

FRIDAY 18 FEBRUARY, 2022

REBUILDING AND RECOVERY: RACV SOLAR POWERS EAST GIPPSLAND

East Gippsland's Swifts Creek Community Hall, Wairewa Hall and Clifton Creek Community Centre are now equipped with solar power and battery storage – at no cost to the communities – as part of RACV's \$1 million Solar in the Regions investment program.

The investment follows RACV Solar's response to the 2019-20 bushfires affecting Gippsland, including a \$25,000 donation to the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund and a donation of a RACV flatbed truck and driver to deliver emergency supplies and equipment to the hardest hit areas.

The Solar in the Regions program aims to improve safety for regional towns by adapting community buildings and installing solar power and battery storage to make them more resilient in extreme weather events and bushfires.

The buildings are now designed to function independently of the grid when required by ensuring communications and critical power sources are still available during an emergency or when the grid goes down.

East Gippsland Shire Council Mayor, Cr Mark Reeves, said the project has had a positive impact on the towns in East Gippsland that were hit the hardest in the black summer fires.

"Being able to keep the lights on, have refrigeration and power our recovery efforts in these buildings means our towns can now keep the essential services running when they need it the most," Cr Reeves said.

"Aside from emergency recovery, these systems will assist in reducing the power running costs of the building for all the activities and events that are held in these spaces. Council is very pleased to have been part of the Solar in the Regions program."

RACV Solar East Gippsland Manager Landon Moss said that the program has delivered energy resilience for East Gippsland in the aftermath of the black summer bushfires.

"My local East Gippsland region was devastated by the bushfires of 2019-2020. Our teams did what they could to support the community at the time, such as building and donating mobile solar and battery systems and helping to deploy generators to areas in need," Mr Moss said.

"There were so many stories of tragic loss but an equal number of incredible acts of kindness and working together. I have been reflecting on how my friends, family and fellow community members were impacted by the bushfires, and how much delivering this project means a lot to me on a personal and professional level.

"The scale of what the Solar in the Regions program has achieved, and the impact it's had on the psyche of the towns – many of them still recovering – has been heart-warming. It helps us all understand the significant role that solar can play in the future."

RACV Solar's team in Gippsland also undertook the following activities to support the community at the time of the 2019-20 bushfires:

- Emergency power packs made up of two mobile Powerwall units were wired into a switchboard and power points which were deployed to wildlife shelters and other isolated communities.
- Donated a complete off-grid system to the Goongerah Wombat Orphanage enabling them to care for injured wildlife; and
- Donation of a 30kWh battery to the Mallacoota radio station to help provide backup power for emergency broadcasts, and more.
- Provided a solar and storage system to the Mallacoota SES.

The solar installation at all three East Gippsland halls include rooftop solar plus a battery that can provide backup power during an emergency **or grid outage**.

-ENDS-

Further information:

- Swifts Creek: 12kW rooftop Solar system and 9.6kWh of battery storage.
- Clifton Creek: 7.35kW rooftop Solar system and 16kWh of battery storage with backup power, system installed ready for future Generator integration.
- Wairewa Hall: 10.36kW rooftop Solar system and 12kWh of battery storage with backup power, system installed ready for future Generator integration.

RACV's Solar in the Regions program will see 27 installs across Victoria where RACV is installing solar panels and batteries on regional community halls, sporting grounds and recreation reserves. 21 installations have already taken place including at sites in Omeo, Tallangatta, Wairewa, Wodonga, Goongerah, Clifton Creek, Yea, Aireys Inlet, Calivil, Anglesea, Heathcote and Dederang. For more information, please visit racv.com.au/solar.

***High resolution images** https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1i9-STO_zjzhvTXGwr4jKtYjyUQCODMy

***Video**

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