

## REPORT ON 2011 SOCIAL SURVEY 'YOUR THOUGHTS ON NEWSTEAD'S ENERGY FUTURE'

The Renewable Newstead Steering Committee and Central Victoria Solar Cities (CVSC) conducted a survey in Newstead in August-September 2011. The purpose of the survey was to find out what Newstead & district residents think about energy.

The survey was distributed via a number of ways. On three consecutive Saturday mornings in August Steering Committee members handed out surveys outside the Newstead General Store. Surveys were left at a number of shops in town (including the RTC, general store, supermarket, hairdresser and post office), and the HEA assessor and community engagement worker also distributed surveys to community members. The survey was promoted through the *Newstead Echo* newspaper.

The survey was available online at the Renewable Newstead website, <http://renewable.newstead.vic.au>.

The survey was analysed using SurveyMonkey®.

A total of 74 people responded to the survey, with six of these completed online. The survey was voluntary and anonymous.

### **Summary of household information**

Most respondents have lived in Newstead community for over 20 years (33%), with 27% living here between 1-5 years and 26% between 6-10 years. Only 6% have lived in Newstead for less than one year.

The majority of respondents (96%) own their own home (either outright or with a mortgage). This consistent with the 2006 Census data for the Newstead district, with 84.5% owning or purchasing their house.

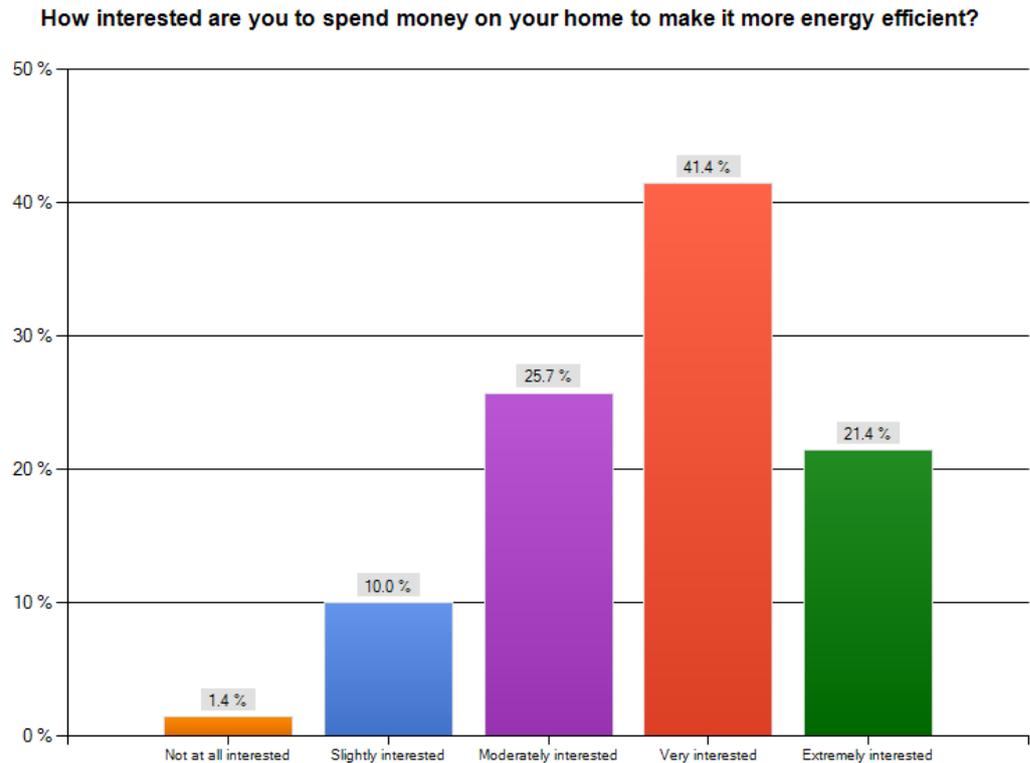
Most respondents source their household energy from an energy retailer, with only 11 per cent relying on off-grid generation (such as solar or wind).

Most respondents, 72% do not purchase Greenpower (where the energy retailer provides a quantity of energy to your household from a renewable source). However 31% would consider purchasing it in the future.

