

# THE SOLUTION

A vision for our city



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**A vision for our city**

**“Focus not on  
fighting the old,  
but on building  
the new.”**

**By Mik Aidt**

Text, photos, graphic design and production by Mik Aidt

*except:* The photo of the Copenhagen Wheel, a project by the MIT Senseable City Lab, [senseable.mit.edu/copenhagenwheel](http://senseable.mit.edu/copenhagenwheel), which was photographed by Max Tomasinelli, [www.maxtomasinelli.com](http://www.maxtomasinelli.com).

Matchstick-drawings: by Alex Aidt. Green Ninja video: by Marty Cooper.

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Collage with innovative solar-wind products: from various Facebook pages. The Sea Dragon: from [www.geelongseadragon.com](http://www.geelongseadragon.com)

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Read about The Solution School Program and find more inspiration on:

» **[www.thesolution.org.au](http://www.thesolution.org.au)**

Continue reading on:

- » [www.climatesafety.info](http://www.climatesafety.info) – Centre for Climate Safety
- » [www.transitioneastgeelong.groupsie.com](http://www.transitioneastgeelong.groupsie.com) – Transition East Geelong
- » [www.transitionsouthbarwon.org.au](http://www.transitionsouthbarwon.org.au) – Transition South Barwon
- » [www.geelongsustainability.org.au](http://www.geelongsustainability.org.au) – Geelong Sustainability Group

Find **The Sustainable Hour** on 94.7 The Pulse as a podcast in iTunes

- » [www.climatesafety.info/TheSustainableHour](http://www.climatesafety.info/TheSustainableHour)
- » [www.facebook.com/TheSustainableHour](http://www.facebook.com/TheSustainableHour)
- » [www.culturefutures.org](http://www.culturefutures.org) – global site for culture and sustainability
- » [www.frackfreegeelong.org](http://www.frackfreegeelong.org) – for a gas mining free Geelong region
- » [www.scoop.it/u/mik-aidt](http://www.scoop.it/u/mik-aidt) – news about climate, culture, media
- » [www.pinterest.com/mikaidt](http://www.pinterest.com/mikaidt) – numerous climate-related topics
- » [www.facebook.com/ClimateSafety](http://www.facebook.com/ClimateSafety)
- » [www.facebook.com/FossilFuelFreeFuture](http://www.facebook.com/FossilFuelFreeFuture)
- » [www.facebook.com/CleantechGeelong](http://www.facebook.com/CleantechGeelong)



**Doubt kills dreams.  
It makes us hesitate,  
and it holds us back  
from taking action  
on issues that are  
important.**

**In our city, a child  
stumbled upon a  
way to remove our  
collective doubt.**





**I**t all started with that picture book which a nine-year-old child came home from school with one day. He had written and illustrated it himself and called it 'The Solution'.

On the first page, a matchstick-boy with a big smile said: "Our Earth. Smoke free". The next picture showed a little man saying: "This problem is too big." Another saying: "Too expensive!" A third asking: "How will it help if I stop when others are not?"

A crowd of people with speech-bubbles illustrated the endless number of reasons people have to not be doing anything about the 'Evil Smoke'.







The smiling matchstick-boy stepped up on a chair and replied: “No, it is not too big. No, it is not too late. And the others *are* doing a lot. The solution is... *right here!*”

Continuing on the next page: “If your lazy neighbour doesn’t clean up all his garbage in front of his house, does that mean that you shouldn’t clean yours up?”



The boy’s school caught on to the idea. They invented the concept of *Solutionators*, created a website and a network for them, promoted ‘Green Ninja’ arrangements, and organised an annual competition between local schools, where one clever ‘Solution Film’ after the other, produced by smartphones, was





uploaded to Youtube, and where the winner was honoured on a collaborative and creative 'Solution Day'.

Students really got into it. Schools built gardens, chicken houses and devices to generate smoke-free electricity. The book was published in thousands of copies. Parents took it home with them. A high school produced a musical show called 'The Solution' which was a sold-out event four days in a row.

It went on to the two universities in town, where new courses, and even new departments for sustainability solutions were launched and began feeding innovative ideas and research into the city's solutions-builder movement.





