



24 January 2019

Subject: Position Statement to request Government support to help meet community targets for renewable energy for Tathra and Bega Valley

Background:

This position statement requests support from NSW and Australian Governments to assist the community of the Bega Valley Shire and our community organisation Clean Energy For Eternity (CEFE) to meet our local community renewable energy target of 50/50 BY 2020 (adopted in 2007), and to assist in meeting our group's goal of reaching a 100% renewable energy target by 2030.

The 50/50 targets translate to a 50% reduction in the use of energy (efficiency) and the use of 50% renewable energy by the year 2020.

CEFE was established in 2006, and has deductible gift recipient (DGR) status. Our group has successfully achieved the following:

- i. Prepared a Clean Energy Action Plan in 2007 (<http://cefe.webhive.com.au/wp-content/blogs.dir/85/files/2014/05/Action-Plan.pdf>).
- ii. Established the not-for-profit social enterprise ClearSky Solar Investments that provides finance for commercial solar installations through mum and dad investor funding. To date \$5.3 million has been raised to finance 32 projects across Australia totaling 3.8 MW
- iii. Held numerous Expo's with prominent public speakers, for local renewable energy, solar hot water and home insulation installers to demonstrate their products to the local community.
- iv. Partnered with local PV installers and facilitated several Solar PV Bulk buys. These bulk buys have assisted thousands of households to install Solar PV on their rooftops.
- v. In 2007, after being awarded a \$100k federal grant, explored the feasibility of community owned solar farms with the promise of \$1M in further funding if the business case was successful. Due to factors beyond CEFE's control, the business case was not deemed successful. The study closely resembled the Solar Gardens concept
- vi. Installed renewable energy on every community building in Tathra.
- vii. Helped fund and facilitate dozens of community groups, including RFS Fire Sheds across the Bega Valley Shire and beyond, in pursuit of funding for installation of PV infrastructure.
- viii. Developed the 30 KW "Imagine" Solar Farm, in partnership with the Bega Valley Shire Council, which operates at the local Tathra sewage treatment plant (STP) works, saving Council dollars. These savings are then passed back to the community through CEFE. We invest these savings into renewable energy installations on community buildings, in partnership with local organisations.

The Bega Valley primarily consists of agricultural land, State Forest and National Park estate. Our population is dispersed, mainly within our towns and villages across the Shire. We understand the grid in some areas is prone to significant transmission loss, occasional blackouts, with a number of communities at the end of long and vulnerable power lines.

Our community is confronted with increasing power prices. We have no control over resulting costs. The local economy suffers as dollars spent on retail electricity supply go directly out of our Region. Our fragile

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economy has suffered in recent years with job losses in forestry and commercial fishing. We continue to miss out on the jobs and investment benefits of the renewable energy boom that is happening elsewhere.

Current Situation:

The 50/50 by 2020 target deadline is approaching and it is time to reset our community targets in response to the urgent need for action on climate change, as revealed by the latest IPCC report. **Concern about the impact of climate change on our local community has escalated as we observe impacts of extreme weather events on our Region.**

To progress our 50/50 by 2020 and 100% by 2030 objectives:

- CEFE will host a **public meeting on 19th February 2019** in Tathra to ask the Bega Valley community to commit to a 100% renewable energy target by the year 2030. Speakers will include Dr John Hewson, Dr Andrew Blakers (ANU), Kristy McBain Mayor of BVSC, and Dr Matthew Nott (founding CEFE president). Political candidates for upcoming elections have also been invited to attend: a final panel session will provide opportunity for MP's and candidates to outline how they would support the target.
- CEFE is seeking support to develop a sound strategy to achieve the new 100% target, starting with a technical assessment to identify:
 1. electricity demand of the Bega Valley Local Government Area (BV LGA);
 2. available electricity grid capacity across the Bega Valley LGA; and identification of gaps in capacity or efficiency that could be addressed to advantage by renewable energy and storage installations;
 3. combinations of electrical generation and storage technologies available (including domestic and large scale) and capacities required to reach our proposed 100% renewable energy target by the year 2030.
- This proposed technical assessment would be our first step in development of renewable energy and storage infrastructure locally. The objective will be to:
 - encourage local investment;
 - generate local jobs;
 - assist us in maintaining our clean green image, so vital for our tourism and food production industries;
 - reduce our reliance on imported energy, thereby reducing transmission losses;
 - underwrite local network reliability; and
 - ultimately reduce the cost of electricity to our community; and bring some financial returns from power generation back into the local economy.
- In relation to the development of large renewable energy infrastructure in the Bega Valley, CEFE aims to establish a **Community Renewable Energy Corporation**.
 - This corporation would lead development of renewable energy infrastructure, pursuing opportunities to partner with government, financial institutions and/or developers and operators of renewable energy infrastructure.
 - We would work closely with Council, local businesses and householders; and would explore partnership opportunities with Local Aboriginal Land Councils re: potential for suitable land use agreements.
 - A goal would be to establish corporate Power Purchase Agreements with local energy users, and investigate opportunities of partnering with external organisations (e.g. city-based councils).
 - Local residents and businesses would be able to invest in ownership of the Corporation.
- In 2018 the Bega Valley Innovation Hub (BVIH) was established with Federal Government support. This organization has a goal of fostering regional innovation and entrepreneurship **within** our local community.
 - CEFE will investigate the opportunity to work closely with the BVIH in establishing our Bega Valley Community Renewable Energy Corporation to achieve 100/100 by 2030.

