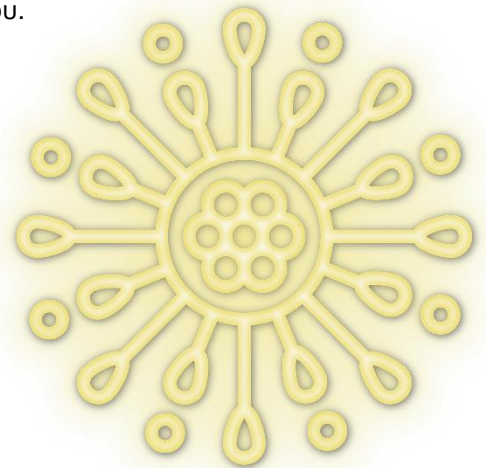


Community Energy Bulletin

It's been a while since we've sent out a Community Energy Bulletin – but rest assured work has continued on the project – so here are a few updates for you.

Strategic Partnership with Mycelia Renewables

The Venus Bay Community Centre and Mycelia Renewables are pleased to announce their strategic partnership agreement that will contribute to the broad aims of the Community Energy Plan that was endorsed last year. The partnership acknowledges we need trusted partners to achieve our ambitious aims for community energy. Having worked extensively with Mycelia – we know we share values and can share expertise and local knowledge to work together on various projects and initiatives that will strengthen our community energy journey and build wealth and capacity for our district.



Action on the Community Energy Plan

As you will remember, the Community Energy Plan was presented and endorsed in August 2023. This road map of how we can work together towards energy reliability and community resilience was a product of the Feasibility Study undertaken over the previous 12 months. Producing the Plan and a suite of enduring reports enabled us to create a Toolkit that can be used for and by other communities as they undertake their own energy resilience journey.

The film of the project has been shown far and wide – we even made a short version of the film which can be found [here](#).



This was presented at the Energy Consumers Australia Foresighting Forum recently to great acclaim. Heather Smith – Coalition for Community Energy (and our marvellous project partner) spoke of our project about Community Energy Resilience – for more info on the forum, here's the [link](#) – and you can hear Heather talking about our project too!

We participated in the Community Energy Congress earlier this year in Sydney – presenting our project on a panel along with Mycelia Renewables. It was great to see one point of difference with our project was the ground up approach of community co-design and collaboration for and with our community – this unique approach sets a framework where trusted relationships are established, information is truly shared in ways that deliver understanding and where community is at the heart. Link to session [here](#)



Community Wealth Building

One of the exciting prospects emerging from the Community Energy Plan was how to embed Community Wealth building into any project or initiative – how can the investment be returned directly to our community in terms of capacity building, local employments, funds that flow directly to local suppliers – rather than sending dollars out of town. (more info to refresh your thinking here in the Economic Report : <https://www.vbcc.org.au/finalreports>)

We're doing it!

We have already started on the Community Wealth Building model – with the community ownership of an electric minibus and the project providing local employment in the form of project officer for 2 years.

We are also pleased to introduce our new partnership with **Mycelia Renewables**. The model of **Mycelia Energy Collective** will be used during an establishment phase while work commences on how the model might be adapted and applied/potentially managed directly by a governing body for and with the VB & TL communities. This will likely be a longer-term project that will help to determine what resources/capability/governance might be required to hold our own community benefit sharing fund (based on this model) or whether the existing arrangement meets our needs.

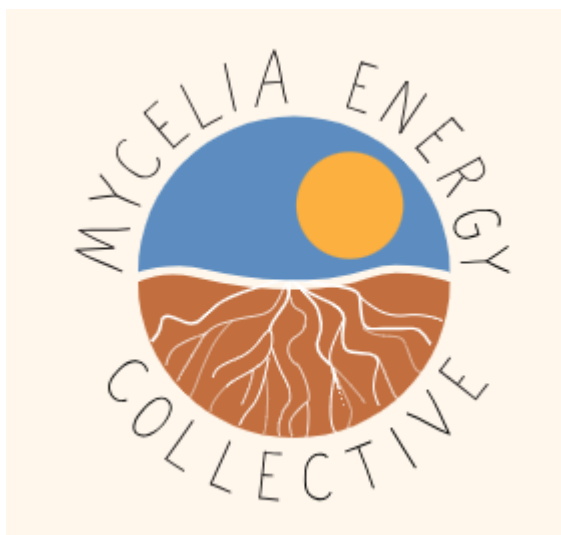
We are in the early stages of starting this journey together, and we look forward to bringing you more information about how you might choose to be involved.

