

ECCO GENERAL MEETING, JULY 27 2011

PRESENT: Colin Foster, Phil Stephenson, Sue Lane, Grant Christopherson, Bob Hill, Peter West, Stephen Nugent, Portia Hawke, David Mallard, Susan Davis, Phil Robertson, Johnathon Davis, Bob Hoye, Alison Ford, Brian Phillips, Simon Wright, Nick King

As this month's meeting was a public meeting on the topic of renewable energy and the possible impact of the Federal Government's proposed renewable energy package there was no ECCO general business. The minutes of the July ECCO general meeting will be in the form of a report.

The meeting was addressed by Grant Christopherson, Regional Co-coordinator, Central West Renewable Energy. Grant informed the meeting about the objectives of the proposed ten billion dollars to be set aside by the Federal Government as part of their support for a clean energy future.

The Government is concentrating on four main platforms in its approach to renewable energy transition. These platforms are a price on carbon, the development of renewable energy, improvement in energy efficiency. Another important aspect of the carbon reduction plan is carbon storage, in the form of carbon farming.

The main renewable energy model involves the 20% renewable energy target by 2020 (currently below 2%). This target has a bipartisan mandate. This model involves encouragement for large scale commercial development through a power purchase agreement and the availability of renewable energy credits.

Another important initiative to encourage renewable energy is the existence of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, funded by 3.2 billion dollars, which is not new money.

Federal funding will be lifted to encourage programs such as solar flagships, which will provide startup funds for large scale renewable energy projects.

The Clean Energy Finance Corporation will be established to invest in "the commercialization and deployment of renewable energy and enabling technologies, energy efficiency and low emissions technologies. It will also invest in the transformation of existing manufacturing businesses to re-focus on meeting demand for inputs for these sectors." For those who wish to find out more information about the whole package, attached is the Clean Energy Plan to be read at your leisure.

Johnathon Davis, from Hybrid Power Systems also addressed the meeting on the cost and the implementation of large scale renewable energy systems. His message is that a major component of installing a system is the basic infrastructure. 56% of the cost of any installation involves the poles and wires.

There is a public perception that we will be switching over to renewables, causing widespread unemployment in the non-renewable sector, but the reality is that the transition will be gradual, involving a forty year transition time frame.

The current delivery of power is via centralized power stations. The future could lie in a more decentralized approach to power delivery involving a mix of coal, gas and renewables. Also some of our established fossil fueled power stations are wearing out, which presents an opportunity for a regional approach to power delivery involving the above mix. Some examples of such decentralization are the Hepburn Springs and Armidale community models. This will require a high degree of community support and involvement.

Simon Wright is the team leader of the Bathurst Orange Dubbo Sustainability Development Project. This project involves the development of sustainable projects in each of the towns. The main thrust of the project for Orange has been the development of our stormwater harvesting project.

Dubbo has concentrated on the development of renewable energy production, resulting in the second highest installation of residential solar energy systems in the state. Both Bathurst and Dubbo have embarked on a program to convert biowaste to energy, thereby reducing emissions from landfill and at the same time producing energy.

Both Orange City Council and Bathurst City Council have a renewable energy fund which focuses on energy efficiency through the installation of LED lighting, retrofitting (magnetite refit for the Orange Civic Centre/Council Chambers windows).

The Project also offers businesses support with the development of programs to reduce energy consumption.

A possible project for ECCO is to research viable renewable energy projects which are feasible at a local level.

Many thanks to Grant, Johnathon and Simon for a most informative presentation.