



14 May 2014

Yarra Climate Action Now is a volunteer community group based in inner-urban Melbourne. We would like to take this opportunity to make a submission with regard to the Renewable Energy Target (RET) review.

- When the Howard government introduced the RET in 2001 the stated objectives were: to encourage additional generation of electricity from renewable sources, to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases in the electricity sector, and to ensure that renewable energy sources are ecologically sustainable.
- By 2012, renewables supplied 13% of Australia's electricity. South Australia is leading the way with 30% of that state's electricity requirements provided by renewable energy. The wholesale cost of electricity in SA has fallen in the last eight years.
- The RET has been responsible for \$10 billion in investments in renewable energy. Renewable energy has created thousands of jobs and has the capacity to create many more into the future.
- Two million Australian households have supported renewables by investing in solar panels, solar hot water etc. Polls indicate that only 13% of Australians think that the RET is too high.
- Electricity usage in Australia has fallen for the first time.
- Clearly the RET has performed very well and Australians have responded to the government's call to increase electricity generation from renewable sources.
- Solar and wind are clean, non-polluting technologies with a free energy source that are reducing Australia's carbon footprint.
- The price Australians pay for electricity is among the highest in the world. The RET is not responsible for rises in electricity prices. According to a recent report, the reason for higher electricity prices is that the big electricity companies, expecting that electricity usage would continue to rise, have over-invested in poles and wires. They are now requiring their customers to pay for their poor judgment, and about 50% of our power bills is due to this.
- Solar power is at peak production in the summer and coincides with peak demand for air conditioning. Wind power generation can provide electricity in evening peaks. Australia is the perfect place for solar thermal power

generation, if only governments and power companies had the vision to invest in this technology that is already in use in Spain and the US.

- The RET was introduced with bipartisan support and has been embraced by the Australian public. There is only one reason why the current government would dilute the RET — to prop up the big electrical companies and the power companies that use inefficient, out-dated and polluting coal-fired power generation.
- Smaller electrical companies with more vision, such as Ergon in Queensland, have seen the writing on the wall and are moving into renewables.
- While Australia continues to rely on 19th-century fossil fuel technology for its electricity production, it will continue to fall behind other countries that have embraced renewable energy production. And despite the fact that large numbers of Australian households, encouraged by successive governments, have invested in renewable technology, and that the wholesale cost of electricity is falling, our power bills will continue to soar.

Conclusion

The Renewable Energy Target should be increased, not reduced. The way to grow the energy economy is to look to the future not remain anchored in the past by 19th-century technology. Australians' power bills will only reduce if we embrace renewable energy. Power generation from renewable energy sources is non-polluting and does not harm people, pollute the air or degrade land. Fossil fuel power generation must be phased out.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Carole Wilkinson
Local Action Coordinator
YCAN

Sources:

Clean Energy Council, *Why we need the Renewable Energy Target*

<http://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/policy-advocacy/renewable-energy-target/why-we-need-the-renewable-energy-target.html>

Radio National, Background Briefing 27 April 2014, *The Price of Power*

David Osmond and Luke Osborne, *Peaking Capacity, CO₂-e Emissions and Pricing in the South Australian Electricity Grid with High Wind Penetration 2005-2013*,

http://www.windlab.com/sites/default/files/South_Australian_Wind_Power_Study_2014_Windlab.pdf

Energy Matters, 26 Feb 2014, *Renewable Energy Target Support Reaffirmed In Poll*

http://www.energymatters.com.au/index.php?main_page=news_article&article_id=4193