



HEAPS BETTER – TRANSCRIPT

Episode 2: How can we speed up renewables?

Ash: Why do you like to take care of the Earth?

Will: Well, because it helps you not to die. What? Why aren't you talking? This is a serious talk about Earth! If you don't have Earth then you'll die! I'm trying to protect the Earth

Jess: Ash, who is this?

Ash: This is Will, he's just graduated from Australia's first carbon neutral kindergarten.

Jess: That's so cool!

Ash: And this is his little sister, Isla, who's three.

Isla: We don't punch mother Earth!

Jess: Greetings, inhabitants of Mother Earth. I'm Jess.

Ash: I'm Ash, and we're two friends who don't want to punch Mother Earth.

Jess: In Australia, we punch way above our weight in greenhouse gas emissions, especially when we include our exports. We are the fifth largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world.

Ash: But we've just found out that Australia could be a renewable energy superpower.

Jess: So why aren't we there yet? And what's holding us back? And what can we do to pack the biggest punch and speed up the renewable revolution?

Listeners: How easy is the transition from non-renewable, like coal mining and things to renewables?

Like, it's a grid network, I've heard about a grid, but I've never really heard too many details.

I'm a renter, so I can't do solar panels, although I certainly would like to.

Is solar legitimately a good investment?

I just simply do not understand why there is so much government hesitation to move towards investing more in clean energy?

Jess: So we are using this podcast to figure out what we can do to make the world heaps better

with the help of our planet-saving friends at Greenpeace Australia Pacific.

Isla: I'm trying to save the "flanet"!

Jess: 'Cause saving the "flanet" is heaps better together!

Ash: But first, pack your lunch box. Yes, you can have some tiny teddies. We are going back to school. If you're in charge of Australia, what would you do to make it heaps better?

Isla: Um, don't throw garbage in the back garden!

Jess: Oh Ash, I really don't want to dump garbage in her garden. What's the carbon neutral kinder like?

Ash: I mean, it's in Victoria, so they were in lockdown at the time, which is why we're doing Zoom interviews. So I asked director Jenny Whelan to tell me what it's usually like at the carbon neutral can be.

Jenny Whelan: If you come to Kinder on a Friday afternoon, you'll see the children in the garden and they're reading the water meter, they're reading the electricity.

Ash: I've seen a video of it, there's kids who are five with clipboards walking around reading meters like tiny tradies, and they're reading the solar metre, not the gas, because they got the gas disconnected.

Jenny Whelan: The vision has been really powerful to make an actual statement to become carbon neutral and then to sit back and go, well, what are the steps that will take us there? And for us, we established very early that solar panels would be the most important factor in reducing our emissions.

Ash: So she had this dream of going carbon neutral and built a team around her of parents, children, the local council, even health professionals.

Jenny Whelan: So have a dream, build a team is the way that we achieve all our big, lofty goals.

Jess: "Have a dream, build a team", I love it, Ash, it's so good.

Ash: And they worked together on this vision for five years to build a fully certified carbon neutral kindy!

Jenny Whelan: It is interesting when you have a big, lofty goal and you achieve that goal, there is what happens next moment. But for us, we did find that, which is to partner with our local primary school and high school to form a Sustainable Schools Alliance.

Jess: I really want to hear more about this carbon neutral kinder. But can things like a kinder change the system?

Ash: OK, let's deal with this. Let's talk about power and how we can change the power system in

Australia. Our electricity accounts for almost a third of our annual carbon emissions, or footprints. We are one of the largest emitters per person and the only country that still relies on coal for more than half of our electricity generation.

Jess: Coal, we are obsessed with the stuff. So, Ash, I wanted to find us an expert who is obsessed with renewable energy.

Simon Holmes à Court: I'm Simon Holmes à Court and I'm a Director of the Smart Energy Council.

Jess: Simon advises the Energy Transition Hub and the Climate Energy College at Melbourne Uni, and he started Australia's first community wind project.

Ash: All right. So he has every finger in the pie of renewable energy!

Jess: Is there anything in the last 10 years that's blown your mind and really given you hope that, like, big things can happen in the next five or 10 years?

