



Dear RET review expert panel,

The Clean Energy Association of Newcastle and Surrounds (CLEANaS) supports an increased and secure Renewable Energy Target. Community Energy groups rely on the financial incentives provided by the scheme for our installations and our members draw motivation from the vision shown by our leaders when setting an achievable target.

CLEANaS is the Clean Energy Association of Newcastle and Surrounds, a not-for-profit association formed in 2012 by a group of local members passionate about clean energy. We are dedicated to driving the uptake of clean energy use and generation so our region can be more sustainable by transitioning away from our current dependency on fossil fuels. Our shift to clean energy is being promoted by CLEANaS in three ways:

- assisting in the establishment of community owned clean energy solutions for direct electricity supply to local organisations and businesses,
- driving the uptake of domestic renewable energy through education programs, bulk buy schemes and networking, and
- seeking other local opportunities for clean energy generation by working with industry, government and community groups.

CLEANaS initiatives, like all community energy schemes, deliver a win-win for local community investors, local businesses and, of course, our environment. We are aware that clean energy in our communities provides an opportunity for consumers to participate in, invest in and directly benefit from renewable energy. Community energy is supported by the RET through both the SRET and LRET depending on the scale of the installations, these support mechanisms allow for projects owned by the community which deliver:

- economic benefits and community wealth retention derived by investing directly in profitable installations,
- environmental benefits of not only the clean energy displacing fossil fuels but also increasing awareness in the community about producing, using and interacting with the energy system,
- the desire to support job creation, noting many of the members of our association would love a career in the renewables industry to follow their passion,
- social collaboration through community involvement in projects, and
- downward pressure on electricity prices for Australian households by reducing overall and peak demand in the network.

Renewable Energy is both popular and widely accepted as a reliable form of energy production in our community and in Australia. Over 77% of voters would like to see more renewables. Over three million Australians have rooftop solar panels – that's more than 1 in 6 of us. Those community members who have already installed panels are already active supporters of the renewables industry and many are keen to invest further through community schemes like those CLEANaS offers. The widespread interest CLEANaS

members have encountered in our activities demonstrates the overwhelming interest from the voting population for more renewables and thus higher targets.

Our conversations with people both attending our presentations and in the general community indicate that there is a growing acceptance of the science of human induced global warming and the need to take immediate action. People are starting to realise that it is up to us not to leave the great burden to our children and grandchildren who are going to have to deal with the consequences. As our current generations have contributed to the problem, as a responsible risk management strategy, we should be attempting to contribute to the solution. The RET provides the support for us to drive to the solution. The RET has been very successful in expediting the uptake and development of renewable energy since it's beginning in 2001. This has stimulated the jobs market to it's current level of over 24,000 and has helped increase the incentives to act and at the same time reduce the cost of the technology as it is rolled out at scale.

Our members appreciate that renewables like solar and wind are also driving down the market price of peak electricity. Claims that renewables are forcing significant price rises are unfounded: the main factor in the price increases in the past was over-investment in our grid networks namely poles and wires. The main factor in future price increases will be rising gas prices driven by higher international demand. Renewables provide a buffer to the gas price rises not only for households but in our network. More renewables mean less times when gas peaking plants will need to operate. Studies have shown that this will help keep our power bills lower in the short term and reduce them in the longer term to an annual \$50 reduction on the average household bill in 2020.

Our members tell us that the RET provides a strong leadership message to Australians that the government stands for future industries, innovation in technology, construction and operations jobs, and action on cleaner air and healthier environments. CLEANaS members and individual investors express a genuine interest in enacting positive and lasting change by making individual efforts. Our communities we represent have indicated through surveys that they are keen to invest in schemes as long as government can ensure their longevity. Supporting renewables through political leadership means supporting a vocal and influential voter population. This will also support the emerging local enterprise sector that is being led by the volunteer effort of hundreds of ordinary Australians, in remote, regional and urban communities across the country.

CLEANaS is a very active part of a growing community energy sector. Our work is only just beginning. We strongly support the maintenance of the current target mechanisms to 2020 (leave the current system alone!) and have a vision to see all increases in energy consumption provided from renewable energy and as our older and highly polluting power stations are retired, they also be replaced by clean energy solutions. Setting ambitious targets is not only necessary for our future quality of life but will deliver an innovative forward looking society and reshape our economy around sustainable energy generation and usage. CLEANaS supports legislating the review period to 4 years to give increased certainty to members of and investors in community energy projects.

Thank you for considering our submission,

Sincerely,

Alec Roberts
CLEANaS Chair

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