### **Interest in home-based energy efficiency**

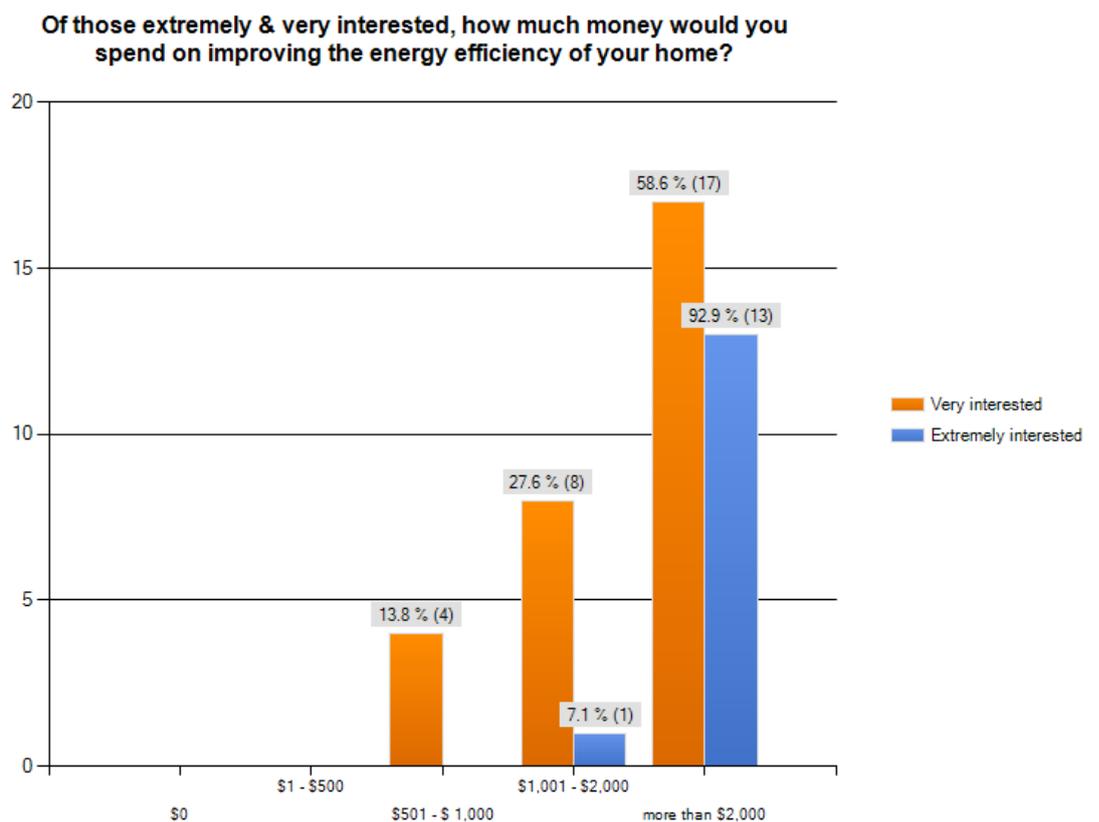
Over half of all respondents were very interested (41%) or extremely interested (21%) in spending money on their home to make it more energy efficient. Another 26% were moderately interested (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



When asked to nominate an amount to spend on this, 54% said they would spend more than \$2,000, and 20% nominated a spend between \$1,000-\$2,000. However, of those extremely interested in spending money on home energy efficiency, 93% indicated that they would spend more than \$2,000 on these improvements (see Figure 2). 57% of those very interested would also spend this amount.