Simon Holmes à Court: There's so much, Jess. We were in the process a decade ago of building this first community wind farm and we had many other communities that wanted to do the same thing. We'd go up to Canberra and we'd say, ah, you know, renewables are great because, look, like they might cost a little bit more, but there's the environmental benefits, there's the economic benefit, there's local jobs. What's been stunning to me is that about maybe about four years ago, the economics changed so dramatically that now you don't have to make that case for renewables. You speak to anyone in industry and they know their next project is going to be wind or solar or storage because it's the cheapest way of getting things done.

Ash: OK, great. So we want our whole country to be powered by renewables. How does Simon think we're tracking?

Jess: So he told me we're about a quarter of the way already and we're on track to have 30 per cent of our energy coming from renewable sources by the beginning of 2021.

Simon Holmes à Court: Almost all of that is coming from wind and solar. And so far, the majority of the solar has been from the roof of households in Australia. So just from everyday people. We have the highest rooftop solar uptake per capita anywhere in the world.

Ash: Well, I did not know that! Way to go households of Australia!

Jess: And where we headed, what's the most ambitious but really achievable future for, say, 10 years or 20 years?

Simon Holmes à Court: One of the most interesting studies comes from the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), and it has us at 96 per cent renewables in 2042. Fast forward to then and almost all of our electricity will come from wind, solar, a bit of hydro and a bit of storage.

Ash: So we could be almost entirely renewable by 2042?

Jess: Yeah, but we don't even have to wait that long, we could be 75 per cent renewable by just 2025.

Simon Holmes à Court: What they're saying is that in the moment we'll be able to handle up to 75 per cent using current technologies. And that that report was basically saying, hey, if we want to go above 75 percent, we're going to have to invest a bunch in the technology to help us integrate.

Jess: So basically, like a challenge to this 75 per cent thing is if we can get that grid set up and strong enough to handle all this new stuff.

Ash: Hang on - why do we need new technology?

Jess: The grid was built for fossil fuels with old technology, so it's kind of like it needs an upgrade.

Ash: So it's like old speakers that can't handle that bass? OK, so what's the grid?

Jess: Let's think of it like a dance floor at your school dance. Fossil fuels got us here, so they like your parents dropping you off, but then they stay on the dance floor -

Ash: Aw Daaaad, this is so embarrassing! And his music sucks.

Jess: Our energy grid dance floor was built for fossil fuels, and for so long it's been full of these coal burning power stations. All these oldies taking up all the space while we just watch along patiently from the sidelines. However...

Simon Holmes à Court: What's basically happening is our coal power stations are reaching the end of their technical life and the end of their economic life is a bit like an old car. You can keep throwing money at the maintenance, but eventually gets to a point where you realise it's cheaper just to get rid of it and get a new one.

Jess: The Hazelwood Coal Power Station in Victoria and the Liddell Coal Station in New South Wales, for example, were at the end of their lives and needed 400 million dollars just to keep operating.

Simon Holmes à Court: And the owners said this is just not worth it. We're not going to ever get that money back. It's reached the end of its technical life and it's just not economic to keep it going. So they're closing it down.

Ash: So our daggy old parents are finally shuffling off the dance floor anyway?

Jess: Let's say they're retiring.

Simon Holmes à Court: One by one, our coal power stations are closing down. We've closed 13 in the last six years and we've got 19 to go. They'll just fall over one by one as they reach the end of their life.

Ash: OK, 19 to go, 19 old coal power stations still boogin' on the dance floor...

Jess: But! We've all got rooftops and on those rooftops we can put solar panels and then any excess power that we generate goes back into the grid. So we don't actually need coal anymore

because we're making the power ourselves and we're flooding onto the dance floor!

Ash: Yeah, it's like thanks for bringing us this far, Mum and Dad, but it's our time to dance!

Jess: And all this technology and solar panels and batteries to store all the excess power that we generate, it's all getting cheaper, too.

Ash: Oh, my gosh. Renewables is like the hottie on the dance floor, radiant like the sun, hair blowing in the wind turbine takes me in their arms, and - and yes.

Jess: Yes! So with all these new dancers, the grid needs a little bit updating. We have about two and a half million households with solar on the roof, and that requires more technology.

Ash: So we need to demand a better sound system?

