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*Community readies to flick the switch by Paddy Manning,
SMH*

WE'D better be getting serious about massive wind and solar, because the alternatives are narrowing. Forget nuclear here, anywhere near anybody. Carbon capture and storage? Yeah, sure. Coal-seam gas? Highly problematic. Geothermal? Hmm.

On Thursday, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, said she was looking at whether the "renewables age" could be brought on sooner and in Australia, the Greens leader, Bob Brown, pounced. "We need to, sensibly, go straight to renewables," he said. "They're safe, they're great job creators, and the power source is free."

Everyone seems down on wind farms at the moment – they're not powerful enough, they're unsightly, they're even unhealthy! (Caution: excessive anxiety about the value of your property is bad for you.)

The failing renewable energy target regime and a Victorian government elected on an anti-wind platform are not helping, but weather permitting, today the first of a pair of two-megawatt turbines in the community-funded Hepburn Wind project is being raised at Leonards Hill, near Daylesford and Hepburn Springs, in central Victoria.

The 1600 members of Hepburn Wind are expecting commercial returns on their collective \$8.7 million investment, but a director, Simon Holmes a Court, says the primary drivers are reducing the town's carbon footprint and "making the statement that we're impatient and are just getting on with it".

"We're not cutting cable to the network," he says. "But when it's up and going we'll be a net exporter to the grid. On a windy day we'll be putting out far more power than our community uses."

A non-profit group, Embark, is extending the Hepburn model, working with more than 40 communities for small wind, solar or micro-hydro projects. Armidale, in the NSW northern tablelands, is next.

"There's no reason why we couldn't have them in cities," Holmes a Court says.