



Co-operative impact

The future of community energy



# Generating Results

Hepburn Energy owns and operates Australia's first community-owned wind farm. The co-operative creates environmental, economic and social benefits for members, neighbours and community. Together with the local community, we are leading the transition to a clean energy future and working to showcase to other communities a successful community energy model.

**127,654 MWh**

**Lifetime wind farm energy  
generated, abating 130,813  
tonnes of CO2**

# Origins

The Hepburn Energy co-operative has shown that the community is prepared to invest significant capital in local infrastructure, provided local benefits are created. The story highlights the 'community investor', with modest return expectations, and high levels of patience but a high requirement for communication and transparency.

## Wind farm project funding

- \$9.8 million raised by 2000 community investors
- \$975,000 grant from Sustainability Victoria's Renewable Energy Support Fund
- \$750,000 grant from Regional Development Victoria's Regional Infrastructure Development Program
- \$3.1m loan from Bendigo Bank

## Awards, recognition & certifications

- 2010 Innovator of the Year Award
- 2011 Victorian Premier's Sustainability Award
- 2011 Banksia Environmental Award
- 2011 Australian Sustainability Award
- 2011 Clean Energy Future national advertising campaign
- 2012 World Wind Energy Award
- 2012 UN International Year of Co-operative (Australian flagship project)
- 2016 Certified B-Corporation
- 2019 Certified Social Enterprise
- Accredited GreenPower Generator
- Annual Best in the World for B-Corp under Community and Environment categories since 2016

**Since generation began in 2011, all financial debts have been paid off earlier than forecast and there has been \$1,659,234 direct member financial benefit.**





## Local jobs & capacity building

Since its inception, the co-operative has directly enhanced the capacity and skills of many local people who have worked on it.

- 35 volunteer board directors, who, throughout the project, have contributed an enormous amount of unpaid time and expertise to the project.
- 9 people employed with roles in site operations, membership, communication, public affairs, project development, oversight, governance and management.



## Community benefit sharing

Hepburn Energy's community engagement is unprecedented for any wind farm in Australia and has been integral to its success. Profits from the project remain in the community as dividends are returned to investors and through community funding. From conception, the co-operative has been determined to ensure that the entire community, beyond the investors, benefit from the project.

Now titled the Hepburn Energy Impact Fund, the fund been a tool for the co-operative to build local community resilience, sustainability and engagement with its community. There have been varying forms over the years and each year \$30,000 (\$15,000 per turbine) is contributed to the core purpose of fostering climate resilience while helping the Hepburn Shire community reach zero net emissions by 2030.

A partnership approach is adopted with programs and projects involved with our Impact Fund where staff co-design proposals responding to the aims described in the Impact Fund Guidelines and in some cases co-deliver them.

# Impact

## Community benefit since 2011

\$326,916 co-operative contribution towards 97 community benefit-sharing projects

**\$6,187,459 in community value.**  
**A leverage point of almost 19 to 1.**

### 17 small scale energy projects

220 Solar systems, over 1120kW  
9 Battery systems totalling 50.1 kWh

### 15 projects & programs

including 104 energy efficiency assessments, bulk buys with 105 heat pump hot water systems, 20 electric vehicles and development of research & education programs

### 59 community grants

### 4 co-operative owned public EV chargers

### >400 homes benefited

### >80 community groups benefited



2024

