Victorian First Peoples Renewable Energy Guide

VICTORIA State Government | Energy, Environment and Climate Action

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.

ISBN 978-1-76176-869-9 **(Print)**
ISBN 978-1-76176-870-5 **(pdf/online/MS Word)**

Accessibility

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Eastern Maar Country / Twelve Apostles National Park

Explanation of terms

Aboriginal refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They may have connections within and outside of Victoria. The use of the term Indigenous is sometimes used in the names of programs, initiatives, publication titles and, unless otherwise noted, is inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Community refers to and acknowledges all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria. Community can be used to describe the entire Victorian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community or smaller specific communities, as the context requires.

First Peoples or **First Nations** people refers to peoples or nations of people connected to an area prior to colonisation. These terms have some general acceptance but may not be the term preferred by individuals or specific groups of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Formal recognition refers to the process under which Aboriginal groups are formally recognised as being the Traditional Owners of a specific area of land and waters, under law. Traditional Owners can be formally recognised under various acts which is typically accompanied by the appointment of a corporate entity to perform its specific functions under the relevant act including:

- *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic).*

Free, prior and informed consent is a recognised right for Indigenous Peoples set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which aligns with their universal right to self-determination. It is a collective right for a group of Indigenous people that requires:

- consent to be given voluntarily and free from coercion, intimidation, manipulation, expectations, or externally imposed timelines;
- early engagement and sufficiently ahead of a requirement for authorisation or commencement of the relevant activity;
- information to be provided to the community that is accessible, culturally appropriate and is easy to understand for the community; and
- consent to be granted according to the customary processes of the relevant Indigenous group.

Individual rights are the fundamental rights guaranteed by a government so that every individual citizen can live a free and equitable life.

Self-determination is all about choice. The UNDRIP describes self-determination as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural equity, based on their own values and way of life. That means Traditional Owners have the right to make choices that best reflect them on their journey to self-determination and self-governance.

A **Traditional Owner** is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who has formally recognised traditional connections to an identified geographical area of Country.

A **Traditional Owner Corporation** is an incorporated group that represents the interests of Traditional Owners in a particular area. They may hold rights under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*, *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)* or *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)* on behalf of the Traditional Owners they represent.

Treaty is a negotiated political agreement between First Peoples and the State to establish a renewed relationship and practical ways of working together. The Victorian Government has signed a Statewide Treaty with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. The *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (the Act) establishes a new entity, Gellung Warl (pronounced Gullung-Warl from Gunaikurnai language), evolved from Victoria's successful First Peoples' Assembly. Gellung Warl was established on 1 May 2026. Future Traditional Owner Treaties and ongoing Statewide Treaty Chapters may also be negotiated in Victoria.

Part 1:

Introduction to the First Peoples Renewable Energy Guide

Introduction

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) has developed this First Peoples Renewable Energy Guide (the Guide) to build understanding of the opportunities and benefits arising from Victoria's renewable energy transition.

The Guide provides information for First Peoples across Victoria about renewable energy and how you and your community can be part of the transition.

The Guide is aimed at Victoria's Traditional Owners and First Peoples communities who want to learn why the transition to renewable energy is important and the key types of renewable energy that will power Victoria into the future. It also provides information for people interested in working with industry and government to develop renewable energy projects on Country.

The Guide provides helpful information and resources to better understand energy use in the home and includes practical steps for making your household more energy efficient.

Bunurong Country / Tarneit. Artist: Jess Kease, 23rd Key

Snapshot

What is renewable energy?

Renewable energy sources are all around us and they have guided First Peoples for millennia.

The sun, wind and water are energy sources that are continually renewed at a higher rate than they are consumed, and they are the basis of a historic global transition of changing how energy is generated and consumed.

Fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas take hundreds of millions of years to form, and they are not renewable resources. The burning of fossil fuels over many years has caused harmful greenhouse gas emissions which have caused global warming and an international climate crisis.

Detailed information about the different types of renewable energy and clean energy projects are set out in Part 4.

Victoria's First Peoples and the energy transition

Benefits for Traditional Owners and First Peoples' communities

The renewable energy transition represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to establish partnerships that present pathways to genuine economic development, while recognising the rights and cultural responsibilities of Traditional Owners and First Peoples to ensure fair outcomes.

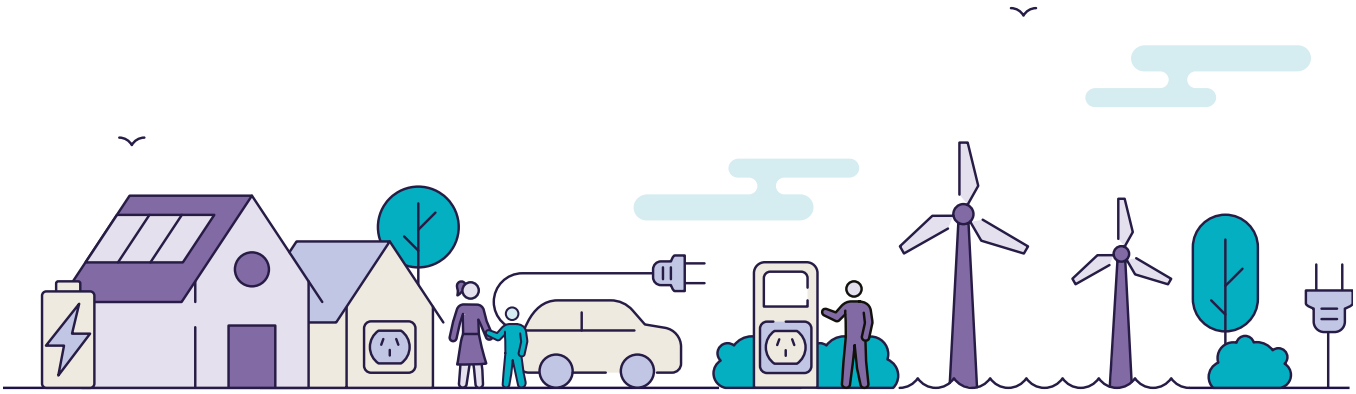
The Victorian Government acknowledges that Victoria's First Peoples have been excluded in the development of energy, mining and resource projects on Country, and this is not acceptable. The Victorian Government is committed to self-determination for Victoria's First Peoples and understands that only Traditional Owners can speak for Country. That is because Country – the water, the land and everything it encompasses – is woven into the fabric of Aboriginal lore, language, governance and wellbeing. In other words, Country embodies culture.

It is widely accepted that management of Country strengthens individual and collective identities, and promotes empowerment, resilience and improved outcomes for First Peoples. In addition, First Peoples' management of Country encompasses experiences learned over thousands of generations, and is a tested, credible and reliable source of environmental management information.

> First Peoples access to and management of Country, including partnering in renewable energy projects, enables the self-determination of First Peoples and promotes environmental sustainability.

Benefits for individuals and families

All Australians deserve access to energy that is affordable and consistent so that we can meet our basic needs and care for our families. It can be very difficult to meet the rising costs of living expenses, the Victorian Government and governments across Australia and the world are moving towards renewable energy so that we can access cheaper and more reliable energy and turn the tide on the climate crisis for our children and future generations.



Part 2:

Understanding the renewable energy transition

What is Victoria's renewable energy transition?

Victoria is pursuing a once-in-a-generation shift in how we make our electricity.

Victoria's electricity system has relied heavily on coal-fired power stations, which increases our carbon emissions and has threatened the stability of our power supply. As our ageing coal-fired power stations retire, they are being replaced by cheaper, more reliable renewable energy such as wind and solar, firmed by storage.. At the same time, homes and businesses are moving towards electrification, which means using electricity as our primary energy source and moving away from using fossil fuels like gas.

Victoria is part of a major global energy transition, with renewable energy at the centre of this change. Victoria is acting now to embrace this accelerating transition and seize the significant economic, environmental and social benefits for current and future generations of Victorians.

VICTORIA State Government | Energy, Environment and Climate Action

- Consumer, Community and First Peoples' Energy Transition
- Offshore Wind Energy Victoria (OWEV)
- Innovation, Commercial and Investment Attraction
- Energy Transition and Strategy
- Whole of Energy Strategy and Transition
- Electrification, Efficiency and Safety

Solar Victoria

VicGrid

SEC

- Traditional Owner Corporations
- First Peoples communities

ESSENTIAL SERVICES COMMISSION

energysafe VICTORIA

Victoria's renewable energy future is already taking shape in homes, neighbourhoods and communities across the state. From rooftop solar and home batteries to large scale wind and solar farms, more renewable energy is being generated and used every day.

Neighbourhood batteries are helping more people access the benefits of shared energy, and electric vehicles are becoming a more familiar sight on our roads.

As this transition gathers momentum, we want to make sure that every Victorian – no matter where you live or your circumstances – can share in the benefits

Wurundjeri Country / Redstone Estate, Sunbury

Shifting to renewable energy will deliver clean, affordable, reliable and secure electricity.

To manage this transition and ensure reliable and affordable electricity supply is maintained for Victorians, the Victorian Government has legislated:

- Victorian Renewable Energy Targets (VRET) of 65 per cent renewable electricity generation by 2030 and 95 per cent by 2035; and
- Energy storage targets of at least 2.6 gigawatts (GW) of energy storage capacity by 2030 and at least 6.3 GW by 2035.

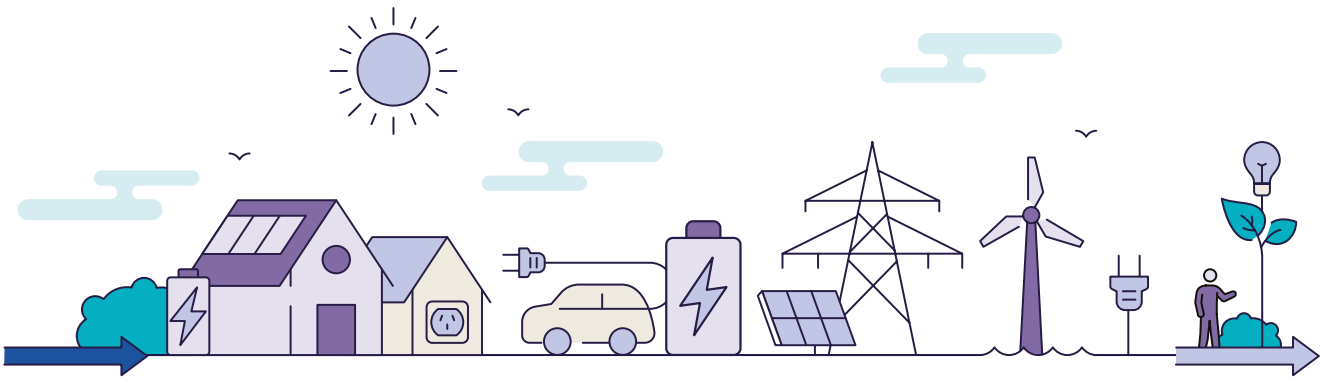
These targets are critical to achieving our world-leading legislated climate target of net zero emissions by 2045.

Fortunately, we are well on our way to meeting these targets. In 2025, Victoria generated 44.6 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources, exceeding the target of 40 per cent renewable electricity generation in 2025. The Victorian government has made record investments in renewable energy generation through solar, wind, and battery storage projects, and will build the first offshore wind farm in the country, right here in Victoria. We are making Victoria's buildings more energy-efficient and helping more homes and businesses switch to electricity as their main energy source. These actions are helping to reduce costs and cut emissions.

We are determined to ensure that all Victorians share the benefits of this energy transition and that no one is left behind. We are establishing new ways of working with Traditional Owners and First Peoples to ensure they have an inclusive and respectful seat at the table on the decisions that impact them. We are also improving how we engage with communities and landholders to ensure their views shape how we manage impacts and maximise the benefits.

More information about the timeline, the vision for Victoria's future electricity system, and how Traditional Owners and First Peoples will be kept at the heart of this transition, is detailed in *Your Energy, Your Savings*. This guide has been developed to help households understand Victoria's energy transition – what's changing, why it matters, and how you can participate and benefit. You can access a copy of *Your Energy Your Savings* here: energy.vic.gov.au/your-energy-your-savings

You can access a copy of *Cheaper, Cleaner, Renewable: Our Plan for Victoria's Electricity Future* here: energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/victorias-electricity-future



Snapshot

How the energy transition will benefit Traditional Owners and First Peoples

Victoria has led the way in the transition to renewable energy with a comprehensive set of policies and programs for each of the key sectors within the energy transition. The aim is to ensure the benefits of the transition are shared fairly across the state, especially in communities hosting new infrastructure.

Affordable energy

Shifting to renewable energy will help keep electricity prices down.

In recent years, Victoria has had the lowest wholesale electricity prices on average compared to other mainland states, and forecasts suggest Victoria's prices will continue to be the lowest.

