

Climate
Rescue
Of
Wagga Inc.



CROW SECURES GRANT TO EXPLORE COMMUNITY-OWNED SOLAR POWER PROGRAM FOR WAGGA WAGGA

Climate Rescue of Wagga Inc. (CROW) has received a \$26,000 grant from the NSW Government to determine local support and interest in a community-owned solar power program in the Wagga region.

CROW has been active in promoting alternatives to fossil fuels since 2006, with a Sustainability Showcase in 2010 and another Renewable Energy Expo staged in November 2012. The group attends local and regional climate change and energy seminars and has regular input on local government climate change issues through the Wagga Environmental Advisory Committee.

The feasibility study aims to find up to five hosts for solar systems in the 80 – 100KW size range. Each host will ideally consume at least 550-600kWh per day and would need about 600 square metres of roof or land space to house the required solar panels.

The solar panels and other technical equipment would be provided by a community-owned private company which would lock in long-term, low cost power agreements with the hosts.

Members of the community will be offered the opportunity to invest in the company, which will offer fair financial returns that are 'better than bank interest rates'. The initiative will provide substantial economic benefits to Wagga as well as generating significant social and environmental benefits for the region.

Host organisations would benefit from cheaper power bills and cleaner energy. Host sites would also benefit by being able to access their power directly, without having to pay for transmission costs through wires and other external power infrastructure. The solar power would be provided for a lower price than current 'black' (coal, gas) electricity and without any substantial up-front capital required.

CROW is in early discussions with a range of organisations to potentially become hosts for the project, including the Wagga Wagga City Council and Charles Sturt University. Other potential host organisations could include aged care facilities, hospitals, abattoirs, hotels and service clubs.

Chair of CROW, Mr Stephen James said that the recent hikes in electricity costs have made solar power an increasingly attractive option for businesses and residents seeking an environmentally sound power solution.

“The costs of solar power have decreased by 80% over the past five years while electricity costs have more than doubled,” he said.

“More than one million homes in Australia now use solar power and we want to help businesses in Wagga to embrace this clean and affordable source of power.”

“This is not just about more cost effective power though, it’s about embracing a more environmentally and economically sustainable power solution for our community.”

“We’re looking for organisations to demonstrate leadership and their good corporate citizen credentials by adopting a power solution which will contribute to a better environment and a more sustainable community.”

CROW has employed Starfish Enterprises Network to assist with the feasibility study. Starfish has successfully established community solar power programs in the New England region and will run a workshop for CROW in Wagga this weekend on the legal, business and financial approach which has proven successful in New England.

Long term committee member and secretary of CROW, Mr William Adlong, said that Wagga stands to gain substantially from a community owned solar program.

“It would be extremely beneficial for our community to invest in and own local solar power program that save money for the hosts,” he said.

“Ethical and community minded investors will get a good return on their money and energy payments will be kept in the local economy.”

As part of its education focus CROW has also partnered in the past with the Wagga Civic Library, Friends of the Library and Council to provide **Energy Audit Kits** that are now available on loan through the Library.

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