

# Watt Matters

The newsletter of 2030Yea Inc: Community Energy

Encourage energy efficiency, increase solar PV and battery uptake  
plan for community energy

In this issue ...

**Enova Community Energy**  
*Jacinta Agostinelli interviews*  
**Alison Crook AO, Chair of**  
**Enova Energy**

Alison Crook cuts through the noise surrounding the energy industry, to give us a clear 'big' picture. She also has valuable recommendations for 2030Yea. At two cups of coffee long be sure to extend your break. p2

**The kilowatt countdown:**  
**Sealing the envelope by Ron**  
**Litjens**

Inspired by an article on home efficiency in our first issue we are introducing 'The kilowatt countdown', which will focus on efficiency measures. Ron Litjens, who is renovating the Yea Butter Factory, is our guest writer. p4

**Community battery power**  
**by Elaine Furniss**

Read about community batteries and how 2030Yea is working towards a Yea community battery. p5

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We know we are in trouble when the cartoonists are stumped, although I must admit to having a giggle at the mention of 2030Yea in the thought bubble line-up of Bev Dick's cartoon! The distressing findings of the IPCC Report mean the work of 2030Yea is ever more urgent.

Thank you to our resident cartoonist, Bev Dick, for her interpretation. I am excited to say we can look forward to more from Bev in future issues.

A big thank you to all those who supported the first issue with your positive comments. Thank you also to those who contributed to our Spring issue.

Enjoy!

Editor Jacinta Agostinelli 2030Yea@gmail.com



## Enova Community Energy

Interview by Jacinta Agostinelli

**As Australia's first community owned energy retailer, Enova Community Energy has a fascinating story, with its beginnings in an historic community blockade against coal seam gas in northern NSW in 2014. Enova was launched two years later with a vision to facilitate renewable energy transition to benefit all. Enova now operates across the whole of NSW and into south eastern Queensland. I caught up with Alison Crook AO, Chair of Enova, and who was also one of its four founding members.**



Alison Crook AO at Enova's 5th birthday.

*\*That is why we set up a structure solar garden model where people can invest in panels, but the panels are on the roof of a small business or community organisation, and the money earned from the solar generated and consumed by the business is then paid as a credit on the bills of those who invested in the panels. This is a complex structure and we have obtained a tax ruling on it, but it (a) requires having a community retailer such as Enova that is willing to take no profit on the transaction, outside maintenance costs and (b) finding the goldilocks right roof. i.e., an organisation that is likely to be around in 20 years time, that would like to have solar and reduce its costs but can't afford to pay for it now, that uses a lot of daytime energy, and that sees advantage from sharing benefits with the community.*

*A look at Enova's board member profiles shows they are well connected to industry. What is the reason for this?*

**W**e set up Enova Community Energy Ltd as a social enterprise, with a for-profit arm of the company and a not-for-profit arm of the company, which is a registered charity, with DGR status. When in profit, 50% of that profit after tax and reinvestment goes to the not-for-profit arm to ensure everyone in the community can participate in the shift to renewables.

As Australia's only community owned retailer (which is a very different beast to community owned generation), it is critical that we get our vision through to government and that we are across developments in the energy market and industry as a whole. So, we have built a board which has extensive networks covering the areas we need to link into.

We are, through our for-profit arm, part of the very rapidly changing energy industry and subject to its rules and regulation, and exposed to its risks. As a small player we are constantly having to adapt and implement rule changes introduced by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) or respond to Australian Energy Market Operator requirements.

While we have been able to achieve many of the things we set out to do in establishing Enova, much of what we would like to achieve is still simply not possible because of the structure of the industry. For example, it is still not financially possible to enable solar gardens where people in the community who can't have panels on their own houses for whatever reason can own panels in a stand-alone solar garden and buy their energy from those gardens\* (see note in side panel). And unless you are part of an embedded network or microgrid you can't legally share your excess solar energy with your neighbour.

While we are proud to have been ranked by *Choice* magazine as best electricity retailer for our customer service and environmental sustainability for 2020, and we are delighted to have donated more than \$100,000 to our community charity partners such as Byron Bay Community Centre, The Shift Project, Liberation Larder, Children’s Ground, The Black Dog Institute and Blaze Aid over the last two years, we are still a long way from demonstrating and achieving our vision of energy self-sufficient regions. And this is despite the facts that developments in technology have now made this quite possible, and that the case for increased resilience in the face of a rapidly changing climate has never been stronger.

Continue reading the interview [here](#).

## Top 10 tips to save on electricity costs

**Stay between 20 - 26 degrees!**

**Heating & Cooling**

Reverse cycle air conditioning is by far the cheapest way to heat a room. Always set the thermostat to a set point not below 26 degrees for cooling and not above 20 degrees for heating. It's mostly the humidity that makes you feel uncomfortable, not so much the high temperature.

