

# Renewable Energy Benalla (REB) Action Group

## MINUTES

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022, 5pm at Uniting Church Meeting Room

### 1. Welcome

**2. Present:** John Lloyd, Kevin Smith, Peter Holmes, Peter Maddock, Larissa Montgomery, David Blore (via Zoom), Heather Thomas, Trish Brooke

### 3. Apologies:

Bev Lee has withdrawn but will attend meetings in future if there is a specific need

### 4. Review of minutes of 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 meeting

Moved: Kevin Smith    2<sup>nd</sup>: Peter Maddock    All in favour.

### 5. Business Arising

#### 5.1. Website - possibility of work experience student.

Bev and Peter haven't changed the website over yet as they are waiting on direct guidance on way forward and if name is changing.

#### 5.2 Storage of materials

John has put all files on a USB stick, Peter Maddock has taken the USB and will also transfer the files onto Google drive.

Variety of booklets - Indigo Shire booklets, BZE booklets, handouts from energy efficiency workshops. Peter M will store the hard copy materials.

### 6. Correspondence - through BSGF email account

#### 6.1 Microgrids - student interested in researching

Email received from student interested in researching micro-grids. Sent materials to him, however he has declined the offer.

#### 6.2 Solar panel recycling

Company wanted to set up a recycling collection point in Benalla. Need to follow up as haven't heard back from them. John will distribute the contact for someone to follow up.

Company seeking help re establishing a collection centre for end-of-life solar panel recycling is Solar Recovery Corporation. Phone: 03 7016 1640    Dylan Nichols was the original person to send the email seeking assistance but he has now left the company. Samuel Agostino is the person to contact.

### 7. Action Groups - Brief reports of any major developments

#### 7.1 Solar Garden

No further info has come from the NSW project. NECEN are talking about solar garden projects so Kevin will continue to keep up to date.

## **7.2 Benalla Community Energy Project**

The grant for Bernard Briggs project took a long time to come through from Winton Solar Farm. Launch of the new solar install on the Bernard Briggs kindergarten took place in February.

Possible further projects – Men's Shed in Waller Street.

Projects could also include energy efficiency measures such as solar hot water, draft proofing etc. Could just offer an interest free loan as would be difficult to work out energy and \$ savings.

Neoen might be another potential source of funding.

## **8. Future of REB**

### **8.1 REB and BCEP to be one action group**

Decided at the last joint meeting that there should be one action group. The possibility of a name change has also been discussed – this might be something the group needs to consider in future.

### **8.2 Transition Strategy**

Is the 2028 target still appropriate/achievable? The results of the Federal election might play a part in how appropriate the target is – it could very well make this target possible.

A lot is dependent on external influences. But will also be about how much REB could influence Council and other businesses.

Would a solar bulk buy achieve an increase in solar installs? With lower panel prices it might not have a big influence. Might be better doing a battery or solar hot water bulk buy.

Utility scale solar – Wangaratta still proceeding with 29 MW solar project in industrial estate. Construction starts in 2023 and aiming to be operational by 2024.

### **8.3 Strategic objectives from BSGF review process - *see next page***

Overlap with Sustainable Planning & Development & Retrofits group and REB energy efficiency and retrofit workshops.

Need to keep this in mind going forward. Ensure collaboration between the groups. The Sustainable Planning & Development & Retrofits group hasn't met yet so will reconsider after this.

## **9. Hume Community Power Hub**

Working on 6 projects, none in Benalla. More will be coming.

## **10. North East Community Energy Network (NECEN)**

Claire has taken over from Cam. All meetings have been on ZOOM with a guest speaker at each meeting. A lot going on – Indigo Power have just released another share issue.

## **11. General Business**

**Solar for Renters** - BSGF has received funding from Hume Community Power Hub.

Doing two forums – one for landlords and one for renters. Real Estate agents have agreed to send out emails to landlords. Brad Foletta will be speaking. Peter will also ask the Real Estate agents to attend so they can pass on information. Heather is happy to share her experience of converting a rental into all electric – renter getting very small electricity bills and very happy. Hoping to get a bigger response from renters. Renters can then talk to landlords through their real estate agents.

Swanpool Hall applied for a grant under DELWP Solar for Halls program to increase solar up to 30kW and change over inverters to be battery ready. However, committee decided not to go ahead.

## 12. New Convenor for REB

This is John’s last meeting. Peter suggested that the group could have joint responsibilities. Ensure continue to communicate and think about way forward when we next meet.

REB is no longer incorporated so don’t need to have a formal structure.

## 13. Next Meeting

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June 5pm

Addendum: Brad Foletta from SolarGain has said that he has enjoyed providing assistance to REB and is willing to continue helping when he can.

## Strategic Objectives/Goals from BSFG Review Process

Strategic Objective	Contributing ideas	Initiatives/Actions
<u>100% Renewable and community owned energy</u>	100% renewable energy for Benalla – Community/business owned 10 microgrids Solar charged city with charging stations Net zero achieved by 2032	Develop a micro-grid project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with RMIT Masters Student on developing a micro-grid pilot project</li> <li>• Organise Indigo Power to talk about how to create a micro-grid</li> <li>• Build and connect micro-grids for a bunch of houses</li> </ul> Engaging and working with BRC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with BRCC to increase Solar – on roof tops and a solar farm</li> <li>• Invite BZE to address BRC on reaching net zero</li> <li>• Seek out funding for installation of EV charging stations</li> </ul> Seek new Convenor for REB
Ecological, sustainable planning and development and Retro fits		Retro fit Advice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Options for renters and older housing for energy upgrades and retro fits</li> <li>• Open house for retrofits</li> <li>• Retrofit advisory sessions</li> </ul>