

ISSUE 38 | SPRING 2022

Clean Energy for All

Our plans for the November state election!

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Front cover image: Gippsland Action Network at the Gippsland ride for a fast, fair transition. Credit: James Thomas

Achieving clean energy for all in Victoria



Sarah Rogan,
Climate Campaign
Manager



This state election comes at a crucial moment for our climate and communities. Victoria has made significant progress in building clean energy, and for the first time in a decade we have a federal government supporting climate action.

embracing community-led climate solutions. Supporting homeowners, renters and people on low incomes to power their homes with clean, affordable energy instead of polluting coal and gas. Investing in education and training for a new generation of clean energy jobs. And making sure our grid can connect communities with the massive amounts of new solar, wind and battery storage being built.

This November, we're calling on all parties and candidates to deliver a fast and fair transition to clean energy that puts communities at the centre.

The transition to clean energy is underway – but to address the climate crisis we need to seriously ramp up the speed and scale of action. The 2022-2026 political term is the last chance we have to start implementing everything we need to get to 100% renewables by 2030 – and parties and candidates need to hear this loud and clear, from voters across the state.

Our next Victorian government needs a comprehensive plan for replacing polluting fossil fuels this decade and building a renewable future for communities across the state. By supporting all households to get off gas and receive electricity from renewables backed by storage, the Victorian government will demonstrate its commitment to tackling climate change in ways that benefit all Victorians.

Imagine a Victoria powered by clean, renewable energy. Where every household no matter who lives there has access to cleaner, healthier, cheaper power. Where communities have the most powerful voice in shaping their renewable future and homegrown power, with virtual power plants springing up across the state.

We've launched Clean Energy for All, our bold election campaign to make sure whoever is elected this November delivers clean energy for all for Victorians.

This is what Victoria's shift to renewable energy can look like, with the right leadership.

Clean Energy for All is not just about building more wind and solar. It means

Find out more: cleanenergyforall.org.au

Editorial

Jono La Nauze,
Chief Executive Officer



After a recent conversation with Claire O'Rourke about her new book Together We Can, one of the things that struck me was how we rarely notice we've passed a tipping point until it is in the rearview mirror.

Who amongst us didn't feel despondent after the 2019 federal election resulted in another term for some of the world's worst climate obstructionists? And yet, it turns out we were in the midst of a social tipping point that lay the foundation for the wave of federal candidates elected on a pro-climate agenda in 2022.

There are negative tipping points of course, none more disastrous than those our planet will cross without urgent action to limit global heating.

The fact is, we could be living through the greatest of all tipping points and we will not know for sure until it is too late.

But this tipping point is one of our making. The choices we make – individually and collectively – matter. And this year's federal election result gives me hope because it proves that together we are powerful – together, we can.

This edition of Environment Victoria News is chock full of hopeful stories – like the extraordinary volunteers who helped shift federal politics last May (page 14) and the growing power of our Action Network that is leading the charge at the upcoming state election (page 5).

We're calling for the next Victorian government to deliver clean energy for all - a homegrown plan for a fast, fair transition that works for all of us, and ensures we all share in the benefits of clean, affordable energy. You can find out more about our plans and how you can get involved on pages 3 and 5.

Ever since the horrific Hazelwood fire we have supported Latrobe Valley locals to put the issue of mine safety and rehabilitation on the political agenda. Now, it's decision time on the massive

Hazelwood clean-up job and the rules that will apply when the final two mines – Loy Yang and Yallourn close. You can read about what's at stake on page 10 and 11.

It's a wonderful time up on the Murray, with floodwaters revitalising Red Gums and waterbird populations. With a federal government committed to getting the Murray-Darling Basin Plan back on track, we might even be approaching a tipping point there as well (see pages 8 and 9)

All around the country, First Nations are not only fighting for a fossil free future, they're fighting for a share in the benefits of clean energy. We sat down with the incredible Karrina Nolan to hear about how the First Nations Clean Energy Network is ensuring that the energy transition is "done the right way. With pace, but with justice." (see page 12)

Right now, we have momentum and we have hope. There's never been a better time to get active on climate – it'll change your life and it might just change the world!



Playing catch-up on climate



Jono La Nauze,
Chief Executive Officer



Victorians have been demanding stronger climate policies from our elected leaders for decades. Is the Coalition finally up to the challenge?

This year's federal election saw a massive community-led surge in voter support for climate action across the political spectrum, and it's clear to all that climate denial and inaction is no longer a viable political strategy. With the Victorian election less than two months away, we're starting to see this play out at a state level, especially in the Coalition.

There is still much room for improvement from both major parties, and we will be pushing them to help deliver clean energy for all Victorians in their election platforms. But the Victorian Coalition will need to work especially hard to convince voters they can be trusted to deliver on climate.

