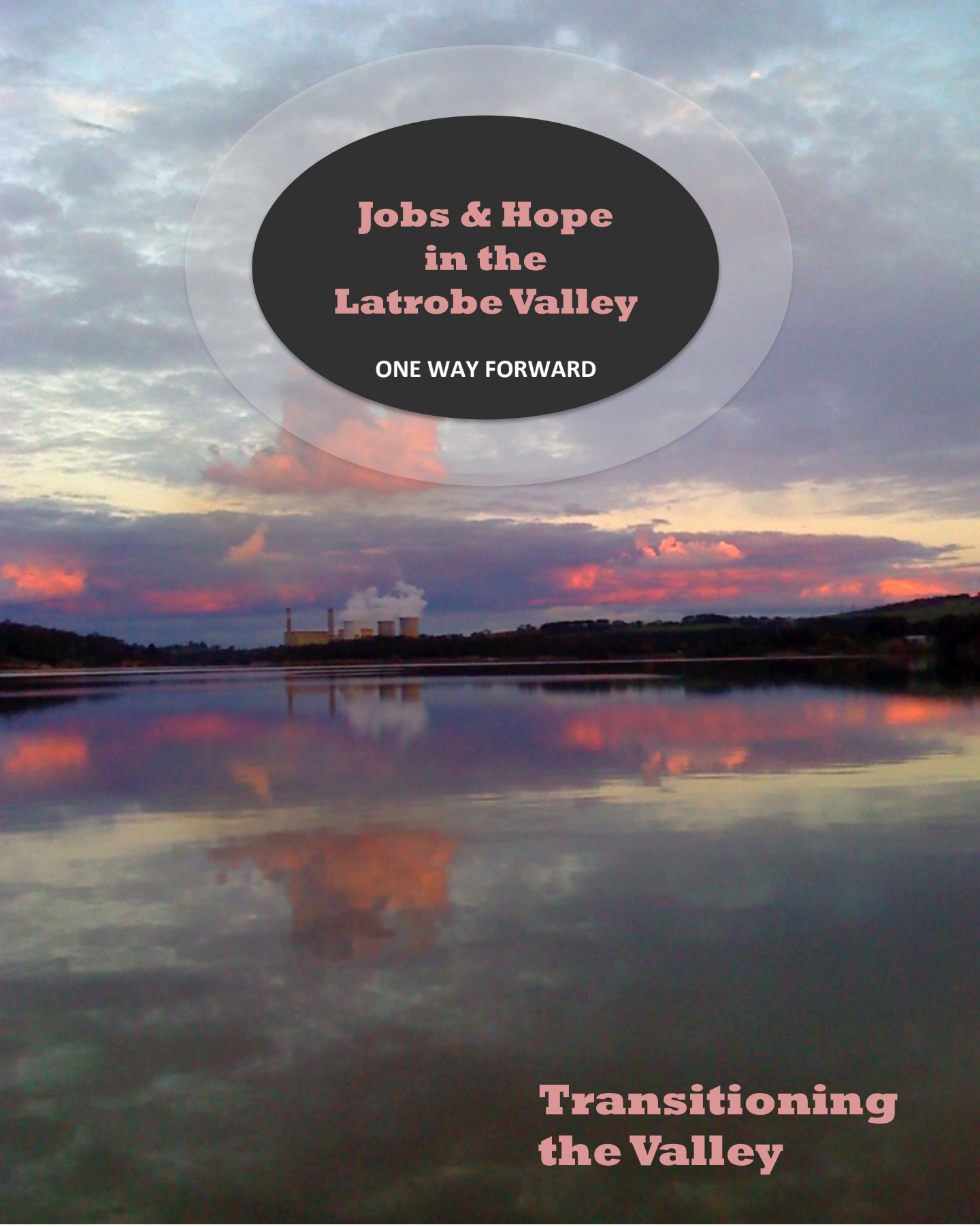

Jobs & Hope in the Latrobe Valley

ONE WAY FORWARD

Transitioning the Valley

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Opportunity

If you are reading this you probably know a bit about the statistics, history and current predicament of the Latrobe Valley. We don't need to re-state the situation here. What we would rather do is paint a picture of the enormous potential of the Latrobe Valley to drive its own transformation.

We see a valley full of tenacity, skills and assets that could shape its own future, with a bit of vision and support from a range of groups to get things moving.

We imagine the Latrobe Valley taking its place among the best of Australia for health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Training would be available in emerging industries for our young people and those wishing to retrain.

There would be rewarding jobs in the valley to apply what they have learnt – so their skills, passion and spend were reinvested in making the Latrobe Valley a better place to live, work and play.

These livelihoods would be sustainable. Sustainability to us means jobs are not subject to decision making by offshore private enterprise, but owned, driven and grown by the local community.