Jess: Yes, but the more of us dancing on that dance floor, plugging renewables into the grid, the larger the flow of investment and jobs and technology to improve that grid, and the less room there is for boring, outdated, old and dirty coal.

Ash: OK, so what I'm hearing is we're actually trying to reduce our emissions, right?

Simon Holmes à Court: It's not right to say that we're trying to reduce our emissions. Sadly, we need we need policy for that.

Ash: Oh... we're not trying.

Jess: Well, the government isn't prioritising reducing emissions for reducing emissions sake. But Simon says it's happening anyway.

Simon Holmes à Court: So it's almost like it's a sideshow what's happening in the politics and media. If we look at any of the statistics on where we're going in the electricity sector, it's rapidly moving. We've built more renewables in the last three years than we did in the 30 years before. This transition is well underway.

Ash: OK, just so I'm actually really psyched on this, when Simon says that the transition is already happening just because it makes more economic sense, I read up and Australia's most respected economists are talking about how Australia could be a renewable energy superpower, like, globally. Even our Chief Scientist Alan Finkel is saying that we should be aiming for 700 percent renewable!

Jess: 700%? How does that work?

Ash: Right? And then my brain just explodes and coats the walls, and then when I scrape it back to my head, I'm like, that's not how math works. And then I say, no, it is! Because we get 100 percent renewable energy here, and then we sell our excess energy overseas. We export it. We lay down a giant underwater extension cord and plug in Southeast Asia, for example, and pump the excess on a wind power out to their grids. We're exporting renewables instead of coal. And the more I look at it, it's like, OK, so more countries are setting renewable energy targets, which means they're no longer going to be needing our coal. And China is like one of our biggest buyers and they've just

announced their plan to go carbon neutral. So I guess we can't really keep being a coal superpower.

Jess: Buuuut there's a little problem...

Simon Holmes à Court: We don't have a coordinated plan in Australia of shutting these power stations down, the transition is happening, it's locked in, but it's either going to be, you know, disorderly chaos or a managed transition. Both and both start from where we are and both end up at the same place. But the managed transition is cheaper, more reliable power and workers will get looked after and won't be disruptive. Whereas the chaos? People will get hurt and it'll cost more than it should.

Ash: I mean, this is the thing I don't get. The whole world is basically saying that we need a green recovery from the pandemic. We can use those funds that are being mobilised to stop economies from collapsing, to build a better future. But I keep hearing so much about gas in Australia.

Jess: Well, I asked Simon about that.... Simon, can we talk about gas? Because there's been all this talk about, you know, the Covid gas-led recovery and the Prime Minister referring to gas as a transition fuel. What does it mean? Do we need gas? Is gas really a transition fuel? Is this going to help our transition or hinder it?

Simon Holmes à Court: Yeah, yeah. So that phrasing that gas is a transition fuel is what people used to say a decade ago. So a couple of a couple of things. In Australia, we have some of the world's best resources for wind and solar, which means that we have some of the cheapest renewable energy production in the world. Meanwhile, we don't have cheap gas. Our gas costs two, three, four times as much as US gas, because when we go fracking, we don't pull out any oil. We frack and pull out gas. And it's much more expensive operation if that's all you're getting out of it. So we're in the middle of a crisis. A lot of people have been advocating that we should use this opportunity for, you know, to decarbonise our economy. But Australia, which, you know, our politics are significantly in the throes of the fossil fuel industry. The industry has seen this crisis as an opportunity to extend it to further their interests. So, yeah, there are no technical or economic reasons why we should be looking at gas right now. The technical and economic case is actually very, very weak. Yeah, no, it's just politics and vested interests. This gas, it's really just a missed opportunity, I think, to you, an opportunity we could be using to decarbonise. But we're going to faff around the edges, debating gas for the next six months or so. And nothing major is really going to happen on that front.

Ash: Hold up. Who is the Government actually dancing with here?

Ash + Jess: We interrupt this broadcast to bring you a message from your hosts, Ash and Jess. Every now and then it's important to take a break, find a buddy, have a movie night, make a bowl of popcorn! And learn about the vested interests slowing your country down from flicking the switch and turning off fossil fuels. Tonight's film, *Dirty Power* comes courtesy of Greenpeace.

