Gippsland Community Power Hub Final Report

Introduction

The Gippsland Community Power Hub (GCPH) formed a Governance Group containing the three Project Partners and key stakeholders representing the three defined regions (or hublets). The members were representatives of the Neighbourhood House Network, Isolated communities, DELWP and other sustainable energy groups. This group employed a Project Coordinator, two Project Officers, three Engagement staff and a Communications Officer.

There were fortnightly meetings of the Governance Group with Sustainability Victoria Representative Heidi Hamm which gave advice and direction to the staff on key projects. So much has been achieved in such a short timeframe, and for this we need to acknowledge the wonderful work of the staff, well supported by the Governance Group.

The GCPH were successful in implementing 8 "Implementation Ready" project funding and provided support for an additional 6 projects.

Project name	Cost	Project type	Capacity (kW)	Renewable energy (kwh/year)
Venus Bay Community Centre Resilience Project	$50,393.00	Extra 9.9 kW of rooftop solar (existing 4.5kW) and Battery storage	14.4kW PV 26.4 kW/hr battery	10,117
Coronet Bay Community Hall	$12,800.00	Rooftop Solar	11.84	3,730
Heyfield Wetlands Information Centre	$11,935.00	Rooftop Solar	13.34	8,520
Lucknow Football Netball	$50,820.00	Batteries complementing their rooftop solar	14	NA

Mallacoota Water treatment plant	$53,295.00	22kW of extra ground mounted solar will be added to existing 7kW array	29	13,183
Neerim South Hospital	$127,465.00	Rooftop Solar	99.8	110738
Gormandale Community House	$8,158.00	Rooftop solar	5.18	4367
Uniting Church Yarragon	$6,905.00	Rooftop Solar	6.66	2108
Carrajung South Hall	$6,500.00	Rooftop Solar	5.5	1545
Bass Coast Adult Education Centre	$19,971.00	Rooftop Solar	14.24	10,464
Sale Neighbourhood House	$9,409.00	Rooftop Solar	8.55	9611
Tamboon Community Bushfire Defence and Response Facility	$69,193	Off Grid system used in fire fighting	4.25	2,700
Mallacoota WWII Bunker Museum	$67,633	solar array and batteries	20	14,052
Renewable trailer upgrade	$40,000	Solar, batteries, wind power		

There were an additional 5 projects which had successfully received funding and were awaiting competition and another 9 that were supported to apply for the Sustainability Victoria **Community Climate Change and Energy Action Program.** At the end of the program there were a remaining 22 active projects with several more in development. A prioritisation process towards the end of the program concentrated the efforts on projects considered of higher community benefit.

It was the stated intent of the Gippsland Community Power Hub to contribute to the bigger picture of action on climate change, sustainability, social equity, community resilience and self agency. It will to be a collective of collaborative, commercially driven and environmentally minded organisations. The strengths and networks of community groups across Gippsland will come together in the Hub to provide information, support and services to develop and deliver more well-designed community RE projects. The Hub will increase the knowledge and capacity of communities to engage in their transition to RE.

Regarding this higher ideal the GCPH participated or initiated community conversations, panel sessions and events with an estimated 10,258 attendees, create social media with 67,648 views, curated a "Regenerosity" Photographic display of Sustainability leaders that is touring about Gippsland and a pilot program of 4 Energy Efficiency workshops led by Green Solutions energy assessor, Lucinda Flynn.

The GCPH was the key driver of the August "Gippsland New Energy Conference" which saw over 330 developers, Government, business and community leaders discuss the transition to renewable energy through the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone.