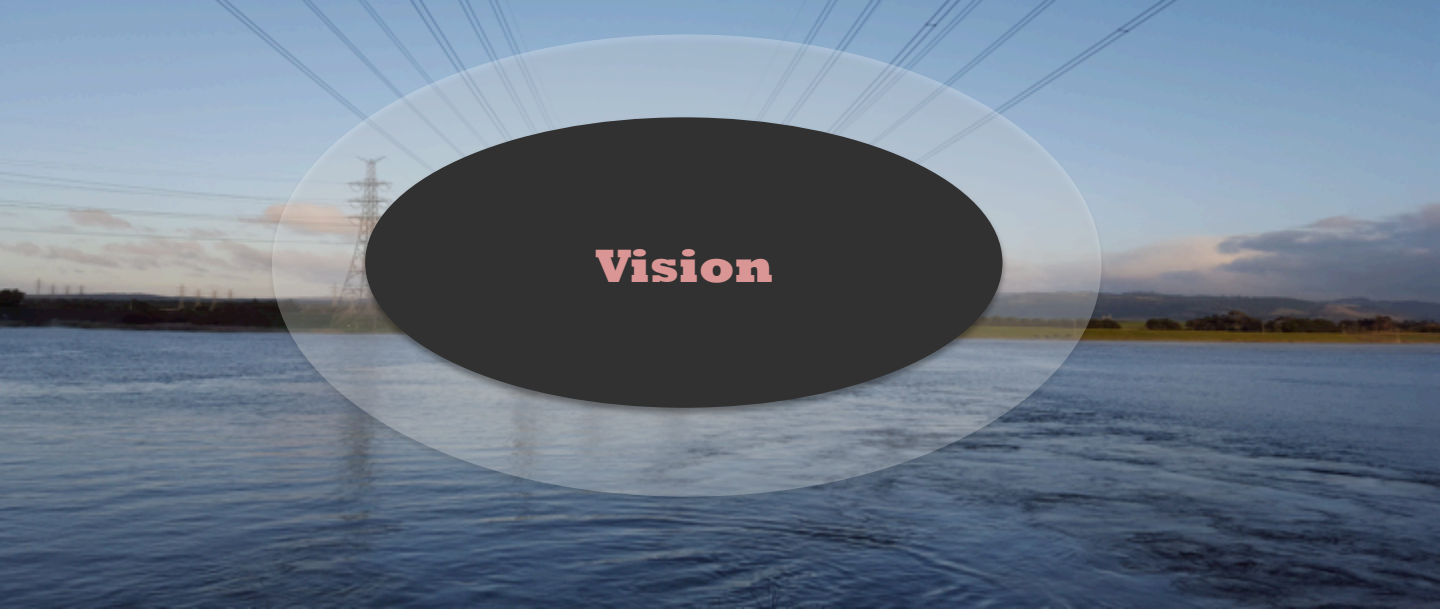
We know this would make others see what we see – that the Latrobe Valley is a place you want to live out your days.

This document outlines one way we can start to deliver this hope for the future.

It is a big, bold vision – but we need to do things differently if we want a different outcome.

We hope you will get on board.

