

Notes from the meeting of the Mount Alexander Sustainability Group and Bendigo Sustainability Group with the Honorable Mr. Damian Drum MLC for Northern Victoria and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development on Tuesday September 20th 2011.

By Dean Bridgfoot, Tuesday 20th September 2011.

Attendees

Mount Alexander Sustainability Group (MASG)

Mick Lewin, Chair of MASG Community Wind Working Group

Frank Forster, member of MASG Community Wind Working Group

Dean Bridgfoot, MASG Community Wind Working Group

Bendigo Sustainability Group (BSG)

Karen Corr, member of BSG Policy and Advocacy Working Group

Jen Enticott, Project Manager Goldfields Solar Hub

Dear Mr. Drum

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the issues around community owned wind power and renewable energy in our region.

I note that you stated that you like the concept of community owned wind farms.

We wish to clarify with you that you support a lifting of the blanket ban on community wind farms within the Mount Alexander Shire and City of Bendigo east of the Calder Highway and place the control over planning decisions in these municipalities concerning wind farms with local authorities.

We understand that you would like to discuss this with the Mayor and CEO of the Mount Alexander Shire Council. We understand that you would be available to have such a meeting within the next few weeks if invited by the Council. We will inform them of your interest in meeting with them.

I note the following items that you have agreed to:

- Find out what science and departmental policy advice and their sources was given to the Planning Minister or Premier regarding setback distances for wind farms.
- Inform us what policy advice and recommendations and their sources were received by the Planning Minister or Premier regarding a blanket ban on wind farm developments in the Mount Alexander Shire and City of Greater Bendigo east of the Calder Freeway.
- Inform us what is the Coalition policy regarding the development of a medium and large scale solar Photovoltaic and solar thermal power generation industry in Victoria.

Given that these issues are of great concern to our membership and the wider community who are wishing to see action on climate change we are requesting that you **reply to us with this information by close of business Tuesday October 4th 2011.**

Finally we would encourage you to visit the award winning Hepburn Wind Farm in Daylesford to understand further the benefits of community owned wind.

We anticipate your interest in this and will contact Hepburn Wind to officially invite you to visit their award winning facility.

APPENDIX: Renewable Energy Lowering The Cost Of Electricity.

For years the prevailing public view has been that renewable energy will make electricity more expensive. Now, as more countries move towards a renewable energy future, evidence is showing that **more renewable energy in the mix actually results in cheaper power.**

Renewable energy has a few important advantages over conventional fossil fuel power that produce these economic benefits. Because renewable energy power plants are normally smaller and more distributed through the electricity network, it makes for an **electricity grid that is more stable**, with numerous points of power supply and more resilient to disruptions to infrastructure or peaks in demand. Further, most renewable energy power plants have **zero fuel costs**. As they are greenhouse pollution-free, they **don't have to worry about carbon costs**. Less moving parts on many power plants also means renewables are **easier to maintain and operate**. Basically, when a renewable energy power plant gets built, **it will run for next to nothing**.

The effect of renewable energy lowering the cost of electricity is demonstrated in the following articles and reports :

1. Wind Power Is Cutting Costs Of Electricity

In South Australia wind farms **generate 20% of the total electricity used in SA** and are responsible for bringing down the cost of wholesale energy to **the extent that SA has the lowest wholesale electricity prices in Australia and their emissions have fallen from the electricity sector by over 20%**. <http://www.climatespectator.com.au/commentary/why-wind-cutting-energy-costs>

In Europe and the USA: **Since 2005 in the United States, the average wind project has been producing electricity at less than the national average wholesale and in Germany, Belgium and Denmark an April 2010 a study showed that wind power was causing a drop in the overall cost of power in these countries. In 2009, the average wholesale electricity price fell in these countries by between €3 and €23 per MWh (\$4.3 - \$32.8 per MWh¹). If this reduction in wholesale prices occurred in the Australian market and was fully passed on to the consumer, it would lower household electricity bills by up to 15%.**

http://www.ewea.org/fileadmin/ewea_documents/documents/publications/reports/MeritOrder.pdf

2. How investments in Coal and Gas infrastructure will result in stranded and expensive infrastructure and lock us into higher future energy prices.

With the dramatic decrease in the costs of solar PV power and solar thermal power now occurring investment in NEW coal and gas infrastructure will result in stranded assets and locking Victorians into ongoing rising electricity prices.

See www.businessday.com.au/business/fossil-fuels-will-run-out-of-gas-when-the-solar-revolution-arrives-20110321-1c3qe.html

¹ Based on an exchange rate of A\$1=€0.7