Victoria's default retail electricity prices are between $189 to $709 lower for households and between $674 to $2602 lower for businesses compared to other states in 2025-26.

Self-determination for Traditional Owners and First Peoples

Establishing partnerships that recognise the rights and cultural responsibilities of Traditional Owners and ensure fair outcomes.

Fair outcomes for communities and landholders

Introducing a new approach to provide direct benefits to communities hosting new transmission and renewable energy infrastructure.

Job opportunities

Victoria's current energy workforce consists of approximately 45,000 full time equivalent (FTE) workers.

By 2040 it's projected that Victoria will need approximately 68,000 FTE workers in the energy sector, an increase of 23,000 FTE workers from 2026.

A reliable and resilient energy system

Moving away from ageing and unreliable coal-fired power stations to a diverse mix of renewables and storage, including a nation-leading offshore wind industry.

Emissions reduction

Leading decarbonisation efforts by focusing on our most polluting sector and setting ambitious renewable energy targets.

Stronger local economy

Creating opportunities for businesses to invest in and build on the existing capabilities of our local research and development sector and local manufacturing.

Yorta Yorta Country / The Murray River, Yarrawonga

Part 3:

How you can save money on your energy bills

More affordable energy bills for Mob

First Peoples households can save on energy with a range of Victorian Government programs and services.

In Victoria, we're building a cleaner, renewable energy future, powering more homes with energy from the wind and sun. Making the switch from gas to electric in our homes and investing in solar can lock in long term energy bill savings, while supporting Victoria's energy transition.

This part of the guide sets out some tips for how to save money on energy bills, while making your home healthier to live in and better for the environment.


Plan summary
Understanding your bill
Energy charges
Total current charges
Check your energy use

Easy ways to save on energy bills

Energy offers vary between retailers, but there are simple things you can look out for that may help you save. Here are five tips to help you spot opportunities to reduce your energy bill.

1. Check you're on the 'Best Offer' with your retailer

In Victoria, your retailer is required to tell you on your bill if you can save money by moving to a cheaper offer every three months for electricity and every four months for gas.

The Best Offer Notice will appear on the first page of your bill in a box that says 'could you save money on another plan?'.

If there is a cheaper offer available, your retailer will list the name of the offer and how much it is estimated you could save each year, based on the way you currently use energy. To get this offer, call your retailer and ask to be moved to the best offer listed on your bill.

See example bill on page 17. For more bill examples please visit energyinfohub.org.au/app/uploads/2019/08/energy-info-hub-reading-bills-1.pdf

2. Check how much you need to pay and if there is an outstanding amount

Your account summary tells you how much you need to pay. If you missed paying all or part of your last energy bill or have an outstanding balance, the unpaid amount will be listed as "balance brought forward" or "previous balance" on your new energy bill.

If you owe money and cannot afford to pay your energy bills, call your retailer. Under Victoria's Payment Difficulty Framework your retailer is required to provide you with support. The types of support can include:

- Setting up a payment plan for an amount you can afford
- Delaying paying a bill or changing how often you pay
- Applying for a Utility Relief Grant (URG): The URG Scheme can help reduce or clear your debt. You are eligible to apply if you are the account holder, have a concession card or meet the low-income criteria, and are experiencing financial difficulty due to one of the following:
  - Unexpected increases in living costs
  - A decrease in income
  - High rent or mortgage costs (more than 30% of your income)
  - Family violence

All you need to do is ask your retailer for help. If you need more support, call the free Energy Assistance Program on 1800 161 215.

The Midday Power Saver will be available to households from 1 October 2026

Midday Power Saver offers a free power window between 11 am and 2 pm every day, and most retailers will have to make the offer available to their customers. It is important to check with your electricity retailer to make sure the Midday Power Saver is right for you. While you should see savings on your electricity bill if you move the use of your appliances to the free 3–hour window, there will be small increases in the price of electricity you use outside of these hours.

3. Check for your eligible energy concession

Account holders who hold a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card, or Veterans' Affairs Gold Card are entitled to a 17.5% concession on every electricity bill and winter gas bills from May to October.

If you have an eligible concession card and your energy concession isn't listed on your bill it means you're not getting it. Call your retailer with your concession card and ask them to apply your concession. You can also ask them to backdate missed concessions for up to 12 months.

4. Check your energy usage

An easy way to understand your energy use is to check your bill for the "average daily use" figure and see how it compares to the "same time last year" figure. You can usually find this your average daily usage next to the energy usage graph on the second or third page of your bill.

This section can help tell you how your energy use has changed. It's normal in to see higher usage in the very hot summer months and in very cold winter months, because heating and cooling use the most energy in the home.

If your average daily usage is higher than last year, or higher than the average for a household with the same number of people, you can check out the 'Saving money by making easy changes around the home' section below for simple tips to reduce your energy usage.

5. Check out Victoria Energy Compare

To check you are on the very best energy offer in the market for your household visit the Victorian Energy Compare website at compare.energy.vic.gov.au

Need help with your energy bills?

Free, confidential, one-on-one support to help with your energy bills is available through the Energy Assistance Program. All Energy Assistance Program staff who deliver phone-based support have completed cultural awareness training to support respectful and culturally safe assistance for First Peoples households.

The Energy Assistance Program can help you understand and save money on your electricity and gas bills, and access payment plans, concessions and grants.

Help is also available to speak to your energy retailer – Energy Assistance Program advisors can call them with you and handle the difficult parts.

How the Energy Assistance Program works

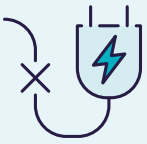
To get help with your energy bills just follow 3 simple steps:

1. Have your energy bill handy
2. Phone **1800 161 215** to get connected with a friendly advisor
3. One of our **energy advisors can help you** answer your questions, help you save money on your energy bills, and access payment plans, concessions and grants.

Scan or call 1800 161 215 to get connected with a friendly advisor. Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm.

Prefer to speak to First Peoples Energy? Contact us at firstpeoplesenergy@deeca.vic.gov.au

Worried about disconnection?



Your energy cannot be disconnected if one of the following applies:

- You owe less than $300 to your retailer (this increases to $1,000 from October 2026).
- You are making regular payments on a payment plan
- You have applied for a Utility Relief Grant.

Snapshot

Making sense of your energy bill

Since energy bills are prepared by individual retailers, they will all look different. However, every bill must include certain details, including:

Energy use

This information tells you how much energy you used during the billing period.

The billing period: This is the timeframe your bill covers. It shows the start and end dates for when your energy use was measured.

Average daily usage: This is how much energy you used each day on average during the billing period. It is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh) for electricity and megajoules (MJ) for gas.

Charges

This information explains what you are paying for energy on your energy plan. Most bills will include two types of charges:

- **Daily supply charge (or service to property charge):** This is a fixed amount you pay each day for the supply of energy to the property. You'll pay this charge no matter how much energy you use. The amount of the daily supply charge can vary between offers and retailers so if you're looking for a new offer, be sure to compare the daily supply charge for the offers you're considering.
- **Usage charge/s (or consumption charge/s):** These are charges for the amount of electricity or gas you use. This will appear on the bill as cents per kilowatt hour (c/kWh) for electricity, and cents per megajoule (c/MJ) for gas.

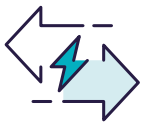
Top Tip:

Shift usage to off-peak times

By running major appliances like washing machines or dishwashers during off-peak hours, you can ease the strain on the grid, especially as renewable energy sources like solar and wind fluctuate throughout the day.

Pricing structures

The price you pay on your electricity offer for each unit of electricity used is called a tariff or rate and an energy plan can have one or more tariffs. The most common tariff types are:



Flat rate: You pay the same price for electricity no matter what time of the day you use it.

Time-of-use: You pay different prices depending on when you use electricity. There are usually peak times (higher prices) and off-peak times (lower prices). Using more energy during off-peak times can help reduce costs.

Block pricing: Some retailers charge different tariffs for different 'blocks' of energy use. As you use more energy, you move into the next block, which may have a higher or lower price.

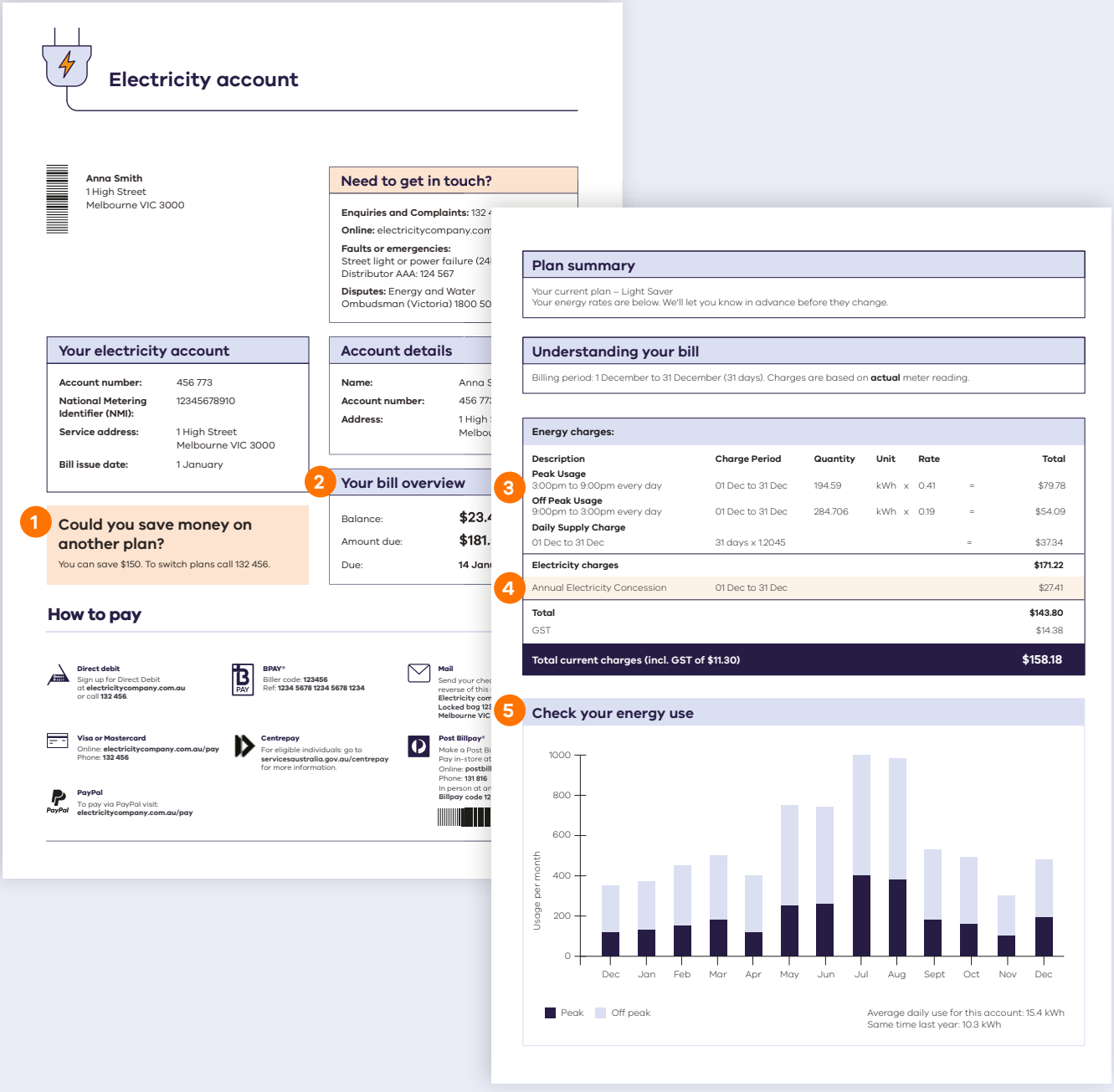
Call your retailer if you have any questions about your plan's pricing structure.

Ensuring protections are enforced

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (EWOV) can help to resolve most complaints about electricity and gas in Victoria. If you are unable to resolve the problem with your energy company first, EWOV's free complaints process recommends you to:

1. Contact EWOV about the complaint;
2. EWOV will investigate;
3. An outcome will be delivered.

To make a complaint visit: ewov.com.au/start-a-complaint



1 Are you on the best plan?

2 Balance and payments

3 Energy charges

4 Energy concessions available to Victorian concession card holders

5 Check your energy use

6 Accessing help

6

Need help?

Scan or call **1800 161 215** to get help through the Energy Assistance Program.

