Australian first: Melbourne powers ahead with wind farm

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Melbourne’s most iconic organisations have joined together to support the development of a wind farm that will be built near Ararat in regional Victoria.

City of Melbourne Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood said the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project has united 14 leading universities, cultural institutions, corporations and Councils to source energy from the new 80 MW wind farm.

“We’re sending a message that we’re committed to jobs and investment in regional Australia as well as long-term energy security for Melbourne,” the Deputy Lord Mayor said.

“We expect that more than 140 jobs could be created in the construction phase, with around eight ongoing jobs in the operation and management of the facility.

“This power purchasing project will be an Australian first. It shows that large organisations can combine their purchasing power to support the development of new renewable energy plants in regional Australia.”

The Melbourne Renewable Energy Project group is led by the City of Melbourne and includes the University of Melbourne, RMIT, Federation Square, City of Port Phillip, City of Yarra, Moreland City Council, Bank Australia, Zoos Victoria, Citywide, National Australia Bank, Australia Post, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre and NEXTDC. The group is working to finalise contracts with Melbourne based clean energy company Pacific Hydro which has been selected as the preferred supplier in the tender for the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project.

The planned wind farm will be owned and operated by Pacific Hydro and the power will be supplied by its retail arm, Tango Energy. The facility will include 39 wind turbines and will deliver a boost to the local economy with construction jobs and opportunities for local businesses, suppliers, and contractors.

The group plans to purchase 88 GWh of energy, which is the equivalent to powering more than 17,000 households in Melbourne for a year.

“This will abate more than 96,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere each year. That’s as much as taking more than 22,000 cars off the road,” the Deputy Lord Mayor said.

Crowlands wind farm has received all relevant planning approvals: construction contracts are being finalised and are subject to financial close. The project at the wind-rich agricultural community, 205kms from Melbourne, was first proposed in 2007. Currently only 17 per cent of Victoria’s electricity is derived from renewable energy.

“This model can be replicated all over Australia and internationally, where practical, by groups of cities, businesses, and community members. We’re releasing a handbook that makes it easy to learn from our experience, improve on the approach and replicate it many times,” the Deputy Lord Mayor said.

“This project adds to a growing number of organisations and governments going direct to market to purchase renewables, but never before has it been proven that such a large number of partners can come together and make it work.”

A video about the project is available here.
The Melbourne Renewable Energy Project Replication Model information can be found here.

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Quotes:

Pacific Hydro, General Manager Australia, Rachel Watson: “As a leading builder, owner and operator of renewable energy projects in Australia, we are immensely proud to be the energy partner in this innovative deal. This new approach to power purchasing will directly support our development of the project; and marks a significant point in our shared transition to a cleaner energy future.”

University of Melbourne Chief Financial Officer and Vice-Principal of Administration and Finance, Allan Tait: “We’re proud to be involved in the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project. We take seriously our responsibility as a public-spirited and global university to lead debate and act on sustainability issues. The Project signals the University’s commitment to sustainability across all of its core activities, underpinned by our Sustainability Charter and Sustainability Plan to 2020. The University continues to implement on-campus projects to reduce energy demand and develop renewable energy capacity on site.”

RMIT University Chief Operating Officer, Dionne Higgins: "RMIT University is proud to be a project partner in the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project, demonstrating the University's position as a leader in sustainability. The project builds on the recent success of the RMIT Sustainable Urban Precincts Program, improving energy efficiency across our campuses and meeting our emissions reduction goals four years ahead of schedule. The project is an extension of this hard work and represents our next step in creating a sustainable future.”

Federation Square Pty Ltd CEO Jonathan Tribe: “Federation Square is very proud to be a carbon neutral precinct. The organisation works hard to be a leader in environmentally sustainable practices through a number of innovative, long term initiatives. We see this project as an exciting opportunity to collaborate with like-minded businesses to pioneer this ground-breaking, renewable energy project.”

City of Port Phillip Mayor Bernadene Voss: “As a local government leader in sustainability initiatives, the City of Port Phillip is excited that this project will help us achieve our goal of zero net emissions by 2020. Linking up with partners, such as the City of Melbourne, to combine buying power is a smart way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It also assists us with managing financial risk and stimulating job creation, while moving towards a clean, lower emissions economy.”

City of Yarra Mayor Amanda Stone: “Yarra City Council is committing to sourcing 100 per cent of our electricity through the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project. This includes all of our Council owned and operated buildings, town halls, parks and street lighting. The project will help Yarra surpass our target of 60 per cent emissions reduction from 2001 levels, with a total emissions reduction of approximately 75 per cent. Yarra has a proud history of environmental leadership, reflective of our community who expect us to take strong action to meet our urban sustainability challenges.”

Moreland City Council Mayor John Kavanagh: “Moreland has always been at the forefront of sustainability initiatives and we are excited to be linking up with other councils, universities and the private sector, to achieve even greater outcomes. We’re confident this innovative and unique model for purchasing ‘home grown’ renewable energy will stimulate interest among other local governments, businesses and institutions looking to decarbonise their operations.”

NAB Chief Customer Officer Corporate & Institutional Banking Mike Baird: “This project is a great example of what can be achieved when businesses and government join forces and work together on a long-term vision. Renewable energy is an important component of Australia’s transition to a low carbon economy and is important to NAB. We have a commitment to provide customers with $55 billion of environmental financing, and source 50% of our Australian energy from renewable sources, by 2025. This project is an important part of that commitment, and NAB is proud to be doing its bit for the bank’s home town of Melbourne.”

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Bank Australia Managing Director Damien Walsh: “The project will help Bank Australia in its commitment to purchasing 100 per cent renewable electricity. We’re a customer owned, responsible bank, and our customers have told us that renewable energy is a priority for them. By enabling new investment in renewable energy, the project will also help Bank Australia to meet our customers’ expectations.”

Zoos Victoria CEO Dr Jenny Gray: “As the world’s first zoo to achieve carbon neutral certification, we aim to inspire the community to practise environmentally sustainable behaviours to protect the natural world. We are proud to unite with like-minded organisations that share our values through the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project. This project will allow Healesville Sanctuary to receive 100 per cent renewable energy and reduce its carbon footprint by 84 per cent, a significant step towards a cleaner future.”

Citywide CEO Chris Campbell: “Within the full scope of municipal services we provide, our day-to-day work involves maintaining public parks and gardens and urban forests and street trees – vital community assets which in addition play a role in the climate change equation. Along with the project partner organisations, we hope to inspire other large organisations to replicate this model and take their own step towards reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.”

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre Chief Operating Officer Leighton Wood: “As an important public asset, it is our duty to improve our environmental impact and live up to the sustainability expectations of our stakeholders – our customers, our employees, our Club Melbourne Ambassadors, and our community. Our venue is always striving to identify and implement positive environmental initiatives, such as our involvement in the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project.”

NEXTDC Chief Operating Officer Simon Cooper: “NEXTDC is delighted to see the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project deliver on its promise and enable new large scale renewable generation capacity in Victoria. Here at NEXTDC we are rapidly expanding our data centre capacity, and investing in initiatives like this one is an important part of reducing our customers’ carbon footprints. Sustainability is a critical part of our focus on future growth, which all began with our industry-leading investment in the 400kW rooftop solar array that resides on our M1 data centre in Port Melbourne, and which has been delivering around 500MWh of renewable electricity annually for several years now.”