



Western Downs Mayor Andrew Smith was one of several speakers at this month's first ever Queensland Community Renewables Forum. (Supplied)



Coexistence Queensland chief executive Warwick Squire delivering a keynote speech.

# Mayor backs forum impact

By Jeremy Cook

Western Downs Mayor Andrew Smith has backed the impact of this month's renewables forum in Miles, insisting rural landholders need good advice when approached by energy developers.

For two days, the small southern Queensland town transformed into a hotbed for talks about the state's renewable energy future as part of the very first Queensland Community Renewables Forum.

It marked the first in a series of community forums set to be hosted by the Queensland Renewable Energy Council and independent statutory body Coexistence Queensland throughout the state's regions.

The forums are poised to bring various stakeholders together for crucial discussions about the impacts of renewable energy developments on communities.

In Miles, more than 140 farmers and townies reportedly convened alongside senior government officials, renewable energy developers and representatives from the agricultural and environmental sectors.

Mayor Andrew Smith hailed the two-day conference as an opportunity for the community to learn.

"It was a great opportunity for [the] community to position themselves better when it comes to dealing with the renewables industry," Cr Smith said.

"I also think my biggest takeaway was the fact there was nobody there trying to sell the renewables industry. It was about advice and factual information.

"We [council] don't have a big say in wind,



More than 140 farmers, residents and landholders packed into the Miles Leichhardt Centre in mid-July.

but with solar and wind, it is purely a business transaction between a renewables company and a landholder.

"Accordingly, you need good advice."

Wind farm proposals have continually proved contentious for residents and rural landholders across regional Queensland.

Any efforts to escalate the state's energy transition could exacerbate those concerns as already highlighted by groups like Property

Rights Australia which have sprung up in opposition to any such development.

Chief executive for the state's peak renewable energy body Katie-Anne Mulder said bringing various stakeholders together for discussions was important for discussing "what opportunities and challenges" renewable developments can present.

Asked what the future held for renewables in the Western Downs, Cr Smith said "that probably needs to be answered by the state

and the feds".

"We're a really progressive council and a really progressive region," he said.

"We've been clear from day one that we will look at all opportunities that are good for our region.

"We will work closely with the government of the day and at the moment where there's an energy transition happening, we're very much central to that."