

20 May 2021

HEPBURN SHIRE SIGNS ON TO EMISSIONS REDUCTION PROJECT

Hepburn Shire is one of 46 Victorian councils to sign on to VECO, the Victorian Energy Collaboration, the largest ever emissions reduction project by local government in Australia.

VECO, led by Darebin City Council in Melbourne's north, will provide 45 per cent of all Victorian Councils' electricity requirements with 100 per cent renewables, reducing greenhouse emissions by 260,000 tonnes of CO₂-e every year.

Provided by Red Energy, the 240GWh of clean power is equivalent to powering 48,000 homes with renewables or removing the emissions from 90,000 cars every year.

Initiated by and facilitated with the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, VECO recognises the benefits of renewable energy for the environment and the economy.

The ground-breaking project will reduce each of the council's current energy bills and reduce electricity prices by using clean renewable energy generated right here in Victoria.

VECO is expected to save councils up to 35 per cent on their electricity bills, based on current costs. By joining the project, Hepburn Shire will power 60 per cent of its total energy use with 100 per cent renewables, including streetlights, libraries and community buildings. Council is looking to source its remaining electricity load from other renewable energy suppliers.

Mayor, Cr Lesley Hewitt, said Hepburn Shire is pleased to be a part of this state-wide project.

"Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and prior to that and since then has been leading the way with initiatives such as the Z-NET Hepburn Community Transition Plan, Solar Savers, Hepburn Solar Bulk Buy, Major Road Lighting upgrades, our first electric vehicle and charging station, and other key actions identified in the Towards Zero Emissions Roadmap," said Cr Hewitt.

"Joining VECO is a natural extension of our work to reduce local emissions, with the added benefit of savings on our energy bills," she said.

Darebin Mayor Councillor Lina Messina said the project was proof of what can be achieved with collaboration.

"This is a collective effort formed by staff and councillors from across the state, for the benefit of our communities," Cr Messina said.

“By powering councils with affordable renewable energy, we’re making ratepayers’ dollars go further. Every dollar we save on energy bills is a dollar we can put towards improving roads, footpaths, libraries or community programs.”

Red Energy will provide 240 GWh of electricity per year to the 46 councils in the VECO purchasing group over a period of 9.5 years, beginning 1 July 2021.

Owned by Snowy Hydro, Red Energy is a 100 per cent Australian owned and operated energy retailer based in Melbourne.

“Given Red Energy is born and bred in Victoria, we are really excited to be a part of a project that is supporting Victorian councils, their ratepayers and two new Victorian wind farms,” said Red Energy CEO Iain Graham.

“Our owner Snowy Hydro has been a leader in renewable generation for decades and Red Energy is delighted to partner with Victorian councils to provide a long-term energy contract that will enable councils to purchase renewable energy at a competitive price,” said Mr Graham.

The renewable energy will be provided by two wind farms in Victoria – Dundonnell wind farm near Mortlake, which started exporting power to the grid in March 2020, and Murra Warra II wind farm near Horsham, which commenced construction September 2020 and will be fully operational by June 2022.

The two wind farms that will power VECO have infrastructure already connected to the electricity grid, and therefore will not need to be connected to the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project. The Dundonnell wind farm is already in operation, and even though Murra Warra 2 is still being constructed, it will be connected to Murra Warra 1 which is already connected to the national energy grid.

Participating councils are:

Alpine Shire Council	Golden Plains Shire Council	Mount Alexander Shire
Ararat Rural City Council	Greater Shepparton City Council	Pyrenees Shire Council
Ballarat City Council	Hepburn Shire Council	South Gippsland Shire Council
Banyule City Council	Greater Bendigo City Council	Stonnington City Council
Bass Coast Shire Council	Horsham Rural City Council	Surf Coast Shire Council
Borough of Queenscliffe	Indigo Shire Council	Strathbogie Shire Council
Brimbank City Council	Loddon Shire Council	Swan Hill Rural City Council
Buloke Shire Council	Macedon Ranges Shire Council	Warrnambool City Council
Cardinia Shire Council	Manningham City Council	Wellington Shire Council
Campaspe Shire Council	Maribyrnong City Council	Whitehorse City Council
Central Goldfields Shire Council	Maroondah City Council	Whittlesea City Council
City of Greater Dandenong	Melton City Council	Wodonga City Council
City of Greater Geelong	Mildura Rural City Council	Wyndham City Council

Darebin City Council
East Gippsland Shire Council
Glen Eira City Council

Moira Shire Council
Monash City Council
Moonee Valley City Council

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

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