



**BALLARAT
RENEWABLE
ENERGY
AND ZERO
EMISSIONS**

President's Report 2022

In Australia, the year 2022 will be remembered by many for the terrible floods, first the east coast of Queensland and NSW, and now north western and central Victoria. While traumatising for affected communities, particularly where homes, businesses and farms have been inundated, as extreme weather events the floods are clear signals that climate change is here and that worse is to come. Globally there is a bare seven years left to get emissions reductions on the right trajectory for net zero by 2050 - the target set to keep global warming to 1.5C and our current best option for avoiding catastrophic climate change. However, there is worse news – we in Australia are facing an even more dire scenario: 'Observations to date indicate Australian warming of around 1.6 °C compared to the globe of around 1.1 °C'. So we need more Australians to get behind calls for closing coal fired power plants and ending gas, coal and oil exploration as soon as possible. With 114 fossil fuel projects still in the investment pipeline across the nation, and with fossil fuel subsidies continuing, there are plenty of reasons for making a lot of noise. It is of course also profoundly bewildering, given Australia's potential to be a clean energy superpower. Even as economists warn of stranded assets, market-driven short termism it seems, continues to be indulged in the face of oncoming climate catastrophe.

At the local level we are focused on doing better and BREAZE Inc. members and supporters have some significant achievements to celebrate. The City of Ballarat has developed a plan for its aspirational community-wide target of net zero emissions by 2030. This is an ambitious target and BREAZE Inc. has been a key player in both the target and the Plan via the Regional Sustainability Alliance Ballarat (RSAB). We look forward to collaborating with other local community groups dedicated to sustainability and climate action in working with the Council in promoting and implementing the Plan in 2023 and beyond.

BREAZE Inc. has also been lead partner in the Grampians Community Power Hub (G-CPH) 2021-22, delivered by Sustainability Victoria on behalf of the Victorian Government. The G-CPH Project Control Group included BREAZE Inc. volunteers, Peter Boadle, Paul Duggan, and myself; Hepburn Branch partner representative, Hepburn Energy Manager, Taryn Lane; Sustainability Victoria's Regional Lead for the Grampians, John van Rooden and Jenny Dickson; and BREAZE-appointed employees, Project Manager, Sowmya Nargaraj and Communications/Admin Officer, Sam Rodgers. The G-CPH undertook community engagement across the 11 local government areas of the Grampians Region, seeking to identify potential community energy projects, which were subsequently supported via feasibility studies, energy audits and other assistance with governance and finance matters. Members of the previous Ballarat CPH Project Control Group: Ross Irving, Ian Rossiter and Peter Reid, also kindly provided expertise and advice.

Despite the constraints of the pandemic, the G-CPH engaged with over 50 community energy groups and contacted 232 community organisations identified via our networks and desktop research. The communities that stood out for their renewable energy champions were: Daylesford, where the Hepburn Shire's ZNet Plan has lifted the level of community awareness, Natimuk, St Arnaud, Pomonal, Halls Gap and Ballan. We know anecdotally that there are many other communities in the region, particularly across the Wimmera, who have pressing energy needs and would greatly benefit from being able to access renewable energy expertise. We hope a future extension of the CPH program might enable us to engage with and offer help to these communities. All up we identified and assisted a 'pipeline' of 46 projects which covered a wide range of types and capacities: from low-complexity feasibility studies for simple rooftop solar installations for local not-for-profit organisations, to contracting expert facilitator discussions on governance for a community-solar farm, to scoping the needs/possibilities of a regional community energy group wanting to establish a renewables power hub, to first stage feasibility studies and expert-facilitated community engagement sessions for community battery projects, under the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance's (CVGA) *Community Sparks* program – a first round NBI recipient – along with extensive Level 1-2 energy audits for the Grampians Health Service on five sites across three regional locations. The G-CPH pipeline's potential total capacity is estimated at 12MW. In addition to its core mission of identifying and undertaking feasibility studies, the G-CPH also implemented six projects and assisted another four that we hope to see implemented in the near future.

The BREAZE Public Fund, to which many of you have generously donated over the year, has also continued to support the Social Solar program. Under the guidance of Chair, Ian Rossiter, and in collaboration with the Grampians Community Power Hub, the Public Fund financed the installation of a 6.5kW Solar PV system onto an assisted-accommodation unit managed by local Ballarat NDIS provider, McCallum. The Public Fund is now fund raising to install solar systems onto two similar units in 2023.