**“What changes  
our planet is  
consciousness.  
What creates  
consciousness  
is education.”**

*Bank of the Planet*



EARTH DAY 2014 : GREEN CITY

# RENEW GEELONG PICNIC



*free*  
**FAMILY OUTING  
WALK THE TALK**  
**EV GRIN DRIVE  
CO2 GPS PARADE**  
**ENERGY SOLUTIONS  
MUSIC & TALKS**  
**TREASURE HUNT  
KITE FLYING**  
**EXHIBITIONS  
THE SEA DRAGON**

SUNDAY 10<sup>AM</sup>–1<sup>PM</sup>  
**27 APRIL**



• Yes2Renewables • Friends of the Earth • Catena Own Renewable Energy Network Australia • Earthworker •  
• The Sustainable Hour • 94.7 The Pulse • Centre for Climate Safety • ATA Geelong EV Branch • Organic Larder •  
• Transition East Geelong • Transition South Barwon • Geelong Sustainability Group •



[www.thesolution.org.au](http://www.thesolution.org.au)



**T**he next year, we made our first ‘Solution Week’ – a public event where more or less the whole city took part in the creation of colourful displays of solutions and ideas which were surrounded by great speeches and music, entertainment, artistic performances and exhibitions.

On the last day of the week, a ‘Walk-the-Talk’ parade ended in a park where it dissolved into a mixture of a market, a festival, a trade fair and a rally – all about solutions and highlighting local food and drinks. It was great fun. As if in a treasure hunt, participants using their GPS-phones would first “paint” and then cross out the three characters “CO2”, dotted on

**“If you want  
to go fast, go  
alone. If you  
want to go far,  
go together.”**

*African proverb*







to an online map of the city streets as they walked, cycled, or cruised in CO<sub>2</sub>-free vehicles and waggon.

Some people dedicated specific months where they would be doing nothing else but looking into solutions and turning them into reality. Unemployed young people as well as retired people signed up to become solutionators. Musicians produced and published one song after the other about a variety of solutions, and about how our city was in a great process of being transformed.

A weekly local radio show, 'The Solution', highlighted the activities on air, and that local radio station, as a side-effect,





became the first media house in town running on 100 percent smoke-free electricity.

“The solution is... *right here!*,” we all said, and as it turned out, yes, it was. We spoke The Solution into existence. We could do that because we believed that this was the right thing to do – and that it wouldn’t actually be hard or expensive.

This wasn’t just about longing for something better. Smarter. Cleaner. Nicer. It was also about caring for each other. Taking responsibility. Loving the children and wanting to invest in protecting their future.

**“It’s been said that the most common way that people give up their power is by thinking that they don’t have any, but we do. We have real power, and it’s not coal-fired or reactor based. It’s community power.”**