The Latrobe Valley Community Transition Group

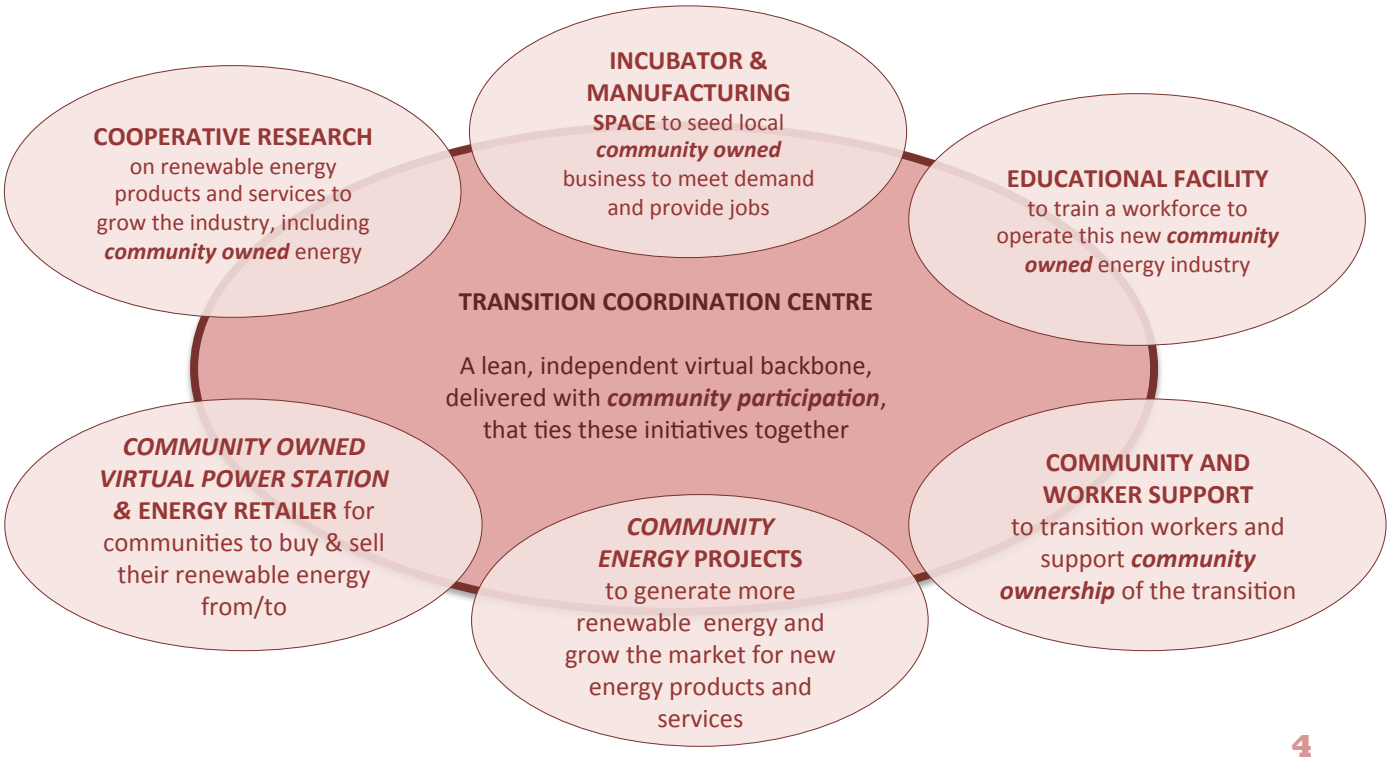


Vision

Jobs and hope for Latrobe Valley through community owned renewable energy

Transitioning from coal as one of our major employers is an opportunity to retool our valley to take its place in the new energy economy. However, we also know that a sustainable transition is as much about the community as it is about technology. We see the people of Latrobe Valley initiating a new local, community owned, renewable energy industry that positions Victoria as a key innovator in this emerging sector. To succeed, the solution will need to be owned by the community and work in partnership with government, business and education providers.

This concept blends existing hard and soft infrastructure, new energy technologies and business models through the initiative areas below. These initiatives are explored on the following pages.



One Pathway

The seven initiative areas proposed embrace the renewable energy future today and put community ownership at its core. Each area can exist as a discrete activity, but when networked together could create a robust system that builds community ownership, generates demand and delivers supply for this new industry.

As everyone feels more comfortable with an idea that has been successfully implemented elsewhere we have included case studies to illustrate the possibilities.

1. **COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP:** A shared community vision and ownership to drive the transition
2. **COMMUNITY ENERGY PROJECTS:** To generate more renewable energy and grow demand for new energy products and services
3. **COOPERATIVE INCUBATOR :** To seed local community owned businesses to build, install and maintain renewable energy technology
4. **EDUCATION AND WORKER SUPPORT:** To train a workforce to operate these businesses and transition workers to this new industry
5. **COMMUNITY OWNED VIRTUAL POWER STATION AND ENERGY RETAILER: F**or community members to buy and sell their renewable energy from/to
6. **COOPERATIVE RESEARCH: T**o research and commercialise new renewable energy products and services that could be implemented by community owned energy groups
7. **TRANSITION COORDINATION CENTRE:** A lean, independent, 'virtual backbone', delivered with with community participation, to tie these initiatives together

1: Community Ownership

What is needed

The community needs to be inspired by *and* control their future.

We are undertaking consultations across the region to engage, and get feedback from, the community on the need for a planned transition. Commitment to actively engaging the community needs to be the basis of every activity government undertakes in the Latrobe Valley – but consulting isn't enough – we must also embrace new forms of community ownership to make this transition sustainable.

How it could be delivered

Cooperatives

Cooperatives are businesses that are owned and managed by their communities for the benefit of their communities. This type of business model could minimise the impact of large private businesses leaving our community.

Overleaf we have provided case studies of two American communities that are transforming from an industrial legacy. They are looking to a diversified and networked cooperative solution to address the impact of private enterprise leaving.

"Across Australia, there are cooperative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) of all sizes operating in all industry sectors from health, housing, aged care, child care and education to agriculture, banking, retail, insurance, arts and motoring…..There is an estimated 2000 CMEs around Australia working for a combined 14.8 million members. From large, billion dollar firms to smaller, non-profit community enterprises, CMEs are formed to benefit their members who are also their owners, rather than shareholder investors."

For more: www.getmutual.coop

Community Foundation

A community foundation is an independent philanthropic organisation that enables donors to contribute cash, trusts, bequests or real property to create permanent endowments that benefit a specific geographic area. They are community investment vehicles that channel community funds into projects the community wants.