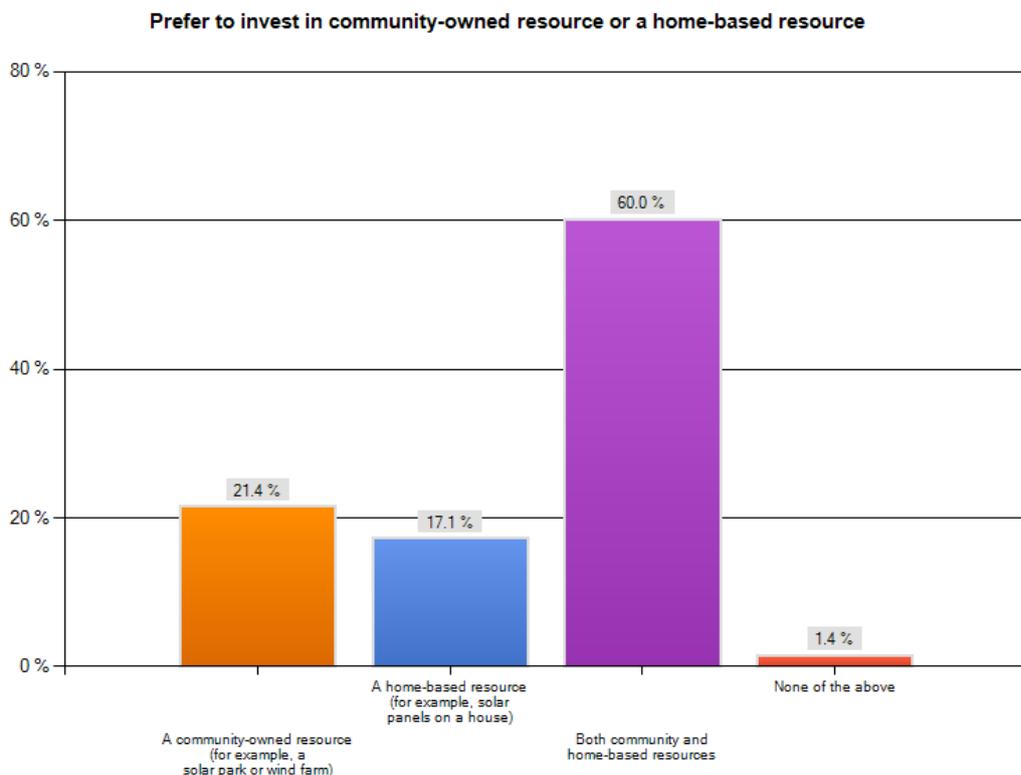
Figure 2



### Interest in renewable energy

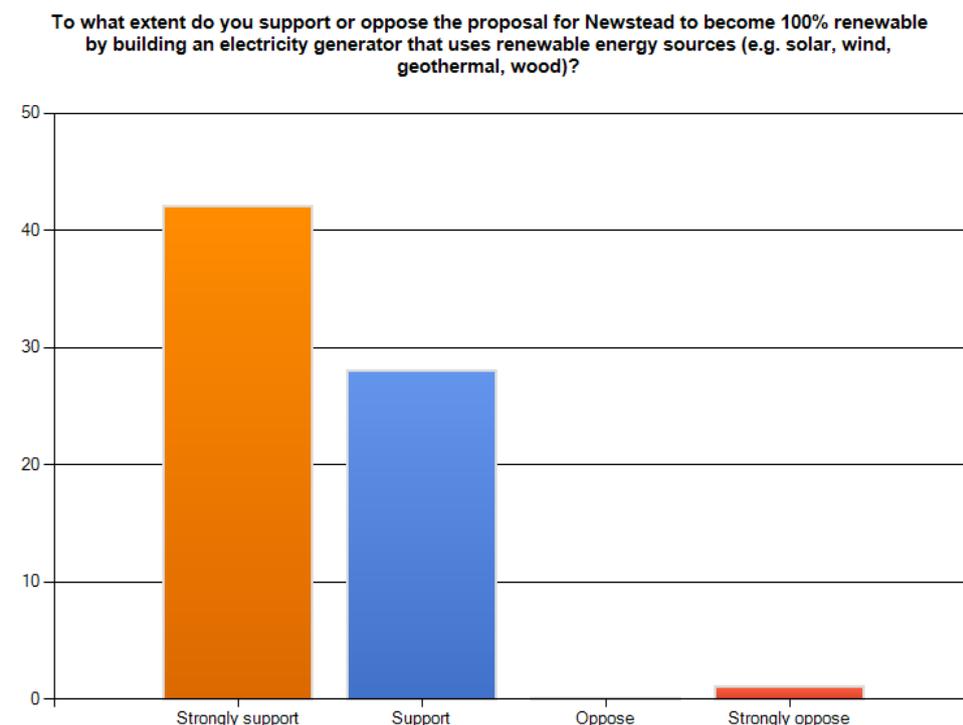
The majority of respondents supported investing in both community-owned (e.g. solar park or wind farm) and home-based (e.g. solar panels on a house roof) renewable energy resources if the return on the investment was the same (see Figure 3).