**Stop leaks!**

**Hot water**

Report leaking taps immediately. Check your power bills whether you are on the right tariff (Controlled Load 1 is the cheapest!). If you have solar hot water, have your shower/s in the morning rather than at night to allow the tank to be re-heated by the sun – not the by the grid.

**Cool wash Hang dry!**

**Washing Machine /Dryer**

Use cold washes wherever you can and use your dryer only if you absolutely have to. Clothes lines are great!

**Shade glass Close doors!**

**Windows & Doors**

Keep the sun off your windows and glass doors with block-out curtains, plants in the right places and blinds. In the hot season, allow lots of cool air in at night and lock up the house during the heat of the day, especially on the side where the sun is.

**Avoid standby!**

**When not in use, turn it off!**

If possible, turn off devices at the power point to avoid use of standby power. Look out for TV's game consoles, larger computers etc. and use the standby / power-down features of your devices.

**Organise your fridge!**

**Fridge and freezer ventilation**

Allow your fridge and freezer to 'breathe' by giving it plenty of space on the sides and the back. Also, minimise door open times by organising your fridge so that you find what you want more quickly.

**Switch it off!**

**Microwave**

Turn off at the wall when not in use. The standby power of microwave ovens can be surprisingly high! Remote controlled switches are great for hard-to-reach power points (approx. \$20-35 for set of 4).

**Cook on bench top!**

**Cooking**

Try to use a small bench top oven rather than the big electric oven for smaller meals. These ovens are rather cheap (less than \$80) and can save you heaps of power.

**Replace globes!**

**Lighting**

Replace blown light globes with LED types. These are often on special at ALDI and other discount retailers. While a bit more expensive, they use substantially less power and last much longer. Turn off lights in rooms not used.

**Cheaper than AC!**

**Fans**

Fans are great for cooling you down, but there is no point in having them running in a vacant room – they actually produce a little bit of heat while running. Pedestal fans or ceiling fans can also help distributing air conditioned air throughout the house.

ENOVENERGY.COM.AU

Accessed from Enova Energy on 6/9/2021 <<https://www.enovaenergy.com.au/free-downloads>>

More fact sheets and information to help you improve energy efficiency at home are available on the [Enova website](#) above.

## The kilowatt countdown

### Sealing the envelope

By Ron Litjens

The secret to improving home energy efficiency is minimising the heat (or cold) transfer between the inside and outside of a building. Heat can be transmitted by draughts caused by gaps in the building envelope or through the building materials themselves. What this means for your house depends on whether you are building from scratch or retro-fitting an existing home, and how old that home is.

The Yea Butter Factory was built in 1905, well before refrigeration. It was built to keep the building naturally cool particularly during long, hot Yea summers - solid foundations, extra thick external doors, walls up to five bricks thick and a natural air recirculating system. The main weaknesses in the energy efficiency of the building envelope are the windows.

Even though the original windows are small and double-paned (as opposed to double-glazed) infrared photographs from inside the building in summer show the windows transmit much more heat than the walls.

To bring the thermal efficiency of the windows more in line with that of the walls double-glazed window cassettes were engineered to fit in the original wooden frames and replace the old glass. Triple-glazed cassettes were considered but were too thick for the old frames.

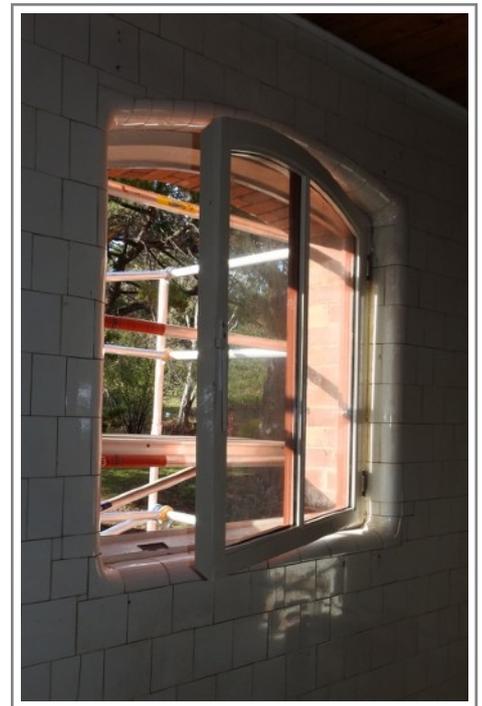
However, where new windows have been installed, for example the one filling in the 3m x 3.6m old loading bay opening, they have been triple-glazed. Triple-glazing provides almost double the insulation of double-glazing for only a 10% increase in cost.

