THINK RECOVERY – THINK SUSTAINABLE FUTURE
Integrating climate and sustainability aspects into recovery initiatives

goulburn broken greenhouse alliance

Local governments are on the frontline of monumental challenges; the Corona Virus pandemic and Climate Change. Both challenges can be tackled at the same time to boost economic recovery. Sustainability can be integrated into projects and save costs based on planning that ensures suitable construction and purchasing. Businesses and products are available in the regions. Government investment in the following areas will deliver an economic boost to sustainable business sectors in the region.

- **Integrating energy efficiency measures in community building upgrades or reconstruction.**

Inclusions that will save operating expenses at relatively modest cost and a short payback period are energy efficient lighting, efficient heating and air conditioning, window treatments, solar hot water, efficient appliances, suitable orientation and shading, and choosing sustainable building materials. Improved insulation will improve comfort for users and solar power installation can save significant cost. Such projects would help electrical, solar and other sustainable installation businesses recover during the COVID period.

- **Rebuilding facilities to be ready for communities in extreme events**

In fire affected areas, councils and agencies will be rebuilding and repairing infrastructure. It is essential this infrastructure includes measures to make communities more connected and resilient during future extreme events. This includes incorporating local renewable energy/battery installations and improved communications. Infrastructure also needs to be designed for increased fire, storm and runoff events. There could be opportunities to reuse stormwater to save precious potable water for community use during drought and periods of disruption.

- **Climate resilient and sustainable infrastructure.**

Where councils plan drainage programs, design for future climate extremes needs to examine a combination of improved pipe drainage with overland flows and storage for extreme events. Inclusion in the planning stage will save destruction and damage to public and private infrastructure during flood. Recycled and low carbon emission materials are available to use in all building programs, including road projects. The inclusion of 10-30% recycled materials in asphalt and concrete in road and footpath projects can save around 20-50% in greenhouse emissions*.

- **Developing climate ready urban areas for community liveability.**

Hotter and longer summers will discourage active use of outdoor areas**.** Greening of urban areas with tree planting will complement healthy living and heatwave plans. Targetted planting can create cool outdoor areas, and cool spaces around key community facilities that are hubs for community life. Corridor planting will create continuous pedestrian routes to high activity areas like libraries and halls, sports fields, pools and shopping and entertainment precincts.

*study by Ironbark Sustainability

Supporting the Community in Recovery Actions

Councils can provide a trusted source of information to help the community connect to information to save money, and provide advocacy and support for community initiatives.

- **Helping households make energy savings**.

Working and schooling at home is increasing household energy use. Councils can assist with tips and information for householders to reduce energy use in the short term, and consider medium term actions for efficient appliances and solar hot water. Now can be the time to update social media with links to relevant sites. Many community groups have been working with local installers in bulk buys of efficient solar hot water systems.

- **Helping businesses make energy savings**.

Council can highlight to businesses that their recovery investment can also save energy costs and help their business sustainability. Energy costs are saved through actions such as efficient lighting and heating/aircon systems, efficient refrigeration and cooking systems, other efficient appliances and use of solar hot water and solar/battery systems. Capital investment can utilise the increased tax write offs in 2019/20. This combines with 'buy local' campaigns to increase trade for local businesses.

- **Information for sports clubs, community halls and child care facilities**

Advising to include energy audits and energy planning in applications to the expanded Solar Homes program and the New Energy Jobs Fund. Early planning will maximise future energy savings.

- .**Build on the Community Capacity to Develop Distributed Renewable Energy**.

There is an active community energy network in the region, comprising more than 16 groups, showing the strength of community backing for local renewable energy. A number of these groups are offering bulk buy of solar hot water, and developing microgrid/battery renewable energy projects. Other not-for-profit organisations are ready for investment in solar farms with community benefit. This is a mature community energy network that can realise local energy projects. Council can advocate for expansion of community scale renewable energy to State and federal governments. Examples include extension of Community Power Hubs to the region, more direct engagement through Solar Vic, and grant opportunities. This could transform provision of affordable and secure local energy, particularly focussed on community hubs and social housing.

Regional and Statewide Projects with demonstrated business cases

- **Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging network.** Tourism in the region will take some years to recover from the double shock of severe fires and COVID shutdown. The statewide feasibility study 'Charging the regions' shows that EV access in the regions could generate $25 million in tourism spend over 10 years as EV use increases. The Victorian Alliances are advocating for a statewide network. (see attached prospectus)

- **Energy Efficient LED Lighting for Main Roads.** Many councils have already reaped a saving of 30% in annual operating costs by installing efficient residential street lighting, The GBGA has conducted a feasibility study to show similar savings can be made with efficient lighting on main roads. The Victorian Alliances are advocating for funds towards a statewide upgrade (see attached prospectus)