

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



Thursday, 27 May 2021

FUNDING TO HELP PROTECT BUSHFIRE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

The Andrews Labor Government is protecting bushfire-impacted communities with new fire resilient energy infrastructure to ensure people will have access to power, even if a fire destroys electrical poles and wires.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio, today announced at least \$7 million in new-technology for Mallacoota, Omeo, and Corryong.

The program is part of a \$9.85 million investment to help improve energy services in bushfire prone areas, with Ausnet services contributing a further \$7.5 million – bringing the total investment to more than \$17 million.

During the 2019-20 bushfires, towns across Gippsland and the state's North-east were disconnected from the electricity network because people couldn't access network infrastructure for repairs.

The program will provide a mix of solar panels, batteries and other energy infrastructure for essential service buildings, commercial and industrial buildings, and households, to provide reliable power supply in all conditions.

In Mallacoota, funding will deliver an advanced microgrid using solar panels, batteries and other distributed energy resources as well as increasing the size of the town's diesel generator to provide back-up power for up to five days if it becomes isolated from the grid.

In Omeo and Corryong, the funding will provide community hubs in the town with reliable power as well as backup power for residents on the outskirts of the town.

This funding follows the record \$518 million package announced in last week's *Victorian Budget 2021/22* to expand Victoria's firefighting capacity, strengthen communication systems during emergencies and deliver reforms recommended by the Inspector-General for Emergency Management.

Quote attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"It is critical that our bushfire-prone communities are well-prepared and supported, which is why we are delivering this funding to ensure that communities have access to power in all circumstances."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes

"The Microgrid Program will build community confidence and resilience helping people to respond to emergencies."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Jane Garrett

"These towns can become important centres for fire crews, support services and surrounding communities during bushfires so it's important that we make their energy infrastructure as resilient as possible."