Figure 3



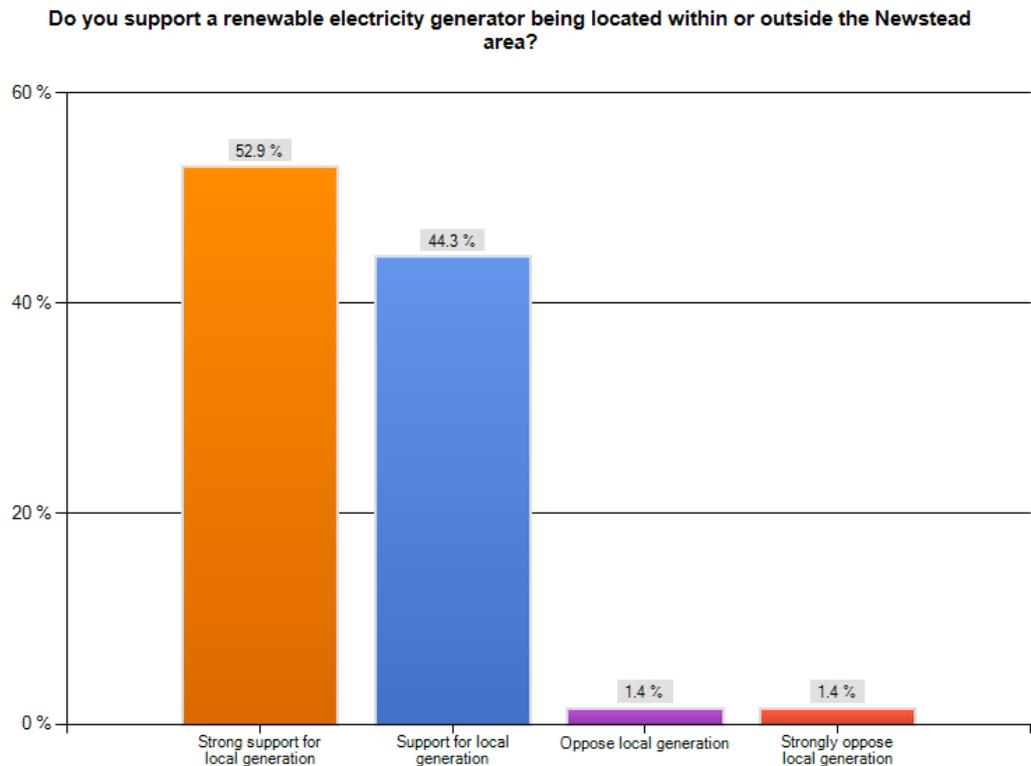
When asked to what extent do you support or oppose the proposal for Newstead to become one hundred per cent renewable by building an electricity generator that uses renewable energy sources, 59% strongly supported and 39% supported this proposition (see Figure 4). Only 1.4% strongly opposed it.

Figure 4



Most respondents supported the building of an energy generator using renewable energy within Newstead district (see Figure 5).

Figure 5



Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements about 100% Renewable Newstead. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with these statements:

100% Renewable energy will:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Bring the town closer together	28%	65%	6%	1%
Help build a positive reputation for our town	49%	50%	0	1%
Provide economic benefit to the community	42%	52%	4%	1%
Help provide energy security to our town	44%	49%	6%	1%
Be our contribution to the fight against rising energy prices	50%	44%	4%	1%
Be our contribution to the fight against climate change	51%	42%	6%	1%
Show that small towns can produce great projects and inspire other towns to take on other similar challenges	63%	34%	1%	1%
Be a good, local investment opportunity for Newstead residents	45%	48%	6%	1%
Will improve my understanding of energy	34%	54%	10%	1%
Would leave a strong legacy for our children and the future population of Newstead.	51%	48%	0%	1%

The statement that most resonated with respondents was that the '100% Renewable Newstead will show that small towns can produce great projects and inspire other towns to take on other similar challenges'. The statement that elicited the most disagreement (10%) was that '100% Renewable Newstead will improve my understanding of energy'.

