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ABN 87 572 206 200  
Reg No. G0003442Y

## Australian Local Power Agency Bills

Written response to the House Environment and Energy Committee

### Introduction

Hepburn Wind is a clear example of the capacity for the proposed Australian Local Power Agency Bills to significantly support rural and regional Australia in a time of rapid change. We are located in the Hepburn Shire, a small regional Local Government Area with just over 15,000 residents. Our community organisation has supported regional development across the Hepburn Shire for over a decade with clear results, including:

- Total energy generated of 93,365MWh abating 100,834 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>
- Total Community Fund benefit of \$279,914, including 57kW of donated solar and 13.5kW of battery storage projects across eight community facilities
- Total partnership funding of \$366,522.00
- Total Hepburn Wind funding in the wind farm, small scale solar/batteries and various programs of \$10,008,550.23
- Public investment in partnership programs of \$2,068,854.00.

### Planned and delivered projects supported to date

Hepburn Wind has supported 13 completed projects or programs of various scales and has a further 11 planned or ongoing projects. These include mid-scale and small-scale community energy, various partnership projects and several programs delivered across the lifespan of the cooperative. For a more detailed breakdown of these different projects and their funding, please read the spreadsheet provided.

#### Mid-scale (1-10MW):

Mid-scale here refers to energy projects that are between 1-10MW in capacity. Our projects are tailored to the local context and community interest. Our planned and completed projects include:

- **The wind farm (completed):** Hepburn Wind delivered Australia's first mid-scale community-owned energy project, a two turbine wind farm with 4.1MW capacity in 2011.
- **Solar farm (planned):** We have submitted a planning application to co-locate a solar farm of 7.44MW DC (5MW AC) capacity.
- **Battery storage facility (planned):** The above planning application also seeks to add a 10MWh battery at the wind farm site.

#### Small scale (< 100kW):

These projects have been delivered with community facilities and often in partnership with other funders such as the Hepburn Shire Council and the Hepburn Solar Bulk-Buy:



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- *Hepburn Recreation Reserve*: Coordinated and contributed funding (\$4,500) to the installation of a 25.08kW solar and 13.5kWh battery system. The total funding required was \$31,818 and was sourced from various funders, including the Hepburn Solar Bulk Buy, Hepburn Shire Council and a grant sourced by the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance.
- *Trentham Neighbourhood House*: Coordinated and funded (\$9,000) installation of 6.325kW of solar.
- *Korweinguboora Recreation Reserve*: Coordinated and funded (\$5,559) installation of 3.3kW solar system.
- *Leonards Hill Hall*: Coordinated and funded (\$6,765) installation of 3.3kW solar system.
- *Ballan & District Community Hall*: Coordinated and funded (\$4,124) installation of 6.6kW solar system.
- *Clunes Bowling Club*: Coordinated and funded (\$3,000) the installation of a 6.05kW solar system.
- *Creswick Neighbourhood Centre*: Coordinated and funded (\$5,500) the installation of a 3.24kW solar system.
- *Daylesford Neighbourhood Centre*: Coordinated and funded (\$5,500) the installation of a 3.24kW solar system.

## Partnership and funded programs

Hepburn Wind led the establishment of the collaborative shire-wide partnership program called Hepburn Z-NET. This partnership seeks to reach zero-net energy by 2025 and zero-net emissions by 2030. In 2019 we supported the development of a shire-wide emissions baseline and co-developed a Community Transition Plan. This masterplan and associated programs have leveraged over \$4,000,000 in community, government and philanthropic investment in the Hepburn Shire. Key programs and projects that we support or deliver as part of this are outlined below.

- ***The Hepburn Solar Bulk-Buy***: This program is led by the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance in partnership with Hepburn Wind. The bulk-buy has installed 202 solar systems and eight battery systems, adding 983kW of local solar capacity. The various rounds of the Hepburn Solar Bulk-Buy have facilitated \$1,643,854 in public investment.
- ***Hepburn EV Bulk-Buy***: This bulk-buy was led by the Good Car Company and facilitated by Hepburn Wind. The program sold 12 electric vehicles in their first round.

