



CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FUTURE FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Business calls for policies that support the sustainable energy industry

The Sustainable Energy Association of Australia (SEA) is a peak body representing over 300 members in the sustainable energy industry. As a business chamber, it promotes the development and adoption of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable energy technologies and services.

Western Australia's geography makes it one of the best places in the world to generate energy from solar, wind, wave, geothermal and sustainable biomass resources. SEA believes there is great opportunity to use sustainable energy and infrastructure projects to grow Western Australia's economy, create jobs and renew our rural regions. To make our communities and cities truly sustainable, we must develop smart grids, and integrate public transport to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and improve Perth's liveability.

SEA advocates cost-effective and practical mechanisms to both build the sustainable energy industry and lower greenhouse gas emissions. SEA calls on all political parties and candidates in the Western Australian election to put forward policies and measures that remove barriers to business entry and deliver incentives to ensure a more sustainable economy.

In early 2013 SEA surveyed its members to obtain industry views on the key policy issues for the State election and for the coming year overall. The issues described here are those our members ranked as most important for business.

What SEA Members want

SEA members are asking the next Western Australian government to put forward policies to:

One.

Adopt a state-based renewable energy target of 20% by 2020 and aiming for at least 30% renewable energy generation by 2030 to provide commitment to a sustainable energy future.

Two.

Reduce barriers to commercial self-generation and implement a buy-back scheme to reduce business costs and allow a reasonable payment for exported energy.

Three.

Commit government to purchase a set amount of renewable energy generation to provide leadership and stimulate development.

Four.

Accelerate improvements to Western Australia's public transport services and infrastructure to reduce emissions, ease congestion and transition to a low-carbon economy.

Five.

Support the roll out of smart meters to help businesses and consumers manage their energy costs and lay the foundation for a smarter grid.

One.

Adopt a state-based renewable energy target

Australia's national Renewable Energy Target (RET) is designed to ensure that the equivalent of at least 20 per cent of Australia's electricity comes from renewable sources by 2020.

Despite the national RET, in 2011/2012 Western Australia generated only 9.6% of its energy from renewable resources. WA has an opportunity to commit to a renewable energy target and become a leader among states in developing and deploying renewable energy.

A state-based RET of 20% of energy supplied by renewable sources by 2020, with a further aim of 30% by 2030, would be a challenge, but a realistic challenge. It would be consistent with the national target and would position WA as a leader among the other states.

A state-based RET would provide Western Australia's renewable energy industry with commitment and accountability, allowing the industry to grow, create jobs, and ensure the continued success of the State's economy.

SEA members have this to say:

“ WA has the resources and the financial strength to commit to a state-based RET.”

“ Retailers should favour local WA-based projects to meet their RET obligation, rather than sourcing renewable energy certificates from interstate.”

“ Please commit to sustainable energy targets and actions.”



Two.

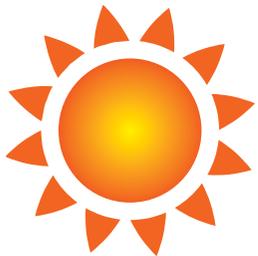
Reduce barriers to commercial self-generation

Western Australian businesses and local governments wanting to generate their own electricity face excessive costs and red tape, especially for systems above 30kW. The current regulatory framework adds significant time and cost to adopting most renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions.

Currently businesses cannot export energy to the grid. To export, businesses must have permission from a retailer, and retailers are yet to allow this for systems over 30kW.

The path should be eased for businesses to generate their own electricity. A reasonable renewable energy buyback scheme that is on par with the current residential feed-in tariff is an equitable and economic solution.

Government rules and regulations should encourage businesses take the most cost-effective solution to meeting their energy needs, which would reduce costs to businesses, deliver significant economic gains for the economy, and grow the sustainable energy industry.



SEA members have this to say:

“Commercial self-generation is both the greatest opportunity for WA businesses to reduce their electricity cost, and the greatest area where reform is needed to grow the cleantech sector in WA.”

“Providing the opportunity for increased competition in generation and reducing barriers to entry will deliver material economic efficiency gains for the WA economy.”

“Governments shouldn’t impair motivated businesses and individuals. Red tape is costly.”



Three.

