

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

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



Friday, 12 November 2021

RENEWABLE ENERGY POWERS UP HALLS GAP BOTANIC GARDENS

Halls Gap Botanic Gardens is set to get an energy boost thanks to new off-grid solar power, including solar panels, an inverter and battery storage.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio today toured the gardens to hear about plans for the off-grid system that will provide power to the visitor shelter, volunteer's office and workshop.

The project will be delivered by the Grampians Community Power Hub, one of seven across the state. Each hub is supporting community groups to develop renewable energy projects by providing energy audits, feasibility testing, system specifications and implementation funding options.

The Grampians Community Power Hub is also working with other communities across the region, including investigating the feasibility of a micro grid for the Pomonal community, which would provide a reliable power supply for the local community in the event of power outages.

The Andrews Labor Government announced \$1.6 billion for clean energy in the 2020/21 State Budget – the largest investment in clean energy of any state government, ever. As part of this, \$5.94 million was provided to expand the *Community Power Hubs Program* and provide new grants for community organisations.

The program is funding seven organisations to work with their communities to offer trusted advice and support, develop and deliver locally owned, cost-effective renewable energy projects that save communities money and deliver local jobs.

This *Community Power Hub Program* follows the success of a pilot program in 2017-2020, which boosted Victoria's community energy capacity and saved thousands of dollars in annual energy costs with solar arrays, bulk buy solar panels and solar streetlight installed across Ballarat, Bendigo and the Latrobe Valley.

Collectively, the pilot program's 15 projects added 1.35 megawatts of renewable energy capacity back to their communities, annually reduced their carbon emissions by more than 1,800 tonnes and saved \$346,000 in electricity costs. Now, the expanded CPH program will bring similarly positive results for Victorians state-wide.

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

"It's wonderful to see the Grampians Community Power Hub helping organisations across the broader Grampians region."

"The hub will support local community groups to develop and deliver community energy projects and be a part of the renewables revolution. This is all a part of our plan to halve emissions by 2030."

"We're investing in the Grampians Community Power Hub because we know that community energy plays such an important role in building local support for renewable energy."