The renewable energy project that is of most interest to respondents is a solar park. The following is the order of preference for renewable energy projects for Newstead:

1. Solar Park
2. Geothermal
3. Tree planting
4. Wind farm
5. Biomass
6. Buying Greenpower

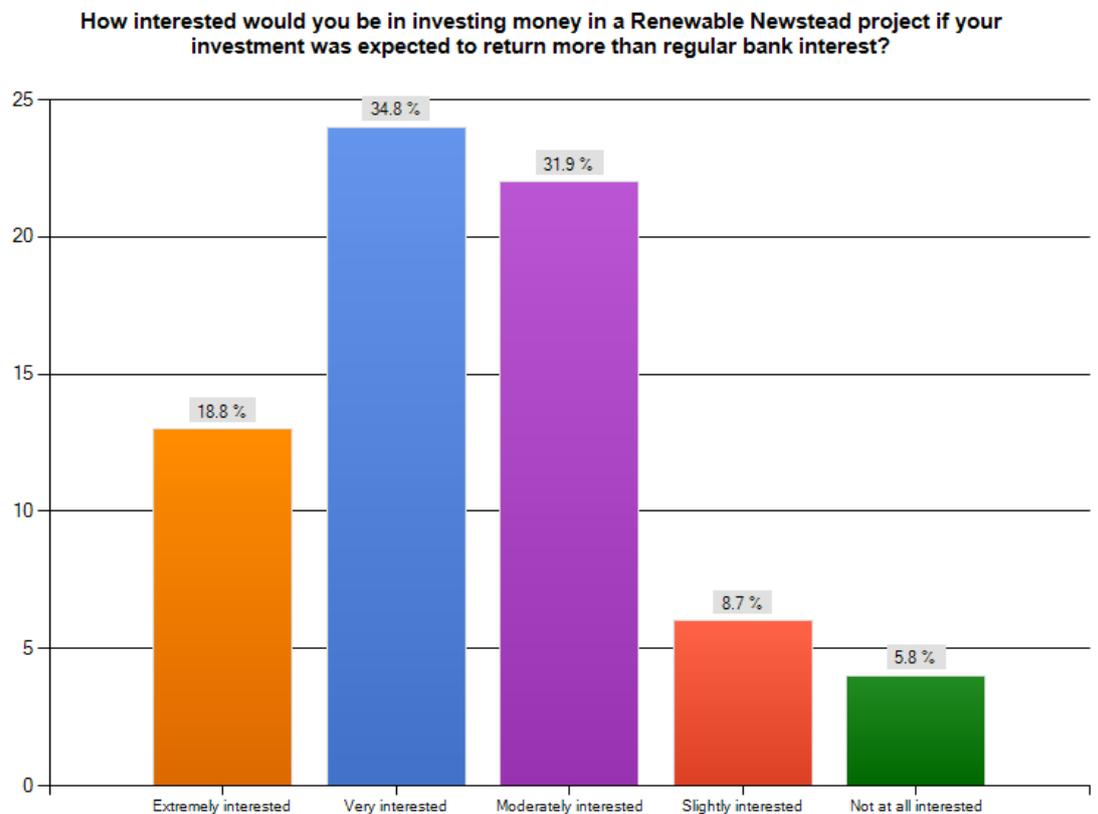
### Potential interest in being involved in Renewable Newstead project

There is a high degree of volunteerism in the Newstead and district community, with 71 per cent spending at an hour or more volunteering in the community during the past 12 months.

A number of respondents indicated that they would be interested in providing time volunteering for a Renewable Newstead project. 36% were very or extremely interested in volunteering.