What's left to do is seal the window openings with compressed rubber to prevent draughts.

And voilà! Nothing is as good as a sealed envelope.



New triple glazed windows at the Yea Butter Factory



## Cool new program to keep your home comfortable

Do you have an old gas, electric or wood heater at home? Through the Home Heating and Cooling Upgrades Program, you might be eligible for rebates to upgrade to an energy efficient reverse split cycle system.

This program is for owner-occupier household with an approved concession card, or with a combined household income of less than \$90,000.

This program is supporting people to replace an existing gas, fixed electric or wood heating or no heating with an energy-efficient reverse-cycle air conditioner from the approved products list.

For more information go to: <https://www.heatingupgrades.vic.gov.au/>

## Save energy and money

Reduce your energy use and save money at home. Find out about discount energy saving products, in-home energy assessments, and solar power - <https://www.victorianenergysaver.vic.gov.au/save-energy-and-money>

Learning about your energy use can help make your business more efficient and save you money - <https://www.victorianenergysaver.vic.gov.au/energy-advice-for-business>

## Community battery power

By Elaine Furniss

There are many winter days in Yea when the sun doesn't shine, the fog doesn't lift and the wind doesn't blow. Batteries can store solar power that can be used on such days as well as overnight and in emergencies. Community batteries take this storage to the next level.

### Yea's history with power

As early as 1905 there were attempts to generate electricity locally in Yea, ranging from using the boiler at the Yea Butter Factory, hydro from the Yea River, Wilhelmina Falls and burning firewood. It took a full 20 years after the Yea Butter Factory's initial offer in 1905 (which was rejected), for the Yea Shire Council to purchase and install an electric lighting plant. In September 1926 [the official opening of the municipal electric lighting plant](#) took place with current for lighting



purposes and power for pumping water. This provided Yea's electricity for twenty years.

**And current connections**

Now we are in a new era. Not only can we produce power from our home, but we can also power our electric vehicle at home, and at night, use our electric vehicle to power our home. (By the way, Yea has a number of Tesla chargers for charging electric vehicles - four superchargers at Foodworks available 24/7, and a charger at the Killingworth Rd Whisky Bar.)

The Australian Photovoltaic Institute shows that in 3717 (Flowerdale, Ghin Ghin, Glenburn, Homewood, Killingworth, Limestone, Murrindindi, Yea), 39.9% of dwellings already have solar PV installations, as at September 27, 2021. We need to take advantage of this growing resource, which now includes the huge and generous RACV Solar installation at the Yea Showgrounds and Recreation Reserve.

**What is community energy?**

Community energy projects directly benefit their community through generating, storing and sharing renewable energy. This can be done in different ways. All community energy or local power plans are specific to a community and may differ in source of energy (solar, bioenergy, wind, pump hydro, etc) and in funding sources. We know that motivated communities such as Yea can take action to reduce emissions and become more resilient. Community Power Agency talks about *positive parochialism*, a concept referring to power being local, as in community energy.

Continue reading this article [here](#).



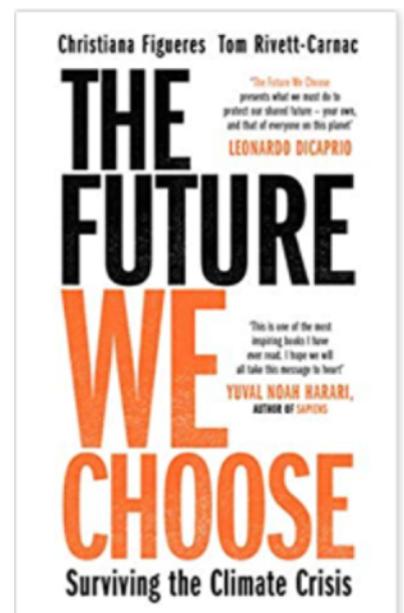
Yea lights up in 1926

**Take a leaf out of...**

**The future we choose: surviving the climate crisis by Christina Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac London: Manilla Press, 2020**

Reviewed by Eliane Furniss

These two luminaries worked on advancing negotiations for the Paris Climate Agreement, Christina as Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and Tom as her chief strategist.



The book is about how to act in the face of an impending and indeed present climate crisis.

The authors highlight three ways of thinking or mindsets and ten actions that you may be inspired to undertake. My favourite way of thinking, espoused by these two is stubborn optimism.

Reading the newspapers and seeing climate change before our eyes in terms of fire and flood here in our shire and just beyond, could lead us to despair.

The writers suggest thinking of a positive future and then working towards helping it eventuate.