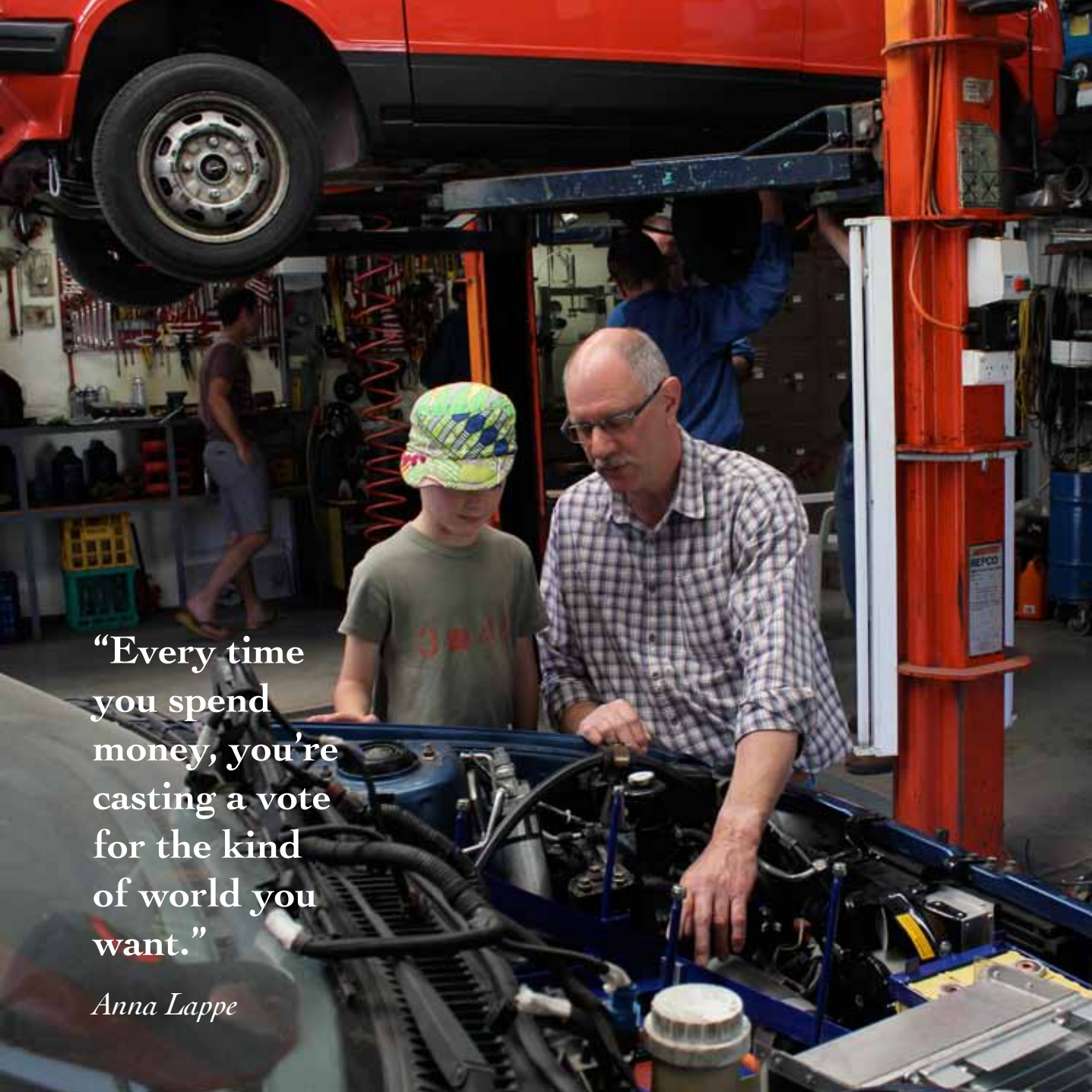
*Dave Sweeney, the Australian Conservation Foundation*



**W**e made a 'Solution House'.  
*"If you want to know more,  
come to the Solution House."*

It started like a combined library, café and workshop where people could come in from the street and recharge their mobile devices free of charge, browse through guides, manuals, toolboxes, and get advice. How to get involved with renewable energy projects. Build your own wind turbines, solar systems, or water heaters from scratch. Or pick up some advice on where to buy a share in the off-shore wind farm near town – or the new 'water battery' up on the hill.

The local club of EV enthusiasts moved in and transformed one old petrol car after the other into solar powered vehicles creating that reputed 'EV grin' which just won't come off an EV-driver's face when

A photograph of a man and a young boy in a garage. The man, wearing glasses and a plaid shirt, is leaning over the open hood of a car, working on the engine. The boy, wearing a colorful patterned cap and a green t-shirt, stands next to him, looking at the engine. In the background, a red car is elevated on a lift, and another person is visible working on it. The garage is filled with various tools and equipment.

“Every time  
you spend  
money, you’re  
casting a vote  
for the kind  
of world you  
want.”

*Anna Lappe*





cruising through town in a car powered free of charge on electricity from the sun.

All activities in that house were based on individual action. We are all individuals; and yet, we are connected.

It didn't take long before we had the city council behind us. The mayor came by and liked our vision. The councillors saw an opportunity for reviving the city, which in many ways had reached a depressing dead-end. The industrial sector was suffocating. Old manufacturing businesses were closing down, adding to the already high unemployment rates.

A *Cleantech Innovations Group* for companies was established and with a series of seminars and a survey, it created a network of companies keen to make themselves part of the solution. It became an obvious move to expand the Solutions

**“You cannot run from your problem. You have to dance with it.”**

*Vietnamese proverb*









House into a 'Cleantech Hub' for companies as well: a physical place to demonstrate new innovative solutions.

