



COMMUNITY ENERGY E-BUS

Venus Bay



Powered by community... for community.

GIPPSLAND COMMUNITY E-BUS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SUNNY IN VENUS BAY

ABOUT THE BUS / PROJECT

- **What is the Gippsland Community eBus Project?** The project involves running trials of community-run electric buses in two regional locations, Venus Bay and Sandy Point, to meet transport needs of the two communities in a sustainable way. With the assistance of researchers at La Trobe University the project will create knowledge about how to set up and run such services. This knowledge will be used to develop a plan for future use of other communities that wish to set up something similar.

The project is very collaborative. Venus Bay Community Centre and Sandy Point Bus Management Committee are responsible for setting up and running the services, the Victorian Government has provided funding for the buses, and La Trobe University is providing the research expertise with the support of the iMOVE Cooperative Research Centre. None of it would be possible without the support of volunteers in the local communities who are helping to organise, promote, coordinate and deliver the services!

As far as we know, this project is the only one of its kind in Victoria! We are leading the way.

- **How did the project come about?** The Venus Bay Community Centre (VBCC) has established a demonstration stand-alone solar/battery system at the Centre that can operate fully during outages and has undertaken a 12-month Community Resilience and Reliable Energy Feasibility Study funded by the Commonwealth Government culminating in a Community Plan for Community Energy along with a toolkit for other regional communities starting their Community Energy journey. The e-bus continues on this work towards community resilience and sustainability. More info: <https://www.vbcc.org.au/communityenergy>
- **What is the Sunny e-Bus?** Sunny is an electric bus that is being used to deliver the transport services in and around Venus Bay. The bus purchase was funded by the Victorian Government and the services are set up, managed and delivered by the local communities. (She is called SUNNY as she is powered by the sun – and our local community!)
- **Why an electric bus?** Electric vehicles are an important way to help reduce emissions that are harmful to the environment. Ultimately the intention is to power the buses from local, clean energy which will make Sunny and Sandy a zero emissions way of travelling. It also means that the vehicle can be re-charged using the cheapest form of energy available to us using the solar array and battery storage system at the VBCC.
- **Is it safe?** We take safety very seriously and have the following measures in place: Our e-bus has a liquid cooled Lithium Iron Phosphate battery. They are the safest type of lithium battery because they are not prone to overheating and even if they're punctured, they won't catch on fire. The cathode material is also non-hazardous and therefore it poses no environmental or negative health hazards.



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- **How many people can fit on the bus?** The bus can take up to nine (9) passengers plus the driver, or seven passengers (7) if there is a wheelchair passenger on board.
- **How can I find out more about the project?** The project is being run through the iMOVE Cooperative Research Centre. You can find out more info [here](#).
- **Why use the eBus?** Currently Venus Bay has no public transport services. The buses will address this need by offering a service that responds to our community's needs. It's more than just a bus, it is a community project and a social experience! The bus will help people who don't have a car or are unable to drive as well as providing a more environmentally friendly way of travelling for those that do.

ABOUT THE SERVICE

- **Who can use the bus?** Anyone can make a booking to use the bus. Children under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult.
- **How long will the service run for?** The project will run over two years, with the idea the community will be able to continue running the service after the project is finished.
- **When does the bus run?** (as per scheduled services, assuming there is at least one booking) All the scheduled services are published on our website and Facebook page.
- **Where does it go? What areas does it cover?** For the trial period (March to May 2024) it will service Venus Bay, Tarwin Lower and Walkerville with local shuttle services and travel to Koonwarra & Leongatha and Inverloch & Wonthaggi. See schedule for more information.
- **Who is responsible for running the service?** The Venus Bay Community Centre is coordinating the service using volunteers to drive the buses.
- **How do I find out what trips are scheduled?** The information is on our [website](#) and local Facebook pages. Printed material available at Venus Bay Community Centre.
- **Where can I get more info about the service?** Visit the VBCC website or Facebook page.

BOOKING AND PAYMENT

- **Do I need to book?** Yes, please book. We ask for 24 hours' notice to help us manage pick-ups and the volunteer driver schedule.
- **How do I book?** (Online bookings are preferred, however phone and direct email will be used to complement online booking system. 24 hours' notice is required, choose your route option or make a suggestion.
- **What information do I need to give to book?** – Name, contact details, reason for booking (optional) and pick up location (either bus stop or home if required)
- **Is my information confidential?** Contact information is completely confidential. Any information you give us about your reasons for travel will be shared with our project partners only and will not include any information about your identity.
- **How far in advance do I need to book?** We ask for 24 hours' notice to enable us to deliver the best service possible.
- **Can I still book if it is less than 24 hours' notice?** Please get in touch with us by phone and we will try to help.