Check out the Victorian Energy Compare website

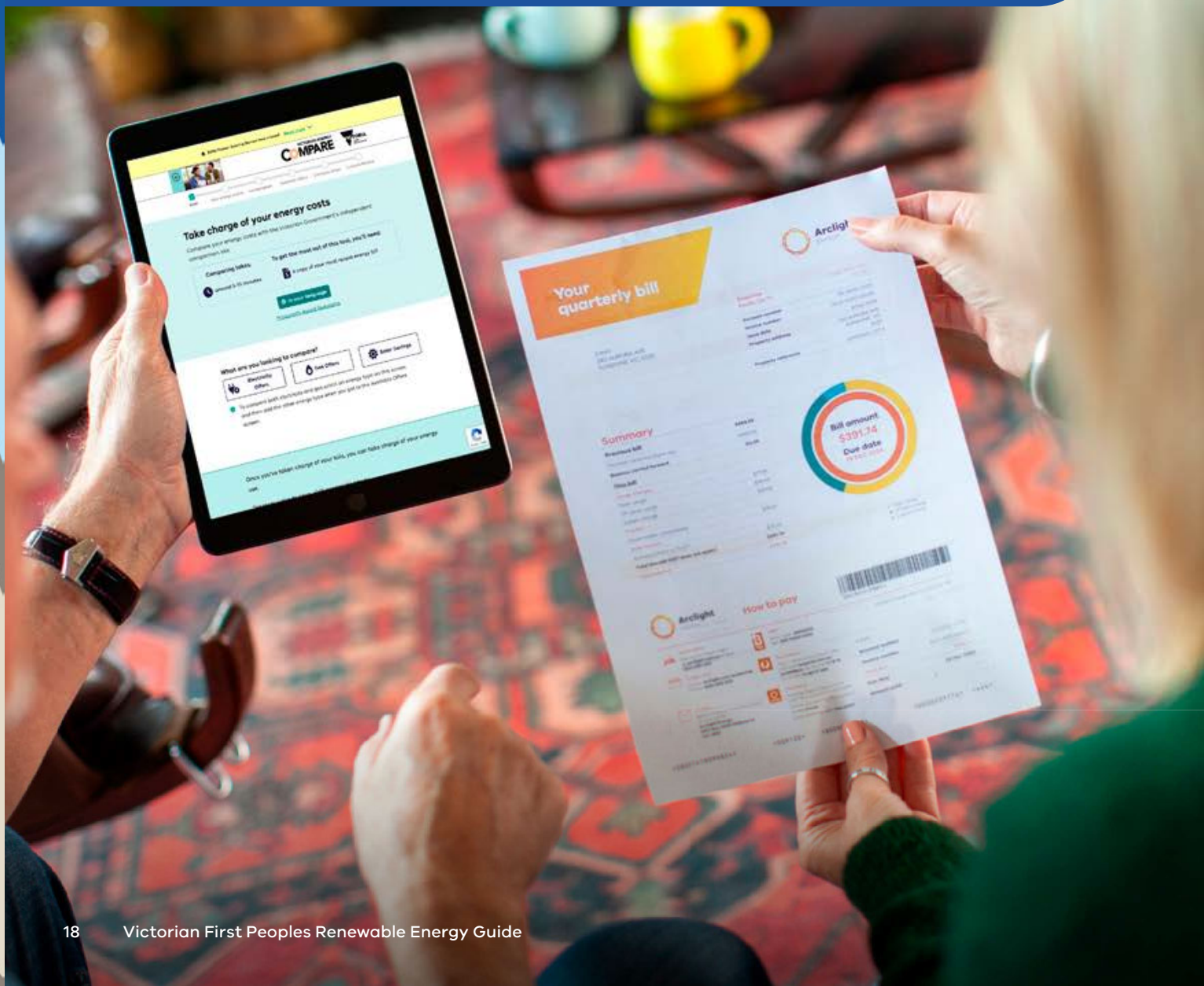
Did you know that the Victorian Government has a free, independent price comparison website that helps you to compare energy offers?

To compare electricity, gas and solar offers, all you need is a recent bill or smart meter data file, and the Victorian Energy Compare website will provide you with the best offers for your household.

The best part? It's free!

> In 2025, users of the Victorian Energy Compare service could typically save around $170 by switching to a better offer.

You can access the Victorian Energy Compare website via this link compare.energy.vic.gov.au



How much are you spending on energy?

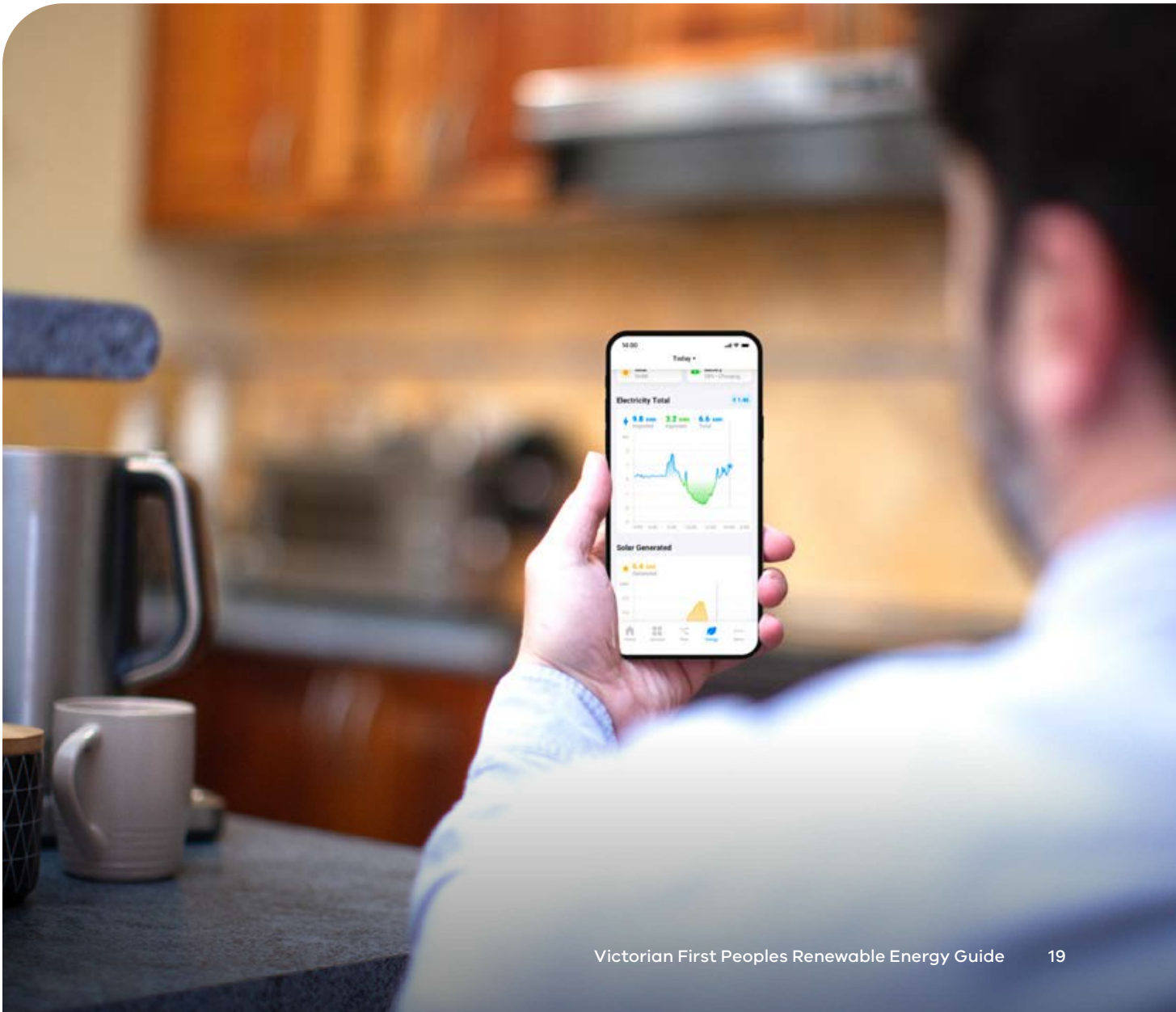
In Victoria, there are a few ways you can monitor your household's energy usage.

Most homes have smart meters, which track electricity usage in almost real-time. You can access this data through your energy provider's online portal or mobile app, which shows you when and how much electricity your household is consuming in kilowatt hours (kWh). This allows you to identify your high-usage times and adjust your habits to save on costs.

For households using gas, your consumption is usually measured in megajoules (MJ) and reported on your gas bill, but real-time tracking for gas is less common.

If you have solar panels, the Solar Hub on Solar Victoria's website – solar.vic.gov.au/solar-hub, provides information and resources on getting the most out of your solar system.

Checking your bills and using digital tools can give you a clear view of your household's energy patterns, helping you make better energy choices.



How to reduce your energy bills and support the energy transition

Some practical steps

Monitor and reduce waste: Use smart meters and apps from your provider to track your energy usage, helping you identify where you can cut down. For example, reducing standby power by unplugging electronics when not in use can save a lot of energy.

Use energy-efficient appliances: Switching to energy-efficient appliances (look for the energy star rating) reduces your household's energy demand and can save you money.

Drive an electric vehicle: Consider purchasing an electric vehicle which ensures that you will not be using fossil fuels that produce carbon emissions.

Look for energy plans that source power from renewable sources: If you're considering switching to an energy plan that includes renewable sources, there are plenty of options on the market. Many of these plans source a portion of their generation from renewables, and the difference in cost is often just a fraction more than traditional options.

Top Tip:

Being aware of your energy usage can help to reduce your bills!

Many households waste energy by leaving appliances running unnecessarily. Simple actions like switching appliances off at the wall, fixing leaky windows, using energy-efficient light bulbs, or ensuring your heating/cooling system is properly maintained can drastically reduce energy consumption. These small changes add up to big savings over time because the less energy you use, the less you pay.

If you are a homeowner, there are further steps you can take to reduce your energy bill

Invest in home Insulation and efficiency: Better insulation reduces the need for heating and cooling, which are typically high-energy processes. Simple improvements, like weatherproofing doors and windows, can significantly lower energy demand.

Choose electric over gas: In line with Victoria's Gas Substitution Roadmap, switching from gas to electric appliances, like heat pumps for heating or electric stoves, supports the shift toward a more electrified system that can run on renewable energy. Discounts on electric appliances are available through the Victorian Energy Upgrades Program.

These are just some steps that will not only help you lower your bills but also contribute to a cleaner, more resilient energy system that relies less on fossil fuels and more on renewables.

Save money by making easy changes around the home

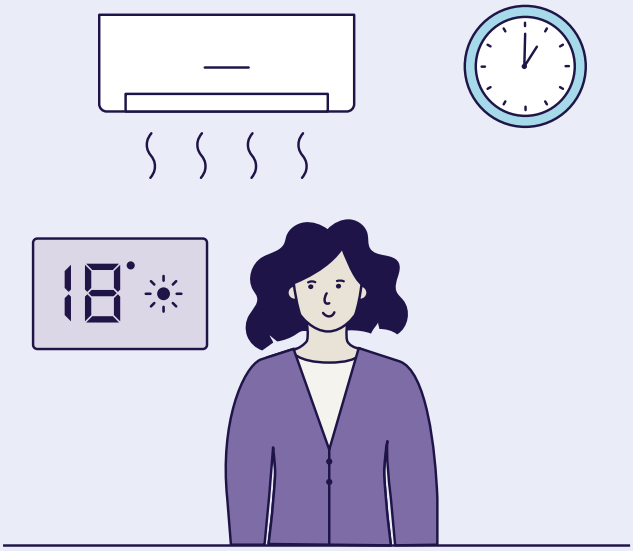
Keeping your home warm in winter and cool in summer is important for your health. The good news is there are also many simple ways to reduce your energy use – often at no cost. Here are our top tips to help lower your energy bills.

- Switch non-essential appliances off at the wall rather than leaving them on standby.
- Clean your split-system filter every month to lower energy use and keep your home comfortable.
- Fitting draught seals on the openings of windows and doors can help you save on heating and cooling all year round.
- Wash your clothes using cold water – it can save you around $115 each year. You can also save on laundry by waiting till your washing machine is full before doing a load of washing and using a clothesline instead of a dryer where possible.
- Save energy in the kitchen by setting your fridge temperature between 4-5 degrees Celsius and your freezer between -15 and -18 degrees. Use the economy mode on your dishwasher and wait until it's full before running a cycle.
- Consider switching to energy efficient appliances. In the bathroom, replacing your old showerhead with an efficient one can save you around $160 a year on energy and water bills.

When using your air conditioner in summer, only cool the rooms that you need and close doors and curtains to keep the cool air in.

- By setting your air conditioner between 24 to 26 degrees in the hotter months, you can keep your home cool and costs down.
- Turn your air conditioner off when the outside temperature drops.
- Open doors and windows to let cool air in.

- Heating the entire house can be costly. Instead, shut the door to areas you aren't using and only heat the rooms you're in to save energy. Don't forget to also close curtains and blinds to keep the warm air in and reduce heat loss through your windows when there isn't any winter sunshine.
- When you're using your heater this winter, you can keep your home warm and reduce costs by setting your heater to between 18 and 20 degrees. Every degree higher than this temperature can add around 15% to your gas bill.