Word got around that we were actually in the business of saving money for citizens. So we got busy. We started producing things.

We launched a construction enterprise specialising in 'green roofs' and vertical 'green walls'. We helped planting fruit trees and vegetables in the streets. We organised one crazy pop-up 'Better Block' and 'Lane Life' event after the other, and Council changed its attitude towards what people were allowed to do in front of their houses. Nature-strip food gardens sprung up everywhere. A windpowered icon for the city, 'The Sea Dragon', was built at the water-front.



Neighbours and friends started 'Solution groups' after work and school. 'Solution boxes' cropped up in cafeterias and canteens. ***'I'm part of the solution'***-stickers were seen everywhere.



The city council all of a sudden managed to find funds that had always been missing to construct new bike paths to make it safe for cyclists to move through the city. Lots of new zebra-crossings were painted on the roads, and the speed limit was reduced from 50 to 30 km/h all over city centre.



Kids loved it. Walking, riding your own bike, or sitting in front of a 'Copenhagen Bike' (cargo bike) with a 'Copenhagen Wheel' – an engine inside the wheel that runs on gravity and brake-energy only – is a lot more fun than sitting buckled up on the back seat of your parents car.



THE COPENHAGEN WHEEL  
www.superpedestrian.com











Photos from [www.facebook.com/ClimateSafety](http://www.facebook.com/ClimateSafety) and [www.facebook.com/FossilFuelFreeFuture](http://www.facebook.com/FossilFuelFreeFuture)



**I**t all came together. Much of it had been there already, growing in the shadows, developing underground and in the fringes, struggling with doubt and pessimism. Until that point, no one had done something which was so simple that it became clear to everyone that the solution was not only possible – it was the *only* right thing to do.

That simplicity made it possible to create a broad, non-political – or cross-party – path through that jungle of information and propaganda which is out there, all the many options and the heated debate between pro and anti, young, old, woman, man, rich, poor... Everyone could agree to this one.

We knew that if we could just get 10 percent of our city to believe in The Solution – 10 percent of the individual citizens at ground level – then we would succeed. We said ‘10 percent’ because scientists have found that

when just 10 percent of a population are deeply committed to an idea, the idea will always be adapted by the majority of the society. Below 10 percent, there is no visible activity. Above 10 percent, the idea spreads like wildfire.

We said that our city had what it takes to become a “solution” in itself, showcasing to the world how it is possible to remove the doubt and cultivate a people-powered transformation of the city’s energy infrastructure. With help from kids, artists and event-makers, we nurtured that kind of mind-shift that opened up for The Solution. It’s face to face, person to person, where real change begin to happen.

What’s more exciting is that now cities all over the planet are copying our ideas. Every day we get messages about new places that will launch a Solution House or a Solution Day. City by city, we are transforming the planet.



*Like this story? Then get started now – in YOUR city!*



Solving  
the  
world's  
greatest  
problems





“We can endlessly get  
lost in the complexity of  
sustainable development,  
but the key to  
transformation  
is simplicity itself.”

*Jo Confino, The Guardian*









# CORENA



Citizens Own Renewable Energy Network Australia Inc.

**YOU can do something clever, different, and surprisingly effective to help give us all a safer climate.**

Chip in to be part of a renewable energy game-changer.

### **Quick Win Projects:**

\$24 each in revolving seed money from only 100,000 people will fund new solar PV Quick Projects *forever*.



*Quick Project: Tulgeen Disability Services*

### **Big Win Projects:** An average of \$8 per week from



*Solar thermal plant with storage*

720,000 people for just ONE year will build a 50MW people-owned solar thermal plant, with all profits used to build more. Be part of it!

