

Mount Alexander Sustainability Group

Member Newsletter, May 13th 2010

Key Dates

- *Sunday May 16th, Town Hall 2.30-5pm Volunteer thankyou concert*

MASG News and Events

Federal Budget 2010 - a lost opportunity

The Federal Budget has allocated \$652 million for a new Renewable Energy Fund, to be paid for from the delay in introducing the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

This fund will:

1. Make use of private sector investment in order to support renewable energy projects, along with the development and deployment of low emissions technologies.
2. Enhance Australia's take up of energy efficiency for households and businesses

Another \$6 million will be supplied to the Renewable Energy Target scheme which will see it split into two parts: a large scale renewable energy target and small scale renewable energy.

This compares with \$2.4 billion set aside in the previous budget in the Clean Energy Initiative for carbon capture and storage.

The actions proposed in the 2010 budget fall well short of leading Australia into a clean energy, low carbon future. As a first step, the Federal and State governments need to develop a plan that will lead to the closure of Hazlewood power station as soon as possible, followed by the phasing out of other carbon producing power stations over the next few years. To do this, they need to focus on what will give the renewable energy industry the confidence to invest in Australia on a large scale. Only part of the solution will lie in supporting developing renewable technologies as there are existing robust renewable technologies. Other answers lie in improving the marketplace for renewable energy technologies (a gross feed-in-tariff, an increased renewable energy target with accompanying renewable energy certificates) and reducing the barriers that make it hard for renewable energy technologies to be connected to the electricity grid.

The delayed implementation of a good carbon taxing scheme, which would have taken aim at Australia's top 1,000 polluting industries, needs to be offset by a program that puts a clear requirement on those industries to cut down their carbon emissions. Asking householders to become more energy efficient, without having stronger regulations about housing and urban design, will have little impact on our energy emissions but may reduce the pain householders suffer as our energy prices rise as fast and as much as the energy industry predicts.

As an aside, why is it OK to slug a resource tax on the mining industries but not a carbon tax? The first is a short term grab, the latter a genuine opportunity to restructure Australia's economy to be much more competitive in a carbon constrained world.

If you want to join MASG's 100% renewable energy campaign (and thanks to the 50 or so people who came to launch this at the Castlemaine Railway Station last Sunday) please call Dean Bridgfoot on 5470 6978.

MASG's solar panel program.

Thanks to all of our members who participated in the second round of installing solar panels on your roof tops. And thanks to Jayson who organised so much of the needed work at MASG for this. We have been asked if there will be a third role out of solar panels. The answer to this depends a lot on whether we get a grant under the State Government's new Solar Hubs program, recently announced. If we are successful in obtaining a grant under this program then obviously we will have a totally different program than if we don't get funding.

The Victorian Government will allocate \$5 million for a new Solar Energy Hubs program to assist the creation of up to 10 solar energy hubs across the State by 2013 – many of these in regional Victoria. Communities will be able to benefit from bulk purchases of solar panels and installation services, reducing the cost of individual rooftop solar system installations.

The solar energy hubs will be developed through partnerships between local community groups, local government, sustainability groups and other interested parties. These partnerships will form proposals for the installation of solar photovoltaic panels, which could be installed in a group of houses, community buildings or commercial properties.

Grants for the solar energy hubs will range from \$250,000 to \$1 million, with the maximum amount to be no more than \$500 per kilowatt of the individual photovoltaic system installed. Sustainability Victoria will assess the proposals and allocate funds to those projects that offer the best opportunities to reduce emissions, create green jobs, and attract investment. The guidelines for the program will become available early in the next financial year.

National Volunteers Week

This week is National Volunteers Week and a time for MASG to thank you all for your contribution to the organisation. We hope you know that MASG would be unable to undertake and complete the range of events and projects we do, without the dedication and hard work of volunteers. In recognition of this we have sent specific letters to volunteers, placed ads in the papers and hope you can all attend the thank you concert at the Castlemaine Town Hall on Sunday 16 May from 2:30 pm, which is being hosted by Mount Alexander Volunteer Network.

Office move

MASG is moving back into its original home in The Hub, on the corner of Barker St and Templeton St, on May 26. We hope to organise a celebration shortly after the chaos of the move has become manageable.

Community Groups Fly the Flag for Sustainability

Does your community group or business walk the walk on sustainability? Do they have a corporate policy on climate change? MASG has received funding from the Helen McPherson Smith Trust to deliver an arts project that will enable community groups in our Shire to express their organisations' commitment to sustainability

and climate change. You are invited to join a short series of arts workshops where your organisation's expression of climate change and sustainability activities and interests will be created. A series of enormous colourful flag-type banners will be produced that informs us of your organisations' platform on sustainability and climate change. If you are from a local corporate business or group with a policy on climate change and would like to walk the walk alongside your colleagues, this project is for you. It's free, and your organisation will be lifted in a celebration of colour and fanfare. Contact Deanna with expressions of interest by 31st May on 0428 751 090 or deanna@focusoncommunity.org or call MASG on 5470 6978.

MASG enews was put together by Bron. To advertise an event or comment on any items, please send to: e-news@masg.org.au or phone 5470 6978.