



July 2011 Communiqué

Renewable Newstead... get ready for the next great leap forward

Our intent and purpose

Renewable Newstead is a town taking charge of local energy. Newstead is aiming to be the first Australian town to run on 100% renewable energy. It will become a town where people talk and think about energy and where understanding of our usage and our energy options become widespread in the community.

Household by household we are having energy assessments to become energy-wise and retrofitting our homes, our community centres and clubs, and our businesses to make us more efficient. We are replacing older energy with cleaner renewable sources, such as solar powered hot water and solar panels.

We are also exploring the potential for Newstead to produce power locally, with the aim of generating renewable energy income for the township. A feasibility study to discuss options has been drafted for community feedback.

Renewable Newstead brings multiple benefits for Newstead and district including a cleaner local environment, education and employment opportunities, and a buffer against future energy shocks. We are looking for energy solutions that are viable, cost effective and strengthen our community, and we want to have fun along the way with community celebrations of our achievements.

Renewable Newstead is partnered by Central Victoria Solar City (CVSC) and Newstead 2021. CVSC is working with the Renewable Newstead project as a research partner and is part of the Australian Government's Solar Cities program that offers incentives to local residents and businesses to participate in a trial range of energy efficiency and local energy generation products and services.

Central Victorian Solar City partnership – Home Energy Assessments and more ...

Our new Home Energy Assessor Ross Egleton commenced in May to continue on the fine work undertaken by Jayson Burhop. Well known and respected local Karly Smith has been appointed to work one day per week over the next six months in a community engagement role to assist with the Home Energy Assessment (HEA) program. This has been very successful and to date ~ 130 HEAs have been undertaken with another 40 in the pipeline, making our original target of 200 seem within reach. Ross and Karly are working as a team to continue the momentum of this aspect of the project. To reach, or even go close to this target would be a wonderful achievement and represent the highest proportion of any Australian community undertaking Home Energy Assessments.

The following well attended workshops have been conducted:

- Smart Meters on Thursday 10th March
- 'Hot Water' on Thursday April 28th.

Renewable Newstead website

Our website <http://renewable.newstead.vic.au/> is the information hub of the project. The site is dynamic – providing regular project updates, information on upcoming events, blogs, links to relevant information and reports and of course the wonderful Renewable Newstead movie! The site is also used as a key communication tool for the RN Steering Committee.

Recreation Reserve redevelopment

The Mount Alexander Shire Council (MASC) has made a provision of 80K (in the 2011/12 budget) for detailed design for a renewed facility with a further commitment of 1000K (in the 2012/13) for redevelopment. This is a terrific outcome and we are aiming to commence discussions with MASC shortly to discuss how we might progress to the design stage of the project. The idea of a sustainably designed and operated facility has resonated very well with all that we have discussed it with to date and there is a strong community commitment to make it a reality. As mentioned in the last update Renewable Newstead is sponsoring the Newstead Football and Netball club for next three years.

Climate Communities proposal

A submission was made to the Victorian Governments Climate Communities program in April. The project aims to motivate and involve a broad section of the Newstead community to contribute to the "Renewable Newstead Community Energy Dashboard". The community energy dashboard concept is simple and elegant - householders and businesses having energy assessments through the CVSC HEA project will set individual goals to reduce energy in their homes and businesses. A key aspect of the project was for a % of the monetary savings to be pledged to the construction of the Green Recreation Reserve - a new sustainably designed and operated community facility in Newstead. We approached the Maldon and District Community Bank for 2:1 support with a positive response.

Unfortunately not long after the proposal was submitted this funding program was axed and so this idea sits in limbo at the moment but we hope to recycle the proposal via an alternative funding program when the opportunity presents.

Feasibility Study – renewable energy options

Crockford McCartney Pty Ltd presented a draft of the feasibility study on 30th May. The purpose of the report is to determine the feasibility of the Newstead community transitioning (over fifteen years) to zero net emissions from its principle stationary energy source of grid connected electricity. If deemed feasible, the model developed could be both agreed as a valid project accounting model in its own right and could be used to assist others transition to a zero net emissions outcome from their stationary energy needs.