There is potential to develop a community foundation in Latrobe Valley that seeds community owned cooperative enterprises, such as the ventures proposed in this document.

On page 8 we have profiled:

- Mirboo North Community Foundation
- Sydney Community Foundation

1. Community Ownership

Case Study: Community Owned Transition in Cleveland and New York, USA

"Launched in 2008 by a working group of Cleveland-based institutions (including the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, Case Western Reserve University, and the municipal government), the Evergreen Cooperative Initiative is working to create living-wage jobs in six low-income neighborhoods, with a median household income below $18,500, in an area known as Greater University Circle.

The initiative was designed to create an economic breakthrough in Cleveland. Rather than a trickle-down strategy, it focuses on economic inclusion and building a local economy from the ground up. Rather than offering public subsidy to induce corporations to bring what are often low-wage jobs into the city, the Evergreen strategy calls for catalysing new businesses, owned by their employees. Rather than concentrate on workforce training for employment opportunities that are largely unavailable to low-skill and low-income workers, the Evergreen Initiative first creates the jobs, and then recruits and trains local residents to fill them.

The resulting businesses have drawn national and global media attention, as well as wide interest from economic development professionals. "These are not your traditional small-scale co-ops," wrote The Nation, noting the initiative's large ambitions, and the buzz it has created for "the Cleveland model." Fast Company magazine noted the collective "is finding ways to make the city cleaner and more wealthy, in ways that will create permanent change for the city's poorest residents.

The Evergreen Cooperative Initiative remains an important model for healing neglected post-industrial economies in the American heartland. But it's also part of a larger experiment in alternative wealth-building and wealth-sharing models. Their goal was equitable wealth creation at scale."

This model has been so successful that New York's City of Rochester's Office of Innovation engaged The Democracy Collaborative in 2015, a group with expertise in the Evergreen Cooperative, to undertake a feasibility study in February 2016. This study documented significant potential for the project, a high degree of community support, including local Anchor Institution buy-in, as well as several potential business niches for future worker-owned businesses. The report also includes an implementation plan to move the project forward in two additional phases, the first of which was approved to proceed by the Rochester City Council on March 22nd, 2016."

For more visit:

- Evergreen Coop: www.evgoh.com
- Rochester: http://democracycollaborative.org/content/rochester-s-market-driven-community-cooperatives-corporation-feasibility-analysis

1. Community Ownership

Case Study:
Mirboo North Community Foundation

"The Mirboo North and District Community Foundation, established in 2010, invested the proceeds of the sale of Mirboo North's community aged care facility for community benefit. The foundation applies the income generated by this investment to the benefit of Mirboo North and its district. The foundation also receives donations and bequests for investment and distribution to the community, offering individuals, families, groups and corporations an easy way of giving something back to the community they care about.

A range of grants are provided, including a strategic innovation grant. This grant is awarded for programs that: test, demonstrate, trial or pilot a new concept; support the expansion or scaling up of an innovative, proven pilot program; or research to build understanding of an issue related to disadvantage.

They allocate approximately $70,000 per annum for the grant for 2 to 3 years and seek to fund 2-3 projects per annum.

A community foundation of this nature for the Latrobe Valley, providing innovation grants in community owned enterprise, could assist a range of cooperative start ups to emerge.

www.mirboodistrictfoundation.org.au

Case Study:
Sydney Community Foundation

Sydney Community Foundation, founded 10 years ago, is Sydney's first public community foundation. Their mission is to help close the growing gap between those who enjoy the advantages of a major city and people experiencing poverty.

The foundation embarked on Project WOW in Western Sydney three years ago. It sought to bring a range of philanthropy investment together in a place based initiative.

The program has been particularly successful in changing lives one by one, building communities where people feel a greater sense of belonging. They support education and employment pathways, in particular for women and girls, grow start-up social enterprises for those who have been long-term unemployed, mentor and bring professional skills and leadership to each community so that self- sufficiency and sustainability ensue. Local leaders in each area have emerged and are being supported to develop professionally and increase the impact of their work.

www.sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au

2: Community Energy Projects

What is needed

To be viable the community owned renewable energy industry requires demand - customers who want to buy whatever is being sold. They also need to grow the production of renewable energy.

How it could be delivered

The initial concepts below could be applied to generate demand for renewable products and services from various groups and grow the supply of renewable energy. A coordinated plan needs to be developed for each market segment, with barriers to entry addressed through a range of incentives. This plan would identify global best and emerging practice and inform the investment and potential policy changes required.

Renters, including social housing

Renters want to be part of the renewable movement, but don't own the building asset, so can't invest in solar panels – but they can through a community owned solar garden. Underutilised public land can hold solar panels that return energy to the grid. Renters purchase a membership to the solar garden and are able to receive a rebate on their energy bill wherever they go.

Case Study: Community Solar Garden

"Clean Energy Collective is one of the most successful companies in the US to take this model to the public. They sell panels to individuals, as well as businesses, and have reached agreements with utilities in a number of states to offer their solution to customers.

