

# Surf Coast Energy Group News

## July 2011



### EVENTS

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July 7pm** SCEG film night  
*Surfworld, Beach Rd, Torquay*

#### **VANISHING OF THE BEES**

This documentary examines the alarming disappearance of honeybees and the greater meaning it holds about the relationship between mankind and mother earth. 'If you like eating, see this film'. Followed by presentation by John Edmonds from the Geelong Beekeepers Club  
Entry by Donation

[Vanishing of the Bees trailer](#)

Listen to the Pulse 94.7 Wed 29<sup>th</sup> June 11.30am for a radio interview with John Edmonds and Jill Hyslop

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July 7.30PM**

*TIA Hall, Price St. Torquay*

#### **SCEG AGM & WHAT IS BIOCHAR PRESENTATION**

Speaker **Russell Burnett** an engineer from Bendigo who has pioneered some ground breaking research on the production of biochar. His company, Biochar Energy Systems is now exporting the technology to the U.S.A. **Biochar** was first developed by pre-Columbian populations in the Amazon to greatly improve soil productivity. A few thousand years later research shows that it not only improves soil but also creates energy and may well be the best option we have for tackling Climate Change as it permanently stores soil carbon.

Affiliate: [www.biochar.net](http://www.biochar.net)

### SCEG NEWS

**LIBRARY:** Fridays 9.15 to 11am, during school terms at 'TOPS' (the old police station), Price St. Torquay  
Returns of DVDs and books; Spring Creek House 9am -1pm weekdays.

#### **ADMIN SUPPORT WORKER:**

We would like to welcome Karen Brassington into this role. Karen has been employed for a few hours a week, to support the SCEG committee with our organizational obligations. She will also be developing a volunteer support network and be available on Friday mornings 9.15 to 11am if you wish to make personal contact with SCEG or use our library.

**SCEG AGM:** Saturday July 9<sup>th</sup> all members of SCEG are invited to vote in a new SCEG committee. Our current committee believes that SCEG is a valued community group on the Surf Coast. We have a strong, active committee, the majority of which, with the support of members, intend to continue in their roles. We are particularly in need of an assistant secretary and I urge anyone wanting to becoming more involved with SCEG to support us by considering this role. We also have vacancies for more general committee members. Please get in touch with Caroline Hawkins [carohawk@exemail.com.au](mailto:carohawk@exemail.com.au) to discuss further about what these roles entail.

### 100% RENEWABLE CAMPAIGN

It has been heartening to follow the 100% Renewable campaign's progress. The results of over 14,000 conversations conducted by groups like ours across the country, including SCEG's were handed to members of the Climate Committee in Canberra with a call for allocation of significant carbon price revenue to drive investment in new renewable energy

projects, in addition to household compensation.

It is now our task to call upon our local MP Darren Cheeseman to represent us by letting him know we want to see the carbon price package deliver for renewable energy. SCEG committee members have already visited, emailed and called Darren to advocate for investment in renewable energy through carbon price revenue. Whilst he is already supportive of a carbon price, it will really make a difference if he hears from other members of the public. (I am informed that his inbox is currently full of emails on the live cattle exports issue!) Please take the time to email or call Darren and tell him the carbon price revenue should be allocated to the development of the clean, renewable energy as well as compensate households. Ross Garnaut has recommended a total of \$2-3billion per year for this purpose.

Email: [Darren.Cheeseman.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:Darren.Cheeseman.mp@aph.gov.au)

Call: 03 5243 2400

News from 100% [www.100percent.org.au](http://www.100percent.org.au)

## SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITY

### GREEN LEADERS WORKSHOP

*Thursday July 21, 10am-3pm*

*Skilled Stadium Geelong,*

St Laurence's Community Services Green Educator Project, with support from Sustainability Victoria, is pleased to offer a workshop facilitated by Environment Victoria. Lunch included.

SCEG has been offered two free places to this workshop normally worth \$150

RSVP: by Tues July 12<sup>th</sup> with any dietary/other requirements to Caroline Hawkins [carohawk@exemail.com.au](mailto:carohawk@exemail.com.au)

The aims are to support SCEG with:  
Developing or adding to current 'green' knowledge base. Provide principles and

approaches to inspire others. Support us to help others to live sustainably.

