accountant from 2008 to 2022 at GHA as the Senior Associate. Matiu has led the development of investment advisory services, business development and delivery of consulting assignments for GHA. His role also included virtual management, organisational development and financial advisory.



## **Jenny van der Merwe**

### **Renewable Energy Lead, Kāinga Ora**

Jenny has led the Kāinga Ora Renewable Energy Programme over the past four years. Jenny has 26 years' service with Kāinga Ora (and previously HNZ), mostly in business improvement and innovation roles. Qualifications in Industrial Engineering and Public Management, together with a passion for the environment, inform Jenny's approach to her work.



## **Briony Bennett**

### **Energy Innovation Manager**

Briony started her career as an electricity trading systems analyst at the European Power Exchange after completing a Masters in energy economics and policy at Sciences Po in Paris, France.

She went on to work as a renewable energy policy analyst at Bloomberg New Energy Finance in London, U.K. before returning home to Aotearoa to make her contribution to the energy transition here. She has worked across both government and business to drive for change and innovation in our energy sector.

As Ara Ake's Energy Innovation Manager, Briony heads up our grid flexibility work and leads our Multiple Trading Relationships pilot programme. She is also partnering with Climate Connect Aotearoa, Tātaki Auckland Unlimited's climate innovation hub on community energy sharing solutions.

For Briony, innovation means energy that works for both people and planet. She is also passionate about diversity and inclusion, and played a key role setting up the women in energy network – Mana Wāhine | Power Women.





## **Jonathan Young**

### **Head of Industry and Government Engagement, Ara Ake**

Jonathan Young is Head of Industry and Government Engagement at Ara Ake. Jonathan was born in Hāwera and spent many of his early years there, later returning as a teacher at Ramanui school and more broadly South Taranaki before embarking for the Bay of Plenty and then Auckland for 25 years. Returning to Taranaki in 2008, Jonathan served as the Member of Parliament for the New Plymouth electorate for 12 years from 2008 through to 2020. His Parliamentary roles included: Energy and Resources spokesperson (National Party), Parliamentary Private Secretary for Economic Development, Chair of the Economic Development Science and Innovation Committee, Chair of the Transport and Industrial Relations Committee, Chair of the Commerce Committee, Deputy Chair of the Law-and-Order Committee, Member of the Environment Committee, Member of the Māori Affairs Committee.



## **James Kilty**

### **Chief Executive, Powerco Limited**

James joined Powerco in October 2021 and has overall responsibility for all Powerco's customer, financial and operational activities. James has a First-Class Law Degree and practised in M&A and Commercial Law before joining the energy industry. He is currently Chair of the NZ Electricity CEO Forum, on the Board of the Electricity Networks Association and the NZ Hydrogen Council, and Co-Chair of the Champions of Change work programme, which aims to attract a more diverse workforce into the energy sector in NZ.

In his 20 years in the industry, James has held senior executive roles in electricity generation, energy wholesale markets, and energy retailing. Before joining Powerco, James was Deputy Chief Executive at Contact Energy, on the Board of Simply Energy, and Chair of Western Energy Services.



## **Bridget Abernathy**

### **Chief Executive Officer, Electricity Retailers' Association of New Zealand (ERANZ)**

Bridget's career has spanned corporate communications and public affairs roles, where she has worked on complex issues across the public, private and community sectors.

As a respected senior leader who has held senior roles in external relations and government relations in the energy sector in Australia and New Zealand, Bridget brings a wealth of experience to support ERANZ and the wider electricity sector at a time of significant growth and transformation.



## **Aamer Daji**

### **Group Manager Kouru Whakahaere, Raukawa**

Aamer is the current Group Manager – Executive & Transformation for the Raukawa Charitable Trust, based in the South Waikato, which has rolled out numerous transformational projects across the Raukawa rohe including the Raukawa Energy Innovation Project.

Aamer has a strong passion for Māori development and innovation which he has applied throughout his career where he was Regional Director for Te Tumu Paeroa (the office of the Māori Trustee), General Manager of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Kea Ngāti Tuara and Pouwhakahaere Matua (CEO) of the Kukutaruhe Education Trust.

Aamer is a graduate of the University of Waikato and currently lives in Hamilton with his wife and 3 children, where whanau life is very busy. In the little spare time he gets, you will likely find Aamer on a golf course somewhere in the Waikato.



## **Tracy Kai**

### **Chief Executive, Electricity Networks Aotearoa (ENA)**

Tracey Kai joined ENA in July 2023 after time at the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission where she was the GM, Operations. She has previously had roles at New Zealand Rugby as its GM, Communications, and had senior brand, marketing and communications roles with The Co-operative Bank, Wellington City Council and Meridian Energy.