Electrification

Energy affordability is a key priority for the Victorian Government.

In Victoria, our households are powered by various sources, including coal, gas and increasingly, renewable sources like wind and solar power.

Switching from gas to efficient electric appliances reduces our households' and businesses' exposure to rising gas prices, saving money on energy bills for cooking, heating and hot water. Encouraging homeowners and businesses to electrify will also take pressure off declining gas supplies, further reducing upward pressure on prices.

The average existing Victorian home could save around $2,230 per year by going all-electric when paired with an existing solar PV system. Without solar panels, converting an existing home to all-electric will save around $1,900 per year. A new, all-electric home running on solar saves up to $1,920 a year on energy bills. If you don't have solar, a new all-electric detached home will save around $990 per year, compared with a home that also uses gas.

Fact sheets outlining these savings are available online: energy.vic.gov.au/households/save-with-all-electric-home

Going all-electric in our homes not only takes the pressure off gas demand, it also limits our exposure to international prices. Going all-electric also helps you save money. The State Government's latest analysis confirms that new homes will immediately reduce emissions by going all electric, rather than relying on dual fuel - and that only increases over time as more renewable energy comes online over the next decade.

Electrification is the most cost-effective way to reduce gas use in homes, commercial buildings and low-temperature industrial processes. However, it is not yet viable for high-heat industrial applications (e.g. metals, glass, ceramics and brick production) and other uses, including fertiliser production. Gas-powered electricity generation (GPG) will also continue to play a role in the electricity system by maintaining reliability of supply when there is high electricity demand or when there is low supply from other sources (e.g. solar and wind).

The Victorian Government is establishing a renewable gas scheme and targets, to help the state meets its ambitious emissions reduction targets and maintain secure gas supplies for industrial users that cannot electrify. The production of renewable gases, such as biomethane and hydrogen, will deliver investment and clean energy jobs across the state. DEECA is committed to supporting Traditional Owners to self-determine and creating opportunities for community led decision making as it relates to renewable gas. The Victorian Government's Gas Substitution Roadmap outlines how Victorian households and businesses can save money and cut carbon emissions. You can read about the Gas Substitution Roadmap via this link energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/victorias-gas-substitution-roadmap

Minimum energy efficiency standards for renters

From 1 March 2027, new minimum energy efficiency standards will start to roll out for rental properties in Victoria, reforms that are nation-leading.

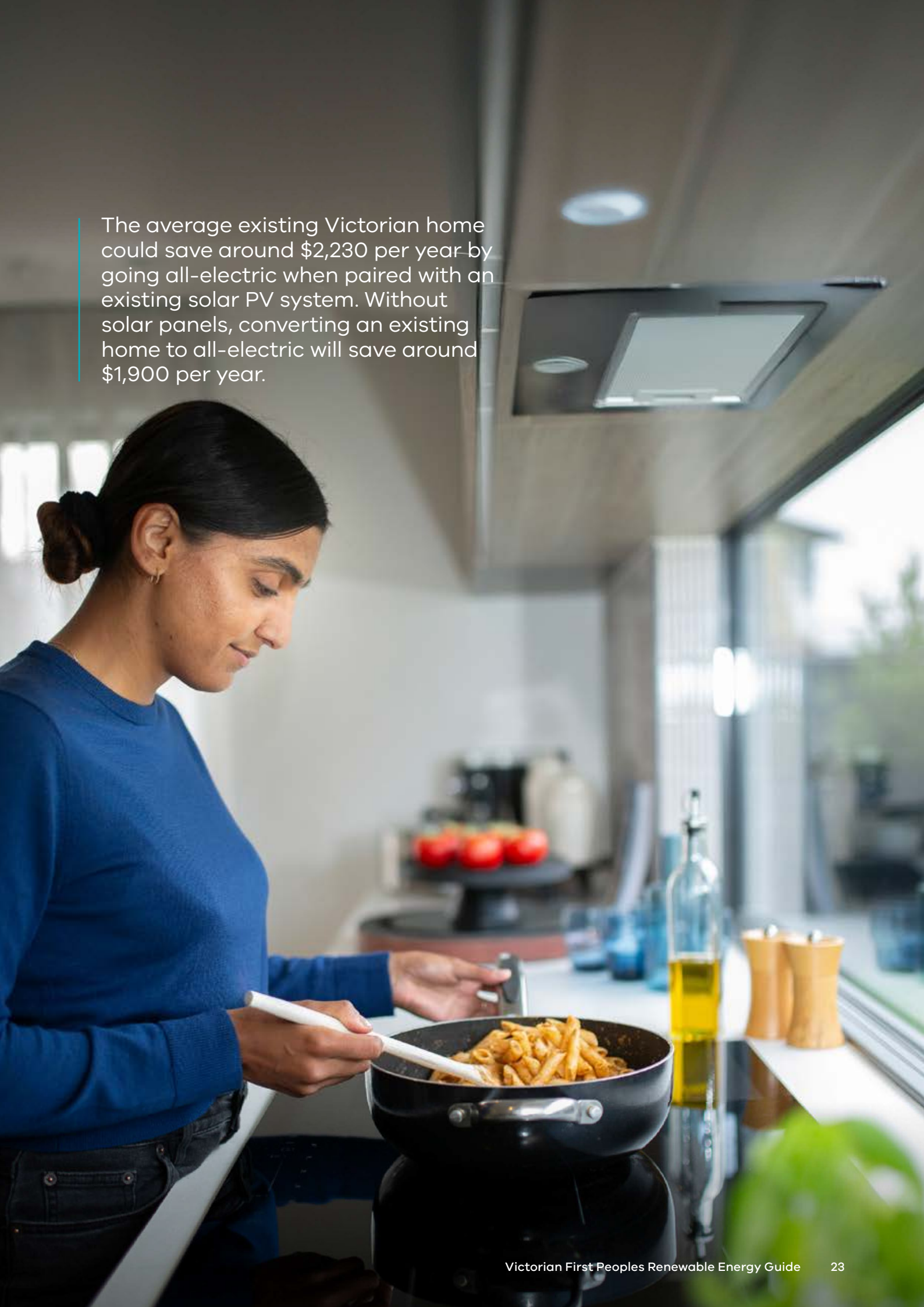
These reforms will:

- save renters hundreds of dollars a year on their energy bills
- make rental homes safer, healthier and more comfortable
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- boost the value of rental properties over time.

What could this mean for you as a renter?

- Ceiling insulation (where there is none) could deliver benefits of up to $454 a year.
- An efficient electric hot water system could save up to $220 a year.
- Energy-efficient heating and cooling could save up to $215 a year.

The average existing Victorian home could save around $2,230 per year by going all-electric when paired with an existing solar PV system. Without solar panels, converting an existing home to all-electric will save around $1,900 per year.



How to lock in long term energy bill savings

Upgrade your old gas appliances

Moving away from gas and upgrading to energy-efficient electric appliances can help you lock in long term savings on energy bills. To maximise savings, it is recommended to replace appliances that use the most gas first – like heating systems, followed by hot water systems and cooktops. If you have older appliances that need upgrading sooner, you should consider replacing these first.

The Victorian Energy Upgrades Program offers discounts on energy-efficient heating, cooling and hot water systems to help you make the switch to electric and save on energy bills.

Find out how you can lock in long term savings with energy-efficient products by visiting the Victorian Energy Upgrades website: energy.vic.gov.au/victorian-energy-upgrades

Solar Victoria's Solar Homes Program offers a $1,400 rebate for installing a locally made energy-efficient hot water system, or a $1,000 rebate for all other eligible energy-efficient hot water systems. This can help you cover the cost of replacing inefficient gas heating hot water systems with efficient heat pumps or solar hot water systems. Installing or replacing an existing gas hot water system with a quality heat pump hot water system can save you up to $400 a year on energy bills.

Visit the Solar Victoria website below to find out how you can start saving with energy-efficient hot water systems: solar.vic.gov.au/solar-homes-program

Images from *Put the Sun to Work: Your guide to creating a solar-powered, all-electric home.*

Make the switch to solar and energy efficient appliances

The Victorian Government supports the installation of solar panels and energy efficient hot water systems through the Solar Homes Program, and access to discounts for energy efficient household appliances such as heating and cooling, and cooktops, through the Victorian Energy Upgrades program. Embracing solar and making the switch to energy efficient alternatives allows homeowners to generate their own electricity, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, helping to lower electricity bills.

Solar Victoria's Solar Homes Program can help you take control of your energy bills while helping Victoria build a cleaner, renewable energy future. You can put the sun to work in your home by applying for a rebate of up to $1,400 and an optional interest-free loan of a further $1400 to reduce the upfront cost of installing solar panels. If you are a renter, the landlord is also eligible for solar panel rebates, and there's $1,400 available for eligible community housing organisations. Switching to solar power can significantly reduce your energy costs, saving you hundreds of dollars annually and averaging $500 on energy bills. Even if your home already has solar panels, replacing older gas appliances to energy-efficient electric alternatives can help you maximise your solar energy use and save up to $1,000 a year on energy bills.

Incentives for home batteries are also available through the Australian Government's *Cheaper Home Batteries Program*.

Want to learn more about making the switch to electric? The Solar Hub is an online resource from Solar Victoria that provides information about all things solar including *Put the Sun to Work: Your guide to creating a solar-powered, all-electric home*.

You can access the Put the Sun to Work guide and other great resources for homeowners and renters via this link: solar.vic.gov.au/solar-hub

Improve the thermal efficiency of your home

Insulating your home can make a big difference to your energy bills and help keep your home warmer in winter and cooler in summer. Many households could see significant energy bill savings of over $400 per year on average, and health cost savings of up to $850 per year by upgrading their ceiling insulation.

The Victorian Energy Upgrades program will offer discounts on ceiling insulation to eligible households in 2026. From 14 April 2026, Public and Community housing dwellings are eligible for upgrades through the Energy Efficiency in Social Housing Program (EESHP). From 1 October 2026, Stage 2 will expand availability to all eligible Victorian households with no or low levels of ceiling insulation and is anticipated to follow the conclusion of Stage 1.

More information is available on the Victorian Energy Upgrades program website: energy.vic.gov.au/victorian-energy-upgrades

Top Tip:

Become a Member of the First Nations Clean Energy Network's Members Hub

To find out more about home energy efficiency and electrification, join the First Nations Clean Energy Network's exclusive Members Hub. By joining the Members Hub, you will have access to tips about how to make power more efficient in your home so you can stay cool in summer and warm in winter, and learn more ways to keep energy costs down.

You can join the Members Hub and view other excellent resources from the First Nations Clean Energy Network via this link: firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/making_power_work_for_you

Part 4:

Understanding renewable energy projects in Victoria

Pavillion Biogas / Wadawurrung Country / Anakie

Key types of renewable energy

Energy generation

Solar

Solar energy is energy created by the heat and light of the sun. Solar power is produced when this energy is converted into electricity by the use of photovoltaic (PV) panels (also known as solar PV). Thermal energy from the sun can also be used to heat air, water, or other substances for such purposes as steam electricity generation or heating up hot water systems for household use.

Solar energy can be used at different scales. It can be a small number of solar panels on the roof of a house or a large-scale array of hundreds of panels that can power hundreds of thousands of homes when connected to the power grid.

Many Victorians are using small scale solar systems in their homes. This gives them independence from conventional energy supplies and can reduce energy bills.

Wind

Wind energy is captured by wind turbines on both land (onshore) and sea (offshore). The energy in the wind turns blades on a rotor. The rotor then connects to the main shaft and spins a generator to create electricity.

Harnessing energy from the wind is an important part of the renewable energy transition given it avoids the generation of many tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Hydro

Hydroelectricity is generated through the conversion of flowing water into electrical energy. In a hydroelectric plant, the pressure of the flowing or falling water powers a turbine. The turbine is connected to a generator which produces electricity.

Most Australian hydro power stations use dams in major river valleys. Many have facilities to pump water back into higher storage locations during off-peak times. The water can be reused during peak times to generate more electricity.

Renewable Hydrogen

Renewable hydrogen is produced when the energy generated from renewable sources powers an electrolyser to convert water into hydrogen gas. A standard method of producing renewable hydrogen is electrolysis. Electrolysis uses electricity to split water into hydrogen and oxygen molecules with electricity. When renewable energy is used for electrolysis, the hydrogen produced is known as renewable hydrogen.

Hydrogen gas can be stored and used for electricity generation, to power fuel cell vehicles, further processed into fuels and fertilisers or blended with natural gas and distributed via pipeline.

Geothermal

Heated rocks and underground water bodies generate geothermal energy. Geothermal technology generally works in one of 2 ways:

1. It uses naturally occurring hot water from a hot sedimentary aquifer
2. It generates super-heated water or steam by circulating fluid through hot rocks.

The heat is converted to electricity in a power plant. It can also be used directly to heat buildings and in industrial processes.