The last time Victorians had a conservative government was when Ted Baillieu decimated Victoria's wind industry. Under current leader Matthew Guy, the party voted against Victoria's nation-leading Climate Change Act in 2017 and fought the 2018 election on a platform so anti-renewables that we described it as "going the full Trump".

But our powerful election campaign back in 2018 demonstrated that Victorians wanted more clean energy, not less, and the

election result confirmed it. Since then, the Victorian Coalition has known that to win government, they need to have credible policies on climate and clean energy. So, at least in Victoria, the recent federal election simply confirmed what we already knew.

And in the past few months the Victorian Coalition has finally released some promising climate policies that appear to signal a major shift for the party.

These policies include expanding the Solar Homes program to accelerate solar and battery installations in Victorian households and public infrastructure, supporting Labor's climate target of cutting emissions by 50 per cent by 2030, and upgrades to transmission lines to support a decentralised clean energy grid.

These moves represent a welcome paradigm shift from the Coalition's previous anti-climate policies. But unfortunately the party is still spinning industry lines about gas as a "transition fuel" for Victoria - when in reality gas use is forecast to decline as we build more renewable energy, and the state needs to act fast to get off polluting, expensive gas completely.

Compare the pair: the Coalition's position on climate from the 2018 election and now.



We need to keep pushing for a race to the top

We have less than two months until the state election, and it's crucial that we step up now to apply pressure to get the best climate policies possible.

Both major parties know they are under serious threat from the so-called teal independents and the Greens.

There is a powerful community appetite for change, and polling indicates that Victoria may repeat the pattern from the federal election, where a wave of climate independents defeated Coalition MPs in seats that had been conservative strongholds for generations.

The true test at the upcoming state election will be whether a party is prepared to stand against the Exxons of the world and lay out a plan to get Victoria off fossil fuels with a level of urgency that matches the scale of the threat.

We simply cannot afford any more delays. The next Victorian government has the opportunity to deliver clean energy for all Victorians - let's get on with the job.

Turning local action into statewide impact



A climate rally in Knox, hosted by local organisers in the lead up to the May federal election.

Taegen Edwards,
Organising Program
Co-Manager



This state election, we're building on the momentum for climate action. And it's communities leading the way.

For all of us who have shown up for events, marched in the streets, had challenging conversations and signed petition after petition, it was a relief to see federal candidates who were speaking up for stronger climate action rewarded at the ballot box in May this year. The election result stood on the shoulders of all that important work over the years - a true display of people power from a movement that just keeps on growing.

In the coming Victorian election, we'll be doubling down on this critical work to put climate and clean energy high on the agenda for candidates right across the state. Through our growing Action

Network we're working closely with a team of incredible community members who are leading local efforts to push for faster and fairer climate action in the Latrobe Valley, around Ballarat, and in Melbourne's south east suburbs right down to the Mornington Peninsula

In those key parts of the state, we're focusing our attention on the most influential seats, having conversations with voters and pressuring state candidates of all stripes to commit to a faster and fairer shift away from polluting coal and gas.

The conversations are connecting the dots around the climate crisis, household energy bills and what state politics can achieve to get us closer to clean energy for all. In Morwell, a marginal seat smack bang in the middle of Victoria's Latrobe Valley coal hub, we're "deep canvassing" - a fancy way of saying we're having genuine local-to-local conversations about shared values and what matters most. We're out knocking on doors, heading down to the shops and train station to discuss what being part of

the clean energy transition means for folks in the Valley, where coal power station closures loom larger than ever.

These are brave conversations, talking to people, listening to their concerns and planting seeds about how things could be different and better. It's this kind of work to bring everyone along that has led to the biggest shifts in the power of the climate and environment movement over time.

That's why, up to November and beyond we will continue to build on this approach with all the inspiring, passionate Victorians that make up our Action Network. We're building the structure, training, leadership opportunities, deep support and a culture of solidarity across the state to grow the long-term power we need to hold decision makers to account and push them further.

If you're in a key region for our Action Network, you can get active here: envict.org/network

SIGN THE CLEAN ENERGY PLEDGE!

Join thousands of Victorians raising their voice for fast and fair climate action this election. Sign on to stay updated on ways you can make a difference and where the parties stand on clean energy:

envict.org/22pledge

JOIN THE PUSH FOR CLIMATE ACTION THIS VICTORIAN ELECTION

In early November, we're coordinating a huge Week of Action across the state for all of us to stand together, turn our attention to Victorian candidates and demand commitments to stronger climate action and clean energy for all.

Whether you're acting solo or joining with members of your local group, we'll provide everything you need to take part!