Dirty Power documentary: While much of the world is taking decisive action on climate change, Australia is going back.

Ash: We're not going to play the whole thing right now, but for a taste, his own parts that made us gasp.

Ash + Jess: * Gasping in shock many, many times *

Ash: You know, I think a lot of us have a feeling that there are these dirty dealings, but watching Dirty Power shows you how it's actually all connected. It's like a map.

Jess: Yup. Everyone should watch Dirty Power. It is 15 minutes long and you will find out so much about just how deeply our political parties and certain media organizations, and even sneaky nonprofits with innocent names like the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, are all deeply tied to each other and to fossil fuel groups. The link to watch Dirty Power is on Heaps Better website, and you can get that via the show notes. So back to Simon. If this is genuinely slowing things down, what do we do about it?

Simon Holmes à Court: OK, so it's frustrating that we could do this faster and cheaper if there was federal coordination, if we were, you know, if we didn't have the feds trying to trip us up at every point. But this transition is absolutely happening. And, you know, we've got to keep fighting the forces that would want to slow that down. But I think success is assured in that sector, not fast enough. We've got to make sure these coal power stations close in the next 10 years. Right now, they're on a path to close in 20 years.

Ash: So these 19 coal stations are already set to close in about 20 years. But we've got to get them shut down in the next 10.

Jess: So all righty, lessons: What is in your experience or your mind is the one thing that I can do as an average Australian to contribute to speeding up this transition, and to support the renewable industries?

Simon Holmes à Court: So on the home front, if you own a north facing roof in Australia, put solar on your roof. You're throwing away money if you don't. But what you're doing is every day as the sun comes up, you're going to be pushing coal out of the system and the solar is coming on at such a fast rate, it's pushing coal out. And we're going to see two or three coal power stations pushed out of the grid over the next two years and that'll be significantly because of the householders of Australia.

Ash: So Jess and I are both renters, so it's kind of a little tricky for us to get solar panels installed.

Jess: But our parents own their rooftops and I found out that a big barrier for my Dad to getting solar panels installed was the cost and hearing stories about people getting sold poor quality panels.

Ash: So while Jess was doing the research for her Dad, I stumbled upon a random website. I was like, well, how do I get a solar quote? Getting a quote takes like ten minutes. I spoke to a lovely guy called George. I was like, Dude, do you mind if I start recording this conversation? Because me and my friends all want to get involved with solar, but a lot of us are renters and we don't know how to do this.

George: We do install on rental properties as well. A lot of the time, you know, the quote will be for the landlord and they'll send it over the landlord and they end up paying for it or, you know, they go

halves on it and things like that. So, yeah.

Ash: And so, you know, to take that economic case to a landlord, like, how would you say it if it was your landlord and you were renting the case?

George: The case you could really put forward is the sort of like the value that they can add to the house if they were going to sell the house or, you know, if you if you if you were to leave the property they could potentially bump up that rental prices because the property then benefits from having solar.

Ash: And so, like, it's not like, oh, I'm a renter, therefore, it doesn't make sense for me to have solar. It can make sense for you and your landlord. But that's a negotiation that you have to enter into. That's kind of like a bit of coeducation. It feels weird and but yeah, I'm doing that now.

Jess: That's amazing! Wait, you're sending it to your landlord. Really?

Ash: Yes.

Jess: Ash! High five!

Ash: Well, I'll let you know how it goes. Like, ideally, by the end of, you know, all of this, they'll be like, oh, yeah, dude, solar sounds like a great idea.

Jess: So there will be an upfront cost, but the Australian Federal Solar Rebate is still going. Just as an example, a six kilowatt system will get about \$3,300 in rebates as of the time we are recording. That's going to go down year by year as this is being slowly phased out. But there are also different state level rebates. So when you get a quote ask what's available for your postcode.

Ash: And once you've got solar panels, your electricity retailer will pay you a small amount for each kilowatt hour you export back to the grid. And on top of that, if you use most of your power during the day when the sun's shining, then you'll have cheaper bills and you could make a payback of your system in about five years.

Jess: And one more thing, until we get to 100 percent renewable energy here in Australia, you're still going to be using some energy from the grid, even when you have solar panels, especially when the sun ain't shining. So you can switch to greenpower for the rest.