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- **Can I make a group booking? Is there a limit?** Yes you can book for multiple people at the same time. The maximum number you can book for is 5. If we can't accommodate the group size we will contact you back to see how we can help. Please note all passenger details need to be entered into booking form.
- **Can I make a trip booking that is not already scheduled?** If you want to suggest a new trip, you can get in touch on the contact form on our <website> or give us a call on 0403 108 199.
- **Will the bus run if I am the only booking?** We will honour all bookings for the first trial period – so yes, it will run if you are the only booking. This may change as we refine the service in response to community needs and feedback.
- **If I see the bus and have not made a booking will it pick me up?** If there is space on the bus and the driver sees you we are happy to pick you up! It is always better to book if you can though so we can guarantee the service for you and for others. We may ask you to fill in your details during the journey so we can improve the service.
- **How much does it cost? How do I pay?** In the initial trial period as we test the service and get feedback (March – May 2024) the bus will be a free service. Changes to this in the future will take into account the community's willingness and ability to pay.
- **Can I book the e-Bus for private events?** Yes, please email us info@vbcc.org.au or give us a call on 0403 108 199 to discuss what you need. Group bookings are only available when scheduled services are not running. There will be a cost for a private event, and availability will be dependent on volunteer drivers.
- **How do I cancel or change a booking?** Please contact us (preferably with 24 hours' notice) on 0403 108 199.
- **What if the bus is full and I want to make a booking for a trip?** If we receive a booking request from you and the bus is full we will place you on a waitlist and let you know as soon as a place becomes available. We will do our best to accommodate your needs.
- **What are the conditions of booking? Is my booking guaranteed?** The eBus is a volunteer run service. It is highly unlikely that we would not be able to provide your trip once you have booked and confirmed. In the very unlikely event that this does happen we will let us know promptly by your preferred method of contact with us (phone / email) and advise of any alternatives.

OPERATING

- **Will the bus wait for me if I am running late?** We don't want to leave people stranded and drivers will endeavour to contact passengers in the event they are not at the pick-up location but we cannot wait for extended periods of time and delay other passengers.
- **Can I have luggage / surfboard / bike / pram etc?** Please let us know if you are bringing any bulky items so we can plan for space on board. At this stage we can't carry bicycles but are looking into ways of being able to offer this service in the future.
- **Can I access the service with a wheelchair?** Yes, the eBus is wheelchair accessible. Bookings are required for this. Only one wheelchair can be accommodated.
- **Can I bring my dog / other pets?** We welcome service dogs (e.g. seeing or hearing dogs) on the bus.
- **I'm a tourist – can I use the service?** Yes, absolutely! Please book in the usual way on the <website> or by phone on 0403 108 199.
- **Where are the pickup / drop off points?**



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For scheduled services pick up points are as follows:

- Venus Bay 2- Post Boxes, Lees Road
- Venus Bay 1 – VBCC and General Shopping precinct (near letterboxes)
- Tarwin Lower – outside CFA station
- Walkerville – CFA station
- Leongatha – V-Line station
- Koonwarra – V-Line Station
- Inverloch – V-line station – address
- Wonthaggi – TBA – likely ALDI and Library
- Home pick-ups/drop-offs can be arranged if required – must have booking with all details.
- The destination pick up points may depend on the trip
- **Will the service come/go to my door?** Generally we ask you to go to a pick up point. If this is not possible due to mobility, luggage or other reasons please let us know on your booking form. We will schedule a house pick up and/or drop off.
- **Are the drivers trained?** Yes! All drivers undertake screening and training to drive the vehicle safely. A critical incident policy and document is shared with each driver, there is a First Aid kit located in the vehicle.
- **What do you need to become a driver?** Drivers must be over 25 years old, have a valid Victorian driving licence, have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) and current Police Check. They are also required to be a Member of the Venus Bay Community Centre and abide by our Code of Conduct and Child Safe Standards.

OTHER

- **What do I do if I have a suggestion / compliment / complaint?** We welcome your feedback which will help us deliver the best possible service for our community. Please contact us info@vbcc.org.au or 5663 7499
- **What happens in the event of an accident (policies, insurance etc)** A critical incident policy and procedure is followed. The vehicle is covered by a comprehensive insurance policy and Total Care RACV roadside assistance.
- **What health and safety measures are in place?** All passengers are required to wear seatbelts at all times. There will be face masks and hand sanitiser on the vehicle. All passengers are expected to behave in a way that ensures their own and other passenger safety.
- **How can I volunteer to help with the service?** We would love your help. Call in to the Venus Bay Community Centre for an initial discussion or send email info@vbcc.org.au. More info on our website:
- **Can I drive the bus myself?** You can volunteer to be a driver. Visit <https://www.vbcc.org.au/e-bus> for more information.