Head here to join in this powerful moment to make our mark this election: envict.org/cefa-week-of-action

What the gas industry doesn't want you to know



Rai Miralles,
Climate and
Energy Analyst



For our health and climate, Victoria needs to get off gas. But making the shift will take real political leadership.

The energy crisis that swept the world in 2022 hit particularly hard in Victoria, the Australian state that's most reliant on gas. Gas is Victoria's most expensive source of energy and also a toxic pollutant. Over a 20-year period, it's more than 80 times more damaging for our climate than carbon dioxide. It's currently responsible for about 17 per cent of Victoria's climate pollution.

Victorians have a unique relationship with gas. From the early 1970s, when plentiful supplies were tapped in Bass Strait, most Victorian households were hooked up to the gas network. Today, about 3 million Victorian households (83 per cent of

the total) are hooked up, and the state accounts for almost half of Australia's residential gas consumption.

Apart from the climate impacts of burning polluting gas, this winter also showed us how costly our dependence is. Just as the cold weather set in, gas prices began to skyrocket.

The problem stems back to 2015, when Australia started exporting massive quantities of fossil gas from Queensland. When Australia's domestic gas market was linked with the global market, east coast gas prices – and company profits – tripled. It also left us exposed to the volatility of global markets. When Russia cut international gas supply earlier this year, Australian gas prices shot up.

Australia is one of the world's biggest exporters of gas (82 per cent of it goes overseas) but the gas industry pretends we have a supply shortage. In truth, the industry is making record profits off an international energy crisis while households, businesses and industries contend with

double-digit leaps in energy bills. The negative impacts of gas go beyond climate and economics. In the home, burning gas releases dangerous particles that affect our health. Recent studies show cooking with gas can be as damaging as passive smoking. It contributes to heart disease and is responsible for 12 per cent of childhood asthma.

The politics of getting off gas in Victoria

We've been calling on Victorian politicians to deliver plans to help Victorians reduce their dependence on gas. Thousands of you have joined the call with online actions and personal messages. In July this year, the Victorian government finally released its Gas Substitution Roadmap, which includes some important advances. It removes laws that force new homes to be connected to the gas network, increases thermal efficiency standards for new homes and flags incentives to replace gas appliances with efficient electric alternatives.

DID YOU KNOW? Cooking with gas is estimated to be responsible for 12 per cent of childhood asthma in Australia. Recent research from the Climate Council found that children living in houses with gas cooktops were 32 per cent more likely to develop asthma than those who didn't.

Read the full report, *Kicking the Gas Habit: How Gas is Harming Our Health* here: bit.ly/kicking-the-gas-habit
Find out how you can start freeing your household from polluting gas here: envict.org/home-tips

But while the modelling is promising, the road map doesn't go far enough. There are no clear goals or timelines, and the lack of detail leaves behind low-income households and renters, who have little control over how their homes are fuelled and are the most impacted by skyrocketing gas bills. The road map also failed to rule out using hydrogen made with gas. The gas industry has lobbied hard for this, hoping to preserve their profits and the value of their pipelines at the expense of our health and climate.

Meanwhile, the Victorian Liberal Party is still spruiking plans for more gas extraction, which could mean drilling beside the Twelve Apostles or giant gas tankers in Port Phillip Bay.

We know that shifting to clean, cheap electricity is critical to cutting climate pollution and protecting Victorians from rising energy prices. This election is our chance to get serious commitments from both major parties to kickstart this shift.

THANK YOU to everyone who sent messages to Victorian politicians calling for a plan to get Victoria off gas. The release of the Gas Substitution Roadmap is an important start, and with the state election around the corner, we'll be pushing for more support to help everyone shift to clean, affordable electricity!

In the leadup to the election, our Action Network is going to be on the streets talking to people about the impacts of fossil gas. We've also launched a powerful advertising campaign to cut through the gas industry's spin. Our videos explain how big a problem gas is for our climate and our health, and show how everyone can share the benefits of powering our homes with cleaner, cheaper renewable energy.

This election, let's show the major parties that Victorians want a future powered by energy from the wind and sun, not dirty gas. We have the solutions and our communities are ready to step up. We just need the political leadership to make it happen.



Keep an eye out on social media for our new videos exposing the impacts of fossil gas

UPDATE ON VIVA'S GEELONG GAS PLANS

Viva's Corio Bay gas import terminal is one of the biggest fossil fuel projects proposed in Victoria. It would import up to 160 petajoules of gas, which would mean up to 600,000 tonnes of climate pollution each year. That's just from transporting the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and operating the terminal – not even counting the emissions when the gas is burnt in homes and businesses.

