

# Sofie Mia Otczyk Cripps

## Final Internship Report

1 August – 19 November 2024



I am a final-year undergraduate student from Gold Coast, Australia, studying a Bachelor of Laws (Honors) and Bachelor of Asian Studies. My passion for the environment stems from a childhood connection to the outdoors and Scouts. During my formal studies, I discovered Australia's close energy partnership with Japan, including the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain pilot project and initiatives like the Japan-Australia Energy and Resources Dialogue. This interest in Australia-Japan relations, alongside my fascination with Japanese language and culture, led me to pursue a 17-month journey in Kyoto, Sapporo, and Tokyo. I engaged in language training, an exchange program at Sophia University, and an internship at ISEP. I conducted research and participated in various discussions on sustainability, energy, and climate change, broadening my perspective on these critical issues. My experience at ISEP has deepened my commitment to pursuing a career and post-graduate education in environmental law and energy policy.

### **Biodiversity and Nature Conservation**

My first significant research project was on biodiversity and nature conversation. I highlighted the tension between Australia's renewable energy goals and nature conservation. Australia has seen a rapid increase in large-scale solar and wind projects. However, these developments often disrupt ecosystems, leading to habitat loss and increased extinction risks for species such as koalas, gliders, and wallabies. Existing policies aim to mitigate environmental impacts but face criticism for inefficiency, high costs, and insufficient enforcement. Reform is underway,

including introducing National Environmental Standards. Other suggestions for improvement include designating "green zones" and exploring innovative solutions, such as agrivoltaics that combine solar panels with grazing land, solar windows, motion-detection systems to minimize wildlife collisions with wind turbines. While these initiatives show promise, there is a pressing need for balance between renewable energy expansion and biodiversity protection, emphasizing sustainable practices and coordinated infrastructure planning.

### **Social Acceptance and Social Media**

My research on the social acceptance of climate change and renewable energy in Australia underscores significant public support for renewable energy but highlights challenges in implementation and communication. Rural communities hold concerns over land use, property devaluation, and consultation processes. Agrivoltaics faces hurdles due to unclear policies and infrastructure costs, and misconceptions about government revenues and fossil fuel subsidies also persist. I emphasized the importance of early consultation, transparent policies, and community involvement in renewable energy development. Positive online discourse can also enhance acceptance, but the prevalence of polarizing content and automated bots complicates trust-building. Social media campaigns led by credible organizations may foster constructive dialogues and counter misinformation, thus supporting broader public engagement and acceptance.

### **Events and Volunteering**

During my internship, I had the privilege of participating in a variety of events. Volunteering at the Yashio Festival and Yashio Board Game Night were particularly memorable highlights. These experiences provided a valuable opportunity to connect with the local community through interactive activities like lantern-making and games. It served as a reminder of the pivotal role grassroots engagement plays in encouraging meaningful initiatives, social consensus, and inclusive planning. Additionally, I attended informative online and in-person conferences, including *Social Acceptance of Local Renewable Energy Projects in Basque*; *Renewable Energy in South Australia*; *Taskforce on Best Practices in the Siting, Planning, and Permitting of Renewable Energy Projects*; *[Not] Yes in My Backyard Campaign in Australia*; and *Toward Carbon Neutrality in the Mobility Field*. These opportunities broadened my understanding of both the challenges and potential of integrating renewable energy technologies and electric vehicles in Japan, Australia, and worldwide.

### **Conclusion**

My experience at ISEP has been transformative, combining academic pursuits with practical involvement. My research on biodiversity, social acceptance, and the influence of social media highlighted the complex challenges of promoting sustainable practices while addressing ecological and societal issues. Volunteering and participating in events reminded me of the importance of community involvement and cross-jurisdictional collaboration in creating trust and driving change. It also increased my awareness of innovative solutions and policies

addressing the climate crisis, fostering a sense of hope. The welcoming office environment made it easy to form friendships with fellow interns and engage with staff. Moreover, the support provided by Yamashita-san and Chris, both personally and professionally, encouraged me to grow and take on new challenges. I hope to revisit the connections I have built through ISEP in the future.