## **Jo Christie**

### **Regulatory Strategist, Mercury**

Jo is a Regulatory Strategist within Mercury's Sustainability team. She has been working on energy hardship issues since the 2019 Electricity Price Review. Her focus is on how Mercury and the electricity sector more widely can best support customers who experience hardship to be connected and remain connected to power. This has involved working alongside government and industry partners to test systemic assumptions and develop innovative ways to make power more accessible to those who struggle to keep their homes warm. Recently Jo worked with Dr Sea Rotmann and her colleagues at Mercury and Genesis Energy to co-design solutions to energy hardship with representatives from community organisations around New Zealand. Today Jo will be speaking about the Hidden Hardship Report, which is a record of this journey, and actions industry is taking off the back of it.



## **Sam Elder**

### **General Manager Energy Futures, Orion**

Sam is Orion Group's General Manager Energy Futures, collaborating to create an equitable energy future for mid-Canterbury and beyond. She is also co-Chair of the Electricity Networks Aotearoa (ENA) Future Network Forum; Founder and Director of Climate Navigator; a member of the Energy Wellbeing Evaluation Consortium; and a Director at the Gas Industry Company. Sam started out as a Spacecraft Thermal Systems Engineer in the UK, before moving to Aotearoa NZ with her kiwi husband and young sons in 2006. Since then she has held a range of leadership roles including Retail Insight Manager with Meridian Energy; South Island Director with the Ākina Foundation (supporting the growth of social enterprise); and Senior Strategy Manager with Environment Canterbury (responsible for Council portfolios on Hazards, Risk & Resilience; Transport & Urban Development; and Air Quality). In 2013 Sam completed an MSc in Advanced Energy & Environmental Studies, including a thesis exploring the 'potential for smart heating to move Aotearoa New Zealand's high-risk households out of fuel poverty'. In 2020 she qualified as a Sustainability & Climate Risk (SCR) certified professional with the Global Association of Risk Professionals.



## **Dr Sea Rotmann**

### **CEO, Sustainable Energy Advice**

Dr Sea Rotmann, CEO and founder of SEA - Sustainable Energy Advice Ltd is a Golden Bay-based behaviour change and energy justice researcher. She was the Principal Scientist at EECA from 2007-11 but has focused on running international research collaborations on behaviour change and hard-to-reach energy users for the International Energy Agency's Users Technology Collaboration Programme since then. This mahi has led her to look at the systemic and structural causes for energy and environmental injustice. She's also building an eco community on her land in Farewell Spit to decarbonise her own life.



## **Paul Scouler**

### **General Manager, WISE Charitable Trust**

Paul was on the Board of Wise before taking on the General Managers role at the Trust. Paul is a Board Member of Community Energy Network, and a Board Member of the Taranaki Air Ambulance Trust, Paul is also Certified Home Performance Advisor. Paul was a business owner for 20 years in New Plymouth.



## **Gareth Cartwright**

### **Executive Officer, Community Energy Network**

Gareth has been the Executive Officer for the Community Energy Network for the last 8 years. Over that time Gareth has grown his understanding on what makes community enterprises tick and how valuable they are to the energy wellbeing sector. A fair chunk of his time is taken up working with Government agencies, researchers and sector partners to provide a community sector voice in policy development and funding decisions. The latest significant engagement has been as a member of the Energy Hardship Reference Group that has supported the EH Expert Panel in their deliberations over the last 18 months. Gareth also represents CEN on the Board of the Home Performance Advisor Training programme as well as working alongside the Zero Waste Network, Environment Hubs Aotearoa and Pare Kore on developing a collaborative community leadership response to climate change.



## **Hinerangi Pere**

### **Head of Community Energy Services, Orion**

Hinerangi Pere comes from a diverse background in public service and community engagement. With a Career spanning across various government departments and NGO's. She has acquired a deep understanding of the complexities of these spaces and a commitment to community wellbeing, where she has made some tangible impact.

Hinerangi's journey into the energy sector started when her career took an exciting turn and joined her Iwi, Waikato Tainui as the Iwi Energy Navigation and Projects. She is dedicated to her cultural roots and passion for increasing Maaori representation in the energy industry. Most recently, 1 year in she stepped into her role as the Head of Community Energy Services with the local Otautahi, electrical distribution business, Orion. Hinerangi drives with a passion and commitment to foster positive change with communities and within the energy sector.

## **Henry Nepia**

### **Manager Warmer Homes, Energy Efficiency & Conservation Authority (EECA)**

SPONSORED BY



SUPPORTED BY



MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT  
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI