

A RENEWABLE ENERGY FACILITY AT POINT HENRY, GEELONG

EEJSC Submission No.24
Attachment 1
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*Four to five three-megawatt
wind turbines*

Solar photovoltaic arrays



“A great opportunity for Geelong”

Submission to POINT HENRY 575 by

RENEW POINT HENRY CONSORTIUM

April 2016

CONSORTIUM MEMBERS:



PRIVATE CITIZENS

INDUSTRY PARTNERS:



Green Earth Electrical



Postal:

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IT MAKES A LOT OF SENSE:

TRULY SUSTAINABLE ELECTRICITY WITH NO DIRECT CARBON EMISSIONS

EXCELLENT SITE: REMOTE, GOOD WIND RESOURCE AND
EXISTING ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE

OPPORTUNITY FOR LOCAL BUSINESS DURING MANUFACTURE, INSTALLATION AND
MAINTENANCE

A PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY TAKING ACTION TO SECURE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

POINT HENRY 575

We wish to contribute to the POINT HENRY 575 process by outlining our vision for the land encompassing the former industrial (smelter) site at Point Henry. We are a consortium of local people including private citizens, businesses with expertise in renewable energy, and environmental organisation Friends of the Earth. We have received support from a range of institutions, including Deakin University and the University of Melbourne. The consortium is in start-up phase and expects more partners to come on board to support and shape this exciting initiative.

We see the land that hosted the former Alcoa aluminium facility as an ideal location for a renewable energy park which would host a small number of wind turbines, possibly supplemented by solar photovoltaic panels. Based on advice from the renewables sector, there appears to be a good wind resource at the site and its relative remoteness from urban areas makes it suitable for such a venture. Transmission lines already exist which could be utilised to distribute power from the facility to local industries and the general grid. We have received preliminary advice that the site would have the capacity to host four to five, three-megawatt turbines.

A company that specialises in small scale wind power facilities has shown interest in the concept, as has Embark Australia, an organisation that supports the development for community renewable energy ventures, so we believe that we could attract the necessary expertise to bring the project to fruition should it be decided the community venture model is the best course of action. A number of people in the consortium are employed in the renewable energy sector and others have experience in establishing community-owned renewable projects. There are various schemes for financing such a venture, including the community-owned model or community/developer partnership. Other options will be discussed further on in the document.

We have had initial discussions with a range of businesses in the Geelong region, all of whom have expressed support for the vision. This includes Craig Pugh, CEO of Winchester Australia, which is based at Moolap.

We have also received a positive response to this proposal from Geelong Trades Hall Secretary Tim Gooden, who views it as a positive action for use of the land since Alcoa closed its manufacturing plant there, with opportunities for local jobs and eco tourism. We are currently in discussion with a number of organisations that have an interest in conservation and the natural environment.

As a highly industrialised and contaminated site, Point Henry needs to be developed carefully in order to ensure community and environmental safety. Our vision is of a wind turbine facility (possibly supplemented with solar PV arrays), feeding energy into the grid, surrounded by restored indigenous vegetation. This would enhance the biodiversity values of the adjacent saltworks site and provide visual 'softening' of the area. A renewable energy park located on such an iconic site would be a powerful statement about the future of Geelong in the 21 century, and position the city as forward-thinking and able to attract world-class development. Because of its high visibility, the Point Henry area would provide a modern backdrop from many vantage points around Geelong.

Such a venture could be linked with nature-based tourism, including in the adjacent wetlands. It could act as a demonstration centre for renewable energy. We anticipate that the project would develop a community fund as part of its operations. Similar projects, such as the Hepburn Wind near Daylesford have community funds that benefit local community groups. Funds from the project could be partially used for ecological restoration works required on the Point Henry site.

We would like to briefly outline how our vision relates to the plan's five themes:

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE OF THE GEELONG REGION

Wind turbines would contribute long-lasting infrastructure and supply an essential service (electricity) in an environmentally friendly and truly sustainable manner, particularly in respect to carbon emissions.

As well as employment generated during the construction and installation phase, the project would have the potential to provide long-term employment in areas such as maintenance of the facility and a possible centre for renewable energy innovation in conjunction with Deakin University. And of course the provision of electricity is essential to our way of life. Generation of electricity by means of wind and solar P.V. does not directly produce carbon emissions, which is essential for a sustainable future.

The project group is committed to maximising local supply of materials for the facility and will carry out an assessment of Geelong-based businesses who may be able to tender for delivering aspects of the project.

We are committed to establishing a community fund which will distribute funding to local community organisations and/or ecological restoration on the site.

More broadly, having a high profile 'new technology' industry based in Geelong sends a strong signal that Geelong is reinventing itself as it adapts to changes in the existing manufacturing sector.

EMBRACE AND CELEBRATE THE COASTAL LANDSCAPE

We are interested in pursuing the option of restoring much of the Point Henry site to indigenous vegetation, once remediation of contaminated sites has been completed. This would build the size and value of the adjacent saltworks wetland.

BUILD UPON THE STRENGTHS OF THE EXISTING COMMUNITY

The community of Geelong would be able to participate directly in the venture if a community-funded model is adopted. Aside from this direct involvement, the community could be proud of producing renewable energy locally to complement that already provided by solar P.V. and particularly as it can be generated at night.

The realisation of a renewable power facility would create a heritage for the Geelong region of being proactive in the provision of an essential service in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner.

HONOUR THE VARIOUS HISTORIES OF THE SITE

Opportunities exist for identifying sites of cultural heritage that were impacted by the smelter development. Elders (including Traditional Owners), members and staff at Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative support the idea and could input expertise for cultural and heritage inclusion in the plans including Uncle David Tournier, Cultural Heritage Education Language Officer and Kym Monohan, Community Services Manager. Point Henry is a significant cultural site for the Wathaurong, and by embedding educational information into the plans for the site the strong links between sustainability and connection to Country could be shared in the region. The Coop has experience of sustainably managing land locally, including the Wurdi Youang Indigenous Protected Areas close to Lara.

Given that the project will be producing electricity, it would have a practical use for much of the transmission and associated energy infrastructure that currently exists on the site. This would provide a practical way of preserving some of the industrial heritage on the site.

CREATE A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE SPACE

We believe the facility would coexist well with the existing recreational and nature-based environment of Point Henry. We believe that because of the small physical footprint of wind turbines, land would be freed up on the site for other purposes.

POSSIBLE LAND-OWNERSHIP SCENARIOS

We acknowledge that critical issues such as the future of the landfills and the actual final ownership of the land will not be decided for some time. With that in mind, we would like to broach some possible scenarios for your consideration.

We are excited about the possibility of a renewable energy facility at Point Henry and hope Alcoa will welcome our vision. We see the former smelter site at this point, as the ideal location for a renewable energy facility that Geelong, Victoria, Australia and Alcoa could be proud of. We would very much welcome the opportunity to talk to Alcoa further regarding our proposal. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to POINT HENRY 575.

THREE GREAT OUTCOMES

The venture would satisfy the following three criteria admirably:

SOCIAL: *sustainable and clean provision of an essential service*

ENVIRONMENT: *the production of electricity with no direct carbon emissions*

ECONOMIC: *industry involvement in construction, installation and maintenance*

CONCLUSION

We are excited about the possibility of a renewable-energy facility at Point Henry and hope Alcoa will welcome our vision. We see the former smelter and rolling mill site as the ideal location for a renewable-energy facility that Geelong and Victoria could be extremely proud of.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to talk to Alcoa further regarding our proposal. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to POINT HENRY 575.



THE NEXT PHASE FOR POINT HENRY:

CLEAN AND SUSTAINABLE ELECTRICITY