The feasibility report is a comprehensive and challenging document that clearly sets out many of the key issues we need to consider in achieving our vision. The study is underpinned by a detailed carbon accounting model. Some of the key questions the study raises are:

What are we trying to do:

- ⇒ 1: being carbon neutral or negative?
- ⇒ 2: protecting ourselves from cost increases?
- ⇒ 3: local production - taking charge of our own energy requirements?
- ⇒ 4: long term job and money making project/ Newstead as cutting edge trial venue? and where does the balance between these sit

Further questions arise ... *Accounting- a proper carbon accounting model or our own ledger? Distance -where is local in terms of power generation and is it important? Behind the meter or in front? Carbon saved versus \$ saved? Where does natural gas come in? Scale - enough for ourselves or do we export? Distribution / retail - do we have a go? Public or private ownership? Does it matter and where does the money come from?*

This report is currently being considered by the relevant working groups with a series of meetings planned over the next month as a prelude to a public meeting in August.

Other developments

- § **Regional Development Australia application** – in May Sustainable Regional Australia (SRA) and the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance made an application to the Regional Development Australia Fund seeking funding (\$ 2.1 mill.) to grow a regionally based enterprise developed by local governments, to assist regional communities to reduce energy consumption and generate renewable energy. The key focus of the application is to extend the existing partnership with Newstead to pilot the community education and engagement process and to raise capital to develop a 500kW solar park. We are awaiting news on the fate of this proposal.
- § **Social Survey** – As our project involves the community, what we really need now is to find out what people in Newstead think about energy. A survey has been developed to explore questions such as: Are you seeking to become more independent in regard to our energy needs? How interested are you in renewable energy? What kind of renewable energy solutions do you prefer? Completed surveys can be returned to the RTC by August 26th and as an added bonus all respondents can enter the prize draw to win a tonne of wood or a bottle of LPG!
- § **Another movie!** – On the 17th June Geoff Park and Liz Bell participated in filming for a documentary on the Federal Government Solar Cities program. Central Victorian Solar City is one of seven similar projects being conducted across the nation and CVSC were keen to showcase Renewable Newstead. Stay tuned for the outcome! More information on the Solar Cities program can be found at:
<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/government/programs-and-rebates/solar-cities>

What makes Renewable Newstead different?

We are watching with interest the large number of renewable energy initiatives occurring nearby and further afield across Victoria and Australia. Each of these projects is unique and we need to forge links wherever possible with other community based initiatives to listen, share ideas and collaborate.

Newstead is unique – a wonderfully cohesive and capable community. Newstead has always been a community that “punches above its weight”, with a strong history of volunteer effort, directed at getting things done ... like building and maintaining swimming pools, creating a community garden and sustaining a wide range of sporting teams and facilities.

We share a common belief that for Renewable Newstead to accomplish its audacious goals its activities must be open and inclusive and contribute to the overall *social capital* of Newstead and district – this means that while the project has a focus on renewable energy it ultimately aims to bring social, economic and environmental benefits to our whole community. This is a daunting task and to our knowledge is yet to be demonstrated anywhere else in Australia.

Key contacts:

Strategy and Funding working group – Geoff Park
Recreation Reserve working group – Doug Bell
Communications working group

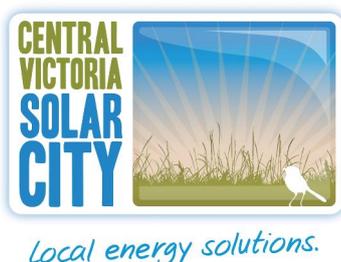
Genevieve Barlow
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Feasibility Study working group – Don Culvenor
Community Engagement working group – Dave Stratton
CVSC Home Energy Assessor – Ross Egleton
Local Community Engagement worker – Karly Smith

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Supporting a vibrant, informed & sustainable community