Pooling of resources to have a solar farm built on a plot of land instead of on roofs. Each member would own a certain number of panels (not simply a 'share' of the project) in the plant depending on their means and needs. The power from the panels does not go directly to the home of the panel owners, but is instead routed through a utility, which credits their owners for the solar power produced, but it is still very similar in principle to rooftop solar. Using this approach, participants are able not only to take advantage of economies of scale (the cost of inverters, mounting are split between participants) that come with buying in bulk, but also eliminate system inefficiencies, as the plant is located on a piece of land vetted to be optimal for solar exposure. From this experience, the community-owned solar model was born and quickly evolved into a viable business."

www.solarchoice.net.au/blog/news/community-solar-provides-another-way-to-own-solar-panels-140214/

2: Community Energy Projects

The Darebin Solar Savers Scheme, couped with the Kildonan Energy initiative, could also support renters and lower income households to access solar and grow demand from this segment of the market.

Case Study: Darebin Solar Savers

"Working with City of Darebin and Energy Matters, MEFL's Positive Charge program was able to co-ordinate the installation of almost 300 solar PV installations on to the roofs of low income households in Darebin. The program, called Solar $aver, was completed in 2014 and is believed to be an Australian first.

Darebin City Council covered the up-front cost of the solar installations, which households are then paying back through their rates payments over a ten year period. The repayments have been structured so that households will save more each year on their electricity bill than the amount by which their rates are increased, so that they will financially benefit as soon as the installation is complete. This is an innovative financial arrangement known as "Save As You Go.""

www.positivecharge.com.au

Case Study: Kildonan Energy Initiative

Kildonan identified a way they could support big energy retailers, such as AGL, to reduce the cost of people not paying their bills, while supporting individuals living close to the poverty line to stay out of debt and retain their utilities.

Through initiatives with government and corporate partners, Kildonan provides over the phone and face to face energy visits for eligible households.

During an energy visit Kildonan:

- Assists people to understand utility use within their home and how to use appliances more efficiently;
- Explains how much appliances cost to run;
- Assesses eligibility for utility-related government rebates, grants or concession;
- Helps identify issues impacting on utility use
- Supports budgeting and payment plans; and
- Provides free energy and water saving retrofit items.

www.kildonan.org.au

2: Community Energy Projects

Community Organisations

Community organisations don't often have the capital required to purchase a solar solution upfront – but solar leasing and crowd funding enables this access.

Case Study: Solar Leasing for community organisations and small to medium businesses

"Highly successful in the US and Europe. Under such an agreement, a company will install a solar system on the customer's roof at no up-front cost to the customer. Customers enter a 20-year agreement to purchase the solar power produced by the system from the installer at a rate lower than their retail electricity rate, thereby saving them money on their electricity bills."

www.solarchoice.net.au/blog/is-a-solar-leasing-program-right-for-you/

Case Study: Crowd Funded Community Solar

"CORENA provides a practical and effective way for 'the people' to collectively fund new renewable energy installations now."

Their solar funding models enable the community to contribute to collectively help pay for renewable energy projects for community owned enterprises.

www.corenafund.org.au

Small government sites, small to medium businesses and home owners

Home owners and small to medium sized businesses are already being serviced by local businesses, such as Gippsland Solar. If the State Government was to commit to awarding a portion of the renewable energy target through the Latrobe Valley and put forward smaller government assets, and social housing as customers, there would be the demand necessary for these businesses to grow.

This scheme could be linked to an energy efficiency assessment program, such as the Kildonan program, which then links to purchasing of solar from the Latrobe Valley for groups who are suitable for a solar solution.

Big business and large government sites

These groups tend to need a different type of solar solution, which could be accommodated through the leasing option proposed for community organisations.

3: Incubate Community Businesses

What is needed

Once demand was being generated the Latrobe Valley would need local businesses to supply, install and maintain cost effective new energy products and services.

How it could be delivered

Set up Community Owned Worker Cooperatives to manufacture 'transition' solar panels and storage batteries

There are currently no solar panel or battery manufacturing facilities in the Latrobe Valley. While competition from low cost solar panels from Asia and emerging battery storage from Europe will need to be responded to, a viable local manufacturing business could be created by:

a) Setting up a community owned business where the imperative to return significant profit to shareholders was reduced, thereby enabling the business to compete with overseas operators. This business could create 'Transition' solar panels promoting the community benefit to Australia of keeping this manufacturing local.

b) Partnering with existing Australian businesses, such as Tindo in South Australia who manufacture solar panels and GridEdge in Pakenham who manufacture battery storage. These groups could advise on the establishment of a viable community owned manufacturing business in the Latrobe Valley.

To provide the volumes required for Tindo to set up or advise on the establishment of a community owned venture in Latrobe Valley the State Government would need to commit to putting a portion of the renewable energy contract through the Latrobe Valley.