Contract Objectives

Were the following objectives delivered?	Yes/No	Description of the evidence that demonstrates that you have achieved each objective (Sustainability Victoria [SV] recognises that CPHs will report your quantitative data in the Quarterly reporting template for Q4)
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	YES	Completed projects, energy efficiency classes, social media posts giving ideas for reduction.
Increase installed renewable energy capacity	YES	Completed projects and many funding and awaiting completion. Development of new and supporting other projects awaiting funding. Feasibility studies at Lake Tyer Cooperative, Mallacoota, Phillip Island and in Yarram builds understanding for what is required.
Increase community support for renewable energy and other clean energy initiatives	YES	Numbers of community meetings, engagement sessions, webinars and launch of Implementation ready projects, Regenerosity photographic exhibition highlighting local champions
Reduce energy costs for households, small businesses and community services	YES	Energy Assessment course to provide pre-accreditation training at Leongatha, Bruthen, Mallacoota and Morwell

		with up to 20 participants in each session, social media postings, engagement activities.
Increase community access, involvement and ownership of renewable energy systems, resulting in local economic benefits	YES	Numbers of local contractors, funding of projects, CAPEX, engagement with marginal communities including feasibility study at Lake Tyers Cooperative. The projects have kicked off broader sustainability conversations and beginnings of local groups to move the transition to renewables forward.
Increase opportunities for communities previously precluded from renewable energy projects (e.g. low-income households; apartment dwellers) to participate in community-based energy projects	YES	Engagement sessions at smaller communities such as Goongerah, Venus Bay, Coronet Bay funded projects but not yet completed at Yallambee Aged Care
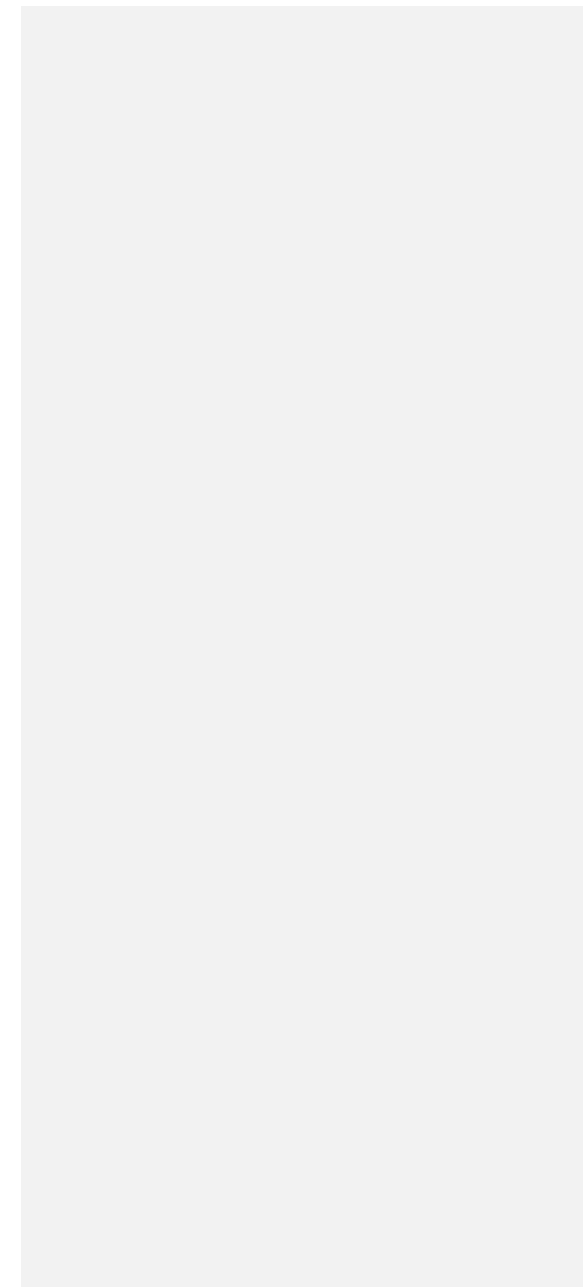
Reporting about the CPH program and your CPH's journey