***We don't need to just wait on government action.  
Chip in any amount you like. WE can be the change-makers.***

[www.corenafund.org.au](http://www.corenafund.org.au)

ABN: 92 929 665 880

# Old Man Nanook

## A Show for Children

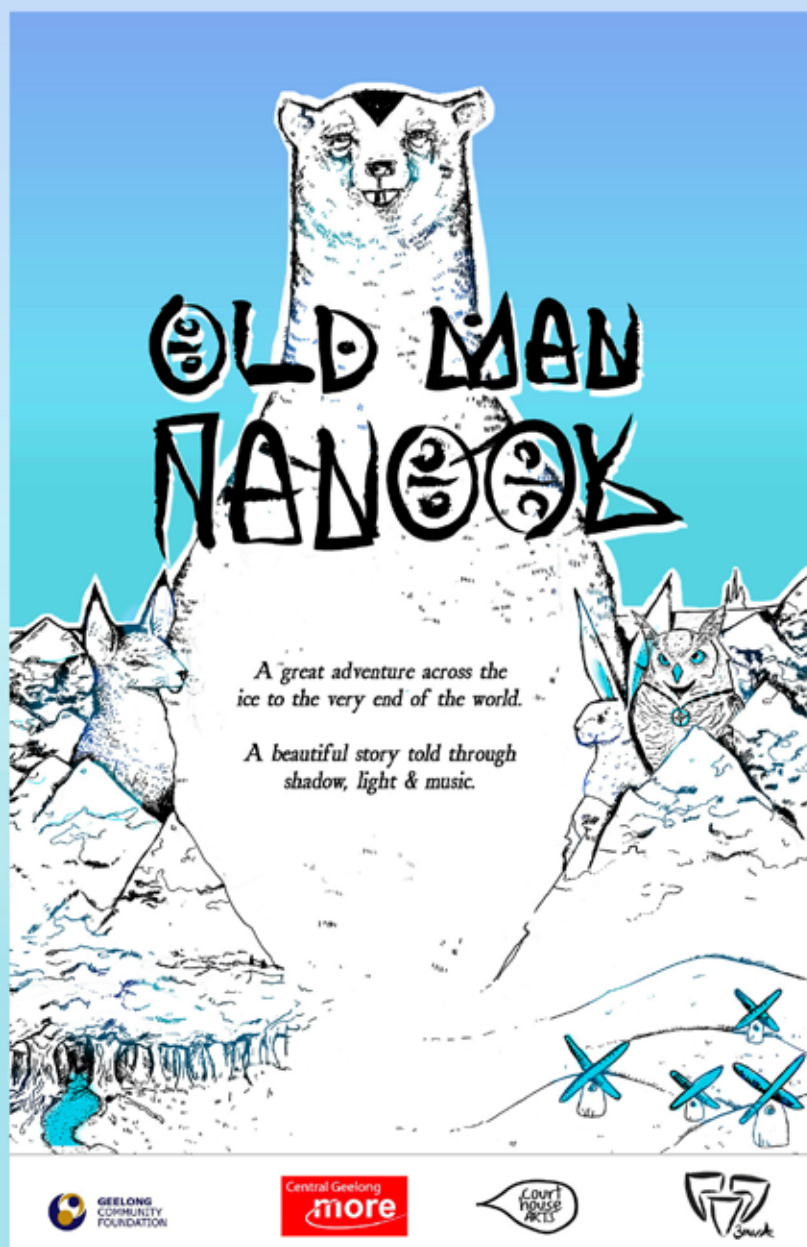
Old Man Nanook travels the end of the earth to find out why his world has faded away.

Featuring music, spoken word and projection – the work of Stacey Williams, Robert Smith and Trevor Maitland – this production serves as an allegory for climate change and the environment.

School booking inquiries should be directed to Trevor Maitland, 3Mask Director on [director@3mask.com.au](mailto:director@3mask.com.au)

Twitter: @OldManNanook

Web: [3mask.com.au](http://3mask.com.au)





## Earthworker Cooperative

The Earthworker Co-operative is an exciting group of people from diverse backgrounds. We are working to create solutions we need for clean, renewable energy, a healthy environment, and fair jobs for people in places like Geelong.

**Heating water for our everyday use takes a lot of energy, so we think this is a good place to start!**

We are setting up worker-cooperatives that will make solar hot water systems. Worker-cooperatives rely on people co-operating to make the things they want to see happen. Having worker-owned factories means the workers themselves have a direct say over how the factories work, and can make sure that they are fair and healthy.

Our first worker-owned factories will be in Morwell (where most of Victoria's coal is mined and burnt) and in Geelong. In our efforts to create a better future and a healthy environment, we want to make sure that Geelong continues to have jobs in manufacturing, and that these jobs are meaningful, stable and democratic.