Invest in local businesses to install and maintain

There are currently two small solar install and maintenance businesses in the Latrobe Valley who could be supported to scale up to meet the demand generated through this initiative.

Incubate other local community owned business in the new energy economy

If the Latrobe Valley Community Foundation discussed on page 6 was operational it could support development of a cooperative incubator to develop aligned community owned businesses in this and other industries.

4: Trained & Supported Workforce

What is needed

To make this solution work - and provide livelihoods - we will need a trained workforce. This includes support for individuals transitioning out of existing coal power stations. The existing workforce has many of skills necessary for success in the renewable energy field, such as electrical and engineering skills.

In addition, local businesses would need to be available for internships to provide on the job learning.

Once skilled, these workers could support an emerging industry across the state.

How it could be delivered

Federation Training and University

Federation Training and University is located in the valley and is well placed to offer training and support to workers transitioning to a new future. Indeed they already provide employment services through their job centre and would need support to bring renewable manufacturing, install and maintenance into their training scope. Federation University has been activated as part of the recent high tech precinct announcement, which is a positive first step.

www.federationtraining.edu.au

Internships / Apprenticeships through local and community owned business

Partnerships could be developed with the community owned manufacturing business and existing local install and maintenance businesses to assist them to provide tangible on the job learning for individuals undertaking training in this industry with Federation Training and University.

5: Virtual Power Station & Energy Retailer

What is needed

Technology will need to be explored to develop a virtual power station. The virtual power station would link dispersed community energy projects across the state - from wind farms to community solar gardens to 'mum and dad' householders with roof panels - to capture excess renewable energy in a web based network that creates a single reliable supply and be sold back to the market, much like a physical power station. This also entails the establishment of a state based, community owned, energy retailer, with its own grid scale energy storage capability. This storage would enable the energy to be maintained in prime condition and make use of the fact that 'all lines lead to the valley.'

These solutions would be cooperative, owned by and run for its community members, with the mandate of keeping costs low and providing strong competition to existing retailers. Their mandate would be to deliver the lowest cost energy, from renewable sources – meeting cost and environmental motivations of potential customers. This would challenge the current market dynamics with commercial energy retailers paying the minimum government threshold when purchasing energy from those returning to the grid.

How it could be delivered

Bring partners together to undertake a feasibility study on the community owned virtual power station and energy retailer concept

As part of the research and innovation collaboration (discussed overleaf) partnerships could be fostered to support a research stream around the community owned virtual power station and energy retailer.

As significant technology, capital and expertise would be required a feasibility study would need to be undertaken, which should include community participation.

Understanding the progress of ENOVA, a start up community owned energy reseller in NSW would be a useful case study, as would understanding the CSIRO's progress on virtual power stations.

As part of the feasibility study policy settings may need to be changed to enable these projects.

For more see:

www.csiro.au/en/Research/EF/Areas/Electricity-grids-and-systems/Intelligent-systems/Virtual-power-station

www.enovaenergy.com.au

6: Research & Innovation

What is needed

Research on community owned energy and new renewable energy technologies would be critical to developing a pipeline of new products and services to sustain the industry.

How it could be delivered

Set up a Cooperative Research style venture using a Living Labs methodology

There is precedent for this type of collaborative research venture in the government led Cooperative Research Centre program, as well as an emerging methodology called a 'Living Lab'. The Living Lab methodology, which has customers or end users as an equal contributing partner, could be used to engage the community, inform the research streams and act a test bed for new innovations.

A consortia of interested parties could come together to develop a shared terms of reference around renewable and community owned energy which could then inform the research streams, additional partners and co-contributions. Each of these entities could make a co-investment commensurate with their interest in the outcomes of the group and this could be partially leveraged by government.

The mutual benefit could be the exploration and commercialisation of new renewable technologies and applications. The community could be a pipeline for ideas and test bed for new technologies.

The consortia could include:

1. Academia, for example key universities interested in solar and storage technologies, such as Monash University and Institute for Sustainable Futures in NSW;
2. Industry, for example technology development companies interested in renewable storage and software;
3. Community and community entities, such as the Community Power Agency, Moreland Energy Foundation or community co-operatives;
4. Local governments wishing to engage with community solar, such as Darebin and Moreland; and
5. State or Federal Government to leverage the in kind and financial investment made by consortia members.

6: Research & Innovation

Case Study: Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)

The federally funded CRC program leverages the investment made by a consortium of academic and industry collaborators to co develop innovative products and services that will be of economic and social value to Australia. In 2015-16, there are 33 active CRCs that operate across agriculture, forestry and fishing, manufacturing, mining and services.

CRC's can assemble the best team in Australia to develop new technologies and manage the process professionally, with geared funds from the Commonwealth, and research providers sharing the risks and returns. CRCs deliver "hands-on" learning, not just publications, and are held to account to deliver.