So first up is a retail offer – have you considered buying your energy via a local co-operative? **New registrations for the Mycelia Energy Collective from our postcode - 3956– will contribute directly to a community benefit sharing fund for the Venus Bay & Tarwin Lower communities that contribute to the Community Energy Action Plan.** You can see if the pricing and offer suits you - Check it out here: [here](#) – it's easy to sign up – and it directly benefits our community! Plus they send out a really engaging and informative newsletter to keep you up to date on all things renewable energy.

An advisory group will provide oversight on collection and distribution of the funds. Quarterly reports will be provided by Mycelia to the advisory group.

The Collective:

- Includes households and businesses with solar and batteries, some with only solar, and others without either.
- Offers fair and competitive pricing to members.
- Matches production and consumption within the Collective to monitor use and set real targets.
- Provides a vehicle for a community-centred benefit sharing scheme.
- Makes locally produced renewable energy accessible to everyone!



Keep your eyes peeled for the upcoming **SPEED DATE AN ENERGY EXPERT session in AUGUST 2024.**

Based on the success of our event last year, and the recent event Mycelia hosted in Bass Coast, we are planning to host a session with local energy experts and will be providing personalised advice on the right solar or battery system for your home based on your energy needs. They'll also help identify bulk buys and rebates you may be eligible for. Watch this space - you won't want to miss this one!.

Neighbourhood Battery Project

You've probably heard of the Victorian State Government neighbourhood battery projects – ideally designed to increase energy reliability and community resilience. There has been one round of funding released over the last 12 months – it is interesting that most of the projects funded related to Network security and distribution network service providers. There were only two community focused projects that received funding in Queenscliff and Phillip Island.

We submitted an application to this fund last year for the development of the Tarwin Precinct cluster neighbourhood battery – with a comprehensive Feasibility Study prepared for that site – unfortunately we were not successful in that round.

We have continued to liaise with DEECA to provide them with learnings from our patch, and contributed to feedback for their readiness toolkit. This was heartening as we could not only identify gaps in their process relating to business case development but felt there was acknowledgement of the work we have undertaken here.

We continue to work with our project partners, particularly Heather Smith and Mycelia to prepare for the next round of funding where we hope to look at funding to implement a community owned/managed battery system.

For more information about the Neighbourhood Battery Plan here is the [link](#).

Community of Practice

There is growing interest in establishing a Community of Practice around the various community energy projects that are underway. Each community has its own learning – for example we have produced a toolkit for other communities to use to get started on their journey- we are proud that our toolkit has community participation and co-design at the heart. Each community is at different stages with projects – how can we reduce replication and magnify the shared knowledge. Working together with other communities not only shares the load, it provides opportunities for collaboration and potential funding to drive the kind of system change that is needed for communities to be self-determining and prosper. We've had conversations with Coalition for Community Energy, Energy Consumers Australia and the Totally Renewable Yackandandah community on how we might contribute to such a community of practice.

SUNNY – the electric mini- bus.

This project is a direct result of the work we have been doing in the Community Energy space over the last few years. Originally a proposal with Sustainability Victoria and Department of Transport for 5 towns in Gippsland working on Community Energy Projects – Heyfield, Mallacoota, Philip Island, Sandy Point and Venus Bay - to consider how an electric vehicle may be used in a community led transport trial – only 2 of the communities were in a position to undertake this work.

This project is exciting as it is the only trial of community transport with an electric vehicle in Australia – we are early adopters! It is not without its challenges however, and has taken time, energy and resources to establish the project. For more information or to be involved in the project/use or support the services or just find out more:

<https://www.vbcc.org.au/e-bus>



Powered by community... for community.