Deliverables	Successes – what worked well?	Challenges-what could be improved?	Lessons learnt e.g. how you would do things differently in the future
A CPH that facilitates and supports the development of local community energy projects	• 42 projects have begun or supported • Identification of energy groups and broader "community" groups identifies gaps need for skills and provides advice and resources • Increased awareness of what is possible in community energy space with examples of successful projects • Social media highlights successes within Gippsland • Photographic exhibition demonstrates our connection to sustainable living – we are more than just a "Coal Community"	• Lack of capital funding • Short time frame for the project • Difficult time for Gippsland with Bushfires and COVID restricting activities. • Difficulty in people coming together due to the distances involved. • Takes time to develop a project within a community and one year was not enough time to initiate and complete them. • Lack of connection to main energy distributors as they are stretched with other priorities.	• Sorting out skill level in community groups and supporting as appropriate is important • Use local people in local areas. • Build reputation through community activities rather than just talk about projects
Project Delivery Plan	• Delivered 8 IR projects and 6 other projects with another 5 funded and almost complete despite interruptions • Was able to consider a variety of project types like off grid, renewable demonstration trailer, aged care etc	• Only one year • COVID and community activity around bushfire recovery meant there were other priorities • Hard to get the spread around Gippsland • Complicated structures like microgrids and community batteries often were	• Work with the community and develop trust before initiating project • Be clear about what you can and cannot do – we cannot fund capital (apart from the Implementation Ready Projects that received funding)

	• Regular meetings of the Governance Group gave guidance to the staff about objectives and who to speak to about delivery. • Tried to include and consider all of Gippsland in project spread.	the focus of community want but hard to deliver in funding timeline • Communication challenges with number of governance group members and staff – sometimes messages/information didn't get through • Difficult for small communities and organisations to have projects to a point where they are ready to go and ready for grant opportunities.	• Be clear on when the next funding round might be available so you are prepared to help write them • Begin by doing an energy audit which creates data to drive the project and rationalize the grant
Project Budget	• Was able to get the staff in place quickly and maintain them for a year • Project Prioritisation exercise determined where to spend the remaining money • Clear budgets with regular updates and review	• COVID meant a lack of travel and network meetings • Hard to get consultants to travel to Gippsland to complete studies	• Do project prioritisation early and use this to determine budgets
Communications training	Employed good people who could use social media and write good media releases	Sometimes hard to get approval from funding authorities within the timeline required.	Create clear messages and calls to action then reinforce them through the program
Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan	• Community engagement officers had skills in Community engagement. Their expertise was community connecting • Use of the photographic exhibition to provide a positive	• COVID • People still unaware of the program • Need to raise awareness of need to develop RE, reduce emission and move away from reliance on coal	• Use local people connected to communities in CE. These are "specialist" skills!!! • Look outside the sector for people to do the work, not outside the region!

	message about community energy and sustainable practice • Renewable Energy Trailer was a valuable drawcard (but could have been better used) • Gippsland New Energy Conference brings everyone into the room to develop a vision for Gippsland • Good social media highlighted activities about Gippsland and built a community of online ambassadors • Insightful hiring – having the community engagement staff already full engaged in their community, in their part of Gippsland.	• Creating networks with key stakeholders takes time to develop. One year is not enough. • Building technical knowledge amongst our staff • Government works in silos and often hard to cut across who was doing what.	• Utilise wider networks outside of region to learn from other similar projects/people with knowledge • Broader publicity about events • Regular and targeted social media
Governance Plan	• Appointment of members of governance group representatives • Recruitment of staff • Growth and knowledge – sharing, contributing to the development of members of the group • Knowledge sharing • Build networks amongst participants – governance and staff	• Collaborative governance • Equity across Gippsland • Independence of governance group • Involvement First Nations people • Structure around how the process worked • Busy • Huge expectations on volunteers and potential for burn out	• Use hublets more • Get feedback and collaboration more than just a ring back • First Nations people build relationships over time • Establish early the process and role of governance

