

MEDIA RELEASE

Major infrastructure boost for Colac

Colac will be home to a new biogas plant which can convert organic waste from the dairy, meat and other agricultural industries to energy.

Mayor Lyn Russell welcomed a \$1.5 million grant from the Victorian Government to help establish a renewable energy plant in Colac.

Colac Power Company will be a joint venture between Camperdown Compost Company and Diamond Energy.

The plant will employ up to six people, while also providing a sustainable waste disposal option to south-west Victoria's agricultural industries.

Cr Russell said that government regulations for waste disposal were becoming more stringent and the cost of disposing of all types of waste was dramatically increasing.

"Colac Power Company will provide a local and sustainable waste disposal option for one of Colac Otway Shire's most important industries and economic drivers – agriculture," she said.

"This project will provide security for our agricultural industries facing waste management issues, reduce pressure on landfill and produce a range of useful products from a waste stream that previously wasn't able to be re-used.

"Depending on how the waste industry evolves, Colac Power Company could potentially be underpinning thousands of local jobs."

Based on an input of 80 tonnes of liquefied waste per day, Colac Power Company will be able to produce about one megawatt of electrical power, which is enough energy to run 2000 homes.

This energy can be fed back into the grid, or could also be channelled to some of Colac's energy-hungry dairy or meat processing plants.

Company director Tony Evans said the biogas plant could take all types of organic waste including grease trap waste, paunch material, dairy liquids and solids, meat scraps – "basically anything organic".

"The ideal is for liquid waste with about 10 per cent solids, which is fed into big digester tanks where it is broken down over 30 days anaerobically," he said.

"The by product of this process is methane, which we harvest off the top of the tanks, put through a cleaning process then burn through a gas-fired engine that runs a generator, which generates electricity."

Company director Nick Routson said the process produced heat as a by product, which could be harnessed to produce hot water or steam.

He said other by products included liquids and solids, both of which were rich sources of phosphorus, potassium, nitrogen and other trace elements.

“Phosphorus and nitrogen are important and expensive fertilisers,” Mr Routson said.

“These elements leave the farm in the form of animals or animal products, and what isn’t sold as meat or dairy can now be recycled, meaning we can help close the loop on these limited resources.”

Mr Routson said that Diamond Energy played an important role in the project, bringing critical skills to the partnership.

“Camperdown Compost Company and Diamond Energy have two very different skill sets, and our partnership will ensure we have the expertise in both producing energy from organic waste, and taking it to market,” he said.

Cr Russell said Colac Power Company owners, which comprise Mr Evans and Mr Routson, as well as Melbourne-based power company Diamond Energy, chose Colac because of its central location.

She said Colac’s strong agricultural industries and proximity to Warrnambool, Ballarat, Geelong and Melbourne made it an attractive choice.

“I would like to acknowledge Council’s economic development unit, which has worked very closely with Colac Power Company and the Victorian Government to help this project come to fruition,” she said.

Colac Power Company previously received a \$50,000 grant from the EPA’s Hazwaste program to conduct a feasibility study for the project, which involved extensive research into German biogas facilities.

Cr Russell paid tribute to the Victorian Government’s Regional Infrastructure Development Fund for providing essential support to help the biogas project happen.

She said Colac Power Company’s decision to base itself in Colac also added further weight to campaigns to duplicate the Princes Highway between Winchelsea and Colac, and upgrade the highway to the South Australian border.

“This project only strengthens south-west Victoria’s role in the agricultural industry and as a major food producer in Australia, and will also help position Colac Otway Shire as a leader in sustainable agriculture,” she said.

“I would like to congratulate the owners of Colac Power Company, thank them for their support of Colac, and wish them all the best with this exciting project.”

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Inquiries -

Tamzin McLennan

Public Relations Coordinator

Ph: (03) 52329493

Mobile: 0448 708 706

Email: tamzin.mclennan@colacotway.vic.gov.au