



## **Annual General Meeting 2008 Chair's Report**

After twelve months of a roller-coaster ride the Moreland Energy Foundation (MEFL) is once again in an incredibly healthy position with one of the most exciting periods of its existence just about to begin.

Since I last reported to you in October 2007, MEFL has lost CEO #2, the high-profile Jim Downey and in his place, appointed a long-time MEFL supporter, Paul Murfitt, as its new leader. Jim's 'tree-change' came after nearly three years of slow build-up of MEFL's suite of programs and a steady rise in its credibility as an agency with real authority in the field of locally-based climate change programs.

Once again the Board drew deep breath and wondered how it would be possible to replace a CEO who had brought the organisation such stature and once again a ready-made solution appeared. MEFL is so fortunate to have acquired a person of Paul's experience, policy background and project management skills right at the time it was about to embark on some really significant programs.

MEFL's overall staff numbers have now reached the magic figure of ten with the recruitment of a Training and Capacity Building Co-ordinator to manage the delivery of our increasingly sought after training services.

And these services are being delivered in such interesting times!

Internationally, the world is moving forward with greater unity of purpose as the two recalcitrant OECD nations the United States and Australia move towards a more collaborative approach at the Copenhagen round of Kyoto talks. Australia is in the fold and the US will be engaged under its new Presidential regime. We watch anxiously to evaluate the economic downturn's impact on the international climate change focus.

Nationally, the Rudd Government participated in the IPCC Bali talks and committed Australia to an emissions trading scheme (ETS). National discussions have been dominated for twelve months by different presentations from the Garnaut Review. Our knowledge about climate change and its impacts and what we need to do to address it has advanced rapidly.

The really large questions of our era (just how do we address our coal reliance, what are the limitations of an ETS, what can we do to support sections of our community most exposed to a hike in carbon prices, how do refocus our wasteful society on to energy efficiency, how can we keep abreast of the rapid advances in renewable energy technologies, is there an increased understanding of the advantages of localised and distributed energy systems and the limitations of highly centralised energy supply and is the renewed focus on nuclear power in the broader debate a distraction) all seem to have a local dimension that is highly relevant to MEFL.

Emissions trading has also dominated the State policy agenda and this leads to the relegation of much of MEFL's community work to the low value category of 'complimentary measures'. An ETS in this context becomes as much of a threat to our work as it is an opportunity. The 'ETS will fix all' school appears to have won the battle already on the introduction of an effective feed-in tariff and there will be plenty more battles.

We continue to receive mixed signals from the Victorian Government. On one hand there is a strong stated commitment to combating climate change and addressing the Government's own greenhouse performance but on the other the potential development of several energy intensive projects such as major road infrastructure projects threatens to exacerbate Victoria's already high emissions per capita and undermine any claims to a leadership position on climate change and sustainability.

Locally, the importance of growth, planning and urban development generally as a focus for sustainable energy provide a context for our work. MEFL is impressed by and often able to support the position taken by Moreland Council on some of these broader land use issues. This has provided us with an opportunity to influence infrastructure renewal as the focus of urban renewal and higher density development shifts to the inner to middle suburbs. It has also given MEFL an opportunity to harness, support and work with the momentum for change in our community and beyond.

At a community level, the challenge has been to stimulate a market to provide truly sustainable choices for individuals and to reduce the potential for ‘greenwash’ as the sustainability space becomes more and more crowded with offerings. MEFL is working at a period in our history when an increasingly unsustainable ‘Australian dream’ prevails. That dream includes increasingly large houses with fewer and fewer people living in them, energy intensive lifestyle changes and the associated energy hungry appliances with the most ridiculous being the home entertainment centre.

Paul will canvas the project manifestation of this work, but two projects, the Moreland Solar City and Zero Carbon Moreland offer particular promise and opportunity over the next couple of years.

MEFL’s partners on this journey will include, in addition to Council, the State Government and more work with Sustainability Victoria, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, CERES, Yarra Trams and the Federal Government, amongst a range of other local businesses and organisations.

Finally I’d like to make a reference to what we see as being a new role for MEFL’s members. Our membership has remained loyal while we really deliver them little direct benefit, rather, looking over their shoulders to challenges well beyond ‘the usual suspects’. The time has come to change this.

As part of the Moreland Solar Cities program, we will soon be launching Zero Carbon Moreland. This major information and engagement campaign that will help deliver Council’s commitment to zero net emission for our community. As initial targets we are aiming to recruit 5000 Moreland households, 500 businesses and 50 local community organisations to action to reduce their greenhouse pollution by 20% by 2010.

To achieve these sorts of outcomes MEFL’s membership will be critically important. We will be focussing on growing and activating our membership so that we can ramp up our impact on greenhouse pollution. We will be looking to our members as partners in community outreach and we hope to work with them to achieve sustainability outcomes across the neighbourhoods and suburbs of Moreland. So, stand by members and expect ‘the call’ from us!

In this context the MEFL Board works to the following key strategies and priorities:

- we lead community based solutions on sustainable energy

- we build partnerships and alliances for sustainable local communities
- we grow and share energy knowledge with the community
- we implement excellence in business practice

The Board continues to address some of the issues I have raised and a wider range of current themes and issues against these priorities which in turn inform our work program.

Finally, I'd like to thank my hard-working, dedicated and strategic Board and the staff who deliver the programs with such commitment and conviction. The energy and hum within MEFL at all levels is contagious so come in and be infected.