	• Governance Group had broad representation from on edge of Gippsland to the other.		
Quarterly reports	• Completed on time • Reported on a large variety of live projects • Assessed by regular Governance Group meetings and consideration by partner organisations	• Hard to get data for behind the meter vs exported energy • Reporting projects that are not renewable energy such as the photographic exhibition • Finding information from completed projects we did not initiate or govern • Individual level projects not reported where a business or community individual made change	• Collect as many photographs as you can • Contact groups regularly to see where they are up to
Delivery of agreed Implementation-Ready Projects (if applicable to your CPH)	• Completed on time and on budget • Launch activities created networks and great learning activities • Used local installers • Showcased a range of products from batteries, small and large installs, multiple funding mixes • Creating energy savings for local groups • Geographically diverse	• Supply issues btw quote and install • COVID • Sometimes needed switchboard upgrades which were the responsibility of the local council • Increase in connection charges by distributor	• Get started early • Be aware that price for materials can change over time. • Need to incorporate some time when installing projects to work with the site so that they (at least 1 person) know how to find and understand the data from their new system and some tips on what they might want to do with this data (eg, share through their newsletter, a poster on site etc). This would also allow for more accurate data collection for program reporting.

Plan, develop and commission at least two community energy projects by June 2022	• 6 additional projects completed • Supported many others (approx. 30 in the pipeline) • Prioritisation meant that funding was provided to those considered important by their local communities • Created networks with local funding bodies such as the Bushfire relief funding.	• Broadening, deepening, evaluation, prioritisation, community capacity • What is a project? • Need to get equity across the region • Waiting on funding outcomes that often take time to determine project completion • Other projects rely on local groups to develop them outside of our control. • Emphasising projects remove concentration on developing local energy groups. • More support for non-project work from the CPH – support for community groups just starting up, or getting groups started where there are none, but there is a desire	• Need to promote the projects so they are visible • Be aware of new funding opportunities and establish networks with funding bodies
Bring together local groups and organisations interested in delivering community energy projects	• Employed staff = engagement and connection to tech staff, community engagement and comms and online. All resulted in increased capacity and underscored success • Our adaptability of operations • Getting groups to "shovel" ready eg Mallacoota auspice and solving physical problems	• COVID – zoom fatigue; fear of getting together; mental health – unfathomable experiences • Distance • Local government did not really engage – council runs at a different speed • Challenges within the community groups – complex reaction; local politics; emotions • Identify groups – linking the "disengaged" or unconnected	• Reliance on Facebook • access to knowledge of the project

	• Used existing networks and activation of these broader than energy • Attending other people's events and just talking to people • Using the arts to help to bring messages together • Cross fertilisation of networks eg Buchan and Bemm River and GCPH totally renewable • Small communities wanting more!	• TIME! – underlying climate change focus; Change for government and % gippslanders concerned about Climate Change but how do we prioritise actions that come out of this project	
Facilitate and support the development of local community energy projects	• 8 ready to go projects • Up to 100 projects or inquiries • Identify across-region projects • Inclusion of community	• Collection of projects and method of governance • Location equity • Leadership per project • Prioritisation of projects • Inclusion of new projects • How to engage 100% of the community • People's passion can derails a project • Need to know who has the authority to act	• Need to know who has the authority to act
Identify community energy projects across the region that have a social licence to	• 12 projects funding ready • More than another 50 projects or inquiries that can be developed have been identified across the region	• Location equity • How do we include new projects • How to engage 100% of the community	• People's passion for immediate success can derail a project • Do Prioritisation of projects earlier

