

RP3007

INSTITUTIONAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS FOR COMMUNITY-OWNED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

Problem

In a rather bleak political situation for renewable energy in Australia, the role of the communities deserves more attention. In other countries community owned renewable energy projects have received increased attention because of their positive social and economic impacts and their potential to contribute to the energy transition. Countries with high renewable energy capacities, such as Denmark, Germany and the UK are leading the way for community involvement into renewable energy.

Despite a growing interest by Australian communities, only 12 community energy projects are operating in Australia so far. However as of July 2014, across Australia 60 groups have been established to develop community renewable energy projects.

The question at hand is what prevents Australian communities from implementing projects more widely and contributing to an increased deployment of renewable energy?



Figure 1: More than 340 participants at the Community Energy Congress in June 2014

Solution

Through analysing existing case studies and with reference to the development in Germany and other countries, a better understanding of how to accelerate community engagement in renewable energy will be gained and success factors will be identified.

For that purpose institutional and organisational structures will be investigated that drive, facilitate, challenge and hinder the development of such projects.

The community is an important driver for the energy transition.

Benefits

The project output will provide a better understanding of certain institutional and political requirements for the implementation of community driven renewable energy projects

By the means of several publications the project will raise awareness for a more active engagement of civil society in the field of small- and medium-scale renewable energy projects. This will help to build up capacities and educate the wider public to become engaged in the application of such projects.

My current research looks at the role of local government in renewable energy and their involvement in community renewable energy projects. As the closest government to the people, local government could assist an active citizenry to engage in renewable energy deployment. Involvement and support for community energy projects can also have positive environmental, social and cost saving effects for councils.

Become part of the community energy movement in Australia and sign up to your nearest community energy group:

e.g. in Sydney Pingala - Community Renewables for Sydney,
<http://www.pingala.org.au/>

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