



Benalla Sustainable Future Group

Newsletter 21

June 2018

Benalla Sustainable
Future Group Inc.
PO Box 642
Benalla 3672

Next Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of Benalla Sustainable Future Group will be held on

Thursday 28th June at 7:30pm

in the meeting rooms at the Uniting Church, Carrier Street, Benalla.

After accepting the minutes of the previous AGM and presentation of reports all elected positions will be declared open and there will be an election of President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary plus a minimum of four committee members and a nominated member from the Food Co-Op.

This year John Lloyd will not be accepting nominations for President nor the Committee as his work with Renewable Energy Benalla is occupying him fully. So please give consideration to nominating for an Office Bearer or Committee position. Contact me if you require further information about standing for a position.

Our guest speaker for the meeting is Leigh Ewbank who is the current 'Act on Climate' coordinator for Friends of the Earth. He has also worked on the 'Yes 2 Renewables' campaign and was very much involved with campaigning against the anti-wind farm lobby. 'Yes 2 Renewables' was the driving force behind the campaign to restore fair wind farm laws in Victoria, and spearheaded the case for a Victorian Renewable Energy Target. Leigh has a Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) from RMIT University, Melbourne. He has been engaged in climate and energy debates for years and more recently has lectured in the Urban Planning and Energy and Energy Policy and Management courses at RMIT University.

We look forward to seeing you at our 2018 AGM.

Peter Maddock, Secretary

President's Column

Federal Budget Ignores Climate Change

It appears that Australia's response to intensifying extreme weather events remains at the bottom of the national agenda, as climate change barely rated a mention in the Federal Budget.

Climate Council Acting CEO Dr Martin Rice said it was disappointing the Federal Government's 2018 Budget had appeared to ignore climate change, despite the nation's greenhouse gas pollution levels continuing to rise for more than three consecutive years.

"The Federal Government's continuous failure to seriously tackle climate change is an embarrassment," he said.

"Australia is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in the developed world, with worsening extreme weather events including severe heatwaves, supercharged storms, heavy rainfall, flooding, droughts and bushfires."

"Australia is at risk of further cementing its reputation as a global laggard when it comes to slashing growing greenhouse gas pollution levels and tackling climate change. We cannot continue to sit on our hands, while nations like New Zealand and France show real climate leadership."

"Australia must rollout credible climate and energy policy that ramps up our transition to clean, affordable and reliable renewable energy and storage technology, while moving away from our polluting fossil fuel past. The only thing standing in our way is political will." (Climate Council media release, 9/5/2018)

Our biggest climate error

Ross Gittins, writing in *The Age*, also reports that after combing through the budget's fine print he finds that

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." - Mahatma Gandhi

its thousands of pages make almost no mention of climate change. ('Our biggest climate error', 30/5/2018)

Gittins says, "I fear that history won't be kind to the present generation. We've known of the scientific evidence for human-caused global warming since the late 1980's. Since then the evidence has only strengthened. And by now we have the evidence of our own senses of hotter summers and autumns and warmer winters, plus more frequent extreme weather events. And yet as a nation we procrastinate."

Gittins states, "The biggest mistake we've made is to allow our politicians to turn concern about global warming into a party-political issue, and to do so merely for their own short-term advantage. The initial motives may have been short-term, but the adverse effects have been lasting."

"Global warming used not to be, shouldn't be and doesn't have to stay a right-versus-left issue. In Europe it is bipartisan. Margaret Thatcher was a vocal fighter for action on climate change, and the Conservative Party is anti-denial to this day."

Gittins concludes by saying, **"But we can't put all the blame on short-sighted politicians and crony capitalism. If enough of us did more to voice our disapproval, the polities would change their tune very quickly. And we'd have a more convincing story to tell our grandchildren when they want to know what we did in the climate war."**

(My emphasis)

John Lloyd

NEG's 2030 targets already exceeded

Renewable Energy projects underway across Australian states and territories have already exceeded the 2030 targets outlined in the Federal Government's proposed National Energy Guarantee (NEG), according to new data.

Renewable Energy Index figures confirm that Australia already has more clean, reliable and affordable renewable energy projects locked in or underway now, than the NEG's weak target for a 26% reduction in greenhouse gas pollution would deliver by 2030.