- CEFE also seeks support to help achieve the original **50/50 by 2020 target for the BVSC** with a combination of renewable and storage installations. The results of the proposed technical assessment would inform our local community of the shortfall of renewable generation required to meet the target. A number of options exist that would facilitate reaching the target such as:
 - partnering by Government with our Council to provide low interest loans (from Green Bonds for example), allowing Council to invest in large scale generation and storage that will create cost savings, cover the loan repayments and deliver a net benefit to rate payers;
 - Government installing renewable energy and storage on state-owned buildings across the LGA;
 - establishing a pilot finance facility to cover the up-front purchase and installation costs for domestic and business rooftop solar and batteries to be then paid off by the consumer at generous interest rates over time from power bill savings.
 - This access to low-cost finance (together with a coordinated procurement and installation package), would help remove the major barriers to people adopting renewable energy; and would help transform the local renewable energy economy by creating jobs and freeing up household and business budgets from the burden of increasing power bills. As stated previously, CEFE has been involved in several Bulk Buys and could co-ordinate with local business to achieve the best possible pricing.
 - This option would pilot a model of self-sustaining finance to help renew regional economies, for potentially scaling-up around the rest of the region and beyond.

In order to achieve our 100/100 by 2030 goal we propose to:

- a. Establish a 100/100 by 2030 Bega Valley Renewable Energy Steering Group. This would include CEFE members, renewable energy experts, Council representative and local business members; hopefully also supported with expertise from Energy NSW.
- b. Create a Bega Valley Community Renewable Energy Corporation (this would likely start as a not-for-profit corporation).
- c. Establish funding to help employ a project officer to:-
 - i. develop a brief to undertake a technical assessment; and
 - ii. under guidance of the Steering Group, develop a 'road map' to 100/100 by 2030.
- d. Engage specialists to prepare the technical assessment, as per the brief to be developed under item c) i., above.
- e. Develop a business case and a structure for investment.

IMAGINE

We imagine and are inspired by the following achievable ideas to help secure our community's future:

- Imagine a community solar farm at every Bega Valley Shire town and / or village Sewerage Treatment Plant.
- Imagine a simple finance package that allows every household and business to install rooftop solar and storage, removing the key barriers for them to participate in the renewable energy economy.
- Imagine the regional and local economic benefits that would flow from attracting major renewable investments to the Bega Valley, with opportunities to keep revenue local through local share-holdings; and with the critical power transmission and storage inefficiencies and gaps addressed in the process(not to mention power price reductions!).
- Imagine a partnership of NSW Government, Council, large scale renewable energy investors, a locally-owned Bega Valley Community Renewable Energy Corporation and local communities; with a share of the income being ploughed back into local community energy projects, making it a self-funding model once set-up.
- Imagine what the investment dollars of country - city partnerships could bring to the revival of regional Australia

We see a strong role for Government in helping achieve this vision for renewable energy and economic revival in the Bega Valley; and we seek your support in helping to make it happen.

Request:

That Government (both State and Federal) support CEFE and the Bega Valley community in achieving its renewable energy and related economic development targets by:

- 1. Supporting the 100/100 by 2030 Bega Valley Renewable Energy target.**

and by

- 2. Providing funding:**
 - i. To facilitate establishment of the 100/100 by 2030 Steering Group.**
 - ii. To facilitate creation of a Bega Valley Community Renewable Energy Corporation.**
 - iii. For the employment of a project officer to:-**
 - a. develop a brief to undertake a technical assessment; and**
 - b. under guidance of the Steering Group develop a 'road map' to 100/100 by 2030.**
 - iv. To engage specialists to prepare the technical assessment.**
 - v. To develop a business case and a structure for investment.**

**Dr Matthew Nott
President
Clean Energy for Eternity Inc.**