Commit government to purchase renewable energy

The weight of public opinion is squarely behind renewable energy – most voters favour using our abundant solar, wind, marine, and other natural resources to generate energy. The Government should be keen to embrace this enthusiasm by purchasing renewable energy for its own use and helping to showcase renewable technologies.

When a Government contributes toward building a wind farm to power a desalination plant or puts solar panels on the houses of parliament (as has been done in WA), it demonstrates a serious commitment to renewable energy. Governments have the wherewithal to bring new technologies to the public attention and drive demand.

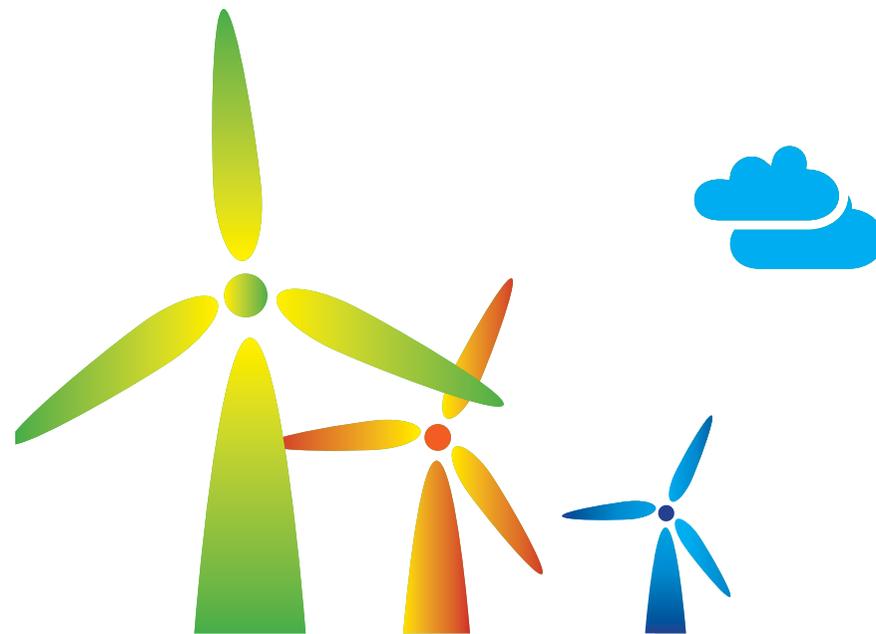
As a business chamber SEA supports Governments leading by example and then stepping aside, to let the market take care of itself.

SEA members have this to say:

“ This is the basic no-brainer, no-regrets option, that is completely within government control. It shows leadership and shouldn’t cost any more.”

“ Government purchase of renewable energy will assist in accelerating uptake. It’s not a question of “handouts” but one of assisting proven technology.”

“ Leadership at government level is essential for action across the board.”



Four.

Accelerate improvements to public transport and green motoring

Western Australia offers an unrivalled quality of life and its rapid population growth – some 1500 people come into the State every week – is making it an increasingly vibrant and exciting place.

While Western Australians see this growth as a good thing, there are downsides: traffic congestion, increased emissions, and a public transport system that hasn't kept up. Congestion in Perth is at risk of damaging our environment and quality of life.

In addition the world is experiencing an increase in oil prices and resource scarcity. This is certain to further the burden and costs of transport in the future.