The Environment Effects Statement (EES) hearings for the project were held in August. Thousands of people spoke at the hearings, along with more than 150 local groups, including Geelong Renewables Not Gas. Together, we exposed just how damaging this project would be for the climate, the marine environment and the safety of the community. Some of the shocking things we learnt included:

- Climate pollution from the project could be twelve times more than Viva has claimed
- Viva is not interested in reducing transport emissions, because it will reduce profits
- Viva doesn't know critical information about the environment in Corio Bay
- Serious safety concerns have not been addressed
- Viva's modelling makes the crazy assumption that gas demand will remain the same until 2040

With the huge community opposition and mounting evidence against their polluting gas plan, it's clear Viva has no social licence nor the technical arguments to proceed.

Let's keep up the pressure and make sure, when it's time to make a decision, our government hears the message loud and clear: Geelong wants clean renewables, not more dirty gas!

Read the full blog on our website: envict.org/viva
Join the campaign: geelongrenewablesnotgas.org



Credit: Geelong Renewables Not Gas

Searching for resilience in the Murray-Darling Basin



A giant river red gum on the banks of the Murray River in Barmah National Park (Yorta Yorta country).

Tyler Rotche,
Rivers Campaigner



Right now, we are in a period with water and political possibility. If we listen to life in the wetland, we can see these are the times to recover, re-establish and grow.

River Red Gums can tolerate around nine years without a good flood. When water finally flows over riverbanks and across the floodplain, these incredible trees can regenerate rapidly.

This is how arid and semi-arid wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin survive. Some plants are remarkably drought-tolerant. Others, like the River Red Gum, have learned to recover quickly when wet conditions return.

This resilience is magnificent. It is also conditional.

Wetlands that have adapted to periodic extremes of drought depend on an otherwise-normal cycle of flooding. For River Red Gums, this means flooding around every three years. But with longer, more frequent periods without water, the trees struggle to bounce back.

In recent decades, these natural flooding flows have become far less common. It's a result of too much water being taken for irrigation, a drier climate, and the 'regulation' of the river with dams and weirs.

On the mid-Murray, smaller floods that used to happen every 1.5 years now happen every 4. Larger floods that traversed the floodplain every 2.4 years now come every 12.5. These aren't conditions that confer resilience.

Whether we're looking at the resilience of wetlands, communities or government institutions, we can ask the same question: What happens when the period of recovery takes longer than the period of relief?

In water politics, we are entering one of those periods of relief now. The federal Labor government, elected in May, has committed to reviving the Basin Plan after nine years of the Coalition's negligence.

It's fortunate that the keystones of Australian water governance – the Water Act, the Basin Plan and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) – survived this period. But they are far from resilient.

Our previous government amended the Water Act, making it impossible to deliver the Basin Plan and return enough water to the river. They undermined the MDBA, publicly discrediting the organisation and placing a former petroleum lobbyist at its helm. They created an Inspector-General of Water Compliance and handed the role to a former NSW Nationals leader.

All the while, Coalition politicians stoked debate, division and confusion around the fundamental task of the Basin Plan: returning enough water to our rivers.

The new federal Water Minister Tanya Plibersek came to the portfolio after this extended drought of water leadership. She brought a strong plan for the Murray-

Darling. It pledges to return long-awaited water to the river. To increase compliance, market integrity, climate research and First Nations' ownership of water.

After years of neglect, this leadership could finally get the Basin Plan back on track. This is a moment of possibility, where we can make immediate gains. But isolated reforms are not enough – unless we win them in a way that builds strength for the long-haul. This speaks to the resilience we need for our communities and government institutions. And the resilience we need for the river, particularly as our climate gets hotter and drier.

Right now, there are two very different ideas of what this looks like in Victoria. The first is a greenwashing exercise from the Victorian government called the Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP).

These projects plan to re-engineer wetlands to survive with less water, by cutting off portions of the floodplain from the river. Occasionally, pumps and channels will siphon water from the river to keep some River Red Gums on life support,

THANK YOU to everyone who sent us their messages for Victoria's new Water Minister Harriet Shing.

We'll be bringing these along when we meet with the Minister, to show her just how many Victorians care about our rivers – and how we can work together to protect them!

while sacrificing other parts of the floodplain entirely.

Perversely, the projects also come with an offset. "Water savings" from the project would justify withholding water from the rest of the river system – a total 605 billion litres. This water would instead stay in the accounts of big corporate irrigators.

These projects ask us to resign ourselves to a disastrous future: a dying river, with a few isolated museum pieces of preserved wetlands. All so a few big irrigators can make more money.

The second alternative is for a living river, where water is free to flow and flood. This is what makes life in the river possible.

Floods allow native fish to travel to floodplain wetlands. It is where Golden Perch and Silver Perch prefer to live and where Murray Cod go to breed. Waterbirds also look for floods, with Little Pied Cormorants, Great Egrets and White-

Necked Herons nesting and breeding in flooded River Red Gums. When floodwaters recede back to the river, they bring nutrients and carbon to support all river life.