The overall activities are actively managed by the CRC management team and Board. This includes terminating, redirecting or accelerating projects. Collaborations must match the amount of grant funding sought from Government through cash and/or in-kind contributions.

www.business.gov.au/assistance/cooperative-research-centres-programme/

Case Study: Living Labs

The Young and Well CRC is currently developing up to five living laboratories across metropolitan Melbourne, one in each of Melbourne's sub-regions.

The labs will bring together young people, researchers, policy makers, employers, health practitioners, parents and technology providers to investigate, design, create and test innovative technology-based strategies that equip young people to tackle personal problems and promote individual, community and social wellbeing. The laboratories will be a catalyst for community-based initiatives to support the resilience of young people.

They are launching a Delivery Office that will coordinate between potential partners to develop the living labs.

www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/files/Governance/JUN16_CDSC_PT3_Resilient_Melbourne_Strategy.pdf

7: Transition Coordination Centre

What is needed

The Transition Coordination Centre has been conceptualised like the 'virtual backbone' in a collective impact program. Collective impact involves a group of organisations coming together to solve a large social problem. They share a vision and each plays a different role in making change happen. Importantly, they report on shared success measures to ensure the collaboration is driving impact.

How it could be delivered

The State Government initiates the formation a taskforce of academic, industry and community members to assess this and other proposals underway in the Latrobe Valley and develop an implementation plan.

The group would :

1. Run feasibility studies on this and other economic development proposals for Latrobe Valley;
2. Pull together expertise - academic, industry and community to drive the change depending on the development proposal under consideration;
3. Understand and resolve bottlenecks;
4. Capture and disseminate potential for cross pollination and improvement across the system;
5. Invest in prototyping and manual tests to move to action;
6. Capture and report on progress and success measures;
7. Provide feedback to government on policy barriers; and
8. Oversee the Economic Innovation Zone.

The Health Innovation Zone is a strong model of bringing together different stakeholders and engaging communities in decision making – but there are other models – drawing on the collective impact project in Tasmania 'Burnie Works' or the approach taken to the Young and Resilient Living Labs (see page 16).

All include:

- the right partners;
- operating under co-designed terms of reference;
- agreed mechanisms for community to drive joint decision making;
- clear KPIs; and
- clear deliverables.

For more about Burnie Works:
www.burnieworks.com.au

Progress

This concept was generated out of the need to transition towards a positive future. It has been a long few years, but significant progress has been made. We now need to turn this concept into action.

WHAT HAPPENED	+	COMMUNITY RESPONSE
State Government announced Economic Innovation Zone, Latrobe Valley Authority and High Tech Precinct	2016	The Community Transition team created this proposal to cement a community owned position on the way forward. While positive steps are being taken by government they do not appear to include community ownership
Hazelwood coal mine announced to close March 2017 with over 900 job losses	2016	Voices of the Valley won the Premier's Sustainability Award Environmental Justice category
	2016	Voices of the Valley participated in the VicHealth Community Challenge and received support to develop the transition concept further
Health Innovation Zone formation underway	2016	Discussions held with AGL, Federation Training and a range of other stakeholders on the community owned transition concept
Second Mine Fire Inquiry concluded leading to the development of the Health Innovation Zone	2015	Voices of the Valley finalist in the Premier's Sustainability Awards in the newly established Environmental Justice category
Second Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry established with specific terms of reference about deaths related to the fire, health effects and health improvements, and mine rehabilitation	2015	Community owned transition concept formulated by Voices of the Valley
	2014	Voices of the Valley commended by Environment Victoria for its efforts on behalf of the community
Initial Mine Fire Inquiry conducted	2014	Voices of the Valley advocated for government and other stakeholders to take responsibility for the Mine Fire
	2014	Voices of the Valley formed to understand the true impact of the Mine Fire on the community
Mine fire in the Latrobe Valley	2014	

Why this will work here

The Latrobe Valley has the skills and assets, and critically the right political environment, to make this happen.

Existing Skills and Infrastructure Assets

The Latrobe Valley is full of very handy people, from farmers to electricians to engineers given the dominance of the power and farming industries. These skills align with the needs of the renewable energy sector.

All lines run to the Latrobe Valley. The grid is a key asset that could be utilised as part of the research and innovation and community owned virtual power station and energy retailer initiatives.

Committed Community

We will need a range of solutions, not just one to create new industries in the valley.

This is one pathway.

However, the mine fire did galvanise the support of over 2300 community members that are now committed to a transition of some sort.

We can activate this commitment in many ways, including as a test bed for economic innovation, as long as they are part of decision making around what happens and how.