The technology used by power plants is well established. But the method of transporting the heat from deep underground to the surface varies. A lot depends on the location of the geothermal site.

Australia has significant potential for geothermal energy generation. This is due to plenty of high-heat producing basement rocks buried beneath sediments. But, in some cases, the technology for accessing this type of geothermal energy requires more development.

Bioenergy

Bioenergy is the term used to describe energy and energy-related products (such as pellets) derived from biomass. Biomass is organic matter from plants and waste streams. Bioenergy covers a variety of fuels that can be used in power generation, heating systems and/or transport. Bioenergy helps mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Bioenergy is likely to expand as a sector in Victoria in the future. Bioenergy is expected to utilise several different feed stocks. Electricity, heat and sustainable fuels are expected to be produced through bioenergy.

Energy storage and other solutions

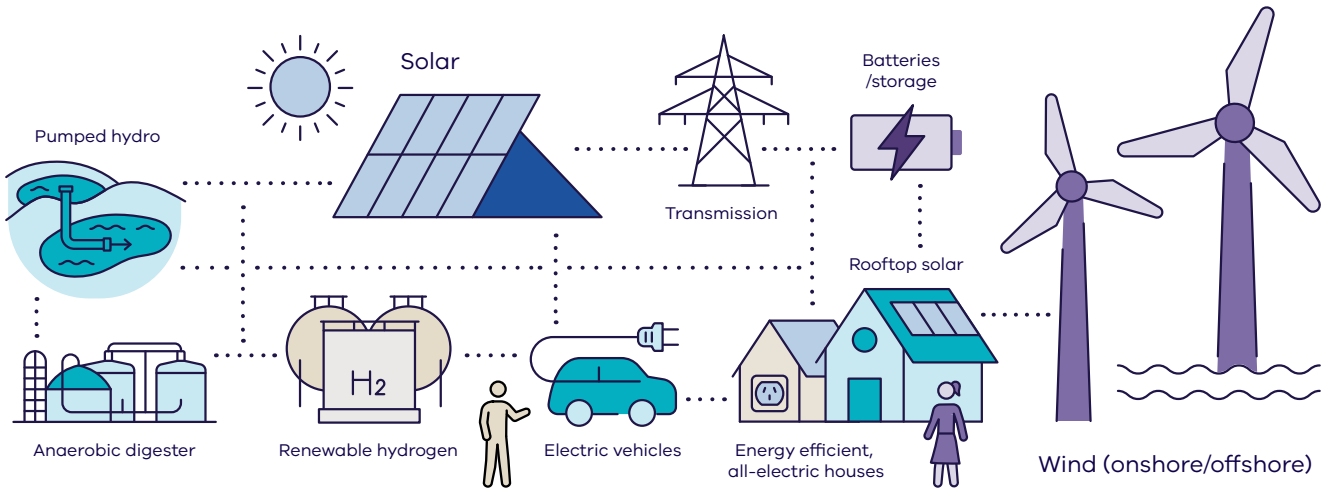
Victoria's energy storage targets will include short, medium and long-duration zero-emissions energy storage systems. Short-duration storage, of less than four hours storage, will include grid-scale batteries and household batteries. Medium and long-duration storage, exceeding four hours storage, could include longer duration battery systems, as well as pumped hydro energy storage (PHES) and other solutions.

Pumped hydro

Pumped hydro technology harnesses the gravitational energy in water. Water is pumped into an upper storage reservoir throughout the day when prices are low (off-peak). It could also be pumped overnight. During periods of high demand when prices are high (peak), the water is released into a lower reservoir. This generates power. Water is then pumped back to the upper reservoir during off-peak hours. The electricity to do this comes from the grid.

Battery Energy Storage Systems

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are large devices that can store and release energy on demand to support the delivery of electricity across Victoria. A BESS gathers energy from the electricity network powered by different sources, such as wind and solar, and stores it for later use. When high demand events impact the network, such as hot days in summer, these batteries release this stored energy for homes and businesses to use.



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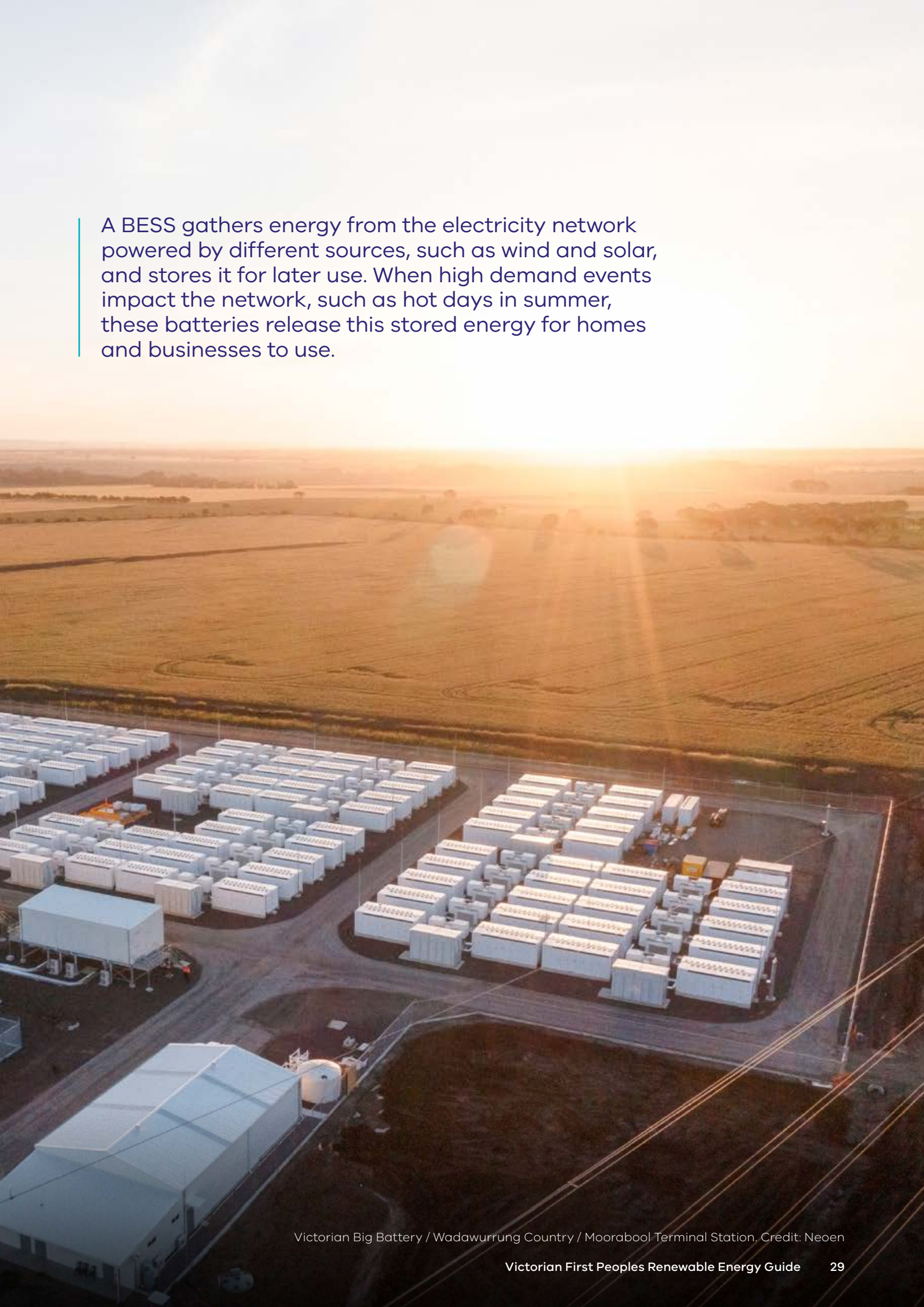


Victorian Big Battery / Wadawurrung Country / Moorabool Terminal Station. Credit: Neoen

Key types of renewable energy projects

The two most common renewable energy generation developments in Victoria are wind and solar farms. These developments are where there is the most potential for you and your community to build partnerships with stakeholders in relation to your Country or community. There is also potential to host transmission infrastructure on your Country, to connect renewable energy projects to the wider electricity network.

Fulham Solar Farm / Gunaikurnai Country / Fulham

Solar farms

In Q1 2026, solar – across large-scale solar farms and rooftop solar PV - generated over 20% of Victoria's electricity. Victoria has commissioned 55 large-scale solar farms generating over 1,983 MW and has a further five under construction which will have a capacity of 384 MW.

Solar panels

The most common type of large-scale solar farms consists of ground-mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar structures. These are large solar panels that generate electricity by converting sunlight directly into electricity using a technology known as a semiconductor cell or solar PV cell. The most common form of solar PV cell is typically encased in glass and an aluminium frame to form the solar panel.

Panels are laid out in groups which are connected to inverters that convert the direct current (DC) electricity the panels generate into alternating current (AC) which is the current usually used for homes. The electricity is then either stored onsite in batteries or fed straight into the electricity network.

Site requirements

Typical site characteristics for developing large-scale solar farms include:

- Availability of sunlight hours
- Large area of flat and flood free land which does not require unnecessary or excessive earthworks or changes to the landscape
- Proximity to the electricity grid network, to minimise the need for additional infrastructure and associated impacts
- Ready access to main roads for construction and operation
- Planning and environment assessments around flora and fauna; native vegetation and biodiversity; cultural heritage; and sustainable agriculture.

Connecting to the grid

Solar energy facilities connect into the National Electricity Market (NEM) through Victoria's electricity transmission or distribution networks. This electricity is then transferred via high-voltage transmission lines and/or the distribution network to energy users.

Victoria's electricity transmission network is planned by VicGrid.

Lifecycle

The operational lifespan of a solar energy facility typically ranges from 20–30 years, depending on onsite environmental conditions, what maintenance occurs, and the type of technology used.

Decommissioning is the final stage of a solar project, and it involves disconnecting and removing the solar facilities and ensuring the land is returned to its original condition as per the planning approval requirements.

Examples of solar farm partnerships on Country are noted in Part 5.

Wind farms

In Q1 2026, wind generated around 20% of Victoria's electricity. Victoria has 44 wind farms operating and generating over 6,052 MW and has 1 under construction which will have a capacity of 205 MW.

Wind farms can be developed both onshore and offshore, and offshore wind farms will be located in Commonwealth waters. Offshore wind normally has a higher capacity factor than onshore.

Wind turbines

Wind turbines use the energy of the wind to spin an electric generator, which produces electricity.

Wind turbines come in various shapes, although the windmill style (also called horizontal axis wind turbine) is the most common.

Site requirements

Typical site characteristics for developing wind farms include:

- Regularity, direction and speed of the wind
- Suitability of securing turbine footings on land or sea
- Proximity to the electricity grid network on land, to minimise the need for additional infrastructure and impacts
- Planning and environment assessments around flora and fauna; native vegetation and biodiversity; and cultural heritage
- Consideration of noise levels, and environmental impacts.
- For onshore wind farm developments, determining the regularity, direction and speed of the wind usually involves on-site testing over a period longer than 6 months. This information will be compared to other credible wind data sources such as nearby BOM station outputs.
- For offshore development, even before an area is officially declared suitable for offshore wind, the Australian Government conducts preliminary assessments of an area's wind speeds, ocean depths and access to an existing onshore electricity grid. It also consults with Australian and Victorian Government agencies, industry, stakeholders and the community. Developers may also start early investigations for possible offshore wind areas.
- Offshore wind project developers must consider the traditional knowledges, values, rights, and responsibilities of, and engage with, the relevant Traditional Owners during all phases of an offshore wind project.

> Traditional Owners are partners who have cultural and legal rights that must be upheld under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)*, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)* and the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*.
>
> Traditional Owners' rights are recognised and promoted under Commonwealth and Victorian legislation and policies. Aboriginal cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) is protected by law and includes various landforms and land categories, including, relevant to offshore wind projects – coastal Crown ('public') land, coastal land, dunes and waterways.

NB: Offshore wind farms may only be developed in declared areas, as prescribed by the Commonwealth Government.

Connecting to the grid

An onshore wind energy facility connects to Victoria's electricity network through infrastructure including power lines, substations, converter installations, and other works. Wind farm developers often seek sites close to transmission infrastructure.

Offshore wind energy facilities transport the electricity from the turbines to offshore substations via cable and the offshore substations prepare it for transmission to onshore substations. The onshore substations then connect the electricity to the onshore grid.

Lifecycle

Construction onshore can take up to 3 years. A project typically includes a series of wind turbines, one or more substations, a temporary construction compound, wind monitoring equipment, access tracks, underground cabling connecting the turbines to the onsite substations and a high voltage power line connecting the wind farm to the electricity grid.

A larger facility may also include a quarry, concrete batching plants during construction, and an operations and maintenance facility. When construction is complete, the wind farm can commence operation when it is given approval from the AEMO.