Getting water into these ecosystems requires floods where some water needs to pass over private property. But dams, low-lying bridges and rules against letting water flood over private land are stopping this from happening. Only 2% of the floodplain is receiving the water that's been set aside for it. While we have the mechanisms and funds to find a solution, we're waiting on political will.

These two pathways – wetland engineering or natural flows – present a simple choice. The first is to look at the disaster to come, resigning ourselves to the promise of calamity. The second is to look honestly at the disaster that is already here. To recognise the dying Black Box, drying wetlands and missing waterbirds – and to attend to them.

In dry times, life has been waiting quietly in wetlands. Through bulbs, rhizomes and tubers. Patient and resilient.

Right now, we are in a period with water and political possibility. With recent rain, storages are brimming across the Basin and Victoria's largest dam will spill any day. These are the times to recover, re-establish and grow.

Life along the river should come flooding back. But unless we seize the opportunity to do more, only some of it will.

A huge thank you to everyone who has donated over the years to help protect our rivers. Thanks to your support, we are now recruiting for a new community organiser in the Goulburn Valley to help build the people power we need in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Wetlands spring to life at Gunbower forest



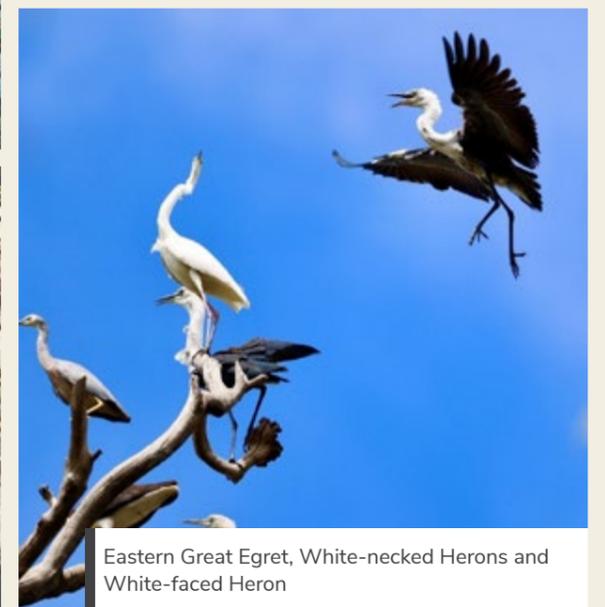
Swamp Lily flowering in Little Reedy Lagoon



A Juvenile Azure Kingfisher



Australasian Darter Nest



Eastern Great Egret, White-necked Herons and White-faced Heron

All images credit: Damien Cook, Wetland Revival Trust

A just transition starts with properly cleaning up coal mines

Looking out over the Hazelwood mine pit. Credit: Benji Doodle

Hayley Sestokas,
Latrobe Valley
Organiser



The Victorian government has proposed new rules that coal mine operators will need to follow to clean up closed mine sites. But do these rules benefit mine owners or the community?

If there's one moment that shows just how important mine rehabilitation is for the Latrobe Valley, it's the 2014 fire that broke out at Hazelwood coal mine.

The mine fire burnt for 45 days. It was one of the worst pollution events in Victoria's history, blanketing 15,000 people in Morwell and surrounding towns in the Valley with toxic smoke and coal ash. The devastating impacts are still being felt as researchers continue to uncover the damage done to people's physical and mental health.

But the aftermath of the disaster also provided shocking evidence of how poorly the mine operator, ENGIE (formerly GDF Suez), had managed old sections of the site and how this had contributed to the fire.

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry found the part of the mine that caught fire hadn't been rehabilitated in line with the mine operator's own rehabilitation plan, or complied with Victoria's laws at the time. Importantly, the inquiry found that rehabilitation (i.e. repairing damage to the land caused by mining) was the best way to prevent coal

mines from catching fire in the future. It was a wake-up call for the community and government that better regulation was needed to prevent a similar disaster happening again.

Fast forward eight years, and we're now at a critical juncture. Thanks to a huge, sustained community campaign, the Victorian government has finally proposed new regulations for coal mine rehabilitation.

These draft regulations lay out how coal mine operators must clean up mine sites after they close and sets the standard for the future rehabilitation of all Victoria's coal mines.

For the health of the Latrobe Valley community, its nature and waterways, we need to get these regulations right. But what the government has so far put forward is nowhere near strong enough and raises worrying questions about transparency and accountability.

The first problem is that the draft regulations would let the coal mine operators themselves decide whether a

site had been appropriately rehabilitated before they walked away. The government isn't planning on imposing any key criteria that mine operators would have to comply with, which means coal mine operators would essentially be able to write their own rules. If there aren't strict standards in place, what's to stop coal mine operators cutting corners to save money and time? In this situation, the community and environment would lose out.

