

## **Future of Renewable Energy Benalla - Report to BSFG Committee 26/10/21**

Renewable Energy Benalla (REB) has been struggling for some time to achieve some of its goals. We have recently had discussions about the future of REB. While these discussions about how the group will operate will continue for some time we believe we need to inform the BSFG committee of some proposals for change.

### **Title:**

Renewable Energy Benalla is a very broad title and could evoke the notion of direct marketing of renewables rather than the social/community goal of promoting the adoption of renewable energy across the Benalla community.

We are proposing that the title be changed to **Community Energy Benalla** as that better reflects the community focus.

However there is the issue of possible confusion with the Benalla Community Energy Project.

### **Considerations for Future Operations of the Group**

#### **Benalla Stationary Energy Transition Strategy**

The focus of this document is to reduce stationary energy emissions to zero by achieving 100% renewable energy within 10 years. The document outlines three key steps to achieving this:

- **Reduce** energy demand by 1/3 through energy efficiency
- **Replace** 1/3 with local renewables
- **Switch** 1/3 to renewable utility power

We are currently investigating a Solar Garden proposal which fits within the Replace with local renewables strategy.

The Benalla Community Energy Project (solar panels or energy upgrades) does focus on Replace but may also focus on Reduce if future projects are to do with improving energy efficiency.

Reduce and Replace strategies could be within the resources of Community Energy Benalla.

Switch to Utility Scale would be beyond the resources of CEB without major involvement from the council.

The goal of Switch would be to have a solar farm built to provide energy directly into the Benalla grid.

A local example is where Wangaratta Council invited a developer to build a solar farm to provide power to the industrial estate. This attracted industries to Wangaratta to benefit from cheaper renewable energy.

Could Benalla council be encouraged to do that for Enterprise Park?

#### **Reduce energy demand through better building and energy efficiency**

REB has conducted Energy Efficiency workshops in the past however the numbers attending the most recent workshops were disappointing. This is one of the key steps in reducing emissions and should continue to be part of the work of Community Energy Benalla.

There are many resources on the internet about retrofitting existing houses to make them more energy efficient and reduce energy bills. Possibly CEB could focus on directing people to these resources through website and social media?

Another possibility could be to conduct a forum focussed on people having problems paying their electricity bills.

#### **Energy Efficiency Awards**

In 2016 and 2018 BSFG and SunReal sponsored the Environmentally Sustainable Business Award as part of the Benalla Business Network "Business Excellence Awards". While it appears that BBN may not continue with these awards they may be interested in supporting an Energy Efficiency Award, obviously for businesses.

While it is obvious that some sort of sponsorship would be needed we believe it may be something worth pursuing, particularly with the focus on businesses. Sustainability Victoria assisted with the judging of the business awards and they may be able assist again.

Such awards may be best initiated by BSFG rather than CEB.

#### **Convenor Vacancy**

A major issue for Community Energy Benalla will be one of leadership as I will be moving away from Benalla in the near future.

**John Lloyd**