COMMUNITY ENERGY for Venus Bay?

Welcome to Bulletin #5 January '23

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**

Energy in our hands, across Gippsland

We're part of something big – a groundswell of community energy projects across Gippsland - from Mallacoota to Philip Island, Heyfield to Sandy Point and Venus Bay.

Our community energy project is part of a bigger story of small communities working together to define their own energy future. We *can* have locally owned renewables and share the benefits across our community.

The Gippsland Community Power Hub has assisted many projects and brokered small renewable energy installations across our region, such as the system at the Community Centre. Follow the links below to get a feel for what some of our fellow communities are up to.

https://totallyrenewablephillipisland.weebly.com/

https://www.sandypoint.vic.au/latest-news/renewable-energy

HEYFIELD MyTown MICROGRID

https://www.heyfieldcommunity.org.au/mytown-microgrid

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-23/mallacoota-energy-group-reliable-renewable-power-source/101003406

Community Energy Worksop #2 Saturday February 11th, 12 – 3pm

At our second Community Workshop we will explore the different types of renewable energy that could best suit our needs, where it could be located and criteria for guiding our community-centred decisions.

Neighbourhood battery operational models

In the last Bulletin we showcased three types of neighbourhood batteries, because battery technology is highly likely to be included in the energy options for Venus Bay. To help us consider what kind of battery technology, we need to know how they operate and who might own them.

In Yackandandah a 65 kW solar and 274 kWh battery system was installed behind-the-meter at an old sawmill, now the Agency of Sculpture. Both solar and battery are located behind the sites electricity meter so the owner can use electricity generated onsite, just like a household solar and battery system, and pay around half the price instead of purchasing it from the grid at full price. The community energy retailer, Indigo Power, manages the battery and sells the excess energy to their customers across Yackandandah, particularly at night or during peak times. Indigo Power only pays (and charges) electricity tariffs once, on energy exported from the battery.

The Yarra Energy Foundation (YEF) battery is different. It is "in-front-of-the-meter", on the roadside, not on the site of an energy producer or user. This means YEF pays for electricity from the grid to charge the battery and must find buyers for the stored electricity. This means YEF pays tariffs on each kWh of incoming and outgoing electricity. That's twice the tariffs and the major difference between behind-the-meter and front-of-the-meter batteries.

Fortunately, this battery is in a trial, testing cheaper tariffs for incoming electricity sourced from surplus midday solar and incentives for buyers purchasing energy at peak times (6pm-9pm). YEF can also sell energy to the wholesale electricity market at very high prices when energy is scarce or during grid failures and outages. This trial is important for everyone wanting to evaluate the costs and usage options of front-of-the-meter neighbourhood batteries.

Community-owned solar & batteries + revolving fund – a local case study.

The Energy Innovation Co-op Old Energy-New Energy project installed 91 kW of solar panels and 41 kWh battery storage at The State Coal Mine, Wonthaggi in 2018-19. The system is a behind-the-meter energy solution generating renewable energy for use by all facilities on-site.

The system produces ~127 MW of clean power per year. That's an annual offset of 127 tonnes of CO_2 or equal to taking 37 petrol cars off the road. This is more electricity than is used at the site (112MW) and so some energy is also exported to the grid. Parks Victoria are the site managers, and they buy the electricity from the Energy Innovation Co-op (EI Co-op), through a power purchase agreement. The income from the sale of electricity to Parks Victoria goes into the EI Co-op's Southern CORE Revolving Fund.

The Southern CORE Revolving Fund loans money to community-based groups, interest free, to fast-track solar and battery installs on publicly or community-owned buildings, such as Football-Netball Clubs, local halls, childcare centres and swimming pools. These groups are then able to spend much less money on electricity and more on what matters to their members and communities. When they pay back the loan, funds are lent out again to more groups.