

Australian Local Power Bill 2020

ACF AWR Submission To:

THE HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the *Inquiry into the Australian Local Power Agency Bill 2021 and Australian Local Power Agency (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2021*.

We are a community group of Australian Conservation Foundation in the Albury Wodonga Region (ACF AWR) covering entire or parts of the beautiful Local Government Areas of Albury, Federation, Greater Hume, Indigo, Towong, Wangaratta and Wodonga. The majority of our members have lived in this region for most if not all of their lives. We love the natural beauty of our region as well as the social and economic opportunities available here and the sense of community we gratefully receive in this glorious part of Australia. However, we are acutely aware of the risks of losing much of what we love.

We are deeply concerned about the increasing and accelerating shift in climatic patterns that have also seen an escalation of dramatic natural disasters with their concomitant and significant social and economic impacts in our region that can no longer be ignored or excused. Both our urbanised communities and farming communities are aware that we must take action and that we must act now. The urgency of the situation is clearly understood by most, if not all. Indeed, the most recent [Climate Poll by the Lowey Institute](#) found that 'Six in ten Australians (60%) say 'global warming is a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now, even if this involves significant costs' which was an increase since the 2020 poll. This poll also found that 'Three-quarters of Australians (74%) say 'the benefits of taking further action on climate change will outweigh the costs' and that 'Almost all Australians (91%) say they would support the federal government 'providing subsidies for the development of renewable energy technology' (Lowey Institute, 26 May 2021).

Members of this Parliamentary Committee would also be aware that a grass-roots movement is well underway around Australia to address climate change and improve their social, economic and environmental outlook. In recognising the extent of the threat, communities around Australia are no longer waiting for our leaders to respond but are working hard towards finding their own solutions. With additional, community-led, well-considered and targeted support, these communities and others could accelerate their efforts and realise the benefits much more quickly.

Dr Helen Haines has worked closely with her community to develop the *Australian Local Power Bill 2020* that will provide a blueprint to empower regional communities by creating a local power scheme, a community renewable investment scheme, and underwriting a new community investment scheme while attracting significant private investment to the regions. We believe that the *Australian Local Power Bill 2020* will create significant, positive economic outcomes for regional communities. Furthermore, the legislation will contribute to sustainable development as there are significant environmental and social benefits. Environmental benefits include reduced greenhouse gas emissions to reduce natural disasters that are also economic and social disasters. Social benefits include supporting resilient communities as we move to the now clearly inevitable clean-energy future and low carbon global economy.

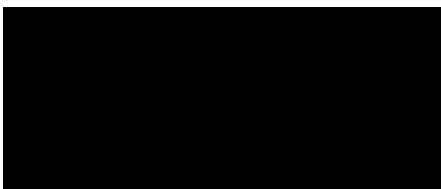
It is important to note, and it is our strong belief, that the significant benefits noted, above, will only be realised if all proposed elements of the *Australian Local Power Bill 2020* are enacted.

In alignment with the [Coalition for Community Energy](#) (C4CE), the *Australian Local Power Bill 2020* seeks to increase support and outcomes for communities and community energy groups to be or continue to be at the forefront of driving:

- **A faster transition to a zero-carbon electricity system**
We recognise Climate Change as a threat to our future survival and therefore the urgency in transitioning to green energy. We do not see that large-scale investment with large-scale infrastructural changes to be an expedient solution here.
- **Local ownership and control of energy assets**
Regional communities like ours see no value in big corporate, foreign-owned organisations stepping in with their own commercial ends in mind.
- **Energy efficiency, working with all consumers to improve energy costs and usage**
As with all communities, we have a broad range of energy consumer needs. Energy costs are also making up an ever-increasing proportion of low-income household expenses, often called "energy poverty".
*NB The Wodonga Council local government area has the highest rate of electricity disconnections in Victoria. [*Border Mail Article Oct 2017: Wodonga most vulnerable community in Victoria for energy or water disconnections]*
- **Zero-carbon community planning, empowering consumers to participate**
'Totally Renewable Yackandandah' stands out as a case in point of a community in our region that is planning its own destiny in renewables. Through local participation they have been able to resource funds and support to move forward and grow.
- **Local job creation with regional investment and allowing communities to benefit from their own resources.**
In order to retain the health and well-being of our regional communities we need to see the benefits of restructuring investments come back into the communities through local ownership and investment which provides profit flow-back into the communities, employment and growth in a localised skills base and capacity.

As a growing regional and global community, we have proven our increased capacity to find solutions to challenging problems by investing in the creative and clever people needed to find the best solutions and to bring about the changes required to resolve the problems we face. We strongly believe that there must be a greater focus on clean energy from our politicians in power, and urge our government to expedite processing all elements of the *Australian Local Power Bill 2020* which will provide a big step forward in transitioning our regional communities to clean energy and ensuring their resilience and economic security. Clearly, these outcomes also benefit Australia as a whole.

Warm regards,



Mr Bart Citroen

per Australian Conservation Foundation Community Albury Wodonga Region (ACF AWR)

