

**SUBMISSION TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE AUTHORITY RE THE
RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGET
FROM THE LATROBE VALLEY SUSTAINABILITY GROUP**

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The Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group (LVSG) is a community based, incorporated group of citizens with the aim of working towards creating a sustainable future for our own and future generations and to preserve the natural environment to provide quality of life for our citizens. We have over 100 members and welcome this opportunity to respond to the Climate Change Authority.

I am presenting this submission on behalf of the Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group in support of strengthening the Renewable Energy Target.

On almost a daily basis there is new and alarming evidence of man-made climate change, that if left unchecked will mean the end of the world order as we know it. While we recognise that the climate catastrophes, which will cause this will not occur in the next few years or hopefully not in our own lifetimes, it will inevitably happen. It is the people living now that determine whether the climate stays benign or turns against us in the future, as many of the interactions in our climate take many years to get to a critical point. We must act now to reduce greenhouse gases, as it will be too late for those future generations to take effective actions.

The most immediate concern is the huge dip in sea ice volume in the Arctic Ocean this northern summer, which was not predicted to occur until into the 2030's or even later this Century. Some experts have said that the Arctic might be ice-free in summer by 2015. The loss of this amount of Albedo Effect – reflecting heat back into outer space, could see a tipping point for the climate and plunge us into a spiral of warming that that the planet won't have seen since the extra-terrestrial impacts such as asteroid collisions with the Earth – scores of millions of years ago.

For this main reason, we at the Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group, want to see the Renewable Energy Target strengthened, not weakened.

As the demand for electricity has reduced for various reasons, two of which are because of the large scale take up of roof top solar on households and energy efficiency, many of the big fossil fuel electricity producers such as TruEnergy, AGL and Origin to name a few are worried about the sustainability of their business models and are actively campaigning to reduce the effective RET.

Nominally, this stands at 20% of the supply of electricity by 2020. Due to this reduced demand, and the commissioning of many renewable energy suppliers onto the market, the 20% RET will easily be achieved and is not ambitious enough. The RET should be based on a set figure not a percentage, because in effect the fall in demand for electricity has reduced the actual target in real terms.

Also as consumers, we are concerned that if we do not transition to a renewable energy supplied grid, we will be paying too much for our electricity in the coming years. The big costs for renewables are up-front and the production costs are minimal as the source of the energy supply (wind, solar, ocean wave etc) is free. This means that over time, the costs of renewable electricity will be cheaper. At the moment we are also seeing the start up cost of renewable electricity falling rapidly as mass production and economies of scale come into play. This is particularly the case with solar panels, which cost one-seventh the price they were in 2005. These figures are backed up in an analysis from the Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics, titled the Australian Energy Technology Assessment (AETA) report.

The RET beyond 2020 needs to be considered as well. By 2030, it will be totally possible for Australia to be 100 % renewable and this will be in accordance with the desires of the mass majority of the population, who even today

are more strident in demanding action on climate change. As well as the desires of the international community at large who are increasingly putting a price on carbon to generate investment in renewable energy technology, in order to satisfy their own citizens and to prevent border taxes being levied on their exports by other countries to even up the price differential for the cost of greenhouse gas reduction in these destination countries.

We also see renewable energy as a bigger provider of sustainable jobs in regional areas than the centralised brown coal producers in Victoria or the black coal producers elsewhere. These jobs range from highly skilled to unskilled and would bring big benefits to rural communities and by having an ambitious RET as the basis of transforming our economy, then the nation can look more confidently to the future.

We at the LVSG sincerely hope that the bigger picture will prevail and that the RET is enhanced to ensure a transition to 100% renewable by 2030 at the latest to ensure the safety of the climate and the health and well being of ours and future generations and the continued prosperity of the nation as a whole.