Climate Councillor and energy expert Professor Andrew Stock said, "Australia's thriving renewable industry, supported by leading states' initiatives, have already achieved and exceeded the weak 2030 target of the proposed Federal Government's National Energy Guarantee," he said.

"This means if the National Energy Guarantee is implemented as is, we will see Australia's renewables and battery storage boom grind to a halt, thousands of jobs lost, billions of dollars of investment stalled, and regional areas bearing the brunt of this downturn."

"The Climate Council is urging state and territory leaders not to settle for anything less than a credible climate and energy policy that Australia can be proud of. The NEG will not deliver this."

(Climate Council, 18/4/2018)



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

Emissions rise for third consecutive year

Peter Hannam reports that Australia's greenhouse gases rose for a third consecutive year in 2017, led by emissions from the gas and transport sectors, according to federal government data. (Emissions up for third year', *The Age*, 15/5/2018)

The National Greenhouse Gas inventory for last year, released in early May, showed emissions were up 1.5 per cent compared with 2016 to 533.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent.

After sinking during each year of the Labor-Gillard governments, emissions began to pick up with the end of the carbon price by the Abbott government in 2014. Most economic sectors reported a rise in pollution in 2017, with so-called fugitive emissions – mostly from the liquefied gas industry – alone increasing 10.5 per cent, and transport 3.8 per cent.

The electricity industry was one sector to report an emissions reduction, cutting almost 6 million tonnes or 3.1 per cent. Hazelwood, Australia's most emissions-intensive coal-fired power plant closed last March.

Australia's emissions are "clearly going in the opposite direction" from what is needed to meet the Abbott-Turnbull government's Paris climate pledge, said Bill Hare, director of Climate Analytics. "To get to 2030 ... you need to be reducing emissions about 1.5 per cent a year."

Since the Coalition repealed the carbon prices at the end of June 2014, emissions have increased 3.6 per cent, reversing a fall of more than 11 per cent during the Rudd-Gillard Labor governments, ACF said.

The trajectory of rising emissions makes the 2030 target more difficult to reach, Gavan McFadzean, ACF's climate change program manager, said.

"We need a comprehensive national climate change plan that will rapidly cut pollution across our society and ensures Australia plays its fair role in halting global warming and ensuring we maintain our safe climate," he said.

(Peter Hannam, *The Age*, 15/5/2018)



Climate Change an 'existential security risk'

A Senate inquiry has told parliament that climate change is a "current and existential national security risk" to Australia, one that could inflame regional conflicts over food, water and land, and even imperil life on Earth.

Ben Doherty, (Climate change an 'existential security risk' to Australia, *The Guardian*, 18/5/2018) reports that the Senate committee inquiry into the implications of climate change for Australia's national security recommended an increase in foreign aid to be dedicated to climate change mitigation and adaptation in the region, as well as a government white paper on climate security, Department of Defence emissions targets and a dedicated climate security post within the Department of Home Affairs.

The inquiry heard that the security risk of climate change was not a possible future threat but one that endangers Australia and its region now. The Asia-Pacific was the region "most vulnerable" to the security and humanitarian impacts of climate change, the committee heard, and faced an "existential threat".

An existential threat was defined as "one that threatens the premature extinction of Earth-originating intelligent life or the permanent and drastic destruction of its potential for desirable future development".

The committee report said climate change threatened Australians' health, and the viability of communities, businesses and the economy. Climate change was heightening the severity of natural hazards, increasing the spread of infectious diseases and increasing water insecurity, and threatening agriculture.

The Climate Council told the committee climate change was "already contributing to increases in the forced migration of people within and between nations, as well as playing a role in heightening social and political tensions, flowing onto conflict and violence".

And the Department of Defence agreed climate change had the potential to worsen existing conflicts.

"When climate impacts are combined with ethnic or other social grievances, they can contribute to increased migration, internal instability or intrastate insurgencies, often over greater competition for natural resources. These developments may foster terrorism or cross-border conflict."

The Senate committee heard that acute climate disruption – in particular long-running and severe droughts – exacerbated conflicts in Mali and Syria, contributing to the destabilisation of fragile states.

