

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

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



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CREATING SAFER ENERGY NETWORKS IN BUSHFIRE REGIONS

The Victorian Government is reducing the risk of bushfires and fostering energy resilience in regional communities with nation-leading powerline and microgrid initiatives.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio announced today that residents of an additional 13 local government areas with high bushfire risk can now apply to underground their private powerlines through the *Private Overhead Electric Line* scheme.

Eligible locations now include the Alpine, Baw Baw, Benalla, East Gippsland, Indigo, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta, Wellington, Wodonga and Yarra Ranges LGAs.

Replacing private overhead powerlines is well advanced across Victoria. To date, 736 kilometers of overhead powerlines have been replaced in high-risk bushfire areas through the Government's \$5 million scheme.

The scheme is open for any partially or fully bare-wire private powerlines, or any insulated private powerlines subject to a current urgent or significant defect notice.

Consultation was also launched today on the Community Microgrids and Sustainable Energy Program, with communities in three East Gippsland towns invited to have their say on how energy-resilient microgrids could operate in their region.

Following the 2019-20 bushfires around Mallacoota, Omeo and Corryong some areas were disconnected for more than a month from the state's grid.

Network resilience projects incorporating solar, battery, hot water heat pumps and/or smart energy management devices help communities stay safe during bushfire emergencies if powerlines are affected.

Communities and affected stakeholders in and around Mallacoota, Omeo and Corryong can submit expressions of interest for subsidised energy systems in their homes, businesses, and essential service sites.

More information can be found at engage.vic.gov.au/community-microgrids.

Residents in the additional LGAs can apply for funding at any time through the Private Overhead Electric Line scheme until 30 June 2022, either on (03) 9918 7315 or at energy.vic.gov.au/electricity/powerline-replacement.

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

"Community safety is our top priority – which is why we are continuing to invest in new technologies to help keep Victorians safe and connected to resilient, secure and increasingly green energy infrastructure".

"We're putting people first by ramping up the Private Overhead Electric Line scheme to underground private powerlines, and encouraging all eligible Victorians to apply for this nation-leading project."

"We're building energy resilience and safety as we face the impact of climate change and see hotter summers with longer bushfire seasons."

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