If you would like to reduce your carbon pollution, and reduce your power bills, you can order one of our locally-made solar hot water systems to heat your water with the power of the sun instead of polluting coal-fired electricity or gas.

Visit [www.earthworker.org](http://www.earthworker.org) for more information or to order solar hot water.

If you are interested in being involved in the Earthworker Cooperative, and helping to get our exciting project off the ground soon, we'd love to hear from you! You can contact us at: [www.earthworker.org](http://www.earthworker.org)





## Decisions made today can have a positive impact on future generations and ours.

The City of Greater Geelong recognises this and is becoming more energy efficient through the Community Energy Efficiency Program.

Our carbon emission reductions equate to over 15,000 one way flights from Melbourne to Perth\*

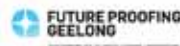
**To save energy, reduce carbon emissions and  
save money at home find out how at**

**[www.futureproofinggeelong.com](http://www.futureproofinggeelong.com)**

\*Qantas offset emissions, each flight is 276kg CO<sub>2</sub>-e



This activity received funding from:  
Australian Government





## transition

SOUTH BARWON

*Visioning a  
sustainable future*

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*Creating honest, local responses to climate  
change, peak oil and economic instability.*

Inc # A0055239N



*Supporting community-led  
responses to climate change  
and shrinking supplies of  
cheap energy, building  
resilience and happiness*

**Visioning a  
sustainable  
future**



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# Continue online

See videos – Explore – Get new ideas

The Solution  
[www.thesolution.org.au](http://www.thesolution.org.au)

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

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Alternative Energy Association  
[www.ata.org.au](http://www.ata.org.au)

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Citizens Own Renewable Energy  
Network Australia  
[www.corenafund.org.au](http://www.corenafund.org.au)

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Clean Energy for Eternity  
[www.cleanenergyforeternity.net.au](http://www.cleanenergyforeternity.net.au)

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Coalition for Community Energy  
[www.c4ce.net.au](http://www.c4ce.net.au)

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Community Owned Renewable Energy  
[www.core.futureplans.org.au](http://www.core.futureplans.org.au)

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Earthworker Cooperative  
[www.earthworker.org](http://www.earthworker.org)



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Embark  
[www.embark.com.au](http://www.embark.com.au)

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Energetic Communities  
[www.energeticcommunities.org.au](http://www.energeticcommunities.org.au)

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Energy for the People  
[www.energyforthepeople](http://www.energyforthepeople)

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Farming the Sun  
[www.farmingthesun.net](http://www.farmingthesun.net)

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Solar Citizens  
[www.solarcitizens.org.au](http://www.solarcitizens.org.au)

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Solar Share  
[www.solarshare.com.au](http://www.solarshare.com.au)

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The People's Solar  
[www.thepeoplesolar.com](http://www.thepeoplesolar.com)

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The Sunrise Project  
[www.sunriseproject.org.au](http://www.sunriseproject.org.au)

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Yes 2 Renewables  
[www.yes2renewables.org](http://www.yes2renewables.org)

## Action online

Fund Community Energy Petition  
[www.fundcommunityenergy.org](http://www.fundcommunityenergy.org)

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The Energy Reality Pledge  
[www.energy-reality.org/art/pledge](http://www.energy-reality.org/art/pledge)

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What 'clicktivists' can do  
[www.climatesafety.info/clicktivism](http://www.climatesafety.info/clicktivism)





[www.thesolution.org.au](http://www.thesolution.org.au)

THE SOLUTION is clear: cheaper and renewable energy in a fossil fuel free world. To become part of that solution we must educate ourselves – along with those who are dear to us – so we can make the right choices. This is a personal journey which begins with making up our minds.

We can reap economic benefits from it, but individual action will not have

much effect on the climate unless we are able to inspire others to step into action as well.

This booklet contains inspiration and ideas as to how we get started on the collective journey.

An increasing number of individuals, businesses and organisations have already started to invest wholeheartedly in clean energy

and energy efficiency. They are showing the way as the true champions of our time, creating a people-powered 'energy democracy' reform from the ground up.

**We must continue relentlessly to pursue and implement non-polluting solutions until that day when the world again is a safe place to live for all living things and beings on this planet.**

Published by  
Centre for Climate Safety  
[www.climatesafety.info](http://www.climatesafety.info)