In Australia's region, the Australian Council for International Development said:

"For Pacific nations such as Tuvalu, Kiribati and Micronesia, climate change is already a genuine existential threat with the capacity to diminish their livelihoods and even erase their states' territorial footprints."



Climate Change could create 143 Million Migrants

CNN (March 20, 2018) reports "Tens of millions of people in some of the world's poorest areas could be displaced by climate change in just a few decades, the World Bank has warned in a report."

The report, "Groundswell — Preparing for Internal Climate Migration," suggests that more than 143 million people across South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America are at risk of the effects of "slow-onset" climate change.

Droughts, crop failure, and rising seas could force millions to move to other places within their countries to areas that are potentially unprepared for an influx of extra people, the report said.

The report suggests that this type of migration will rise until 2050, then "accelerate unless there are significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and robust development action."

The numbers include 86 million potential migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million in South Asia and a further 17 million in Latin America — three regions which represent 55% of the developing world's population.

"Every day, climate change becomes a more urgent economic, social, and existential threat to countries and their people," World Bank CEO Kristalina Georgieva wrote in the introduction to the report.

"Increasingly, we are seeing climate change become an engine of migration, forcing individuals, families and even whole communities to seek more viable and less vulnerable places to live."

"The poorest and most climate-vulnerable areas will be hardest hit," the report suggests, and the impact most keenly felt in hotspots like low-lying cities and coastal areas and "areas of high water and agriculture stress."

The trends will be inverse in other hotspots, which will see the worst influxes of climate migrants, and will suffer as a result due to the added stress on their services and resources.

"Many urban areas will need to prepare for an influx of people, including through improved housing and transportation infrastructure, social services, and employment opportunities," the report says. However, the worst effects could be mitigated by "planning and early action."

In addition to cutting greenhouse gas emissions, the report suggests that governments, particularly in these areas, need to include climate migration as part of their development planning, and to study the phenomenon to better understand it.

However, even if a "climate-friendly" scenario is implemented, the scale of the issue is such that anywhere between 31 and 72 million people could still be displaced across the three regions.

Blocking Adani No Sovereign Risk

Stopping the Adani coal mine would pose no "sovereign risk" to Australia, and politicians on both sides have misled people into thinking otherwise, says economist Saul Eslake.

Michael Kozoi (*The Age*, 21/5/2018), reports that the former chief economist of ANZ said the major parties were "abusing the term" for political gain when there had been no impact on Australia's sovereign rating as a result of decisions taken on environmental grounds.

In a paper commissioned by the Australian Conservation Foundation, Mr Eslake found there was "absolutely no reason" the country's sovereign risk would be affected if a future government stopped the Adani mine proceeding for environmental reasons.

Nor were the banks likely to downgrade Australia's risk rating. "Banks wouldn't be concerned because banks don't want to loan to it anyway", Mr Eslake told Fairfax media.

The verdict by one of Australia's prominent economists flies in the face of arguments from both Labor and the Coalition. Mr Eslake said "there is no contract" between the Commonwealth and Adani. He said the term "sovereign risk" had a specific meaning - the chance that a government will default on its debt - and politicians were abusing it to mislead voters.

"You can't describe every time a government makes a decision as sovereign risk, otherwise the term has no meaning," he said.

"Sovereign risk is not the risk a government might change its mind or make a decision I don't like."

Governments regularly made environmental decisions that did not affect sovereign risk, Mr Eslake said, such as bans on uranium mining and domestic gas controls. "Politicians use these terms because they know how ordinary people who are not familiar with it are going to interpret it," he said.

Post Barnaby Joyce Evolution of the Nats

Just over a month ago, state and federal Agriculture Ministers gathered in Melbourne for their periodic meeting. It was the first such occasion for new federal Agriculture Minister and Nationals MP David Littleproud and it heralded a departure from the previous three years when Barnaby Joyce was in charge.

Phillip Coorey, (*The Australian Financial Review*, 7/6/2018) reports that Joyce had not only vetoed any joint state-federal action on climate change, he has also insisted the term not even be used.