operate, are financially feasible and technically viable	• Feasibility studies create data to prove the viability of energy projects and bring them to "funding ready"	• Projects need capital and the GCPH is unable to provide capital for new projects • Need to know who has the authority to act. Often smaller Community Energy Groups have limited Governance.	
Ensure a collaborative approach and equitable spread of support for community energy groups and projects across the region	• Having three key partner organisations from across the region allowed representation of the voices of communities from across the region. • Engagement officers in each hublet create meaningful relationships • Strong networks • Governance group provide advice and monitoring to ensure compliance with our goals • Flexible working arrangements • Having 3 hublets, operating across Gippsland at the 'on the ground level', with the Governance Group and three project partners maintaining overall across-region linkages	• It takes time and 'getting to know you' space to be fully functional in a cross region organisation design • Variation of knowledge and expertise • Unreal expectation for funds available within the timeframe • Skill based staff to assist development ie engagement expertise vs technical knowledge • There is a focus on projects to meet guidelines rather than developing the skills of groups/communities • Various groups can be parochial • Gippsland is a very big place • Keep re-visting documents like the Partners MOU to ensure desired objectives are being worked toward and expectations are being met. – trying to get the collaborative governance arrangements right caused significant challenges and disruption for the governance group	• <u>The GCPH could never have achieved the outcomes we did if any one of the key partner organisations had been the only party responsible for the GCPH.</u> • Develop and encourage networks and partnerships across the region

Operate the CPH in accordance with the Project Plan, Governance Plan, Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan and Project Budget	• Appointment of members of governance group representatives from around Gippsland • Growth and knowledge – sharing, contributing to the development of members of the group • Build networks between participants – governance and staff	• Collaborative governance • Equity across Gippsland • Independence of governance group • Involvement First Nations people • Busy, lots to do • Building trust and cooperation in a quick time. • With large distances, members must meet online. Hard to physically meet. • No funding for projects. Have to develop without being able to fund. • Keep re-visting these documents as well as others like the Partners MOU to ensure desired objectives are being worked toward and expectations are being met. •	• The impact of devolving some of the responsibility to the hublets wherever appropriate and work collectively where it is needed/appropriate. • Relationships with First Nations people take time. • Establish early the process and role of governance
Recruit and contract suitable staff for the CPH	• Engagement officers build collaborative networks. Its not just about the technology. • Great social media content • Project officers that understand the needs of the community and the demands of the sector.	• Hard to understand the moving landscape of Community Energy – microgrids, community batteries. • Getting buy in from energy distributors ie: AusNet.	• Regular staff meetings build mutual understanding. • Local people are best
Attend regular project update meetings (online	• Responsive local SV representative was always available when needed	• Would have preferred more meetings in person rather than zoom as this builds cooperation and trust	• Work with your SV representative

or in person) with the SV Representative			• It is difficult to build relationships in an online environment, but the ability to meet online meant more equitable collaboration and support across the region
Participate in quarterly CPH Network meetings	• Combined meetings were informative • Establish networks with other GCPH and work on mutual problems	• Would have preferred more meetings in person rather than zoom as this builds cooperation and trust	• It is difficult to build relationships in an online environment, but the ability to meet online meant more equitable collaboration and support across the region
Participate in CPH Network capacity building sessions delivered by SV	• Combined meetings were informative • Establish networks with other GCPH and work on mutual problems	• Would have preferred more meetings in person rather than zoom as this builds cooperation and trust	• It is difficult to build relationships in an online environment, but the ability to meet online meant more equitable collaboration and support across the region
Provide local, trusted advice to the community on clean energy solutions	• Many points of contact with local community who appreciated someone to turn to • Strong networks with local government developed connections • Provided a clearing house of modern solutions and spoke to developers/innovators to connect to the community	• Takes time to develop networks • Need to grow understanding of what a community power hub is	• Build networks with your local government sustainability officers as often they are a point of contact for communities
Develop a list of additional community	• Engagement officers created networks with projects to be added to list	• Hard to engage with smaller, isolated communities	• Engagement is a key priority of the hubs and the creation of engagement officers with special

energy projects across the region for development	• Prioritisation process that was developed toward the end of the project meant that projects with larger community support and benefit were able to be supported first	• Project prioritisation process should have been developed earlier and expectations and processes to ensure the collaborative governance approach was utilised needed to be followed more closely • With COVID difficult to organise network meetings around Gippsland • Many people cannot access online meetings • Farming sector too busy to go to meetings • Often renewable energy happens outside of conventional community energy groups and these groups are hard to connect to ie: the local historical society in Mallacoota wanting a renewable off grid solution.	skills meant that we could better network and develop projects through these networks.
Other topics (optional)			

