



Report to Community - January 2019

Vision: For Benalla to become a zero net energy town by reducing and balancing energy demand with 100% renewable energy supply

Once again I must apologise for the long wait since our last Report to Community in April 2018. However that does not mean that REB was not busy.

Our Christmas - New Year heat wave is unrelenting and could be a foretaste of what is to come with global warming and climate change. (As I write there are more 40+ degree days forecast.)

Tips for Summer Cooling

With our summers getting hotter and the widespread use of air conditioning to keep cool, I have included some tips on how to reduce energy use and save money over summer. We have distributed these tips before but I think it is worth reminding people about using air conditioning efficiently.

Tips to save money on summer air-conditioning:

- Each degree warmer will save you 10 per cent off your energy bill, so when the AC is on, aim for a comfortable 24 degrees rather than aiming for Arctic.
- Open windows at night to allow cool breeze in, kick off the covers and sleep under a thin sheet.
- If you do have the air-conditioner on, close windows and doors and use a door snake to keep the cold air in and turn it off once the room is cool.
- Instead of leaving the air-conditioner on while you go out on a hot and sunny day, close up the house and draw the blinds.
- Install a cat or dog door so your furry critters can let themselves in and out and find the coolest place around, unless there's a heat wave.
- Make the most of summer evenings by cooking on the barbecue or enjoying salads and quick pastas rather than switching the oven on.
- Check the forecast and do your washing on a sunny day so you don't need to use the dryer.
- Invest in door draft stoppers to prevent the cool air from escaping.



The Sustainability Victoria website has a lot of information about, **How to cool your home and reduce energy consumption this summer**. This information can be found on their website with the following link: www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/You-and-your-home/Save-energy/Cooling/Cool-your-home-in-summer

While many of the suggestions are of a more permanent nature there is information about different cooling systems and how to use them efficiently. If you select the **Cooling** drop down list on the page the link takes you to you will find all these topics covered.

With our summers becoming hotter requiring more cooling some of the permanent adjustments to your home will certainly make it more comfortable and reduce energy costs.

Renewable Energy Benalla Activities

Implementing the Transition Strategy

As many of you are aware the Benalla Stationary Energy Transition Strategy, developed by REB and Beyond Zero Emissions, was launched in November 2017. The transition strategy details three strategies that need

to be implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve zero net energy within ten years. REB has been working to implement those strategies, as follows.

1) Energy efficiency measures to reduce energy use

REB conducted a series of sessions about increasing the energy efficiency of existing homes to make them more energy efficient with reduced energy bills. These sessions were advertised with the heading, *Reduce Energy Bills and Increase Thermal Comfort*, and covered the following topics:

Understanding your energy bills - electricity and gas; Energy Efficient Lighting; Draught Proofing; Insulation; Windows-shading, coatings and films, and glazing; Efficient Hot Water Systems; Efficient Heating and Cooling Options. We plan to repeat these sessions again in 2019.

2) Promote and install local roof top solar

As part of this strategy REB invited Mondo Power to make a solar panel and battery offer to the Benalla community. This also included the Mondo Ubi, a smart monitoring and management system that has the potential for sharing energy and being part of a micro grid.



We have also promoted the Victorian government's Solar Home Program which is aimed at installing solar panels on the roofs of thousands of Victorian homes. This scheme offers a 50% rebate for any solar panel system under 10kW, up to a maximum rebate of \$2225. This program also offers rebates on solar hot water systems but each household can only receive one rebate, either solar panels or solar hot water. More details can be found at the program's website: www.solar.vic.gov.au

As part of promoting roof top solar REB has been investigating the establishment of a Community Energy Project based on donations from the community that would provide solar panels for community buildings such as kindergartens. We hope to have more information about this project in coming months.

3) Investigate utility scale renewables, battery storage and micro grids.

One member of the REB committee has been doing a lot of work investigating the possibility of establishing a utility scale waste to energy project in Benalla. A number of discussions have been held with Council staff about the feasibility of such a project. Further investigation and discussion with council will continue.

As mentioned above, the Mondo offer included batteries and the potential to establish micro grids.

Assistance needed to achieve our vision

A plan to achieve zero net energy by 2028 is an ambitious and complex task. REB need more people from the community to assist with implementing the Transition Strategy. This may be to help with a small distinctive task (e.g. write a media article, design a flyer, compile some case studies) or to become involved in the organisation of a specific event or project (e.g. community energy project). If you are able to help, on any scale, please let us know.



Community Energy Retailer

We have previously informed you about the establishment of a Community Energy Retailer in north east Victoria. The community energy retailer has now been incorporated as Indigo Power.

In 2019 Indigo Power will be partnering with local businesses and organisations across the region for some large-scale community owned solar installations. They are also aiming to come out with a retail offer to customers in the first half of 2019! **This means you will be able to buy your power from Indigo Power -- our very own locally owned community energy retailer.**

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