The wind farm can operate for around 25 years before it is decommissioned or reconditioned.

The first phase reflects the planning, design and coordination needed to establish a project and can be up to five years in duration.

The second phase consists of construction, which is typically three to four years in duration. It covers the manufacturing of components, installation and infrastructure construction activities, logistics, assembly and testing of components.

The third phase consists of the activities needed to continually maintain, operate and generate energy from each windfarm over their 30-year lifetime. As assets reach their end-of-life, they will need to be decommissioned safely and with minimal environmental impacts.

Hosting transmission infrastructure

Landholders hosting energy and transmission infrastructure play a crucial role in Victoria's renewable energy transition and are entitled to compensation as well as new annual payments.

Landholders who host new transmission easements are entitled to compensation in line with the Victorian *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986* (known as the LACA). The LACA is designed to fully compensate landholders for the establishment of easements on their land, including the impact on farming and business operations.

Compensation amounts are set through negotiation with the relevant developer. Landholders can have an independent valuation and be reimbursed for reasonable costs associated with this process.

Compensation is calculated using many factors including:

- the market value of the acquired easement
- disturbance
- costs associated with seeking legal and professional advice
- some non-financial losses.

There is also potential for developers to approach landholders to carry the electricity from their renewable energy project and connect it to the electricity network.

Expectations for engagement and social value in renewable energy projects

The Victorian Government is detailing the minimum expectations of renewable and transmission project developers when engaging and creating social value and economic benefits for First Peoples communities. These expectations are listed in the *Community Engagement and Social Values Guidelines for Renewable Energy and Transmission Projects* .

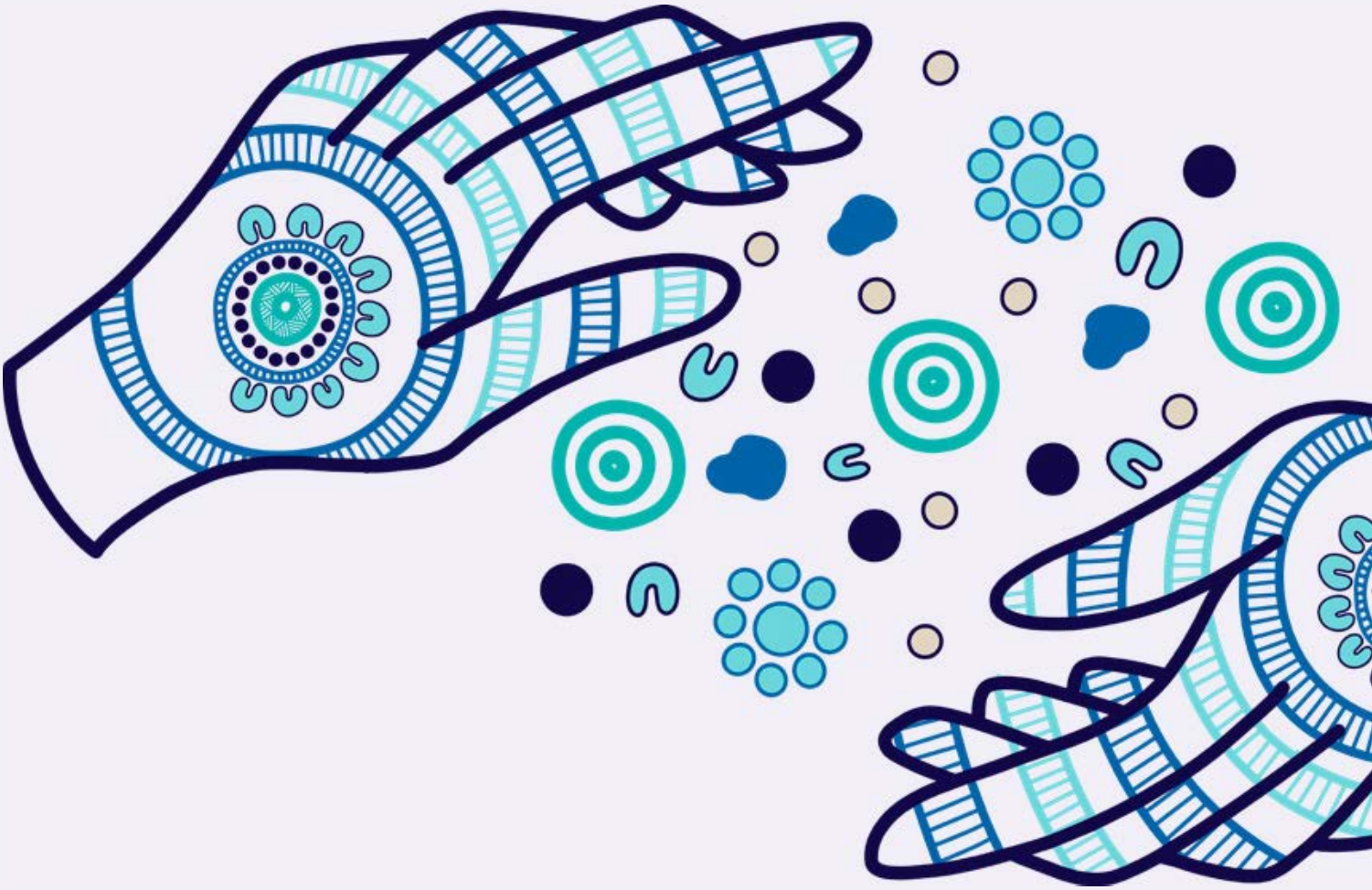
Engagement expectations

While the move to renewable energy can provide economic growth opportunities for communities, local businesses and industries, it also presents challenges and impacts. The Community Engagement and Social Value Guidelines ensure Traditional Owners can exercise more agency in shaping how the energy transition impacts and benefits their communities. Renewable energy developers will be required to show how they are meeting the following expectations when engaging with First Peoples:

- **Prioritise working in genuine partnership with the Traditional Owner Corporation to support self-determined engagement and agreement-making, ensuring decisions that affect their rights, interests and connection to Country and Sea Country are led by Traditional Owners.**
- Research and understand the rights, interests, aspirations and protocols of Traditional Owner Corporations as expressed through Whole of Country Plans, organisational strategies, renewable energy statements, and engagement protocols.
- Undertake cultural safety and cultural competency training and education appropriate to the Traditional Owners on whose lands the project is intended to be developed.
- Before engaging, research best practice and industry standards for Traditional Owner engagement and social value creation. For references, see page 35.
- Engage early in the project planning stage to understand the level of engagement, collaboration and participation with Traditional Owners. Engagement is expected to include relevant Traditional Owner Corporations and may also include Traditional Owners who are not formally recognised but assert connection to the area.
- Recognise and uphold the legislated rights of Traditional Owners.
- Provide timely and transparent information at the earliest opportunity about the project, including about impacts, risks and opportunities, and how Traditional Owner input can influence decisions.
- Enable self-determined engagement approaches, including adequate time for Traditional Owner consideration, negotiation and decision-making processes.
- Establish a dialogue with Traditional Owners to understand and address concerns and interests, arrive at solutions or come to an agreement that all parties are satisfied with.
- Seek to establish genuine and respectful partnership with Traditional Owners, including through formalised agreements, where Traditional Owners seek this.
- Work with Traditional Owners to ensure tangible and non-tangible cultural heritage and values are considered in project design and delivery.
- Undertake engagement and knowledge sharing with Traditional Owners in alignment with principles of data sovereignty.
- Support Traditional Owners with flexible resourcing to participate in engagement in ways that best meet their priorities.
- Provide appropriate remuneration where Traditional Owners are engaged. This may be through partnership, expertise, knowledge and/or services.
- Explore opportunities with the Traditional Owner Corporation for collaboration on social value and economic benefits within broader First Peoples communities, including local community-controlled organisations, chambers of commerce, health organisations, support services or education, training and employment providers.

Traditional Owners may hold their own expectations of project developers, which may be expressed through renewable energy strategies, statements and dialogue. It is up to Traditional Owners to determine whether, how and at what level they wish to engage with developers. Along with the Community Engagement and Social Value Guidelines, groups such as the First Nations Clean Energy Network have created useful guides.

Available here: firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/network_guides



Social value expectations

As part of the Community Engagement and Social Value Guidelines renewable energy project developers must demonstrate how they are meeting the following expectations in the design and delivery of social value and economic benefits:

- Work with communities to design a mix of initiatives that deliver both immediate and strategic or long-term social value and economic benefits.
- Engage with Traditional Owners following a self-determined approach to co-design social value and economic benefit initiatives.
- Develop community capacity by identifying opportunities that build on local strengths, assets, capabilities and resources.
- Align benefits with the needs, priorities and strategies already identified by local communities government, community foundations industry and research.
- Collaborate with industry and community to achieve collective impact, including coordinating on resourcing, initiatives, information sharing and engagement, and leveraging shared networks.
- Provide transparent information to the community about the project's social value and economic benefit commitments, including by publishing a Social Value and Economic Benefits Plan.

Developers will also need to determine an appropriate budget for informing VicGrid of the financial value of their social value and economic benefits initiatives.

> Developers will be encouraged to buy goods and services from First Peoples businesses, and they should consider setting targets, designing accessible contract packages, engaging sub-contractors, designing accountability methods and building the capacity of social enterprise partners.

Snapshot

What are Renewable Energy Zones (REZs)?

Renewable energy zones (REZs) are a new way to coordinate renewable energy and transmission network development to deliver reliable and affordable power for Victorians as coal closes.

Renewable Energy Zones are the areas of the state that have been identified as the most suitable to host new solar, wind and battery projects, and with access to the transmission network so energy can flow to homes and businesses across the state. Coordinating development in REZs will minimise impacts, delivery meaningful social value and economic benefits, and keep costs down for consumers.

The Victorian Government is planning the future energy grid with the batteries and high-voltage wires needed to develop renewable energy resources at scale and in a coordinated way. This is a significant transformation for our energy system, and it is being undertaken by the Victorian Government through VicGrid.

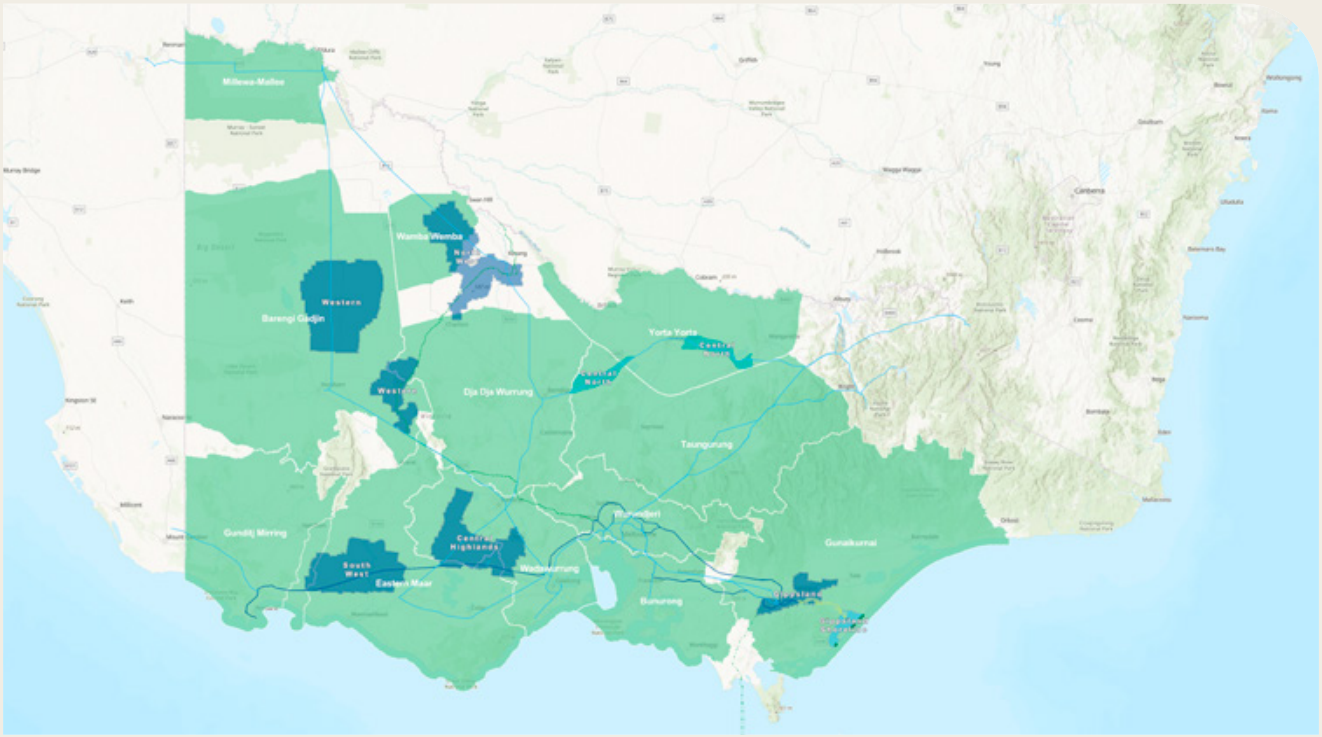
Good planning and management are needed to deliver the best outcomes for Victorians. In doing so, VicGrid is committed to putting in place a new way of planning energy infrastructure that gives Traditional Owners a real voice in the process.