Ash: We found some really great resources for getting your head around the whole rooftop solar thing. So we're going to chuck them in the show notes and it's easy as pie.

Simon Holmes à Court: But that's kind of like the personal hygiene thing, that's like getting out of bed and having a shower. You've done the basics. That is kind of a ticket to play to be putting the pressure for societal change or systemic change, and that's where the heavy lifting comes in. If we can get one one coal power unit to shut down, that has a massive impact on everyone who used to take power from that power station.

Ash: Right. Well, I'm all about shutting down coal plants.

Jess: Oh, can I give you another reason, another reason to shut them down? So I'm going to share my screen and show you this thing that Simon tweeted. OK, look at this. So he put together this nifty little graph, 'Greenhouse gas emissions for the financial year of 2019', and check this out. See this on the left, that giant amount, six point eight million tonnes, this is the Vales Point coal power station. That's just one coal power station in New South Wales. And it emits as much carbon dioxide as the entire Australian domestic aviation sector! So, like you can see, Qantas and Virgin.

Ash: Whoa. OK, wait, hold on. That's crazy! Six point eight million tonnes? So this is just Vales Point, one power station?

Jess: Yeah. And just to put that into perspective, I did a carbon footprint calculator for myself and my personal emissions is like 12 tonnes, 12 tons versus six point eight million tonnes. So from Simon's helpful graph, I then calculated that shutting down this one coal power plant is the same impact as more than 560,000 me's completely offsetting my carbon footprint. That is more than the population of Tasmania!

Simon Holmes à Court: You might convince, you know, 20% of people to reduce their flights by 20%, but that doesn't move the needle. What really moves the needle is when we change our power system to use renewables rather than coal, or we change our aviation sector to use clean fuel rather than the kerosene they currently use.

Ash: Also, the Vales Point one is only the tenth dirtiest? Excuse me!

Simon Holmes à Court: So if we can push that power station for early closure, it's like we've just taken a whole sector of emissions out of the economy. So this systemic change, you get to reduce the carbon footprint more than you could ever do for yourself and all of your neighbors and the rest of society at the same time.

Ash: Yes, Simon speaking our language with the systemic change! And the thing I love about this kind of change is it's basically easier for everyone than the alternative, either (A) we all fret forever about every single carbon emitting decision we make, or (B) not fret, because you're running on renewable energy.

Jess: So we were wondering what is the easiest and fastest way to get heaps of solar onto our grid and kick coal off our dance floor completely.

Ash: And that led us back to our buddies at Greenpeace Australia Pacific and specifically to Lindsay Soutar. Lindsay runs REenergise, which is Greenpeace's renewable energy campaign. And what they're doing is targeting the biggest polluters in Australia to get them to go renewable.

Jess: We wanted to specifically know how does the residential impact of all of us switching our homes to renewable power stack up against big business doing the same?

Lindsay Soutar: Yeah, it's a good question. So large corporations make up about 70% of emissions from electricity in Australia. Even if we get every single Australian to make the switch without getting those companies to shift as well? We're not going as far as we need to go.

Ash + Jess: 70 per cent! 70 per cent of Australia's emissions comes from large corporations. So

don't be mad at yourself. Be mad at them.

Lindsay Soutar: You, of course, might be able to install 12 solar panels on your roof, whereas Aldi, the supermarket company, has just announced that it's rolling out a solar program with 102,000 solar panels on rooftops around the country, so on their stores and distribution centers.

Ash: OK, so a big supermarket chain like Aldi switching that power is really huge. I mean, like, remember our dance floor story? When Aldi generates excess electricity from all those massive supermarket rooftops covered in solar panels, they feed back into the grid and they're helping to push out coal.

Lindsay Soutar: So Australia's biggest emitters have to report how much they're polluting to the government and that information becomes publicly available in a database. So that's how we've got this data. We've pulled it down off the Clean Energy Regulator's website and trolled through it to look at, I guess, in particular, which are the big brand companies, because they're the ones we can't we know as consumers and as members of the public that we can really have an influence over and and the companies we're targeting initially with this campaign.

