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Marcia – water, water everywhere...



Tuntable Creek



Tuntable Falls

Greens launch vision for secure energy future for NSW



by Dr John Kaye, Greens NSW MP

Ahead of the March state election, the Greens have launched their vision for a secure energy future for NSW that stabilises household power bills, eliminates greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation and creates tens of thousands of new jobs across NSW. The centrepiece of the new policy is the creation of 20 Energy Service Agencies within the public sector, to support the transition of households and small businesses from coal-based electricity and gas. Households and small businesses would no longer be passive consumers of electricity. Instead they would become active participants in the electricity industry, trading rooftop solar electricity

and other renewable sources across a publicly-owned network. This will enable them to manage their use to minimise their costs and assist the network transition to clean energy sources. The Northern Rivers region is ideally suited to become a leader in the clean energy revolution. The local community already recognises that the coal seam gas industry is an unnecessary and dangerous distraction from the cheaper and greener alternatives. There are growing moves in the region to create investment opportunities in community energy projects that would bring jobs and lower the carbon footprint. A Northern Rivers Energy Service Agency would also be available to assist the development of such projects. Electorates on the North Coast have seen some of the highest uptakes of rooftop solar in the state despite government policies undermining renewable energy investment. Under our plan households will continue to be critical players in the transition to 100% renewable energy in NSW, but that can only be done if we keep control of the state's electricity transmission and distribution system in public ownership. The smart grid that allows energy to be traded point to point between

households and other participants requires a reworking of the existing wires and poles network. The flow of information will be as important as the flow of energy. Much of the \$17 billion investment in transmission and distribution since 2009 has been in the wrong kind of technology, locking NSW into a centralised and expensive supply based on coal and gas. The technical and financial challenges for households to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and cut their power bills can only be provided by an agency that is free from the profit incentives that drive private sector electricity businesses to exploit consumers. Coal and gas fired electricity generation in NSW produces 60 million tonnes of CO₂ each year, giving this state one of the most carbon-intensive economies in the world. While the environmental and health costs of continued fossil fuel consumption are unacceptable, the cost to households is also rising. Electricity bills have doubled for the average household. Gas bills are now following close behind as exports from Queensland have thrown NSW consumers into competition for gas with

Tropical cyclone Marcia dumped vast amounts of rain across the Northern Rivers region, causing some flooding and simultaneously creating some spectacular waterfall action, as shown in these photos by Brendon Hanley. Of course, the frogs all loved the rain. Frog photo by Suzanne McGauley

the high-priced global market. Making the transition to a renewable energy economy on the state's own timetable, rather than having it imposed on us, will be cheaper and will create opportunities for more in-state employment. While there are just 1,800 jobs in NSW's coal-fired power stations and approximately 4,000 in mining the coal to fuel them, a number of studies have suggested more than 70,000 new jobs can be created in NSW in clean energy. These include research, development, design, manufacturing, installation, maintenance and marketing, as well as providing technical and financial assistance to households. The plan would position the state as a world leader in the fast growing clean energy economy. The Northern Rivers region will reap the rewards with lower household bills, more jobs in sustainable industries and a cleaner environment.



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