VicGrid achieves these goals through the delivery of new long-term strategic plans for REZ and transmission infrastructure development called the Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP). VicGrid published the first VTP in 2025 which set out the transmission infrastructure needed over the next 15 years to enable the development of new renewable energy sources. This Plan included 6 proposed renewable energy zones.

You can find out about REZs and the Victorian Transmission Plan via this link vicgrid.com.au/transmission-planning/renewable-energy-zones

VicGrid has run extensive consultation and technical work to identify the 6 proposed REZ, taking into account input from Traditional Owners, community, landholders and industry.

The following map shows the proposed REZs identified in the 2025 VTP. These proposed areas may be altered before being declared as a REZ.



Victorian Access Regime and Grid Impact Assessment

The Victorian Access Regime will govern how much new generation and storage capacity may connect to Victoria's transmission network (referred to as the declared shared network, or DSN). It has been designed to reduce the risk of excessive network curtailment in renewable energy zones (REZs) for generators connected via a REZ access scheme. It has also been designed to reinforce Victorian Government expectations for how developers engage with and create social and economic value with Traditional Owners, communities, and landholders.

The Grid Impact Assessment will apply to projects seeking to locate outside REZs and to those not using eligible technologies locating within a REZ. These projects must pass criteria to be offered access including that they will not cause excessive curtailment of REZ generators, and that they will also meet the Victorian Government's expectations for engagement and social and economic value.

Identifying the key players in a renewable energy project

State and Commonwealth Government entities

In Victoria, several government departments, agencies and statutory bodies are involved in the planning, regulation, and support of renewable energy projects. These organisations focus on many aspects of our renewable energy transition such as policy development, environmental assessments, planning permit applications, REZ identification, regulations and much more.

Landholders

Landholders hold vast tracts of freehold land in Victoria and may be approached by developers to develop renewable energy projects. Freehold title permits the landholders to negotiate and make direct agreements with developers, subject to government planning and approvals processes and restrictions.

Traditional Owners

Traditional Owners are a group of First Peoples who are formally recognised as the traditional owners of the land, based on Aboriginal traditional and cultural associations with the land. Such recognition does not give Traditional Owners freehold title, however, there is a right to be engaged and negotiate interests for renewable energy projects, with respect to their Country. Key considerations for Traditional Owners are discussed in Part 5.

Registered Aboriginal Parties

Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) are recognised under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic) as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage for their specific Country. Renewable energy developers will be expected to engage with RAPs for cultural heritage guidance and community expectations when looking to develop a renewable energy project on specific Country.

Developers

Renewable energy development companies can adopt various models for project development. Some handle all stages of development from start to finish, while others focus specifically on obtaining approvals and then outsource the construction phase. Projects may be transferred at any point in their lifecycle, and planning approvals are generally transferable between different project owners.

Facility operators

Facility operators oversee the asset throughout its operational lifespan, including decommissioning, and earn revenue by selling the generated electricity to the market. They may be the same company as the developer, but that is not always the case.

Electricity grid operators

Facilities need a connection to the electricity grid, typically arranged through negotiations between the developer and the relevant grid operator, also known as the Network Service Provider. The specific grid operator involved depends on the facility's location and whether the connection is to the state's electricity transmission network or the local distribution network.

Electricity retailers

Facility operators generally secure a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) to sell their generated electricity to an electricity retailer, though many now also sell directly to large corporate energy users. The electricity retailer then resells this electricity to end-users, including residential, commercial, and industrial customers.

Options for financing renewable energy projects

A combination of financing methods may be used to meet the upfront investment requirements of a renewable energy project.

Direct investment refers to the equity stake investors take in renewable energy projects. These investors invest directly into the project and own a portion of the project, thereby participating in both the risks and profits.

Debt finance involves borrowing money to cover the costs of developing, building, or expanding a renewable energy project, such as a solar farm, wind farm, or hydroelectric facility.

Project finance secures funds for a project based on the project's potential future cash flow. Renewable energy PPAs may help project developers access finance for construction, by ensuring future cashflows once the project is operational.

Government support mechanisms can be an important tool in lowering capital costs by reducing financial risks and driving project development.

An example is the **Commonwealth Government's Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS)** which is designed to accelerate investment in renewable energy generation such as wind, solar and clean dispatchable capacity such as battery storage. It does this by providing revenue certainty to projects that are successful in their applications to the scheme.

> The scheme includes a focus on facilitating shared benefits to regional communities, supporting the industries that will drive our future economy and helping First People preserve their unique culture and heritage and remain on Country.

First Nations and Community Exemplars: The Commonwealth has introduced a dedicated capacity allocation and minimum megawatt set-asides specifically for projects that commit to 5% or higher equity and/or revenue-sharing agreements with First Nations communities.

To check if a project which has been awarded a winning tender under the CIS is meeting expectations please head to: firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/project_commitments

In Victoria, the **Traditional Owners Renewable Energy and First Peoples' Adoption of Renewable Energy Programs** funded a range of renewable energy related activities including:

- installation and usage of renewable energy generation and storage
- feasibility studies and business case development
- renewable energy policies and strategies
- renewable energy officers
- community engagement and workshops on renewable energy.

More information about how you might finance the opportunity to be involved in a renewable energy project is set out in Part 5.

Snapshot

Stages of a renewable energy project

Generally, the stages involved in a renewable energy project are:

Site selection involves assessing the suitability of a parcel of land for a specific renewable energy project and determining if it meets the site requirements. This stage should also consider the preliminary benefits and impacts of proceeding with the project.

Project feasibility stage assesses the technical, economic, social and environmental aspects of a potential renewable energy project. It can help identify the best options, estimate costs and benefits, and plan for implementation.

Detailed assessment involves environmental assessments which must be completed before applying for a planning permit.

Planning application is the process of applying for a permit from the Victorian Minister for Planning.

Planning assessment process, which includes the appraisal of the project's expected impacts under State and, in some cases, Commonwealth applicable legal and regulatory frameworks.

Planning approval granted by Victorian Minister for Planning when a project is deemed to comply with requirements under relevant legal and regulatory frameworks.

Construction includes the construction of the facility as well as construction of any related infrastructure such as pipelines, transmission lines, and access roads.

Operation refers to the working phase of the project which may last up to 30 years dependent on the lifecycle of the specific project and its foundational technology and materials.

Decommissioning is the final stage of a project, and it involves discontinuing and removing the facilities and ensuring the land is returned to its original condition.

Lardner Park floating solar project / Bunurong Country / Lardner

Part 5:

Developing renewable energy projects on Country

A new era: Supporting self-determination for Victoria's First Peoples

> "I acknowledge that the legal reality of British sovereignty was the State-sanctioned dispossession of First Peoples' land and waters on a devastating scale. The dispossession was fuelled in large part by the quest for wealth in the form of what the colonial state conceptualised as resources for the creation of wealth, including gold and other metals and minerals and rich pastures to enable large scale agriculture including wool production. History shows that these were viewed as riches for easy exploitation for settlers and the colonising state alike and were treated as such in accordance with the imported legal systems and processes."

The above statement by the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to the Yoorrook Justice Commission on 22 April 2024 highlights the past practices and attitudes of governments and industry towards Victoria's First Peoples in relation to resource development.

The Victorian Government's commitment to renewable energy represents a significant turning point and presents positive opportunities for Traditional Owners and First Peoples to engage meaningfully in renewable energy projects on Country. Through projects that respect cultural heritage, embed self-determination, and provide economic benefits, your communities can build a sustainable future that aligns with your values and priorities. DEECA's Pupangarli Marnmarnepu 'Owning Our Future' Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy 2020-2025 (Strategy) supports self-determination through promoting meaningful partnerships with First Peoples and communities.

The Victorian Government understands that self-determination is central to enabling First Peoples in Victoria to play a significant part in the renewable energy transition. Although self-determination is about choice and may mean different things to different people, including different First Peoples groups, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) describes self-determination as being the ability for Indigenous people to 'freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.'

Through self-determination, your communities can shape projects on Country to align your cultural values, social goals, and environmental priorities. This approach is reinforced by Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), a process that ensures First Peoples have a say in any development on their Country, underscoring their right to make decisions based on full and accurate information (see also Explanation of Terms).

The Treaty process in Victoria seeks to formalise the State's commitment to respecting First Peoples' sovereignty and interests. The Treaty process emphasises genuine partnerships that enhance community-driven decisions, especially as they relate to managing land, cultural heritage, and environmental resources.

It is important that you are fully aware of opportunities presented in the renewable energy transition in Victoria and understand how you can leverage such opportunities for the benefit of your community.

Snapshot

A new era: Self-determination for every community

DEECA acknowledges that the renewable energy transition and the opportunity to partner in renewable energy projects might not be a priority for all First Peoples across Victoria.

It is understood there are numerous reasons why First Peoples and their communities might shy away from engaging with government and industry, including concerns relating to protecting Country, or concerns about the way First Peoples and their communities have been sidelined in the past.

DEECA's role is not to dismiss the valid concerns of First Peoples, but to equip them all with the tools and knowledge to have a seat at the table if they are considering renewable energy projects on their Country. In addition to this Guide, DEECA is developing an overarching strategy for how Victoria's First Peoples want to participate in the energy transition.

Targeted for release in June 2026, the strategy will capture the needs and aspirations of Victoria's First Peoples and provide a blueprint for respectful and inclusive engagement for all renewable energy projects on their Country.

The energy transition represents significant opportunities for communities to determine their futures, however, how your community chooses to engage is entirely their choice. DEECA's role is to ensure that every community has a choice, and the knowledge and resources to make informed, self-determined decisions for each community's future.

Bunurong Country / Mornington Peninsula

Examples of First Peoples led renewable energy projects

Many First Peoples communities are successfully leading renewable energy projects, and there are great examples of sustainable renewable energy projects around Australia and the world. The following are some examples of projects that are having positive impacts on First Peoples communities in Victoria, as well as in New Zealand and Canada.

Victorian examples

Wadawurrung Renewable Energy Project

This project is located in the areas of Ballarat and Ballan, Victoria. Through the Traditional Owner Renewable Energy Program (TOREP), the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) installed solar generation and storage systems on community buildings. The project aims to lower energy costs, promote sustainability, and enable the Wadawurrung people to use clean energy.

The Wadawurrung community was involved by co-designing the project and working with engineers and consultants to integrate renewable technologies that aligned with their community needs. TOREP funding enabled WTOAC to retain project ownership and benefit from reduced energy expenses, enhancing local sustainability.

Barengi Gadjin Solar Project

This project is located on Wotjobaluk Nations Country, in Horsham, Victoria. Led by the Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLC), it involved installing a battery and solar system to provide renewable energy to the Council's head office and depot building.

The project aimed to decrease energy costs and reduce dependency on non-renewable energy. BGLC actively managed the project through the First Peoples Adoption of Renewable Energy program, ensuring all bill savings flowed back into community and on-Country programs.

The Council collaborated with a values-aligned local contractor to ensure culturally respectful project delivery while supporting the regional economy.

International examples

New Zealand – Ngāti Tūwharetoa Hydro Partnership

The location for this project is the Tongariro River, near Lake Taupō. Ngāti Tūwharetoa has entered a co-management partnership for hydroelectric facilities on the Tongariro River, integrating tribal governance with the energy project. The aim is to harness hydropower while preserving the ecological health of culturally significant waterways.

Ngāti Tūwharetoa holds significant control in the partnership, with revenues contributing to community development and conservation initiatives. They also actively monitor and manage ecological impacts through a co-designed governance framework.

Canada – Henvey Inlet Wind Project

The location for this project is in Ontario. The Henvey Inlet First Nation developed Canada's largest First Nations-owned wind facility with a capacity of 300 MW. The purpose of the project was to produce renewable energy while generating sustainable revenue for the First Nation.

Henvey Inlet holds a 50% equity stake in the project, with revenues directed to health, education, and infrastructure within the community. Community members were actively involved in both construction and operational stages, with training programs to build technical skills for long-term employment.

If you or your community organisation knows of any other communities currently taking part in renewable energy projects, it may be a good idea to speak to them so you or your community organisation can gain a better understanding about renewable energy projects, firsthand.

Considerations for developing renewable energy projects on Country

If you are considering a renewable energy project on your Country, or if there is a proposed renewable energy project on your Country, there are some key points that you should consider. These key points will assist you or your community organisation to stay across what is occurring so you can ensure respectful engagement of your community throughout various stages of the project.