Environmentally Sustainable Design is something that BREAZE Inc. has traditionally supported for many years via Sustainable House Day – working with local sustainable homes-owners who generously opened their homes to the public – an event that moved online during Covid. This year, Board members Sally Missing, assisted by Sue Broadway and Pat Hockey established a sub-committee, chaired by Michael Poulton, CEO Committee for Ballarat, a partner in the event, to plan the 'Building Better Homes for the Future Forum'. Targeting Ballarat-based builders, architects and developers – rather than residents and prospective home owners – the Forum was jointly funded by the Regional Sustainability Alliance Ballarat (RSAB), the City of Ballarat, and DELWP. The timing of the event coincided with efforts by Ballarat City planners as part of a 24 member group of Victorian councils led by CASBE (Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment) to have Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) principles embedded in the State Planning Scheme. This endeavour, also supported by the Municipal Association of Victoria, is still in train, having moved into its second phase. The City of Ballarat Council recently endorsed continuing support for this initiative.

Following many months of dedicated planning by the sub-committee, the Forum was widely declared a success. An audience of 60+ builders, developers and architects assembled to hear about sustainable design and building from four speakers: renowned sustainable architect, Paul Haar, who was the founding architect of the Mullum Creek development; Bradley Hall, Director of Chatham Homes, recently responsible for an award-winning 8.2 star rated energy efficient home; Joseph van Dyk of Hygge Property, who has been responsible for several small scale sustainable developments across this region; and Natalie Robertson, Director of Development and Growth at the City of Ballarat, who has responsibility for the City's ESD initiatives. In the

new year, the BREAZE sub-committee, coordinated by Sally Missing, will be organising ESD workshops for the public.

Despite the many constraints of the Covid pandemic, BREAZE also continued its delivery of the Smart Living Ballarat (SLB) talks program, online via Zoom. Under the coordination of Host, Ellen Burns, the monthly talks covered a wide range of subjects – from a Guide to Woovookarung with Jeff Rootes from Friends of the Canadian Corridor, to an inside view of one of Ballarat's first sustainable housing developments. As the weather warms, Ellen will be moving to in-person sessions for SLB, often in the form of hands-on workshops. Ballarat Green Drinks has also returned to in-person sessions, every third Thursday of the month at Lake View Hotel, with talks: 'Getting off gas' by Ian Rossiter, 'Regenerative Farming' by Campbell Mercer and 'Friends of the Canadian Corridor is 10!' by Bob Hartmann and in November, Matt Turner on The Future of Home: Sustainable, Accessible, Affordable.

During 2022, the BREAZE Inc also made submissions to the City of Ballarat on the 2022-23 Draft Budget and on the Draft Zero Emissions Ballarat Plan. This year thanks are due again to Brett McDonald and Radio 3BA, for the opportunity for BREAZE Board members to participate in a monthly talks slot on *Ballarat Today*, on the fourth Friday of the month – topics covered included Regenerative Farming, Ironbark Sustainability's Snapshot Tool, Market Forces and Climate Change, and Energy Efficient Homes. Other activities include: collaboration on two climate rallies with XR and other climate action groups, a Candidates Climate Forum for the May federal election, and another planned for the Victorian state election in November. BREAZE Board members have also run information stalls and/or presentations at various events: the Buninyong Sustainability Festival, Ballarat Central Library's From Garden to Kitchen, and the Caring for Nature Expo at the Earth Ed Centre in Mt Clear.

The renewed importance placed on the clean energy transition following this year's federal election is a long overdue but extremely welcome development. We hope that the Albanese Government's *Rewiring the Nation* strategy will see a rapid reduction in GHG emissions. We all know however, that it won't be easy. Thank you for your membership and support.

All the best

Mary

Dr Mary Debrett
President, November 2022



BREAZE Inc.– www.breaze.org.au

The principal objective of BREAZE is to protect the natural environment and increase sustainability within the region by promoting renewable sources of energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. BREAZE aims to facilitate and educate the wider Ballarat community towards a goal of zero emissions by 2030. BREAZE became an incorporated body in 2007.