Sustainability Victoria's CPH program design

Outline any program design elements that:
1. worked well

The expansion of the program beyond the Latrobe Valley and into Gippsland was an improvements with three key partners ensuring the program had acceptance in a large region. The engagement officers with the technical assistance of the Project Officer contributed to better outreach while our communications team ensured regular updates to social media and good press coverage. We managed to connect with all community sustainability groups and realise networks with several other agencies interested in renewables.

The GCPH being a recognised organisation meant we became a resource for Government and Industry to contact if they needed a community voice or an "honest broker". This was manifest in the Gippsland New Energy Conference which could bring together often competing LGA's to form a coordinated management team. Another example was the Gippsland Bushfire Relief Fund which used our independent technical expertise to assess a community solar project to give confidence in funding them.

The project team was not constrained by levels of bureaucracy or politics and could connect with community and advance their activities easily. This created a spirit of "we can do this" and mutual trust. Community people helping community.

The use of funding models created by the partners with the Southern Core Fund and the Energise Gippsland Revolving Fund meant they could be utilised in GCPH supported projects.

graphic recording by melanie murphy on Gunaikurnai land for GCPH 2022

2. could be improved if there were another similar program

The inability to fund capital improvements in the program was a constraint in bringing smaller projects to completion. There was some confusion about this and concern about money being spent on "wages" rather than outcomes.

The bringing together of community groups with a collaborative governance model was something that had to be worked out. Different organisations have different cultural norms and different obligations that can creates points of tension. It is also hard to establish what is equitable in regions with different population density, different geographical constraints, and different histories of community energy projects. Would have preferred a simpler model to guide our arrangements.

The "bigger picture" vision of the GCPH of increasing the knowledge and capacity of communities to engage in their transition to Renewable Energy did not appear to have a strong quantifiable measurement within the program. In our opinion, the role of the Hub in creating cultural change that ultimately drives social licence and community uptake is one of the most important features of the Hub.

3. could assist the community in the future to achieve CPH outcomes in your region (in the absence of funding).

> **Commented [HH1]:** Some of the key points from the above table could be completed in more detail for this section.

These are best described by a series of infographics that were developed in the workshop weekend.

Acknowledgements

List here any stakeholders that you wish to acknowledge for their participation and/or contribution to the program.

Latrobe Valley Authority
Manna Gum Community House
Venus Bay Community Centre
DELWP Gippsland
Wellington Shire
Latrobe Sustainability Group
Baw Baw Sustainability Group
Bass Coast Council
Neerim South Community Energy
Totally Renewable Phillip Island
Just Transitions South Gippsland
Marlo and Orbost Renewable Energy (MORE)
Tyers Community Hall
Totally Renewable Tenby

Additional information and evidence

Please attach all other reporting requirements (as per the contract) to this report including:

- final Quarterly Report (April – June 2022) – <u>within Teams</u>
- proof of:
  - expenditure (certified financial statement showing budget acquittal & expenditure signed by CFO/delegate) - TBC
  - project
    - progress
    - performance
    - agreements with site owner/distributor
    - feasibility reports
    - invoices for completed projects
    - certificates of electrical compliance
    - photos of completed work
    - signed *Project Completion Letter* from CPH governance group <u>These are in the teams folder</u>

- examples of marketing/event invites/feedback, and

  - Energy Audit Classes
  - CPH Information sheet
  - Switched On Stickers for window display
  - GCPH Illustration
  - Program Launch Media release
  - COP 26 Webinar introduction

- any other useful information for our evaluation.

  - Details about Regenerosity Exhibition
  - Request for Quotation for Phillip Island Solar Farm Feasibility Project
  - Project Idea Form
  - Project Prioritisation Spreadsheet
  - Gippsland New Energy Conference Program