



# COMMUNITY ENERGY for Venus Bay?

Community Resilience and Reliable Energy Feasibility Study at Venus Bay

*let's talk about the possibilities of community owned energy!*



Keep up to date with planned community consultations via the timeline on the back. For more information scan the QR code or head to: [vbcc.org.au/communityenergy](http://vbcc.org.au/communityenergy)

Welcome to Bulletin #2 October 2022

## Technically Speaking

Bushfires, storms and floods have devastated many parts of Australia and put communities at risk when electricity was cut and residents were left without power and telecommunications, sometimes for days or weeks.

In 2017, about 157 widespread power outages occurred in Australia for a total duration of 6,218 minutes, affecting 1.2 million people and causing enormous financial losses for businesses, according to the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO). Australian organisations experience three days of unanticipated interruption per year on average, with a total loss of \$70 billion to the Australian economy.

Victoria's electricity distribution businesses regularly face difficult decisions – do we bypass new fire-safety technology to keep the power on but risk causing a fire? It is not just severe weather that is cause for concern. The energy market is in the spotlight, with the AEMO recently suspending energy trading amid fears that reliable electricity supply was in jeopardy. The trigger - a so called 'gas-shortages' - has not been resolved. It's just become less obvious as the cold weather recedes.

These dilemmas present opportunities for innovation in how and where energy is generated, co-ordinated and distributed. Community-based energy systems, including microgrids, ought to be considered as localised energy supply and for enhancing resilience of communities prone to natural disasters.

Microgrids are typically self-contained power generation systems connected to the grid but can work locally and independently. Microgrids already operate in remote and regional communities across the world. Microgrids can increase the ability of vulnerable communities to be well-prepared by having access to power when grid supply is disrupted.

The job of the Technical Team in the Venus Bay Community Energy Study is to understand how, where and when people and businesses use energy and to translate this into local generation and distribution options, including analysing the potential of a microgrid.

The team will look at how energy is used in non-emergencies and emergencies. Then, based on community preferences and priorities coupled with existing energy infrastructure and new technology, several proposed energy options will be considered by our community, before we go on to analyse the associated costs for the most promising option(s).

## Venus Bay Voices – Henry O'Clery

We moved to Venus Bay four years ago, and apart from an excess of mosquitos and power outages, we love the place. We can't do much about the mossies, but surely, in this day and age, it must be possible to improve the energy supply!

So how about we study what modern renewable energy technology can offer our community? Not what it can offer the network or the retailers, but how it might be able to improve the amenity, safety and economics for all of us while also contributing to a better environment?

Two years ago the Venus Bay Community Centre decided to take on this task.

First, we built a solar/battery demonstration system at the Centre so that the place can fully operate when the grid goes down. Then we obtained a substantial grant from the government to develop a feasibility study for the whole town.

We have now assembled a crack team of experts who are working with community members to develop a model of what is possible, and how we could build it.

If you think this is a good idea and might even be a bit excited, why not come along to our Resilience Workshop at the Venus Bay Community Centre?

**Community Workshop #1 – What does resilience mean for each of us and our community?**

**Saturday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, Venus Bay Community Centre, 27 Canterbury Road, Venus Bay – 12 noon to 3pm**

**Lunch included – RSVP [alyson@vbcc.org.au](mailto:alyson@vbcc.org.au)**

The technical team includes a group of researchers from Federation University and Heather Smith from Changing Weather



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## Brilliantly Resilient

The Venus Bay Community Energy Study is framed through a lens of resilience. So, logically, the Study is asking - Resilience to what? To help unpack that, people from across Venus Bay are being asked to think about and describe their social networks and their relationships with energy and infrastructure, including energy use, access and priorities, both during non-emergencies and emergencies.

The Study is also asking - When does a lack of electricity become an issue? Four main events may help us think through the impacts and possibilities.

Firstly, let's remember that the black summer bushfires of 2019/20 inspired this Study. Crises and disasters arrive suddenly. They are often driven by weather, and we are reminded that climate change will make extreme weather events more frequent. They also place significant demands on a community - dealing with a power outage is only one of a number of challenges being faced in that moment.

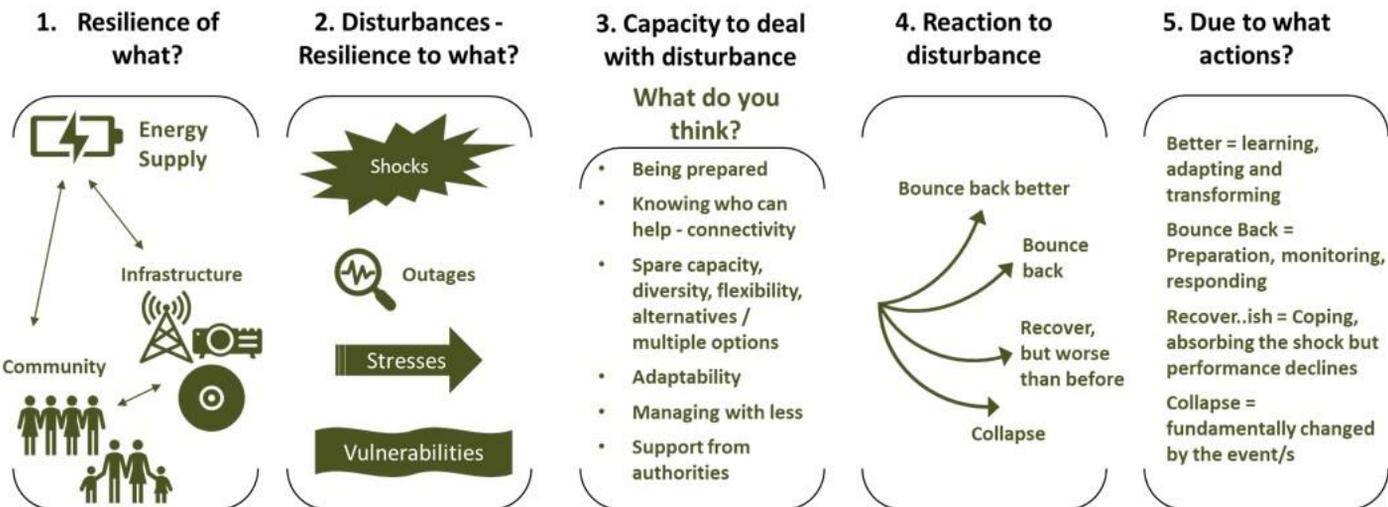
Secondly, it is important to highlight ordinary power outages. We know these happen relatively frequently because Venus Bay and Tarwin Lower are at the end of a

long power line from Inverloch and are therefore very prone to equipment failures, fallen branches and other faults that trip the switch. Thinking about the way we currently respond to regular power outages can help us think about the changes we might like to see, if we could reduce their impact and the inconvenience.

Thirdly, thinking about resilience reminds us to think about long term stressors as well. For example, parts of the electricity network might be getting to the end of their life, climate change will bring longer heatwaves, and our energy system is under pressure of significant changes as we transition to renewable energy.

Finally, thinking about our vulnerabilities provides a useful provocation because vulnerability is the flipside to resilience. We all have elements of modern life that we are over reliant upon. Also, the single road in and out of Venus Bay is a constant reminder that every community has unique challenges that can amplify vulnerabilities.

This Study offers us a chance to think through our essential energy needs under each of these circumstances. From this deeper and shared understanding, we can shape our local energy systems and ambitions so they strengthen our resilience.



**PUBLIC WORKSHOPS**  
All public workshops are held at the Venus Bay Community Centre.

- Accountability group meet
- Advisory group meet

