

Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy

Agreed to by the VFF Policy Council
Meeting 172
21 June 2021

Policy Statement

Renewable energy and energy efficiency principles

1. The VFF supports a smooth transition for Australia's energy market towards renewable energy without loss of reliability and with minimal impact on price for consumers.
2. The VFF recognises that Australia's energy generation mix needs to change as existing infrastructure assets reach the end of their useful lives and to meet emissions reduction targets. Government policy must not favour specific technologies, but rather enable the technologies to compete on their merits.
3. The VFF supports research into development and adoption of new generation technologies including both centralised and decentralised generation, and support and promotion of improvements in on-farm energy efficiency and self-sufficiency in generation and storage capacity.
4. The VFF supports efficient investment in generation, transmission, distribution and storage capacity to avoid over investment or 'gold plating' of the energy network. This includes support for the transition to appropriate transmission, distribution and storage assets and facilitating investment in targeted and necessary interconnectors.
5. The VFF opposes the early decommissioning of existing power plants where the continued supply of dispatchable power cannot be guaranteed. VFF supports investment in new on-demand generation capacity in Victoria to offset the loss of baseload generation facilities in the Latrobe Valley.

On-farm renewable energy and energy efficiency projects

6. The VFF supports policies that aim to promote improvements in on-farm energy efficiency, self-sufficiency in renewable energy generation and storage capacity.
7. The VFF supports targeted policies and programs that seek to support farmers' knowledge and decision making in developing on-farm energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.
8. The VFF believes government must reduce integration barriers to enable farm businesses to invest in larger on-farm renewable energy developments and take advantage of feed-in tariffs, thereby also helping to decentralise energy distribution networks.
9. The VFF supports the provision of low cost finance to farmers for on-farm energy efficiency and renewable energy projects through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and other sources.

10. The VFF opposes policies such as the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target discriminating against small-scale renewable energy developments. Government should promote small-scale developments that have less impact on agricultural land compared to large-scale developments because farm businesses have control over their scale, location and construction.

11. The VFF supports the regulation of renewable energy installers and contractors to prevent unscrupulous behaviour that targets and disadvantages farm businesses.

Renewable energy developments and agricultural land.

12. The VFF encourages the construction of large-scale renewable energy and associated developments on non-agricultural land. Where large-scale renewable energy and associated developments must be located on agricultural land, the VFF believes developers must be required to mitigate the development's impact on the agricultural use of the land. The VFF will oppose renewable energy and associated developments that risk the ongoing and long-term productive use of agricultural land.

13. The VFF opposes renewable energy and associated developments being located on irrigable farmland where a water use licence is attached to that land or where agricultural production is displaced on high quality soils.

14. The VFF encourages the undergrounding of transmission and distribution powerlines to ensure minimal disruption to agricultural land use and regional communities, and to help eliminate fire risks.

15. The VFF calls for the establishment of a statewide strategic plan for renewable energy developments that considers all issues concerning impacts to agricultural production and regional communities. Formulation of a strategic plan must include consultation with the VFF and impacted regional communities.

16. The VFF supports rigorous planning policies that restrict large-scale renewable energy developments on agricultural land by requiring a permit. Permit requirements should be less restrictive for large-scale developments where agricultural production continues to be the predominant use of the land. More restrictive permit requirements should be in place for proposed developments where agriculture is not the predominant use of the land. A permit should not be required for on-farm small-scale developments where the energy generated is to be predominantly used in the farm business.

17. The VFF supports local governments to have the ability and power to protect agricultural land through the planning scheme where it is considered that renewable energy developments pose a threat to the ongoing and long-term agricultural productivity in a region.

18. The VFF supports local content policies aimed at supporting local industry in the construction of renewable energy developments. Such policies must be targeted towards supporting economic development and job creation within the region where renewable energy developments are taking place, not just at a national or state level.

19. The VFF believes that when establishing statutory processes governing renewable energy developments, government must consider all issues concerning their eventual impacts on land use and rehabilitation including decommissioning. Developers, not landowners should be held

responsible for all decommissioning and remedial works. This includes placing requirements on developers to recycle or reuse any materials at the end of the development's life cycle. Where the developer is unable to meet these obligations, the government must be responsible for costs associated with carrying out all decommissioning and remedial works.

Wind energy developments

20. The VFF supports farmers having the choice to enter into arrangements with companies to locate wind energy generation facilities on their properties where projects have been approved in accordance with government policy and planning guidelines. However, wind energy developments must not result in a loss of agricultural productivity or disruption to affected landowners.

21. The VFF supports the right of farmers and local communities having their views considered in the planning assessment and approval process for wind energy developments by:

- Requiring an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) process for wind energy generation projects greater than 30 megawatts.
- Providing neighbouring farmers the opportunity to review and make submissions to the approval or EES process. - Requiring decision makers to seek the agreement of neighbouring farmers, taking into account the potential impacts that a wind energy development could have on agricultural production and rural communities.