## SOLAR INCENTIVE REVIEW

The Victorian Premium Feed in Tariff (PFIT) legislation for solar power is close to reaching its original stated capacity of 100MW. The scheme currently requires electricity retailers to pay solar households a minimum of 60c for power exported to the grid out until 2024. This encourages the early uptake of solar photovoltaics (PV), by helping reduce the financial payback on a system. The Victorian government will soon have to decide if it wants to use the PFIT as an incentive to encourage new installations in the future. A review of the PFIT is expected following reporting from the state's electricity distributors. It's probable that the scheme will be reviewed soon after, and if Victoria follows the lead of other states, the tariff will most likely be reduced. The key concern is that the scheme will contribute to electricity price increases. If this is shown to be minimal SCEG would like to see a continuation of the PFIT to help homeowners transition to solar, save on electricity bills and support solar industry growth in Victoria. More info:

Greg Barber, Greens MP Victorian Upper house urges the Victorian Government to [review terms on solar feed in tariffs](#)

## CHANGES TO SOLAR CREDITS

The federal Government recently announced that the Solar Credits multiplier would be reduced from five to three from July 1 2011. The price of STCs (Small-scale Technology Certificates, formally known as RECs) has also dropped from \$35-40 in March to around \$20. Both of these factors mean that the price of installing a solar system has gone up, but with the ever increasing price of electricity and the falling cost of installing solar PV, it still remains a

viable option for households wanting to reduce their bills. SCEG is concerned that the Solar Credits scheme is set to be phased out by 2013. Most estimates are that solar PV will reach grid parity somewhere around 2014-15 (where it will be cheaper to borrow money and install a solar system without government subsidies, than continuing to pay your electricity bills). SCEG hopes that the government aren't too hasty in reducing incentives to solar, and continue to assist households to reduce their carbon footprint, lower their electricity bills and help maintain the solar industry as a healthy and growing employer for Australia. [Aus. Govt. Solar credits FAQ](#)

## TOOTHBRUSHES

For those who pride themselves in reducing their waste as much as possible, toothbrushes are one of those items which are difficult to find a waste free alternative. Thanks to SCEG member Anne Sullivan, we have found a toothbrush which is entirely compostable at a comparative price. SCEG has bulk purchased some of these toothbrushes, which have a bamboo handle and use nylon 4 for the bristles. Nylon 4 breaks down in compost over four months, as does the bamboo, leaving no residue. Our toothbrushes will be available to purchase at our film night and other events.

## COMMUNITY SOLAR PANELS

After a year of attempts to find a suitable community building for the solar panels on offer from Solar Shop through our last bulk buy scheme, we have sadly been unsuccessful. All potential buildings we have identified have not met with approval by the Surf Coast Shire, to the extent now where we have missed the opportunity to install the panels on offer. With the changes in solar rebates, understandably the offer of panels for a community building has now been withdrawn and we have been offered a cash donation instead. Whilst the cash

donation is less than half the value of the solar panels, we are lucky that the Solar Shop contributed this given the problems encountered locating panels on SurfCoast Shire Community buildings.. It is a great disappointment that the original intent has not been achieved.

## SCEG's INVESTMENT IN HEPBURN WIND SHARES

At very short notice it became apparent to the SCEG Executive that SCEG could become a community shareholder in this venture. With the assistance of some generous members 1000 shares were purchased at the current rate of \$1 each. We are very excited by the purchase as it not only goes to the heart of tackling climate change; it also means a small but regular income stream for SCEG.

## SCEG COMMUNICATIONS

**Newsletters:** these are a great way to keep members informed of our activities on a monthly basis; however we would love to communicate and discuss with members in between newsletters, so why not join us on **Facebook**. We have a new organisation page, (an upgrade from the previous group page). There is already some interesting stuff up there including video clips, an interesting link to baseload solar thermal possibilities for Australia and information on upcoming events.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Surf-Coast-Energy-Group/175907212469751> and press the 'Like' button. Otherwise you can search for us as Surf Coast Energy Group under pages.

**SCEG Twitter:** @SCEGinfo  
**SCEG Web:** [www.sceg.org.au](http://www.sceg.org.au)  
**SCEG Contact:** [info@sceg.org.au](mailto:info@sceg.org.au)

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