

From: Rob Catchlove [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 2 September 2019 3:10 PM
To: ClimateChangeInquiry
Subject: Tackling climate change through local street action and energy sharing

Hi.

Please accept my late submission to this inquiry.

I am the founder of a small community project in Melbourne, with the explicit aim of tackling climate change through increasing the use of renewable energy in our street – and sharing our renewable energy.

We started in 2016. In 2019, we are still prohibited from doing something good, for the climate, the state and our street, through regulation and a lack of willingness by energy companies and regulators to support and enable our project.

Background

In a street in Brunswick West, Melbourne, I started a project with the aim of generating clean energy from solar panels on separate roofs in the street, and then trading the excess energy to enable all households (owners and renters) to buy and benefit from this renewable and local generation.

It was focused on creating a smarter way of creating and trading electricity within this group of neighbours.

It was a way of this small community (50 houses) explicitly taking action on climate change, and taking more control of their electricity generation and use.

It would enable this group of residents to spend less on electricity (assuming there are reduced network expenses), buy more efficient and smaller solar and battery systems, sell electricity between neighbours, and lower their environmental footprint.

What we did

We had a series of meetings as a community in 2016, discussing what we wanted and what we might try. We had Prof Ross Garnaut come and talk to the whole street community one night.

We partnered with Moreland Energy Foundation to help us approach Citipower and other industry groups.

We pitched the idea to CitiPower, who initially accepted the idea as a trial, then reneged and bailed on the concept. Now they won't talk to us.

Why can't we do a trial

The answer from Citipower (who we need to help us as they own the infrastructure we need to use for electricity trading, and also set a price for each kWh that is transacted through the network), was that this area doesn't have a grid constraint, and the area is too small to matter. We see it as a model of the next generation grid, and hence while small would have a lot to offer an electricity distributor like CitiPower.

What I hope the State government does

We would hope that the State government creates a mechanism for us to do a trial. We are not asking to disconnect from the grid, or mandate everyone in the street participates, but we want a real trial to help the whole industry test out how it could work from a tariff, consumer and technical perspective. This is also about supporting consumers and community.

Further information / appearing at hearings

I would be willing to appear in person in front of the committee, and hope you would also call representatives from Citipower, DELWP and AER.

Thank you for accepting this belated submission.

Thanks
Rob

