

Building Community Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change through Distributed Bioenergy (Regional Bioenergy Project)

Background

In May 2012 the Minister for Environment and Climate Change through the Department of Sustainability and Environment allocated \$599,200 of funding to the project under the Victorian Local Sustainability Accord. The funding was under the Partnership Grants category aimed at fostering collaborative and innovative partnerships between regional councils to address climate change and sustainability issues of common concern. Partner councils contributed \$108,832 of cash and in-kind to the project.

The project builds upon regional strategic planning, identified in both the Regional Plan for the *Wimmera Southern Mallee 2010* and *Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan 2010*. Objectives of these plans include facilitating industry clusters and building on regional strengths by investigating business development opportunities and demonstrating commitment to innovative and sustainable energy solutions for businesses.

Across the region there has been substantial investigation and active interest in bioenergy application led by the Central Highlands Agribusiness Forum (CHAF). The Beaufort hospital was flagged as a semi commercial entity to demonstrate the bioenergy concept. In the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region, groups such as the Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance (WMSA) continue building upon initial exploration of bioenergy opportunities.

Project description

The Bioenergy Project is a major regional pilot study that involves the showcasing of a commercial bioenergy demonstration plant at the Beaufort hospital. Actions including establishment of a biomass supply chain model and undertaking a feasibility study for a Wimmera Southern Mallee bioenergy unit will be undertaken. Project outcomes will be showcased at a Bioenergy Forum and through dissemination of a Business Case Study, increasing awareness of bioenergy and promoting bioenergy economic development opportunities across the local government and business sectors.

Desired outcomes

In showcasing and promoting bioenergy, this project places a focus on regional economic development opportunities with two major desired outcomes of:

1. Locally produced bioenergy that stimulates regional economic activity and increases energy security by:

- The Beaufort Hospital bioenergy unit operating effectively
- A Business Case developed
- Investment planning for a Wimmera Southern Mallee bioenergy facility

2. Bioenergy is understood and accepted across the region by:

- A Bioenergy Forum report outlining recommendations to stimulate further bioenergy activity in the region
- An LGA Forum Report outlining recommendations for further bioenergy activity in the region
- Case studies showcasing the practical aspects of regional bioenergy delivery and opportunity are developed and communicated

Progress to date

Specifications were developed for the Beaufort Hospital boiler and boiler fuel secured from a local business. Tenders were called for the supply and installation of the boiler with New Zealand company, Living Energy, appointed. They have now installed a containerised 110 kW Hargassner boiler system. A biomass supply chain model and investigation into suitable bioenergy project for the Wimmera Southern Mallee has been completed. A number of Project Updates have been produced and distributed to project stakeholders as well as other promotional activities. A forum showcasing the boiler installation and other project activities was held on 30th April, 2014 with over 50 people attending. For more information visit: <http://www.pyrenees.vic.gov.au/Home>

