

Why attack renewable energy when our community wants it?

This week the State Government unilaterally banned wind farms from half of our shire, banned them outright in the Macedon Ranges Shire and dramatically cut back the support for solar panels on homes.

Both decisions will hurt rural economies and will only make climate change worse. Wind and solar are viable alternatives to burning coal or gas to supply our electricity needs and both of these clean power sources bring valuable benefits to regional areas. The community owned wind farm at Daylesford contributed over \$7M to regional Victoria during its construction and employs 4 people. It also supplies all the power for over 2,000 houses, safely, reliably and cleanly. The wind farm is owned and managed as a cooperative, with local people having a say about its operation, and importantly, any profits made are returned to those local owners.

Imagine how it must feel to know that you own your own clean power station, that you doing something positive about climate change and that the money from the sale of the wind generated electricity stays in your town.

Naturally inspired by such a story a group of volunteers from the Mount Alexander Sustainability Group have started working to build a community wind farm in the Mount Alexander Shire. And we are not alone, there are community groups across the state wanting to take control of their power supply and do something dramatically effective against climate change.

We have spoken to hundreds of residents, by street stalls and door knocking, in the last 12 months asking them if they supported renewable energy and our plans for a community owned wind farm in the Shire. Over 85% of people supported a community wind farm, and over 87% thought that the government wasn't doing enough to support renewable energy, and that was before this series of attacks by the state government on renewable energy!

Renewable energy is already the preferred energy source for advanced economies. It already supplies large amounts of clean energy and jobs. In Germany it supplies 17% of all their energy and employs over 300,000 people and in Denmark wind alone supplies more than 20% of all the electricity used and is mostly owned by small cooperatives like the one we want to build in the Mount Alexander Shire.

With all of this activity renewable energy like wind power and solar is the fastest growing energy generation sector in the world. Last year, despite the global financial crises, worldwide investment in renewable energy rose 32% to be over \$211 billion.

In Victoria we have abundant renewable energy resources and should seize the opportunities this presents, not lock them out. We know that renewable energy like wind power is clean and will never run out. It uses no water, produces no pollution and is a very cost effective and safe way of generating power. Renewable energy is the only energy source that gets cheaper the more you install and it delivers valuable investment and job opportunities in regional areas. With every doubling of solar PV installed in Australia, prices have come down by 20%. Cutting support for Solar PV cuts the incentives for innovation and keeps Solar out of reach for many people.

We will be asking our State Government to reconsider these illogical and discriminatory policies and we will continue to work on renewable energy solutions to climate change like solar household PV and community wind farms in our Shire because we know that is what people want.

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