Another big problem is that there would be no legal requirement for mine operators to make their plans public or ensure that they are evidence-based.

The brown coal mines in the Latrobe Valley are huge, complex sites. There are very few cases in Australia or overseas where rehabilitation at this scale has been tested – so much so that a senior public official has admitted it is "one big experiment" in the Valley.

100% NEWS

Morwell residents seven times more likely to have a heart attack since Hazelwood mine fire



Given this and the serious failings exposed by the 2014 mine fire, the community deserves to know how mine operators plan to clean up the mess they have left behind and that this is grounded in science. This level of public scrutiny should be the bare minimum.

Finally, mine operators would have no legal obligation to consider the concerns of the community in their rehabilitation plans. People in the Latrobe Valley will be left with the legacy of these holes and the pollution that comes with them, but these rules would see them shut out of the consultation process.

Together with Environmental Justice Australia, we've made a submission to the Victorian government providing 13 key recommendations that address the serious shortcomings in the draft regulations. We're calling for transparency, accountability and deep community engagement. Ultimately, we're calling for stronger regulations that stand up for the interests of the local community and environment – not those of the big polluters responsible for creating the mess in the first place.

Eight years on from the Hazelwood mine fire, this is our chance to get rehab right and set the Latrobe Valley up for a healthier future.

EPA case update: Our hearing is in October!

Last year, we announced our plans to take the Victorian Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Victoria's three remaining coal power station owners to court. This October, we finally go to hearing.

In their review of coal power station licences in 2021, the EPA failed to place limits on greenhouse gas emissions and only made minor tweaks to toxic air pollution limits. We'll be challenging this decision in court, arguing that Victoria's key climate legislation – the Climate Change Act (2017) – requires the

EPA to consider climate change in their review of coal power station licences. If we win, we will be calling for the EPA to re-do their homework and remake their decision, this time actually complying with the law.

It's been a long road to this point, and we want to say a **HUGE THANK YOU** to everyone who has generously donated to support this court case, every supporter who has taken action in this campaign over the last few years, and our brilliant legal team at EJA representing us in court. Stay tuned for more information soon!

Hazelwood rehab plans first big test

The brown coal mine that fuelled Hazelwood coal power station is bigger than Melbourne's CBD.

Cleaning it up will be the largest rehabilitation project Victoria has ever seen.

In a big win for the community, coal mine owner ENGIE's plans to flood the site with billions of litres of valuable river water is required to undergo a full Environment Effects Statement (EES). This process will kick off when the Victorian government releases its scoping requirements, which outline what ENGIE will be required to investigate and report on in the EES. We're expecting this to be released at any moment!

Once the requirements are released, there are 15 days for the public to comment – which is a key chance for us to have our voices heard.

For more information and to find out how you can get involved, visit our FAQ here: envict.org/hazelwood-faq

The First Nations Clean Energy Network



Twenty Mile outstation residents with community organiser Gadrin Hoosan (far left). The Borroloola community is working to design, develop and build its own solar microgrid to provide clean energy for residents, families and businesses in the region. Credit: Original Power

Isabel Kimpton,
Communications
Officer



The First Nations Clean Energy Network is helping build a better, fairer energy system – one where First Nations communities can benefit from reliable clean energy, good jobs and the power to choose what happens on their Country. We chatted to Karrina Nolan, Executive Director of Original Power and founder of the Network, to learn more.

To address the climate crisis, we need to transition our energy system away from polluting coal and gas. But while clean energy is being rolled out across the country, most First Nations communities are still locked out of the benefits.

The goal of the First Nations Clean Energy Network, launched in 2021, is to make sure this transition happens in partnership with First Nations. Its work centres on three core pillars: supporting community, deepening industry partnerships and advocating to lift key policy barriers and drive investment.

“We know that now more than ever, we must be able to determine what happens on our country. While there’s an urgency to scale up clean energy, it has to be done the right way. With pace, but with justice,” Karrina says.

“Our people are just not at the table, and there are no systematic processes, models, incentives, or adequate investment when it comes to renewable energy for and

by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.”

Karrina’s work with Original Power, an Aboriginal-led, not-for-profit organisation building the power of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to self-determine their futures and protect Country, has highlighted the many opportunities and challenges that exist for First Nations.

A trial project they spearheaded, in partnership with Warumungu man Norman Jupurrula Frank, revealed significant structural and regulatory barriers stopping Traditional Owners accessing cheap, reliable solar energy.

In Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, summer temperatures regularly soar above 40 degrees. Power for air conditioning is expensive and most public housing is overcrowded and doesn’t have proper insulation.

Rooftop solar should be a simple solution. But like thousands of community and government-owned homes across the Territory, Norman’s home gets its electricity through a pre-paid power meter.

