

# **On Their Own Terms: Building the Capacity of Communities to Co-Create the New Economy**

**Dr Amanda Cahill**

The Paris Agreement marked an important turning point in international efforts to reduce carbon emissions and shift the global economy away from its dependence on fossil fuels. While governments continue to focus on macro economic policies such as carbon trading systems and financing mechanisms to encourage greater investment in renewable energy, civil society continues to focus on building a strong climate movement to hold governments and fossil fuel companies to account. Only recently has attention has been paid to the question of what will happen to the workers and communities whose livelihoods are tied to the fossil fuel industry and how we can be more proactive in facilitating a 'Just Transition'. While all of these efforts are important, a key element is missing from current discussions – that is, to achieve zero carbon emissions in a socially just way, we need to build a radically different type of economy.

This workshop will introduce a strengths-based approach that is facilitating community-led action to build more socially just, zero emissions economies across Australia. Not only is this approach stimulating economic activity that will reduce carbon emissions, but is also inadvertently catalysing new forms of economic democracy that challenge traditional power structures. By building the capacity of local actors to analyse their situation and take action to develop the local economy on their own terms, this approach fosters new economic subjects and more participatory forms of local governance.

The workshop will present an overview of the participatory action research methodology underpinning the approach, and provide participants with the opportunity to experiment with some of the tools used to build local capacity. The workshop will conclude with reflections on strategies to respond to the power dynamics that emerge when challenging the economic status quo.

**Conference Themes:** Work, Exchange, Relationship with the Natural World.

## **Bio:**

Amanda is the Director of the Centre for Social Change in Brisbane and an Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Queensland. She founded the CSC in

2012 to support the emergence of more resilient, socially just and ecologically sustainable local economies across the Asia-Pacific region. A cornerstone of the Centre's approach is applying participatory and strengths-based approaches to research, plan and implement diverse economic activities that support increased employment and investment opportunities. Currently she is assisting the Byron Shire achieve zero emissions within ten years, as well as working with a range of coal and gas affected communities across Australia to identify economic opportunities beyond fossil fuels.