

frNotes from meeting with Mount Alexander Sustainability group and Bendigo Sustainability Group
September 20, 2011.

Dean Bridgefoot said MASG had been working on wind power generation concept for about five years and that 18 months ago the idea gathered a bit of momentum as the group began looking at sites. The group has recently employed a person to begin community consultation.

The area to the “east of the shire” and north of the Calder Highway had been identified in DSE wind atlas as having stronger winds and therefore preferable for wind power generation.

While a Future Energy web site spoke of six towers in the Castlemaine area, the scale of the project talked about by MASG was for three towers. MASG is not now associated with the Future Energy company’s plans for the region.

There was extended conversation over whether there had been any significant anti-wind farm lobby or community expression which would have led in part or whole to the central Victorian area specified in VC82 being declared a no-go zone for wind turbine installations? MASG asked whether the same had been expressed to the State Government and if this was the background for the exclusion zone.

Damian Drum said he would seek from Government ministers the reasons for the exclusion and any information on what had informed the Government’s decision. Any further decisions on how Damian felt about the proposal and the exemption zone would be determined by the Ministers’ responses to that request.

Damian said he would welcome a discussion with Mount Alexander Mayor Janet Cropley and/or CEO Phil Rowland about the shire’s recent resolution to see a reversal of the central Victorian no-go zone. MASG would inform the Shire of this.

Dean was particularly keen to seek the background or policy advice which led to the no-go zone.

While Future Energy is reported to have lease agreements with two land-owners in the area, the Community Wind Farm does not. It has, however, had discussions with owners of potential sites.

Further wide-ranging discussion was held concerning the Government’s reduction of the solar feed-in tariffs and MASG and BSG expressed disappointment at the reduction and at what it believed this signified of the Coalition Government’s attitude towards encouraging renewable energy.

Damian’s response to the notes of the meeting supplied by Dean substantially agree, with the exception that Damian did not say he supported a lifting of the no-go zone and returning planning control to local government. He said he would seek details from Planning Minister Guy and Energy Minister O’Brien on the information/policies/inputs which led to the ban and would then consider his attitude and position.

On the issue of when Damian can supply a response on this, while MASG might welcome a response by “the close of business on October 4th”, Damian will reply when information is available.