Residents have to purchase power cards, and if they run out of credit, the power automatically disconnects until the card is recharged. Research from the Australian National University showed more than 90 per cent of homes with a pre-paid meter experienced a disconnection in 2018/2019.

“So people are regularly without power, it’s unaffordable – often diesel or expensive electricity – and this has huge implications for health and wellbeing. Food goes off, medicines can’t be kept cool and heating

and cooling is a serious issue.”

There were lengthy delays involved in getting Norman’s solar connection approved. But in November 2021, he became the first prepaid power card customer to integrate rooftop solar, with support from the NT Government utility and retailer.

“This has the potential to impact 10,000 other houses. So if we can demonstrate to both the retailers and the government that it can be done, then that just has implications for so many other people.”

The Network is excited that last month Federal, State and Territory Energy Ministers agreed to develop a co-designed and resourced First Nations Clean Energy strategy to ensure First Nations people are central to the renewables boom.

“Our experiences on the ground with communities in the Northern Territory has shown us that everything changes very quickly – and with some work, determination and good relationships policies can be turned around, technology that is rapidly advancing can be deployed and communities really can benefit.”

Read the full article on our website
www.envict.org/naidoc2022

Show your support
Original Power:
www.originalpower.org.au
First Nations Clean Energy Network: www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au

Safeguard the future of our environment with a free online Will



Image credit: Doug Gimesy

Sylwia Sierkiewicz,
Key Relationships
Officer



Since 1969, Environment Victoria has played a vital role in safeguarding Victoria’s precious environment.

Our work to protect the places we love is powered by acts of giving by people who deeply care for nature and are committed to protecting it for future generations.

Together, we have won national park status for the Little Desert, Gariwerd (Grampians), and East Gippsland forests. We stopped dirty industrial developments from going ahead in Westernport Bay in the 1970s, 1990s and 2020s and have fought long and hard to get water back into our stressed river systems, including the Snowy and Murray-Darling.

For decades Environment Victoria has played a leading role in addressing climate change, from stopping new coal-burning

power stations being built in Latrobe Valley to securing the closure of Hazelwood coal power station in 2017. Today we’re pushing for a clean energy revolution for all Victorians.

All these, and many wins in between, happened because caring people wanted a better future for our climate and environment and decided to do something about it. Like you, we want to see Victoria’s unique wildlife and beautiful places protected today and thriving forever.

One way you can do this is to remember Environment Victoria in your Will. Writing a Will might sound daunting, but it is something we all need to do. You can write your Will using a solicitor, or Environment Victoria has partnered with Gathered Here to offer our supporters the opportunity to write a Will online free of charge.

If, like many other supporters, you wish to leave a small percentage of your estate to Environment Victoria or any other cause close to your heart, Gathered Here will help you ensure your Will reflects this. There is,

“I want future generations to have the same opportunities to explore pristine environments as I have – environments in which our indigenous flora and fauna can flourish”

– Carl L

however, no obligation to leave us a gift in your Will. Gathered Here is Australia’s largest online end of life services site and will help you write your Will online – when you are ready, free of charge.

Thanks to people like you, we’ve achieved many great wins for Victoria’s environment in just over fifty years. Imagine what you could help us do in the next fifty years and beyond.

To create your free online Will with Gathered Here visit: envict.org/online-will

If you would like to find out more about leaving a gift to Environment Victoria in your Will, please contact our Key Relationships Officer, Sylwia Sierkiewicz, on 03 9341 8131 or email: bequests@environmentvictoria.org.au.





Stories from the federal election

At the finish line of the Gippsland ride for a fast, fair transition

At the May federal election, we saw an overwhelming vote for climate in cities, suburbs and regions across the country. And it's thanks to the tireless work of thousands of people, community groups and organisations who have been building momentum and power to put climate firmly on the agenda! We chatted to some of our volunteers to hear their experiences of community action in that election.

> Bruce, Melbourne's south-east

"One-to-one conversation – there is no more effective tool in changing people's minds"

Bruce has volunteered with us for more than ten years, and he felt this election was so important that he took four weeks off work to give it everything he could!

He was active in several groups working to make climate a vote decider in Higgins and Goldstein. The groups held "democracy walks" to engage locals in conversation, as well as knocking doors and leafleting the entire Goldstein electorate several times during the campaign. While the last six weeks were the most intense, the Higgins campaign began in earnest six months earlier, with a vigil held every Thursday outside then Liberal MP Katie Allen's electorate office.

THANK YOU to everyone who signed onto one of the regional open letters, turned out to an event or showed their support online. Together, we showed that community power is an unstoppable force for change. Let's keep up the momentum for November!