"They had to change (the terminology) to climate variability," said one source familiar with the earlier meetings. The May meeting was the first time climate change had been discussed at ministerial level for three years. Not only was the term climate change reinstated, the ministers agreed to contribute funds towards measures to help agriculture adapt to climate change.

Victoria's Labor Agriculture Minister Jaala Pulford put the issue on the agenda for the meeting and Mr Littleproud agreed. A "forward-looking" national strategy was "a sensible thing", Littleproud told reporter Natalie Kotsios of the *Weekly Times* after the meeting. "I'm pleased we're doing that and thank my state agriculture minister colleagues for coming on the journey with me."

Pulford was a touch more blunt, indicating it was the Nationals who were coming on the journey: "The National Party has held agriculture back by denying the reality of climate change for decades," she said. "It is welcome that they have caught up with the reality that farmers and food producers are already acting to manage the risks that climate change presents."

Standing on a property in NSW on Monday, where they inspected the drought that is threatening much of the grain crop along the east coast, Prime Minister Turnbull and Agriculture Minister Littleproud openly cited climate change as a factor as droughts become increasingly severe and frequent.

They spoke of the need to expand drought policy beyond the usual short-term relief measures such as household assistance, counselling and concessional loans, all of which cost the budget a bomb, to more long-term ideas to help farmers adapt.

It was, in one sense, an admission that climate change mitigation was becoming a lost cause and adaption was the next best thing. Turnbull told reporters the rural sector needed to become more "resilient" to adapt to what was "clearly a drier, hotter and more variable climate". "The climate is changing. I know it becomes a political debate. But there's no doubt that our climate is getting warmer."

Fundamentally, the Nationals are shifting their attitude, partly because the party's core constituency – the farmers who know the weather better than most – acknowledge things are not normal any more.

"I don't know many people in rural NSW that I talk to that don't think the climate is getting drier and rainfall is becoming more volatile," Turnbull said.

One Nationals source said Joyce and other old stagers like Ron Boswell had put the party on the wrong side of history and now, as regional populations grew, the old-guard thinking was politically dangerous.

"Barnaby wanted to start a war on every environmental issue, it was always about issues like native vegetation, climate change or water," he said.

He said as regional centres within a Nationals electorate expanded, the Nationals risked losing that seat based on their views on climate change and other environmental issues such as native vegetation clearance, water use and renewable energy.

"If they don't do what Littleproud's doing, they'll become a rural party that loses regional seats," he said.

"If you want to go there, continue down the road Barnaby Joyce was going."

Per Capita Greenhouse Emissions for a Safe Climate

When I began to consider an article for the June newsletter I was interested in the global per capita emissions required to achieve a safe climate by 2050.

This firstly led me to [Contraction and Convergence](#) which is a concept for international agreement on greenhouse gas reduction. It outlines a way to fight climate change that is fair and equitable for everyone on the planet. The website has an animation from The Age of Stupid, a film at last year's Swanpool Environmental Film Festival [showing how C & C works](#) showing the equitable allocation of emission reductions.

A 450 ppm greenhouse gas concentration is accepted to be required to produce a rise in average global temperatures of no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. To achieve this C&C proposes that all people on the planet should be allocated an equal carbon footprint. This allocation would be about 2 tonnes per person. By 2050 that allocation would fall to about 1.5 tonnes per person due to the anticipated population increase. A [table](#) on C&C shows CO2 Emissions per capita, with Australia leading the table at 18.6 tonnes of CO2, slightly ahead of the US at 18 tonnes.

I considered the plan for Benalla to become a Net Zero Stationary Energy City by 2028 and in looking for information on Stationary energy in Australia came across the [BZE stationary Energy Plan](#). One of the most interesting things on this page was that at the launch of the Plan in 2010, the now Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, said:

"I believe our long-term global goal is to, very substantially, reduce our emissions, a goal that will require almost all of our energy to be produced from zero, or very near zero, emission sources ... The work they (Beyond Zero Emissions and the Melbourne Energy Institute) have done is important. ... It provides the most comprehensive technical blueprint yet for what our engineers, our scientists can begin to do for us tomorrow. ... A zero emission future ... is absolutely essential if we are to leave a safe planet to our children and the generations that come after them."