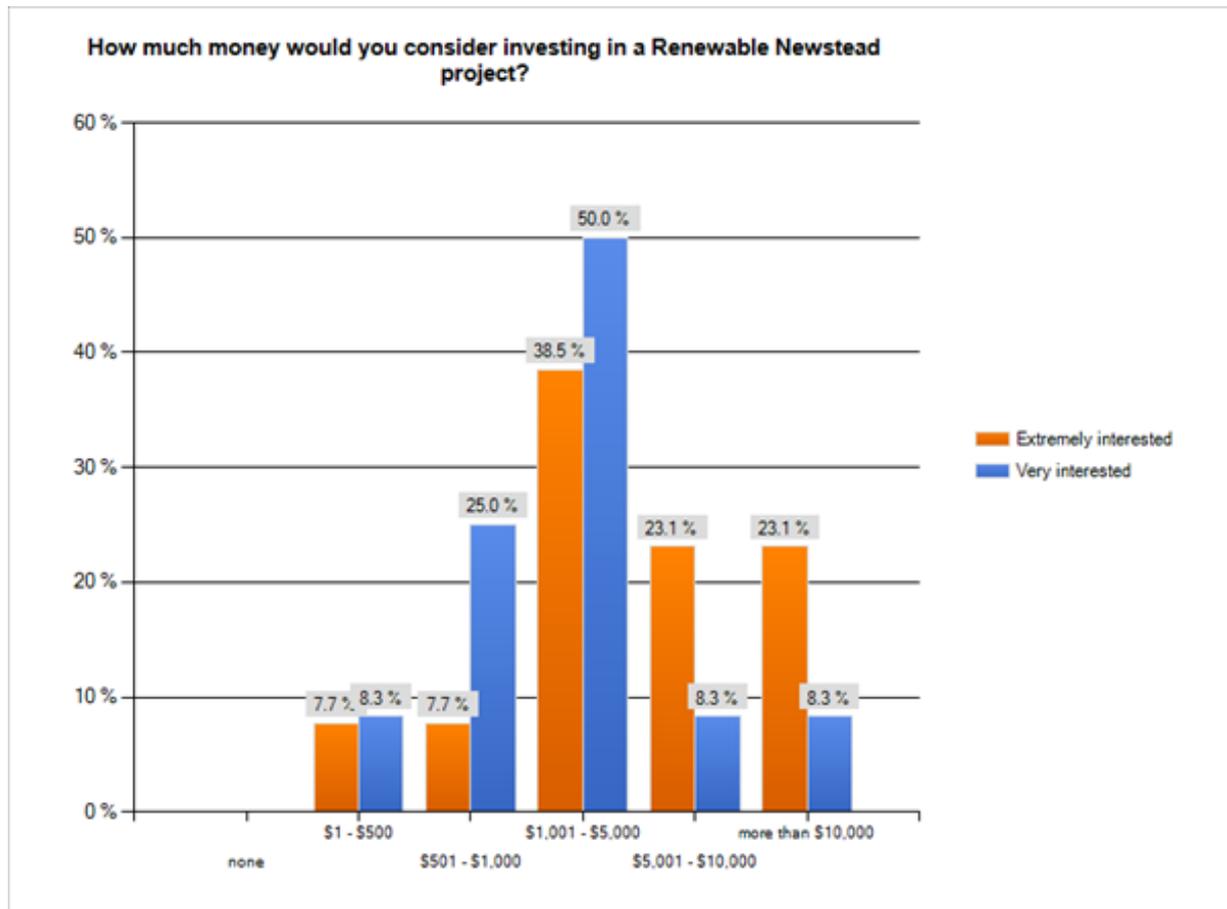
There was substantial interest in investing money in a Renewable Newstead project if the investment was expected to return more than regular bank interest (see Figure 6)

Figure 6



Of those extremely and very interested in investing in a renewable energy project in Newstead, most nominated they would invest between \$1,000 to \$5,000 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7



The most important considerations for a renewable Newstead energy project were ranked in the following order:

1. Environmental
2. Financial benefit to householders
3. Ensuring energy security for Newstead residents
4. Local economic benefits e.g. jobs, business, ecotourism
5. Financial benefits for a community fund
6. Financial benefits to shareholders

**Further comments or suggestions**

Twenty six respondents added comments about the project or survey. These comments were grouped as follows:

- Newstead needs access to natural gas
- More information required about project options, particularly biomass and geothermal (there was a lack of knowledge about these energy sources); more information about how local generation of power would work
- Need a cost-benefit analysis on project options
- Newstead needs a cheap supply of wood

- There needs to be a good business model for the Renewable Newstead project to work in a sustainable energy marketplace
- Due diligence needs to be done on any project for financial transparency
- Lack of community profile with the project. Not enough publicity.
- Concern about health issues relating to electro-magnetic radiation from generator
- No wind farms
- Need to demonstrate community support if the project is to succeed
- Newstead would be a great place for a project like this as it is so cohesive and active