Jess: So we're rolling through the list of big businesses on the REenergise website right now. OK, so that's REenergise.org. And we're scrolling through the list of the dirtiest businesses in Australia. Let's find out which companies. Lion... Oh, JB Hi-Fi!

Ash: Oh, yeah?

Jess: No, no good. Hmm, make some demands.

Ash: You would think that Apple would have done better.

Jess: So Woolworths is ranked 6th on the list of the largest electricity users in Australia. They do have onsite solar, but they have no renewable electricity commitment.

Ash: OK, so Coles is ranked 12th. So how do we take action? So: ways to make change. You can message a company, share the campaign, sign a petition. Easy. OK, email CEO! Oh my gosh. There's a link right here. Hello. OK, I'm Ash Berdebes, I am a Coles customer because you know it's everywhere. I'd like to know, when will Coles commit to 100 percent renewable electricity? Aldi has committed to a hundred percent renewable energy by 2021, Telstra has committed to 100 percent renewable energy by 2025. What is standing in your way? Let me help you.

Jess: So listeners, we're going to make this real easy for you. There's a link to REenergise on our website. You can get to it from the show notes.

Ash: I mean, if you're working in these companies sure, you can say, I want you to go renewable, but would they listen to us? It just feels weird being like, do you Woolworth's? Could you please go renewable and put lots of solar panels on your roof, then I will shop with you. Thank you very much. Cheers. Ash and Jess.

Jess: Yeah, what's the best way to be calling them out or asking them to make the switch?

Lindsay Soutar: I think what you've outlined is exactly what we want to be doing. They are very sensitive to customer pressure and expectations, especially on issues like climate change, which they know have been rising in public concern and public attention.

Ash: OK, so that was me doing a record scratch. It's me. Hey, future Ash talking to past Ash, to let you know that they did listen to us. We've got some good news! Since this interview with Lindsay, Woolworths announced they're going 100 percent renewable by 2025.

Jess: And why is this so epic? Because Woolworths represents one percent of Australia's entire electricity usage. They have a power bill of like over a million dollars every day. And instead of supporting fossil fuels, soon that money will be going towards clean, renewable energy. Only two weeks before Woolies announced this, our mate Lindsay here and David from our first episode went along together to meet the CEO of Woolworths because thousands of people just like us had sent a message to Brad Banducci through the REenergise website. So they have a chat with CEO Brad about the REenergise campaign. And then two weeks later, Woolies makes this announcement: that they're going 100 percent renewable.

Ash: Who knows, by the time you're listening to this podcast episode, maybe Coles will have flicked the switch too! It shows just how quickly things can change right now. So let's keep that momentum going.

Jess: You can go to the REenergise website and call on Australia's biggest electricity users to go 100 per cent renewable. It is a win for a minute.

Ash: I guess this is something that Greenpeace probably has seen a lot in the past is just knocking on someone's door, I mean, that's someone being a big company who's not doing the right thing, is enough sometimes for them to go, oh, maybe we don't want this kind of attention. Maybe we'll change ahead of time before you have to launch a campaign against what we're doing.

Lindsay Soutar: So, yes, we absolutely are seeing companies, I guess, get trying to get ahead of some of the attention of scrutiny. And interestingly, we were launching a renewable beer or a sun powered beer campaign just before Christmas at the end of last year, asking Asahi and Lion, the two other big brewers in Australia, to match Carlton and United, who's the third big brewer who had already made the commitment to 100 percent renewable electricity. And so we had a whole lot of little coasters printed that we were going to be distributing in pubs and stickers that were going on, you know, cases of beer in bottle shops all around the country. But we never got to use any of it because in the end, once we told the company that these, you know, all these volunteers were going out all around the country with with these stickers and posters, those big companies were like, oh actually, you know, we can say this makes sense what you're asking us to do. We're already on this path. We're already investing in renewable energy. Let's just go the whole way to 100 percent renewables. And so they ultimately decided to make the commitment before we even really got going!

Ash + Jess: Oh, that's so good!

Lindsay Soutar: I mean, but I think it also speaks to how doable this is. Like it is it is now at a point where switching to renewable electricity for these companies does just make sense.

Jess: So Christmas 2020, one of the silver linings will be we can have sun-powered beer?