> Faizul, Dandenong

"We have to get the message out to the community that clean energy is good for the economy. It will create more jobs for us and future generations."

Faizul is deeply involved with the Bangladeshi community in Dandenong, having moved to Australia fifteen years ago. Faizul spent many hours talking to people in his community about the difference between the climate policies offered by the parties. He also helped organise a community event calling for climate action as part of a big week of action across the state.

Faizul was really pleased that after the major parties failed to put climate change at the centre of their federal election campaigns, the community forced them to listen. He says, "While there were lots of other issues – housing, the cost of living – people put climate first."



Bruce (centre) handing out flyers in the community

> Malaluca, Gippsland

"I think we need to stop using coal, gas and even oil to protect our planet. We need to care about the ocean, trees and people, and we need all people to help with climate action."

Malaluca is just six years old, but he was right up the front of the Gippsland ride for a fast, fair transition with his scooter!

The bike ride was organised by the Gippsland Action Network as part of a community rally for climate action. Malaluca helped lead the way from Loy Yang coal power station to the finish line, where the community presented federal candidates with an open letter calling on them to support a fast, fair transition.



Malaluca on his scooter



Dear Jono, I want to push all candidates to commit to bigger and better climate policies before the crucial state election this November.

Please make this a donation by credit card:

(All donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$1000 Your choice \$ _____

Please make this a monthly donation

Please find enclosed Cheque or Money Order (payable to Environment Victoria Inc.)

Or please debit my credit card: Visa Mastercard Amex

Cardholders name: _____ Expiry __/__/__ Signature _____

Card number

Please send me info about how I can make a gift to Environment Victoria in my Will

Are your personal details correct on your letter? Are you moving soon? Please update your personal information if necessary

PERSONAL DETAILS

Title: _____ First name: _____ Last name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Email: _____

Mobile: _____ Home: _____

Please complete this form, cut off this page and return it with the reply-paid envelope enclosed, or to Reply Paid 12575, A'Beckett Street, Melbourne, VIC 8006 or visit www.environmentvictoria.org.au and make your donation online. **Thank you for your generosity!**

Personal information is collected to process donations, issue tax receipts and keep you updated about our work. Please contact us at the address below if you wish to limit the use of your personal information or stop receiving direct marketing material from Environment Victoria. Our privacy policy is available at environmentvictoria.org.au/privacy and outlines how you can access or correct your personal information, who we disclose your personal information to (including overseas recipients) and how you can lodge a complaint.

Please tick if you do NOT want to receive communications from other organisations. Occasionally we allow like-minded organisations to contact you with information that may be of interest to you, including organisations outside Australia. Those organisations allow us to do the same and this way we can reach more people with vital information.



Image credit: Doug Gimesy

Join us at the Environment Victoria AGM and Campaign Briefings

It's time for this year's AGM! Join us online on the evening of Wednesday 26 October to hear directly from our campaigners about the incredible things we've achieved together this year for a safe climate, a fair and fast transition to clean energy and healthy rivers.

This is your chance to learn more about our new campaign for the Victorian state election and beyond - Clean Energy for All. We'll also have a special presentation on where we're headed together with our strategic plan for 2022-2026.

For more information and to RSVP, head to:
envict.org/agm-2022

Who's who at Environment Victoria

Chief Executive Officer
Jono La Nauze

CAMPAIGNS & PROGRAMS

Climate Campaign
Manager **Sarah Rogan**
Policy and Advocacy
Manager **Bronya Lipski**
Healthy Rivers
Campaigner **Tyler Rotche**
Climate and Energy
Analyst **Rai Miralles**
Senior Climate and
Energy Analyst **Paul
Beaton**
Community Organising
Co-Managers **Laura
Melville, Taegan
Edwards**
Senior Organiser **Emma
Horsburgh**
Senior Organiser **Victor
Komarovskiy**

Latrobe Valley Organiser
Hayley Sestokas
Network Organiser **Lucy
Marks**
Data Support Officer
Chante Bock
Communications Manager
Alex Merory
Communications
coordinator **Cameron
Wheatley**
Media and Content
Manager **James Norman**
Communications Officer
Isabel Kimpton

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Batson**
Bookkeeper **Jing Lu**
Administration Support
Officers **Fiona Ames,
Ingrid Wys**

Office Manager **Cate
Hoyle**

Fundraising Director
Jonathan Storey

Fundraising Officer
Hannah Minns

Key Relationships Officer
Sylwia Sierkiewicz

Database Officer **Karly
Rooker**

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Elaine Montegriffo
Paul Bailey
Ralf Thesing
Tabatha Fulker
Tim Lo Surdo
Tim Watts

REGULAR VOLUNTEERS

Environment Victoria would like to thank our amazing crew of regular volunteers, who are now too numerous to mention.

TALK TO US

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