**SUBMISSION NO. 19**

3 September 2002

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Secretary: *Paul Hume*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Dear Committee Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Employment in the Environmental Industries.

The Renewable Energy Generators of Australia (REGA) was formed in 1999 to provide a voice for the renewable energy industry, and to provide support for renewable energy initiatives that encourage the development of the Australian renewable energy industry.

REGA is an association of organisations with a common purpose of supporting the development of generation of electricity from truly renewable resources. REGA represents all sectors of the renewable energy industry; membership comprises 95% of the existing generation capacity, together with equipment suppliers, developers and industry specialists. A common coalition between the members of REGA is commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change is currently a highly politicalised environmental issue. The Commonwealth has recognized the role that the renewable energy industry plays in greenhouse gas abatement and has shown great initiative in its efforts to abate greenhouse gas emissions through the introduction of the Mandated Renewable Energy Target (MRET). REGA, however, urges the Commonwealth build on this and the Renewable energy action Agenda by specifically including the renewable energy industry within the definition of the environment industry. The growth opportunities within the environment industries can only be realised when there exists a concrete definition of the environment industries and the core sectors within it. Resources and effort can only be effectively deployed where target areas are identified by sound analyses informed by sound conceptual frameworks. The employment potential in the renewable energy sectors is both significant in its degree and core to the growing environmental industries.

Another significant interest of many REGA members is in the critical area of water management and conservation generally and the use (but not consumption) of water for electricity generation.

In an era of increasing concern about Australia's and the world's water resources, it is important to see water in its context as a vital part of our total environment.

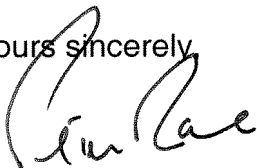
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The environment industry has the capacity to improve the quality of the environment, generate employment, capture export market opportunities and make businesses in other sectors more efficient by producing less waste using fewer resources. The industry is based on knowledge and engineering skills and has a competitive advantage based on this diverse skills base, strengths in consulting, waste management and recycling. The industry is strategically important as it cuts across many, if not all, sectors of the economy and provides and underpins the sustainable development objectives of Australia.

There have been a number of studies over time that have set out to define, or put a ring round, what the environment industry is. The general consensus is that there is no universal agreement on the criteria that may determine the boundaries of the industry, in part because it is still rapidly evolving. An objective of REGA is to initiate and co-ordinate research, modelling and statistical development of material relevant to greenhouse gas emission reduction as a means to aid policy development. In March 2001 REGA funded a study by ACRE entitled, 'The Economic Development and Job Creation Potential of Renewable Energy' (see attachment). Earlier in 2002 REGA made a submission to the COAG Energy Markets Review and were asked, along with other renewable energy businesses and associations, to identify what impacts pro renewable energy industry policy would have on the Australian economy. Questions of this nature are extremely difficult to answer without reliable base information. It is a Commonwealth role through organizations such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to provide this base information. We understand that the ABS is currently working on environmental industry information including renewables, however, we urge the Commonwealth to fast track this process given the current global environment issues related to climate change.

We see the opportunity for this inquiry to improve on the current understanding of the environment industry. REGA, as a part of the environmental industry, would welcome the opportunity to expand on this submission at any stage during the inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Hon. Peter Rae AO  
**Chairman**

**Renewable Energy Generators of Australia Ltd**