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RIDF Grant Helps Community Wind Get Connected

22 June 2010 – Daylesford

The State Member for Ballarat East, Geoff Howard MP, today formally announced a grant of \$750,000 to assist with the costs of connecting Australia's first community-owned wind farm to the electricity grid.

Hepburn Wind is developing a new model of small-scale, locally-controlled, renewable energy projects. Unlike large wind farms which connect through substations to major transmission lines, smaller projects can connect directly to the local distribution network. While there are significant advantages of producing electricity close to demand centres, connections at this scale have not been implemented in Victoria before.

Geoff Howard MP, who visited the site of the wind farm to announce the grant said, "*the grant will help Hepburn Wind, the local network operator, Powercor, and the builders of the wind farm, REpower Systems to develop and implement what is expected to become a standard design for community renewable energy projects.*"

"Distributed generation will play a significant role in Australia's transition to a low carbon future. Our community is the first of many that will harness local resources to contribute clean-power into the electricity grid." said Simon Holmes à Court, Chairman of Hepburn Wind. *"This assistance will help simplify the process and reduce the connection costs for future community renewable energy projects."*

The Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Jacinta Allan MP approved the grant from the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund's (RIDF) Regional Electrical Access Program (REAP) in April, which recognises that the cost of new and upgraded electrical connections in regional locations can be high. REAP provides grants of up to 50% of the customer's contribution where the customer is a business and the works will improve the local energy capacity for surrounding properties.

Hepburn Wind is a community co-operative with more than 1160 members. The \$12.9m two turbine wind farm is expected to be in operation in the first half of 2011 and is projected to produce over 12,200 MWh of clean electricity annually – more than is used by the houses in Daylesford. *"Most Australians want to see a meaningful response to the threat of climate change, but many aren't sure what role they can play."*, said Mr Holmes à Court. *"Hepburn Wind is showing that communities can take constructive action on climate change today."*

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