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Rob Gell commends Hepburn Wind

Thursday 31 March, Daylesford

Climate guru Rob Gell provided a gripping keynote presentation to the trail-blazing community of Hepburn Wind as they proudly celebrated the construction of Australia's first community owned wind farm at their AGM last night. His presentation highlighted the importance of pioneering projects like Hepburn Wind to lead Australia in the take-up of renewable energy.

Almost 200 committed members gathered to attend the AGM and play an active part in the running of their wind farm. Before settling into the evening's business, two large buses took the members to Leonards Hill to view their achievement up close and learn about the technology from Chairman Simon Holmes à Court.

With a term sheet signed only five minutes prior to the AGM, Director Daniel Magasanik, was able to reveal that Hepburn Wind has chosen an energy retailing partner. Red Energy, a 100% Australian-owned energy company will be selling the community's clean energy when it begins generating in the coming months. Members also elected three new directors for their co-operative – Dan Cass, Almut Beringer and Peter Rogers.

The final components of turbines were lifted into position on Sunday, making the Hepburn Community Wind Farm Victoria's ninth and smallest wind farm and the first to be owned by a community.

The overwhelming community support is in stark contrast to many of the messages coming to light as part of the Senate Inquiry into the social and economic impact of wind farms. In order to build the \$13m project, the 1600 members of the wind farm co-operative collectively invested \$8.7m, a clear indication of enormous local support for renewable energy.

Last Monday, members of Hepburn Wind were proud to openly share their story with the Senate Community Affairs Committee. Simon Holmes à Court, Chairman of Hepburn Wind, presented the Senators with a list of the 1,100 positive submissions made by supporters of the project, many of whom outlined the numerous benefits of clean renewable energy and the community ownership model.

The project is firmly committed to sharing the benefits with the entire community, even those who haven't directly invested, by establishing a Community Sustainability Fund that will see more than \$1 million in community grants over the project's first 25 years.

Hepburn Wind has inspired more than 40 communities around Australia to begin development of their own solar, wind and mini-hydro initiatives. Community owned projects build support for renewable energy and will play a vital role in driving the inevitable transition to a low-carbon economy.

Quotes

“I am so proud of our community for building our own renewable energy project. It’s a definite positive step towards reducing our carbon footprint”.

- Sophie Liu, Member, Hepburn Wind

“We’re very pleased that the Senators chose to visit our community’s wind farm. Our project is not just about building two wind turbines it is about empowering local people to become engaged and active participants in responding to the challenge of climate change.”

“We have created three local jobs, purchased more than \$6.3 m of goods and services in Victoria and we will soon be generating enough clean energy for 2300 homes for the equivalent of less than \$6000 per household.”

“Communities are showing that they can take the lead – we don’t have to wait for government or big business to act on climate change.”

– Simon Holmes à Court, Chairman, Hepburn Wind.

“Prior to Hepburn Wind I had never bought shares in anything. The shares give me a sense of enormous pride in my community and demonstrate the power of individuals and collective passion to achieve change. That, surely, is the best legacy to pass on to our children.”

– Kirsten Wilken, Member, Hepburn Wind.