



23 November 2021

The Secretariat
Legislative Council
Environment and Planning Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

INQUIRY INTO RENEWABLE ENERGY IN VICTORIA

The Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is pleased to take this opportunity to submit a response to the Environment and Planning Standing Committee's inquiry into Renewable Energy in Victoria.

NAGA is a network of nine councils across the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne working to achieve significant emissions abatement and energy cost savings by delivering effective programs and leveraging local government, community and business action. Our members are Banyule City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Manningham City Council, City of Melbourne, Moreland City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, City of Whittlesea and the City of Yarra. NAGA formed in 2002 to share information, coordinate emission reduction activities and cooperate on research and develop innovative projects.

NAGA's position is that efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions need to accelerate rapidly, in line with the latest science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The most recent IPCC report, the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), states that if greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current rate, the global mean surface temperature increase is likely to exceed 1.5°C by the end of the 21st century, relative to an 1850 to 1900 baseline. In this context, the accelerated transition to a renewables-based society and economy is of primary importance.

Victorian local governments are already active in supporting and directly contributing to the growth of renewables, including through:

- installing rooftop solar on council facilities, such as recreation centres, swimming pools, libraries and town halls;
 - engaging and supporting local business to install rooftop solar, in particular using energy upgrade agreements as a form of financing;
 - investigating the feasibility of investing in solar farms on municipal land;
 - supporting community energy groups;
 - using special rates mechanisms to make rooftop solar available to previously neglected audiences, such as low-income households;
 - facilitating bulk buys for rooftop solar for residents and small businesses;
 - investing in renewable energy within Victoria, firstly through the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project and more recently through the larger Victorian Energy Collaboration;
 - shifting existing council vehicle fleets from internal combustion engine cars to electric vehicles, powered by renewable energy;
 - conducting community engagement initiatives to support local residents reduce household-based emissions, such as through the installation of rooftop solar;
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- being the responsible authority for renewable energy facilities under 1MW in capacity; and
- the enforcement of wind energy facility permits.

These activities are, in many instances, underpinned with the legislative, policy and resourcing support of the Victorian government. However, to meet the accelerated challenges posed by climate change, we recommend the following actions that could be undertaken by the Victorian government to better support local governments and their communities:

1. Set science-based emissions reduction targets for Victoria to achieve a 40–45 per cent reduction on 2005 emissions levels by 2025, and 65–75 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030.
2. Research and develop an immediate pathway to increase the state renewable energy target to 100% by 2030, to smooth the costs of the transition as coal fired power generation exits the market.
3. Conduct additional reverse auctions to increase investment in new renewable energy production for state government operations.
4. Streamline grid connection regulations to reduce costs for new renewable energy projects.
5. Support the deployment of large and medium scale energy storage projects. In addition to grid scale storage, there are likely strong benefits in providing more support for mid-scale “neighbourhood” batteries closer to consumers.
6. Recognise the current limitations with existing regulatory frameworks that hinder the transition to a 100% renewable grid, and overcome these through:
 - a. changes to energy market regulations to support peer-to-peer trading and distributed generation and storage; and
 - b. cost reflective use of network mechanisms such as ‘local use of system’ type-tariffs;
7. Develop mechanisms to apply small technology certificates or other solar rebates to community solar models such as solar gardens.
8. Support community energy organisations groups with resources and training.
9. Build a strong local workforce to deliver the services required to transition the state to a renewables-based society and economy. This would establish the skills, expertise and professional services for Victoria to become a leading market for innovative climate change solutions.
10. Actively support the accelerated transition to electric vehicles by developing a state-wide vision, strategy and plans, coordinated with both Federal and Local Governments, to address the barriers to electric vehicle uptake including, but not limited to, vehicle costs and incentives, public charging infrastructure and planning provisions for new developments;
11. Ensure new buildings and urban renewal precincts are not locked into natural gas infrastructure and support communities to prepare for the transition away from natural gas. These requirements should instead require zero emissions infrastructure and for new developments to achieve 100% renewables.

Please contact me if you would like further information regarding the issues raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Meiklejohn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Meiklejohn
Executive Officer