*This program was started and completed in 2020.*

- ***Home Energy Assessment and Energy Savvy Upgrades***: This program is delivered by Transition Creswick and supports Hepburn Shire residents and homeowners with energy assessments and some retrofit support. Since commencing in 2020 the program has assessed 71 homes and facilitated 25 energy-efficient retrofits with 19 planned retrofits.

*This program started in 2020 and is ongoing.*



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- **Hepburn Z-NET Agriculture Guide:** This guide was delivered as a key output of the Hepburn Z-NET collaborative partnership. It is an in-depth guide for how the agriculture sector can reach zero-net emissions in the Hepburn Shire. This was launched with Farmers for Climate Action in 2021.

*This project started in 2020 and was completed in 2021.*

- **Trentham Carbon Forestry Project:** This project is delivered by Trentham Sustainability Group and Wood 4 Good and was funded through Hepburn Wind's Impact Fund. This project is supporting the uptake of agroforestry and carbon forestry opportunities across Trentham.

*This project was started in 2021 and will be completed later this year.*

- **Energy Smart Schools:** Hepburn Wind supported six Hepburn Shire schools to fund and coordinate the installation of demand management and education packages from Wattwatchers and Solar Schools as part of the My Energy Marketplace program. Two schools have had their installations and training conducted.

*This project started in 2021 and will be completed in 2021.*

- **Schools Curriculum:** Hepburn Wind partnered with CERES School of Nature and Climate to deliver a bespoke science and climate education package with both face-2-face and online components. This project started in 2019 and will be available publicly once Covid-19 restrictions ease.

*This project started in 2020 and will be ongoing.*

For a more detailed breakdown of these projects, their funding and or investment, please refer to the spreadsheet provided.

## Ownership structure and number of shareholders/members

Hepburn Wind is a cooperative with 2009 shareholding members who have voting rights and the ability to participate democratically in decision making. Hepburn Wind's entity name is Hepburn Community Wind Park Cooperative Limited and as a cooperative, we have rules regarding:

- the number of shares held by each shareholder
- prohibiting the quotation of its shares to the public
- our primary purpose, whether it be in marketing, processing or storing commodities for disposal or distribution among its shareholders, or rendering other services to its shareholders.

## Dividends and returns paid to shareholders or members

The cooperative has provided various member returns since 2017. In total, members have received \$496,578.32 in dividends, delivered in 2019 and 2021. Member returns have included a share buy-back in 2021



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of \$497,075 share pool, a capital buy-back of \$32,040 in 2019. In total, \$1,029,115 has been provided back to members in these returns.

For more detail, see the spreadsheet provided and the Dividends and membership page.

## Total number of ongoing full-time employees

Hepburn Wind employs three staff, the General Manager (0.6), Project and Communications Officer (0.6) and Membership and Administration Officer (0.2), all of whom are part-time. Their total hours come to a 1.4FTE position.

## Total amount of salary paid to employees or board members annually

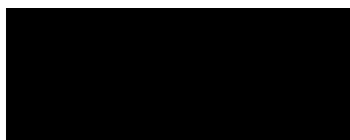
For the 2021 financial year, Hepburn Wind staff will be paid a total of \$135,567 across these different positions. The board receives a voluntary allowance of \$500 which is available to all seven board members and can cost \$3,500 when adopted by each director, however, generally this offer is not taken up.

## Conclusion

Our cooperative has demonstrated the potential benefits to regional and rural communities through supporting community energy. We believe that the Australian Local Power Bills would ensure that people across the country can make their communities stronger and take advantage of the renewable energy boom.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.

Kind regards,



Taryn Lane  
General Manager  
Hepburn Wind