The First Nations Clean Energy Network has developed a set of principles which highlight respect for land and cultural heritage, economic benefits for communities, transparent communication, and the necessity of obtaining Free Prior Informed Consent.

> It is highly recommended to consider in-depth resources from the First Nations Clean Energy network here: firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/network_guides

The most notable guides on this page include:

- Best Practice Principles for Clean Energy Projects
- Clean Energy Negotiations Guide for First Nations
- Clean Energy Planning Toolkit for First Nations

Summary of key considerations

- Understand your legal rights
- Identify the opportunity
- Identify how you will finance the opportunity
- Ensure the site for the project is appropriate
- Make sure you have appropriate representatives
- Be involved in co-designing the project
- Prepare to negotiate
- Recognise potential benefits for your community
- Ensure your rights are documented in agreements
- Ensure the project is managed appropriately
- Develop strategies to address any issues
- Identify appropriate advisors to assist your community.

Snapshot

Understand your legal rights

Understanding and exercising your legal rights can really empower you and your community to participate in and benefit from the renewable energy transition. Some examples of these legal rights include protecting your cultural heritage, the right to negotiate project details on your Country, and agreement making to benefit you and your community. Below is a broad overview of the key legal frameworks specifically relating to First Peoples rights that provide the foundation for respectful and collaborative engagement with various stakeholders.

Native Title and Land Rights

Under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), native title and certain land rights recognise the traditional rights of First Peoples to their lands and waters. In Victoria, native title may exist if a First Peoples group can prove an ongoing connection to the land under their traditional laws and customs. Where native title is found to exist, renewable energy projects must address these rights, engaging with Traditional Owners to negotiate access, compensation, or participation in the project. Generally, native title does not grant exclusive ownership but provides rights such as practising traditions, hunting, fishing, and accessing cultural sites. Developers must consult with native title holders and may require consent to proceed with projects on your Country.

Traditional Owner Settlement Act and Agreements

The *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)* (TO Settlement Act) in Victoria provides a framework for the State to recognise Traditional Owner rights through agreements that include land ownership, land use, and joint management. These agreements may involve land transfers, cultural heritage protections, and natural resource management rights. For renewable energy projects, the TO Settlement Act means developers need to work with Traditional Owners under these agreements, particularly if the project falls within their recognised settlement areas. These agreements facilitate collaboration and allow Traditional Owners to have a say in how the land is used and managed, including any renewable energy developments.

Through the TO Settlement Act, agreements can be made with developers or other stakeholders to incorporate provisions for Traditional Owners to participate in economic activities related to renewable energy projects, such as employment, co-ownership, or revenue-sharing arrangements. These interests may align with the goals of Traditional Owners for environmental stewardship, sustainable development and community empowerment.

Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage laws protect places, objects, and traditions of significance to First Peoples and their communities, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* in Victoria, renewable energy projects must comply with regulations that protect cultural heritage sites. This includes completing Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) when development occurs in culturally sensitive areas. These plans assess potential impacts on cultural heritage and outline measures to minimize harm. The recognised RAPs are usually the bodies that represent the relevant First Peoples' cultural heritage matters (see also **Interests of Registered Aboriginal Parties** below). Engaging early with RAPs is essential to identify and protect cultural heritage, including sacred sites, artifacts, and landscapes significant to the community.

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Climate Change

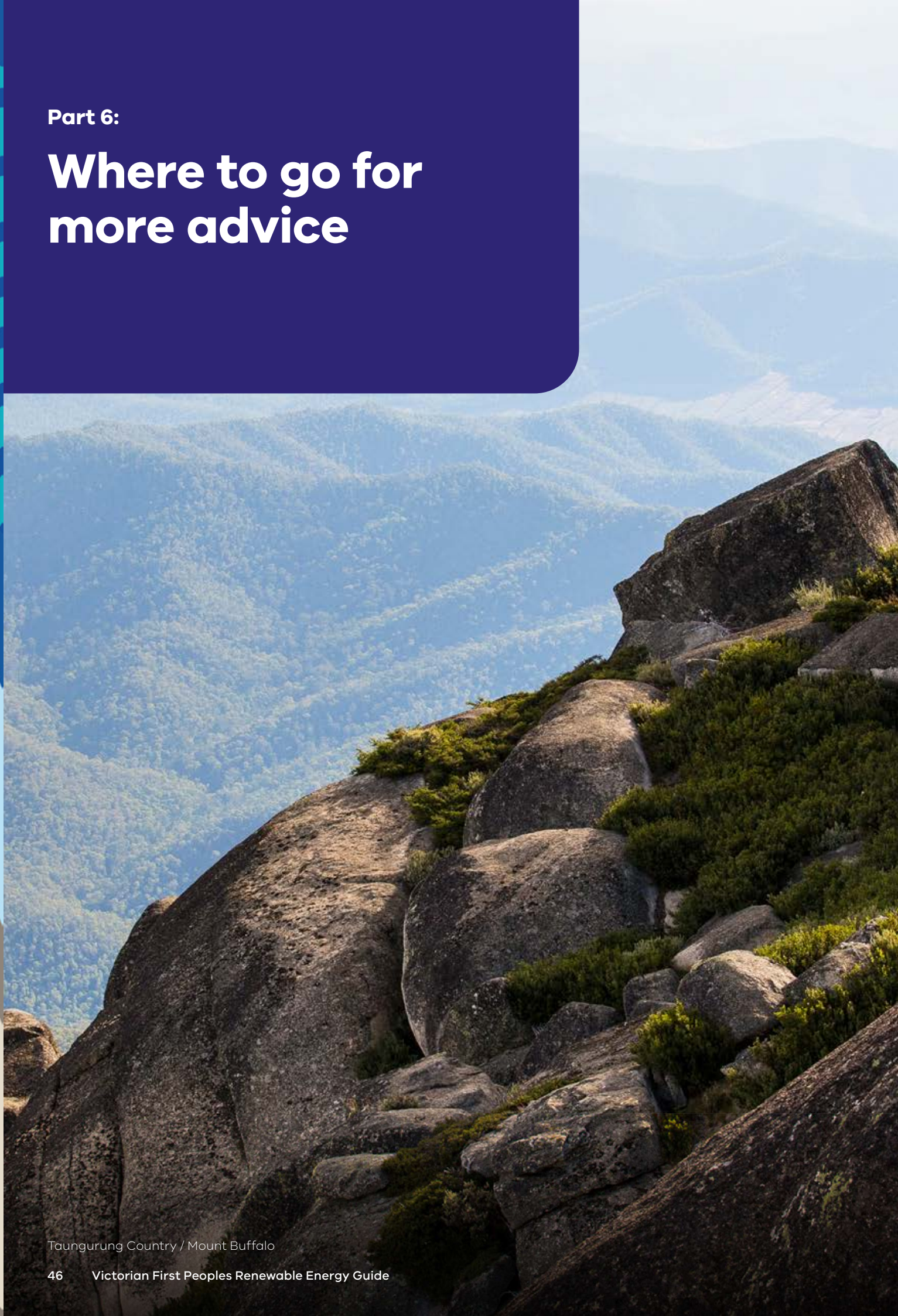
ICIP refers to the rights of First Peoples to their cultural heritage, knowledge, and intellectual property, including traditional knowledge of the environment. Renewable energy projects should respect and incorporate First Peoples' environmental knowledge to promote sustainable practices that align with traditional land management. As climate change impacts First Peoples' communities, ICIP is critical for recognising traditional ecological knowledge that contributes to climate resilience. First Peoples may leverage ICIP rights to ensure that renewable energy projects are carried out in ways that honour and protect their cultural values and practices.

Interests of Registered Aboriginal Parties

In Victoria, 12 RAPs represent the interests of specific First Peoples communities in managing cultural heritage under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. RAPs have a statutory role in advising on cultural heritage protection, providing input into CHMPs, and approving or advising on development impacts. For renewable energy projects, working with the relevant RAP is essential to meet legal obligations around cultural heritage and gain insights into the community's interests. RAPs advocate for the preservation of heritage and can be key partners in achieving respectful and compliant project development (see also **Cultural Heritage** above).

Part 6:

Where to go for more advice



Taungurung Country / Mount Buffalo

Organisation	Role	Contact
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)	DEECA has a dedicated First Peoples Energy Team to assist you with your energy related queries.	energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/first-peoples-energy Firstpeoplesenergy@deeca.vic.gov.au
First Nations Clean Energy Network	Check out their website for excellent tips and guides to support you and your community when considering renewable energy projects.	firstnationscleanenergy.org.au
VicGrid	Find out more about the coordination and planning of Victoria's renewable energy zones.	energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/vicgrid
Offshore Wind Energy Victoria (OWEV)	Information and updates on the development of offshore wind energy in Victoria	energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/offshore-wind-energy
Solar Victoria	Find out more about the benefits of switching to solar.	solar.vic.gov.au
SEC	Find out more about how the SEC is accelerating the delivery of renewable energy.	secvictoria.com.au/home
Department of Transport and Planning	Learn about environmental assessments in Victoria and projects being assessed.	planning.vic.gov.au/environmental-assessments
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Learn about how concession cards and utility relief grants can help if experiencing hardship.	services.dffh.vic.gov.au/energy
Energy Safe Victoria	The state's energy safety regulator, responsible for electricity, gas and pipeline safety.	energysafe.vic.gov.au
Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV)	If unable to resolve electricity and gas issues with your retailer first, contact EWOV to form a complaint for them to investigate.	ewov.com.au/start-a-complaint
Energy Assistance Program	A free, confidential service available to help with energy bills and retailers.	energy.vic.gov.au/households/help-paying-your-energy-bills/energy-assistance-program
Victorian Energy Compare	A state backed website that can be used to help find a better electricity, gas or solar offer, relevant to your area.	compare.energy.vic.gov.au
Victorian Energy Upgrades	Discounts and rebates on energy-efficient products and services	energy.vic.gov.au/victorian-energy-upgrades/about
Clean Energy Council	Find out about Australia's peak body for the clean energy industry and its members.	cleanenergycouncil.org.au
ARENA	Learn about the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and its funding programs.	arena.gov.au
IBA – Indigenous Business Australia	Find out what IBA has to offer in relation to business and partnerships.	iba.gov.au
National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA)	Find out what NIAA is doing to support Indigenous landowners and native title holders to use their land for economic development.	niaa.gov.au
Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation	Find out how they can support renewable energy projects on Country.	ilsc.gov.au

Chloe Chatterton

About the artist

Chloe Chatterton is a proud Wadawurrung woman and First Nations artist residing in Wurundjeri Country in the western suburbs.

She always loved art and its capacity to turn written and spoken words into images. Her work is inspired by her deep spiritual connection to Wadawurrung Country, where her ancestors have cared for and nurtured the land for generations. Her fine art practice is contemporary in nature and uses digital media to express her connection to culture and Country.

> 'The coastal, inland, and mountainous landscapes of Wadawurrung Country deeply move Chloe, and she finds returning to Wadawurrung Country a restorative and rejuvenating experience.'

The stories and teachings of Chloe's Wadawurrung heritage form the basis for her creative work, which explores places of significance and traditional symbolism. The coastal, inland, and mountainous landscapes of Wadawurrung Country deeply move Chloe, and she finds returning to Wadawurrung Country a restorative and rejuvenating experience. It allows her to reconnect with her cultural roots, a profoundly meaningful experience. Art ultimately serves as a way for Chloe to visually communicate Wadawurrung history, stories and culture. Teaching is also a passion, where Chloe strives to close the gap and break down the barriers many face in education, to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to reach their full potential and pursue their passions in life.

MAIWAN (Long Time)

This artwork highlights sustainability and enduring energy. It honors the timelessness of Country, fire, wind and water. The meeting places are where voices are heard and decisions are shaped. They are decision making centres. And symbolise the shared responsibility of communities.

Energy comes from many sources including fire, wind and water. Each element is symbolically represented within this piece celebrating their vital role is sustaining the world around us. Knowledge is not rushed. It is built layer by layer, passed along the same paths walked by our ancestors and by generations before us.

This story speaks of a future where renewable energy moves with Country and is guided by the Traditional owners that care and belong to it.

Artwork meaning

Currents

Symbolises ocean currents (kinetic energy).

Water and bay

Energy comes from many sources including fire, wind and water. Each element is symbolically represented within this piece celebrating their vital role is sustaining the world around us.

Knowledge

Knowledge comes from many sources. Elders, community, experiences and Country.

Line work patterns

Represents Country being active and alive. Energy is a part of the landscape. Caring for Country is inseparable from energy planning.

Meeting Places

Scattered through the art piece to symbolise decision making centers (different groups of people, perspectives and responsibilities).

Symbolises the relationships and knowledge involved in renewable energy.

Represents shared governance rather than centralised control (self determination, connection and respect).

Yaluk (river)

Rivers link communities, carry stories and nourish country. It sustains and connects us. Energy flows like water. It is reliable, steady and shared.

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