



4 Sept 2010

Annual General Meeting.

Chair's Report: Energy Innovation Co-operative Ltd

The Energy Innovation Co-operative Ltd. started as an idea, and has grown this far only because enough people also had the same idea- that we don't have to sit back and wait for others to lead, but can take constructive action ourselves.

We are a registered trading Co-operative. The Co-operative can develop a prospectus, invite investment in renewable energy generation, and pay dividends to members, like Murray Goulburn or perhaps more closely like the Hepburn Wind Co-operative.

But our organisation has a social purpose- which is to work together to help our community to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the demands of a climate changed environment. So we are a social enterprise, rather than a purely for-profit company. According to Wikipedia, "a social entrepreneur is someone who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change." I'd like all of us to think of ourselves as social entrepreneurs.

The rules of the Energy Innovation Co-op list 3 primary activities:

1. To inform members plus the broader community about renewable energy systems and the emerging renewable energy market
2. To facilitate the establishment of renewable energy systems with the objective of collectively selling surplus production into the energy market
3. To promote a carbon neutral business ethic.

This first year of our operation has seen a productive start-up to those activities.

We have a good strong board, which meets monthly and has been establishing our strategic direction, policies and procedures. Deputy Chair Moragh Mackay, Gil Freeman, Dave Sutton, Bruce Hydon (Treasurer), and I were elected at our Foundation meeting. Robbie Gray (Secretary) was appointed by the Board to replace Jeanette Swain who left the region. His position will become an elected board position next year.

(The Board can number between five and nine Directors, with up to two of those appointed, and the remainder elected by members. Half of the board will retire at each AGM, but can be renominated. The Chair and Deputy Chair are then elected into their positions by the new board. The Chair cannot be elected for any continuous period of longer than five years.)

We also have had the consistent efforts of Cassie Wright who produces the newsletter and is working with the board on our community activities and planning.

Membership of the Co-op is now around 60, with more prospective members on our mailing list. Membership is not expensive, and is a crucial factor in building our credibility and capacity as an effective organisation. I'd encourage people to formally join up.

We have had three newsletters and three activity days including a visit to two energy efficient buildings/ houses at Bass, a visit to the Island to view a two kw wind turbine and talk about project developments, and a meeting at

Wonthaggi Energy Innovation Festival to listen to a presentation on gassifiers as well as participate in the other presentations and displays at the Festival. Today's presentation from Rhys Freeman is another information sharing opportunity.

The Co-op has been represented at festivals in Wonthaggi, Korumburra, Loch, Foster and Cowes, and has completed presentations to the Victorian government, to Social Traders (private Foundation), to the Local Government Accord committee, and to other Sustainability groups across Gippsland. We share information through interactions with the South East Councils Climate Change Association and Gippsland Climate Change Network, through Bass Coast Landcare and other local networks.

In July 2010, the Co-op began asking people to submit expressions of interest in becoming involved in a bulk buy of solar panels. This has grown slowly into what is now proposed to be a Gippsland wide bulk buy in partnership with a range of other organisations including (we hope), Councils, and a funding application to receive a Victorian grant as a "Solar Hub".

There has been much work on funding applications and project development.

Our first two successful grants were from Bass Coast Shire and Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment. We are very grateful to those organisations, as the first grants, when you have no organisational history, are always the hardest to gain.

Those grants enabled us to take on Brett Whittle, who is working on our website and a Transition Towns Project, which will enable the Co-op to add value to the work of groups in several small communities. We will provide workshops and information helping householders reduce their carbon footprint and save on energy bills. We hope for a positive announcement of Climate Communities funding for this project in the next week or so.

Three Co-op members who are registered home sustainability assessors, have worked with and through the Co-op to apply for funding to continue free home sustainability assessments in this region, under the new Green Start program. (The outcomes from this may well be dependent on who ends up being our Federal government.)

We have also had some advice from a Melbourne based engineer, Bill Proudfoot, who was engaged to provide technical project development support. He had some input into a "pitch" to the organisation Social Traders, which has just given us some very good news about an application for funding and mentoring support for the Co-op. That will be formally announced in October.

The Co-op has also asked various members and others to submit initial outlines of potential small- medium sized renewable energy generation projects of different types they'd like to see developed in this region. There are several state government funding programs which provide feasibility study or other start-up funds for these kinds of projects. I would encourage others with ideas to put them onto a couple of pages and we will see what we can apply for.

I would hope that at next year's AGM, Co-op members will have been offered the opportunity to invest in some of these projects, and that we are well and truly on the way to making a contribution towards all three of our primary objectives.

Thank you again to the Board, and to the members. I hope that we can continue to gather strength in numbers, but also in your active involvement in Co-op activities. Sharing your enthusiasm, skills, ideas and information will help ensure we become a strong and effective organisation which can lead the real changes we need, to move our community towards a zero emissions future.

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