Political Environment

We must take advantage of the Government focus on the Latrobe Valley to set our community up for the future:

1. State and Local Government attention and investment after the mine fire, including development of the Health Innovation Zone.
2. Government's awareness of the need for economic transition with Hazelwood closing and over 900 job losses
   - Development of the Economic Innovation Zone
   - Appointment of the Latrobe Valley Authority
   - Announcement of a High Tech Precinct
3. State Government interest in renewable energy:
   - Renewable Energy Target
   - Community renewable energy project discussion paper
   - Future industries fund to fund energy projects across Victoria
4. Federal Government interest in renewable energy and community transition

For more see:

1. www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/health-in-latrobe-valley
2. www.lva.vic.gov.au
3. www.premier.vic.gov.au/economic-growth-zone-to-boost-latrobe-valley-business/
4. www.premier.vic.gov.au/new-hi-tech-jobs-for-the-latrobe-valley/
5. www.premier.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy-targets-to-create-thousands-of-jobs/
6. http://haveyoursay.delwp.vic.gov.au/community-energy
7. www.business.vic.gov.au/support-for-your-business/future-industries/new-energy-technologies

Who is involved?

We have a committed core community team who are surrounded by a range of supporters seeking to make this happen.

TEAM

- Countless community members make up this team. The core transition group has a strong advocacy and innovation skill set and has been able to get the conversation started. We now need others to move the conversation to action

SUPPORTERS

- Voices of the Valley is made up of 2300 community members who were brought together over the mine fire and are now looking to a successful community driven economic transition for Latrobe Valley
- VicHealth
- Centre for Social Change
- Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group
- Environment Victoria

CONSULTED

A range of groups have been consulted and informed the development of this concept, including:

- Federation Training and University
- Various Unions
- Local businesses
- Council

Implementation

Below are five tangible ways we could get started.

1. State Government forms the Transition Coordination Centre

   Government scope the formation of the proposed Transition Coordination Centre which should bring together the High Tech Precinct, Economic Innovation Zone and Latrobe Valley Authority and embed community decision making as part of its structure.

2. State Government awards a portion of the Renewable Energy Target to the Transition Coordination Centre

   If government committed to putting a portion of the renewable energy contract through the Latrobe Valley this would provide the volumes and assurance required for the South Australian manufacturer, Tindo, to set up a factory in the Latrobe Valley or advise on the establishment of a community owned venture in the Latrobe Valley. It would enable demand to be fostered through the community energy projects proposed.

3. Establish a community solar garden

   A group be established with Council to draw on the Darebin solar program and learnings from the US to establish a community solar garden, potentially through an application to the Energy Jobs Fund to fund the project.

   See: www.business.vic.gov.au/support-for-your-business/future-industries/new-energy-technologies

4. Government scopes a collaborative research consortia around community owned renewable energy, including a community owned renewable energy virtual power station and retailer

   A group of interested parties could be brought together to discuss how a research consortia could be established and understand the benefits and barriers for key groups. This would build on the high tech precinct concept.

5. Community Foundation Established

   Government and business could provide seed funding for a Latrobe Valley Community Foundation, whose remit it is to support the establishment of community owned enterprises. It could draw on the Evergreen model to support the establishment of a workers cooperative proposed as part of this solution.

Support Sought

This concept is going to need support from a diverse group of stakeholders:

Local, State, Federal Government

1. Establish the Transition Coordination Centre
2. Commit to putting a portion of the renewable energy target through the Latrobe Valley
3. Invest in a collaborative research partnership around community led renewable energy, with a test bed in the Latrobe Valley
4. Review policy barriers
5. Council to partner with the community to implement the solar garden concept – including allocating underutilised public land
6. Support the formation of a community foundation in the Latrobe Valley

Academia, Business and Non Government Organisations

1. Consider the value proposition for a research consortia and potential partners
2. Local businesses contribute to the set up of a community foundation
3. Consider how to engage in community led crowd funded solar projects or leasing and get in touch with us

Community

1. Generate ideas for an economically prosperous Latrobe Valley and lobby government to support their implementation
2. Attend consultations on this concept and work with us to unlock support to get this moving
3. Get in touch with us to start a community foundation and advocate for a community owned solar garden

Benefits

The benefits of this transformation for all stakeholders – academia, industry, government and, most importantly community, are clear.

Leaders in community renewable energy

For government, industry and academia who invest in the research initiative there is potential to commercialise new technologies that could position Victoria as a leader in renewable energy technology development.

A live 'test bed' for community owned renewable energy projects constructed, with a community willing to drive the change, would be of significant benefit to all stakeholders interested in progressing this sector.

Test case for transitioning communities

For government this could be an innovative approach to supporting communities transitioning away from coal power stations.

Reduce the cost of health inequalities

For government this can stabilise the social and financial cost of health inequalities they currently fund in the Latrobe Valley. This could mean less people on welfare, less people claiming Medicare, and less people engaging with the justice system.

Control, pride and hope

For communities on the ground in the Latrobe Valley this initiative has the potential to offer hope, pride and control over a sustainable future.

We will keep advocating.
Help us make this a reality and get in touch.

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