Lindsay Soutar: So by 2025, all beer in Australia will be 100 percent renewable powered. So these companies have made the commitment to make the switch, to make the transition. But that's not something that can just happen overnight. They have to do the work to, you know, sign those deals with the wind and solar farms and get all those solar panels up on their facilities. That takes a bit of time, but certainly making that commitment and sending that clear signal about where they're going as a company and also where the world is heading is really important.

Ash: I'm looking forward to sinking a few frothies with a clean conscience!

Jess: Speaking of solar powered beer, Lindsey gave us a pretty great solution for people who are locked out of rooftop solar, like us, who are renters or people who live in apartments and have small rooftops or who don't get a lot of sun... and the solution involves beer!

Ash: So Lindsay's a renter just like us, and she has invested in a solar community project on the rooftop of a brewery in Sydney called Young Henry's.

Jess: These community projects - that are sometimes called solar gardens - basically work like a community veggie garden. You can buy a plot of panels in a huge community solar farm and, you know, they're an awesome way for local businesses with large rooftops, like this brewery, to make the most out of them. The local community get the financial benefits of solar and any excess energy from the solar gardens gets fed back into the grid. You get dividends, in the case of this Young Henry's Brewery, or in the case of things like solar gardens, you get savings on your electricity bill just the way you would if you had your own rooftop solar. So we're going to chuck a little link on the Heaps Better website and in the show notes of this episode so that wherever you are in Australia, you can check out what's happening around you. And if you too are locked out of rooftop solar, you can still get a slice of the pie.

Jess: Hi, Richard, how are you doing?

Ash: Where are we Jess?

Jess: Well, Ash, we're sipping on a delicious solar powered beer at the Young Henry's Brewery in Sydney, that one with the community solar project that we've invested in.

Ash: And we're walking through the back of the brewery with the owner, Richard Adamson, past these giant vats of green algae that grown from the CO2 from the brewing process.

Jess: Richard tells us that each batch of algae here produces the same amount of oxygen as a hectare of forest. So thanks to this algae and the solar panels, the brewery is aiming to be carbon negative.

Ash: Jess really loves seaweed, but we're here to talk about solar.

Jess: Is it expensive for you as a business to have done this? I know it gives dividends back to the community who've invested in it, but as a business has it been costly?

Richard Adamson: That was the beauty of it, that there was actually no upfront cost on our part. We just signed an agreement that we would lease the space over the period, I think it's 10 years, and that was it. I think that money is much better in generating electricity now than it is probably getting interest out of the bank because the interest rates are so low. So even my dad is a bit of a skeptic, and he has gone OK, I'm putting solar panels on the roof. It's like, wow, that's amazing!

Jess: I love that. I want to get my Dad to put solar panels on his roof! That's my goal.

Richard Adamson: I mean, I think if you put the economic case to him he might just go, well, alright! Because that's where it stands at the moment. It does make more financial sense to invest your money in solar panels for, you know, for home generation.

Ash: I was sort of surprised that Young Henry's was doing so much, but then I thought again and I was like, oh, well, like being a brewer is just kind of like being a scientist, but you get to wear like a T-shirt rather than a white coat.

Richard Adamson: Yes! I did say to my science teacher from high school, if I knew I'd be using all this science in brewing, I might have paid more attention! We've had some we had a science teacher bring these students down to say, hey, look, these guys use science every day. There's a full lab up upstairs but they've just got tattoos and beers and look really cool! So maybe, maybe that's why you should pay attention in class! And I was like, that's cool.

Ash: Okay, that's a real cool teacher. Imagine your teacher taking you on an excursion to a solar powered brewery.

Jess: Yeah, kind of reminds me of a solar powered kinder from the beginning of this episode that you were going to tell me more about Ash.

Ash: I didn't forget! OK, so let's bring Jenny Whelan back.

Jenny Whelan: We talk at the Kinder a lot about curious questions, it's like an ongoing thing. What's the curious question? And I just really encourage everyone to just keep asking those curious questions, like why do our schools not have solar panels on every roof? Why would we build a school today without a full solar installation on the rooftop? And it's not just thinking about making that specific school sustainable. We're thinking beyond that. We're thinking of, what can happen when, as a Sustainable Schools Alliance, our roof is covered with solar panels and then we unite that energy, combine that energy and then deliver it to our communities in term break?

