

# Hume Community Power Hub (HCPH) Project Plan

## Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the **Hume Community Power Hub (HCPH)** is to increase the deployment of renewable energy and energy efficiency projects across the Hume Region. To achieve this purpose, the HCPH will build the capacity of the Network and its members and foster the development of new members.

The **Hume Community Power Hub** will focus on delivering on three objectives:

1. To continue developing the capacity of the Network and its participant groups.
2. To rapidly expand the rollout of solar PV systems through the Hume Region.
3. To carry out project planning to support the delivery of future renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

1. **Strengthening the Network:** Through the addition of a Network project officer, funding project delivery and capacity building, and increasing membership by supporting the establishment of new community energy groups.
2. **Solar for Good:** A region-wide program to transition large daytime electricity users to on-site solar power supply, prioritising not-for-profit and service delivery organisations.
3. **Renewable Energy Readiness Fund (RERF):** A program to fund:
  - a. Works that increase the organisational capacity of Network members.
  - b. Project feasibility studies & business cases for innovative renewable energy or energy efficiency projects.

## 1. Strengthening the Network

This program of work will identify all community energy groups not yet included in the Network and invite them to participate. It will identify key organisational needs of participant groups, and deliver programs to meet those, and provide access resources for participants to continually develop and improve. It will employ a project officer to carry out these works, who will also be available to deliver programs through the Network to better engage individual communities, to improve local renewable energy and energy efficiency uptake.

The RERF will fund works to meet agreed organisational needs of the Network and its members in circumstances where these services are outside the delivery capacity of GVCE or Indigo Power.

*Strengthening the Network* will deliver the following key outputs to strengthen cooperation across the Network and stimulate effective project delivery across the Hume Region:

1. Convene five annual Network meetings that include collaboration on HCPH projects, and capacity building by including technical expert presenters.
2. Delivery of a day long workshop, to bring HCPH project teams together to share ideas on project work, and to provide access to expert advice to assist in the development of HCPH projects.
3. Hold at least ten community engagement events across the region to promote HCPH activities, engage communities, or assist in the development of new community renewable energy groups.

4. Prepare printed and online collateral to better engage communities on the topics of renewable energy and energy efficiency.
5. An expanded Network through the integration of North East Victorian and Goulburn Valley community energy groups, and through the establishment of new groups.
6. A program to identify key operational needs of Network participants, and to address these through a program of upskilling and capacity building.

## **2. Solar for Good**

Despite having excellent connections to their local communities, and across the region through the Network, many community renewable energy groups suffer from a lack of project delivery capacity. The *Solar for Good* program will draw on GVCE's 12 years of practical experience in project delivery and provide capacity for the design of high value - large cost savings and emissions reductions for host sites - solar PV systems across the Hume Region.

The *Solar for Good* program will provide technical support to community groups seeking assistance to identify and develop solar PV and energy efficiency type proposals to reach implementation status. The program will be guided by Network members, who will identify suitable sites for analysis. Projects will focus on buildings owned by community-based organisations, with scope to include commercial enterprises, property rental market (including both commercial and residential) and the general domestic sector.

Solar PV suppliers will be invited to participate under best practice procurement procedures.

The *Solar for Good* program will engage with local government in the promotion of the Environmental Upgrade Agreement program which is currently tailored for commercial clients and soon to expand into the residential sector. Finance options will bring benefits to both building owners and community energy groups including revolving funds programs and income generation options.

Key learnings from the Community Power Hub pilot program will be used to guide the design and implementation of the HCPH program, leveraging existing relationships with the Bendigo CPH.

The program will deliver:

1. At a minimum, 10 community groups each with two rooftop solar projects, up to 30kW in size, and at the project implementation stage.
2. Four projects in the 70-100kW size range, targeting large electricity users like nursing homes and social housing providers.
3. Deliver facilitated sessions to the Hume community energy groups to jointly identify projects and funding options to allow host sites to implement prepared projects.

Funding options may include a revolving fund, green loans, environmental upgrade agreements, power purchase agreements, virtual energy networks and self-investment by the host site.

## **3. The Renewable Energy Readiness Fund**

The electricity sector is changing at a rapid pace, and increasingly, distributed energy resources are at the centre of these changes. For rural and regional communities to fully benefit from the transition to renewable energy the Network must position itself to be an active participant. The *Renewable Energy Readiness Fund* will fund programs of work that are not included under the *Strengthening the Network* or *Solar for Good* programs, with a focus on:

1. Programs that build the capacity of Network participants to play an active role in renewable energy transition. This might be for programs that assist with upskilling, like energy market training courses, through resource development, like the creation of a website, or organisational capacity, like assistance with incorporation.
2. Programs that deliver region-wide feasibility studies, business cases, or delivery plans, that inform future project delivery. Analysis will focus on projects with unproven technological, commercial, or regulatory components. Information created will inform future projects delivered through the Network.

The *Renewable Energy Readiness Fund* program will:

1. Deliver workshops with Network members to identify key organisational needs of Network participants.
2. Deliver workshops with Network members to identify future project delivery priorities.
3. Design service briefs, carry out a procurement process and engage service providers to deliver works that address points one and two.
4. Ensure that identified project priorities are met by service providers.
5. Ensure that works are adopted, where practicable, by the Network and its members.

The *Renewable Energy Readiness Fund* (RERF) is a 100K fund to run programs that build the network's capacity, programs that deliver feasibility or case studies for renewable energy projects. North East Community Energy Network (NECEN) members will provide guidance for how the RERF is used, via a working group. One person from each community energy group will be invited to join the RERF working group.

**Kevin Smith is the REB representative on the working group.**