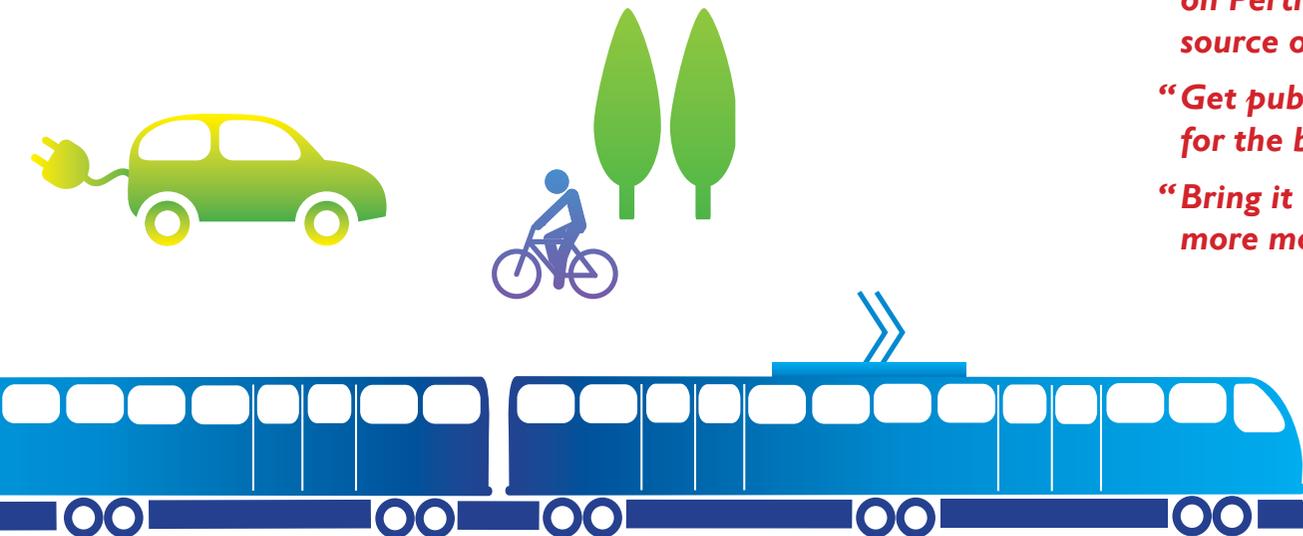
The State Government must accelerate improvements to our public transport infrastructure so that it can meet the needs of its rapidly growing population. Transport-oriented development must include improvements to all modes such as creating new heavy and light rail infrastructure corridors, supporting low emissions road transport options (such as electric vehicles) and integrated transport planning.

SEA members have this to say:

“Public transport (or the lack of it) is having a major impact on Perth and its productivity as well as being a serious source of greenhouse gas emissions”

“Get public transport right and the state will change rapidly for the better.”

“Bring it on, but bring it on extremely quickly. We don't need more monuments, we need [transport] infrastructure.”



Five.

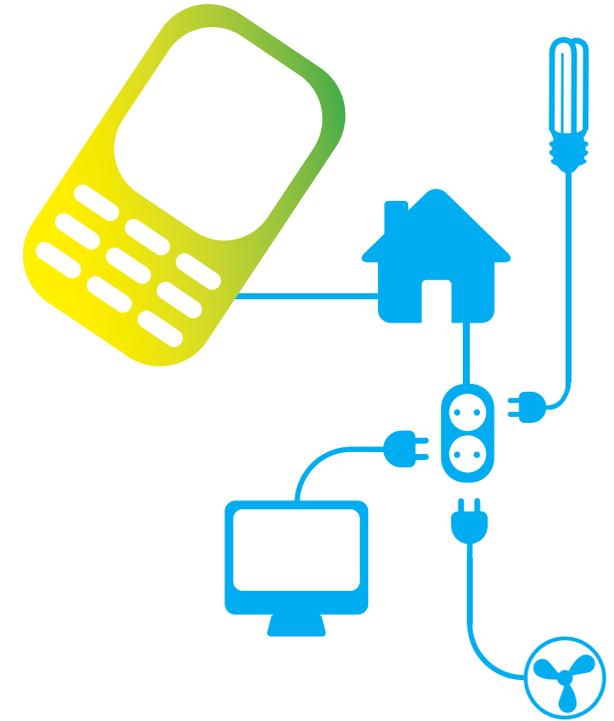
Support the roll out of smart meters

Many of Western Australia's electricity meters are nearing replacement age, which makes now the ideal time to support households and businesses in choosing a new smart meter.

Although smart meters are not an end in themselves, they give businesses and households the opportunity to better manage their energy use – and therefore their energy costs. They are also an important step toward a smarter grid, and may be used in conjunction with the introduction of incentivized tiered tariff reform, including for renewable energy.

The South West Interconnected System (SWIS) is a relatively small grid, and provides a great opportunity for Western Australia to focus on showcasing technologies such as smart meters that help grids manage intermittent generation and loads more effectively.

Smart meters are an appropriate program to be managed by the State Government as their widespread adoption would provide benefits to a range of stakeholders – from households through the electricity supply chain.



SEA members have this to say:

“Government needs to get its head around the benefits, beyond the upfront costs of deploying advanced metering infrastructure on a large scale.”

“Real time power consumption data empowers users to be efficient and provides authorities with better information for future planning.”