There is a video included on the page of the [Malcolm Turnbull speech](#) at the 2010 Zero Carbon Australia launch.

How times have changed. Where is the political will, or even our own personal consideration and acceptance of the need to drive our per capita CO2 emissions from 18.6 tonnes to 1.5 tonnes to achieve 450 ppm by 2050?

Some scientists say that to achieve a safe climate we should be reducing atmospheric CO2 to 350 ppm, limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. I expect that to achieve this we will need to [Drawdown](#) the level of atmospheric CO2.

Peter Maddock

Renewables not to blame for Rising Power Costs

Renewable energy cannot be blamed for the rising cost of power bills, according to the boss of Australia's consumer watchdog, reports Felicity Caldwell. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 May 2018).

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chairman Rod Sims told a lunch in Brisbane the main reason power prices had increased was increasing network costs. "Which have got pretty well nothing to do with whether the energy is generated from renewable energy sources or coal-fired power," Mr Sims said. "They've gone up a fair bit because of retail costs and margins."

Mr Sims said a "fair bit of the affordability story" had nothing to do with the climate debate. "The debate gets so polarised that we ignore the rest of the value chain," he said.

"The RET [renewable energy target] has got a little way to go, but after 2020 I think you'll find that the subsidies to renewables, irrespective of when they generate, will close to disappear and they'll have to make money out of, the new ones, from linking into the grid," Mr Sims said.

Mr Sims said electricity costs had gone up and some offers to consumers were "very opaque". "A lot of people are on very high standing offers and I really do think the retailers are trying to make this market as opaque as they can so they can keep people on offers that are higher than they need to be," he said.

"Some people are getting lower prices as a result of deregulation, but most are probably not, and that's a worry."

Mr Sims said a lot of companies advertised electricity prices by discount, but customers often did not know the base rate. "I can easily show you products where you'll pay more on the 30 per cent discount than you will on the 10," he said. "We are looking at taking some enforcement action, but we've done it before and it hasn't seemed to change behaviour, so we think something more is required."

"The best way to sell your product is to offer the highest discount; it follows the best thing to do is to push that standing offer up, and up, and up. The problem is there are a lot of people still on that standing offer who are paying more, and more, and more." Mr Sims said customers could save \$500 to \$600 per year if they were on a better offer.



Renewable Energy Benalla Mondo Power Bulk Buy Offer

Following the two information sessions about the Mondo bulk buy offer to the Benalla community Mondo received approximately 40 expressions of interest, many of which have resulted in contracts being entered into for the purchase of solar panels. The Mondo offer remains open until July 31st and can be accessed via the following link:

<https://mondopower.com.au/benalla/>

Energy Efficiency Workshops

As part of the goal of reducing energy demand by one third, the Energy Efficiency group have developed a program of four sessions focussed on improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings, making them more comfortable and reducing energy bills. The sessions will be held at the Benalla Gliding Club, Samaria Road, from 7pm - 9pm.

The first session, held on May 22nd, provided an overview of the project and information about reading and interpreting energy bills and the meter, to help establish baseline energy use.

The dates and topics of the other three sessions are as follows:

- June 26 - Lighting, Draught Proofing and Insulation
- July 24 - Windows, Appliances & Cooking, Heating and Cooling
- Aug 21 - Hot Water, Energy Monitoring and Control

RSVP by the Sunday before a session, Phone Peter 0418 135 330, Howard (AH) 0409 504 420 or Email RSVP to Peter - peter_maddock@iprimus.com.au

Contact Details:

BSFG President

John Lloyd
5765 2476
andrewslloyd@iinet.net.au

Vice President

Wendy Sherlock

Secretary

Peter Maddock
0418 135 330

Treasurer

Peter Holmes
0438 625 638
chrispeth@bigpond.com

Committee Members

Christine Holmes Kevin Smith
Wendy Baker James Webster

Coordinator Benalla Food Co-op

Christine Holmes
chrispeth@bigpond.com

Newsletter Editor

Ian Herbert
limaeaster@bigpond.com



Benalla Sustainable Future Group

www.bsfg.org.au