The book is also useful for its extensive 'where to go next' section. Not a difficult read and yes, there are similar books, but you do get the feeling that these activists have walked the walk, not just spruiked the talk.

## 2030Yea notices

### Membership fees are now due! \$20 per year or \$10 for concession and under 18s.

Payment may be made either by direct payment at the Bendigo Bank or online payment to:

2030YEA Incorporated

BSB 633000

Acc 175565647



Please state annual fee, or joining fee if you are joining up, and your name.

Members are invited to attend monthly meetings, currently held online on the fourth Thursday evening of the month. Please let us know if you'd like to attend and we will send you the link.

## Laying the groundwork

### How to get to net zero emissions in Yea

Another pressing task that needs some funds is working out what 100% renewable Yea would look like and what energy demands would need to be covered to reduce our emissions to net zero. Some good work has been done in this area by David Coote writing about [Totally Renewable Philip Island](#). We are part the way there with the CPA report mentioned in our first newsletter, but having a proper roadmap is imperative. **If you would like to donate some funds for this work, please be in touch with the editor.**

### Seeking installers!

Indigo Power is proud to announce that we're acting as an intermediary for Sustainability Victoria's Small Business Energy Saver Program. We are looking for local installers of energy efficient equipment (heat pump hot water systems, space heating and cooling systems) to undertake the installation of these new systems. If you or someone you know may be interested, send a message to [support@indigopower.com.au](mailto:support@indigopower.com.au). Do you know local installers in Yea?

## Getting our houses in order

### Yea Community Shed

In July 2021, The Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio announced seven new community power hubs across Victoria. We are part of the Hume Community Power Hub run by Indigo Power in Beechworth. As part of this new community power hub, 2030Yea was pleased to be awarded a grant from **Sustainability Victoria** for \$12,250, to put solar photovoltaic panels on the Yea Community Shed. That task is underway with the planning process of the shire and we thank Mel Spinks, Facilities Coordinator for Murrindindi Shire Council, for her work on this. Soon the potters and woodworkers of Yea will be powered by energy from the sun!



The Yea potters with Elaine Furniss and Clare Daly from 2020Yea

### Yea Community House

In September 2021 we were successful in getting funds in the order of \$10,000 for solar photovoltaic panels for the Pioneer Reserve, which is now used for a range of community events and administered by Yea Community House. We were thrilled to receive these funds from the **National Australia Bank Foundation**. Again there will be a planning process to be undertaken before the install by RACV Solar.

## 'How can I look my grandson in the eye and say I did nothing?' David Attenborough

Report by Clare Daly

At our recent AGM on September 9, Jeff Barlow, President of Healesville Community Renewable Energy Inc (Healesville CoRE), and Executive Officer, Yarra Valley Community Power Hub, presented the story of Healesville CoRE and the projects they are currently engaged in.

Jeff's involvement in community energy began in 2016. Frustrated at the lack of leadership by the federal government he attended a conference representing a coalition of community energy groups. He realised that community leadership was needed, so reached out to the



Jeff Barlow

Yarra Ranges Council. A community meeting was arranged in June 2017 which 230 people attended and Healesville CoRE was launched. A group of local community volunteers began working towards 'transforming Healesville into a renewable energy town'.

Healesville CoRE is working with Komo Energy in developing a grant application for a microgrid feasibility study, costing around \$2.5 million. A community microgrid would secure energy supply especially in times of emergency. They didn't get that grant, but Monash University did and Healesville CoRE will be involved in that project.

They have been successful in securing a Sustainability Victoria grant of \$428,000 to set up one of seven Community Power Hubs (two in Melbourne, five in regional Victoria). The Yarra Ranges Community Power Hub now employs four staff, including Jeff as Executive Officer. The goal is to build capacity in community energy groups by operating on a regional scale; supporting volunteers to help prevent burnt out; engaging with and marketing to the community; and offering bulk buying opportunities.

Jeff attributes the success of Healesville CoRE to hard work plus:

- building relationships through good communication: friendly emails; face-to-face events (with food!); a good website and newsletter
- good systems and processes e.g. open-source software for constituency relationship management (CRM) integrated with the Google Workspace
- developing partnerships with experts, especially a local solar installer who has done quite a lot of pro bono work helping people solve problems with their solar systems
- engaging positive emotions, evoking similar values and confidence to *join in*.

Jeff finished his address with the David Attenborough quote which titles this article and, while he knows Healesville CoRE won't ensure zero net emissions for the whole country, if every small town acted it would certainly make a difference.

Thank you Jeff for an affirming talk that will help us at 2030Yea to strive towards our goals: energy efficiency, solar PV and battery, and community energy.



Yea, photo by Ron Litjens