

**Address to Yarra Ranges Council Meeting on 22 September 2020 by Jeff Barlow, President, Healesville Community Renewable Energy Inc (Healesville CoRE) to Table the Healesville CoRE Annual Report for 2019-2020**

**To: Mayor Cr Richard Higgins and all Councillors, Council CEO Tammi Rose, the Executive Team and all Council Staff**

Thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight in my role as President of Healesville Community Renewable Energy Inc or Healesville CoRE. I am very pleased to table at this meeting our 2019-2020 Annual Report, a copy of which I understand you have all received.

Before providing a brief overview of our work outlined in the Annual Report, I would like to say that we have as a group adopted a policy of working closely with the Yarra Ranges Council. From our very beginning, the Sustainability Team has been actively engaged and has provided much support for us.

In addition, we have been generously supported by Cr Fiona McAlister, our Ward Councillor, Cr Tony Stevenson, and Crs Tim Heenan and Mike Clarke, all of whom have been strong supporters and morale boosters! We thank you for your support!

Further, we could not have run any of our events without the generous support of Council through the Community Grants programs. We have been able to run 5-7 community events a year and in total we have run 20 events using Council grant funding. We thank you for this support.

You will see from our Annual Report that we are a dedicated and committed group of volunteers that was established in 2017 and we have grown in 3 years to a membership of just over 100 financial members and a data base of over 800, who receive our regular newsletters. We have a very active website visited by many thousands of people and we have engaged over 2,000 people via our newsletters and in educationally focused community meetings. We have showcased many speakers on a diverse range of topics covering the wide field of community renewable energy and have focused on reducing carbon emissions, saving money, creating energy efficiencies in the home and developing a resilient and connected community.

As well as these educationally focused community engagement activities, we have organized successful community offers of solar panels and batteries, solar hot water systems and we are actively supporting Council's Solar Savers program this year.

We have also been cognizant of both our strategic and our administrative responsibilities as a community group and have worked hard to develop a three-year strategy plan with a 1 year action plan as well as a suite of 40 policies using FRRR grant funding.

This year, with support from Council's Sustainability Team we obtained a targeted grant from Sustainability Victoria to develop our plan for an online integrated administration system that centralizes and contains the work of a disparate team of volunteers, thus retaining our corporate knowledge and creating deeper administrative efficiencies in running our organization. Our report on this to Sustainability Victoria will be made available to other community groups.

We are currently working on installing solar systems for three not for profit groups in Healesville using \$90,000 of Federal Government funding made available via the work of our local MHR Tony Smith, and

tomorrow we apply for a \$20,000 grant to FRRR to develop a community engagement strategy for the next three years. I think you will agree we are working very hard towards our goals.

I would like to finish this very brief overview of our work by using some broad brushstrokes to point towards some future possibilities. You might recall it was just 12 months ago that I addressed this Council in support of Cr Mike Clarke's motion, which Council adopted, to acknowledge a 'climate emergency' and that we are in a 'new paradigm' where business as usual will no longer suffice. It is within the context of that thinking that I would like to present two ideas for Council's contemplation.

The first is that Council and Healesville CoRE work together to develop what is called a 'Collective Impact Strategy' (maybe also including the Victorian Government) to create a pilot program in the 3777 post code region to transition the area to Net Zero as soon as possible, whilst at the same time working to stimulate and support the development of other community renewable energy groups across the municipality, and that the strategies that are developed during the pilot program be refined and used to roll out a Net Zero community energy strategy across the whole of the municipality, to support Council's Liveable Climate Plan.

Secondly, I would like us to look ahead ten years and to envisage the Yarra Ranges Municipality as a place of expertise in the development of a wide range of diverse, creative and innovative community renewable energy projects across the municipality - projects that not only lead to Net Zero but that also lead to economic development with the establishment of non-polluting businesses using community renewable energy as the primary focus. We could envisage:

- tourist and educational facilities for people to visit and learn about these innovative projects;
- educational and training programs with both a professional and a trade focus in community renewable energy, including educational programs in community change and development, attracting academics, local, interstate and overseas students wanting to learn and to train in these new technologies;
- there is not the time to outline in detail the exciting and stimulating new possibilities still to be imagined.

I hope in the future that Healesville CoRE and other community renewable energy groups, Council and the Victorian Government, can work together, using a 'Collective Impact Strategy', to discover new and creative options for the collective development and the collective well-being of our whole community in rising to the challenges presented by Climate Change!

Thank you for your attention.