



Community Energy Co-Design Submission

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Location	Beechworth
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Your experience

1) What role do you see renewable energy playing in the future of your community?

Renewable energy provides a way to increase the resilience of the community, reduce costs and reduce emissions. In times of bushfire and heat waves, increased penetration of locally generated renewable energy combined with storage can provide a critical buffer against loss of power, particularly if the transmission lines from the La Trobe valley get threatened, as they often are.

2) What do people in your community think about renewable energy?

There is considerable interest in increasing the level of renewable energy in the local area.

3) What message about renewable energy is most important for regional Australia?

Renewable energy is an opportunity to diversify incomes (particularly for farmers), reduce costs related to energy, provide a new source of employment, become more resilient and reduce emissions.

Benefits

4) In your view, what are the most important benefits of community energy?

Community energy provides an opportunity to increase knowledge about the benefits of renewable energy, as well as providing an investment opportunity that is ethical and community based. It may also reduce the flow of money out of the regional economy.

5) Can you outline how community energy has benefitted your community?

In a previous location (Murrumbidgee) the local landcare group facilitated a group purchase and installation of solar panels throughout the community. It was very successful and helped the community reduce costs, increase local generation and generate income. At the time of the program renewable energy was paying 60C for each unit of excess energy generated.

6) Are there other benefits of community energy not outlined in this paper?

The ability of renewable energy to reduce emissions and help in the challenge of climate change is underdeveloped, but given the politics of climate change at the Federal Level understandable.

Barriers



7) In your view, what are the most important barriers to community energy?

The current position of community renewable energy seems similar to the initial development of Landcare. That is, it relied on passionate volunteers working in an additional role outside of their professional lives to get things to happen. This is a recipe for burn out, and faltering of progress. Funding to allow paid facilitators (or similar) to do the leg work to help projects off the ground would be very helpful.

8) Can you outline any barriers to community energy you have experienced?

A group I was working with (RAW Energy Inc) in a volunteer capacity spent considerable time trying to develop a 2 Mw community farm. The pace of change in the industry was just one of the reasons that this project could not be completed. There can be large technical requirements to get a larger project up and the volunteers may not have access to those skills.

9) Are there other important barriers to community energy not outlined in this paper?

The Federal Government is currently a blocker for renewable energy. Initiatives have to be taken in spite of the government and the current policy settings mean that people have to be creative to get things done. If the Federal Government could be encouraged to see the opportunities of both renewable energy and community energy the rate of positive change could be enormous. It would also provide an important economic stimulus.

Acceleration

10) In your view, what are the most effective measures to support community energy?

Changing policy settings to encourage renewable energy in Australia and accept that the change is occurring. This would also mean accepting the need for a just transition for coal communities that will be impacted. At the community energy level, providing access to paid facilitators to help develop the personal networks and undertake the administration needed to develop successful projects would be very helpful.

11) Have you received any support from Government before? How has it helped you?

12) Are there other policies not outlined in this paper to support community energy?