Jess: Oh, I love this story so much.

Ash: Right? And the cool thing is the kids are going home and talking about solar panels and renewables to their parents, so that message is spreading into the community and encouraging everyone to ask these big questions, like, if the kids know what's up, why haven't we done this already?

Jenny Whelan: Action is a great panacea for anxiety, and that's why I think we've got to show our kids that there's things that we can all do, there's numbers between 1 and 10 and they can make a difference without having to march to Parliament House to do it. There's just a lot of things that we

can do, particularly within a school setting, because you actually you've got hundreds and hundreds of young adults and you've got teachers that are passionate to support the voices of those students. And you've also got a connection with hundreds of families, and through that connection with hundreds of families, you've got a connection with hundreds of workplaces. So the capacity for schools to show leadership and transform how we live in our homes and how we work in our businesses, it's very powerful. There's a great opportunity there. And I think it's important not to miss the opportunity.

Isla: On Monday I cleaned up the park!

Ash: Really? You know what, thank you for cleaning up the park. Some people leave things behind and make things dirty and other people make things better and you're making things better.

Jess: Ash, I refuse to leave it to the three year olds to clean up our parks and our backyards and our atmosphere. Can we kick dirty old coal off our dance floor?

Ash: Yes! I mean, I don't think we have a choice not to anymore. So what are we going to do? We're going to go back to our renewables 101. Get solar panels on your roof! You can look into community solar gardens if you can't do the whole rooftop solar thing.

Jess: You know how I was going to try and convince my Dad to get solar panels on his roof? Well, he got wind of my plan and he and Mum started doing the research themselves.

Ash: Oh he got wind of it, did he? Was that a renewable energy pun?

Jess: It was an accident, I swear! But he's getting it done, which is cool!

Ash: I think I'll pass that on to my Mum. OK. Then think bigger picture, go right for those big polluting businesses that are responsible for 70% of our electricity emissions. You can go to reenergise.org and call them out to flick that switch. Greenpeace has literally done all the hard yards for you, so this is now the easiest action.

Jess: And if you're feeling really gung ho, then channel Albert Park kinda or the Young Henry's brewery and get your workplace, school, university, whatever, to flick the switch to renewable power. All those things will get more fun, renewable dancers onto our dancefloor grid and kick old fuddy duddy coal out.

Ash: The power is ours! and one final word from our future PM:

Will: Solar panels save the world!

Jess: To make this hella easy for you, the Greenpeace team have put together a step by step action plan. It's on the website at greenpeace.org.au. Everything you need is in there, and there's a link in the show notes too. Ash, I got another big tip from Simon Holmes à Court that I was holding off telling you. He said that one of the biggest things that we can do to stop coal and fossil fuel projects is actually to switch our banking in super.

Ash: Oh... I've been meaning to do that, but it seems like a big effort.

Jess: In the next episode, we're going to work out whether our money is actually financing the climate crisis and if it is, how we can fix that stat and use it as a tool for good, instead.

Ash: Subscribe to Heaps Better on Spotify, Apple or wherever you listen. And if you like what you heard, please write and review this podcast, it's a huge help!

Jess: Heaps Better is a podcast made by us, Jess Hamilton and Ash Berdebes, with Greenpeace Australia Pacific and Audiocraft by our side. The mixing engineer is Adam Conolley, EP is Kate Montague and the Creative Lead at Greenpeace is Ella Colley.

Ash: We acknowledge and pay respects to the traditional custodians of the lands this podcast was created, and their enduring legacy of sustainability and caring for country. A huge thank you to the Greenpeace team for getting us out of the weeds and showing us the bigger picture, especially Lindsay and the team behind the REenergise campaign and the Dirty Power doco.

Jess: Thank you to Simon Holmes à Court and the many experts who wrote books, papers and guides that helped us make sense of all of this and who are all chipping away every day to bring on the renewable revolution.

Ash: And thanks to Jenny and Lesley from Albert Park Kinder and of course, to Will and Isla for cleaning up our parks and dreaming big. With kids like you, we know the future is in good hands. And thank you for coming with us! Together we are heaps better.

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