



Renewable Energy Benalla (REB) Report to Benalla Sustainable Future Group AGM

Thursday 27 May 2021

While the activities of Renewable Energy Benalla were impacted by COVID restrictions during 2020 some activities resumed with the easing of restrictions in 2021.

Benalla Community Energy Project (BCEP)

REB has been successful in implementing the Benalla Community Energy Project (BCEP) which aims to establish a donation based revolving fund to install solar panels, or undertake energy efficiency upgrades, on community facilities in and around Benalla.

The project provides interest free loans to the selected community facilities, to fund the works required, with no upfront contribution being required from the receiving community organisation. Loan repayments to the fund from the host site are based on the estimated savings made on energy bills. The loan repayments gradually rebuild the balance of the fund, which can then eventually be used to make a loan to another community building. In this way the fund becomes a revolving fund.

We were able to undertake our first project without conducting a fund raising program, as we obtained a grant for \$5000 from the Winton Solar Farm Community Benefit program. This grant, along with a significant donation from Sandy Campbell and a significant in-kind contribution from SolarGain, enabled us to install panels on Munro Ave kindergarten.

Following installation of the panels we conducted an official 'switch-on' ceremony at Munro Ave kindergarten on May 6th where Dr Helen Haines, the Independent Member for Indi, launched the Community Energy Project.

At the conclusion of this ceremony we announced the next project would be the Bernard Briggs Kindergarten.

A special thank you to members of the BCEP working group: David Blore, Patricia Brooke, Karen Nankervis.

Thanks are also due to the BSFG committee for their support of the BCEP.

Website and Social Media

Bev Lee and Peter Maddock continue to manage the operation of the REB website which receives a lot of attention. Recently, they have been joined by Heath Wiley who has initiated an Instagram account and is an excellent photographer. Our thanks to this Web team.

Current Investigations

Waste to Energy: Adrian Howden continues to investigate a variety of options for a utility scale waste to energy project for the Benalla region. COVID has restricted the extent of these investigations.

Solar Garden: Kevin Smith has been investigating Solar Gardens with the ultimate aim of establishing one in Benalla. A 'solar garden' is like a small solar farm where households unable to install solar panels (e.g. renters) can buy a 'plot' of panels and receive an annual credit against their energy bills for the energy it produces.

North East Community Energy Network (NECEN)

This network consists of representatives from all the community energy groups in North East Victoria.

A lot of valuable networking takes place at these meetings with each group reporting on their activities. The network is supported by Indigo Power. Following the success of the trial Community Power Hubs the state government is making funding available to set up six more hubs in Victoria. Indigo Power and Goulburn Valley Community Energy have put in a joint application to establish a Community Power Hub in Hume Region.

Transition Strategy

The Benalla Stationary Energy Transition Strategy which was developed with support from Beyond Zero Emissions details appropriate strategies to achieve our goal of 100% renewables by 2028. However, this is a complex task and while REB has managed to work on some of the strategies outlined in the Transition Strategy document, we urgently need more people to join us to help us achieve our goal.

Many of you will have recently received a letter appealing for people to join REB and help us achieve our vision of Benalla becoming a zero net energy town by 2028. This remains an urgent need.

John Lloyd
Convenor