

FRIDAY 3 DECEMBER, 2021

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE: RACV POWERS AIREYS INLET COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Aireys Inlet Community Centre is now equipped with solar power capability as part of RACV's \$1 million Solar in the Regions community investment program.

RACV aims to improve safety for regional towns by adapting regional community buildings and installing solar power to make them more resilient to extreme weather events. These buildings are designed to continue functioning independently of the primary communications and power networks in an emergency.

Aireys Inlet Community Centre could potentially play a role in supporting the community to recover from emergency events within the Shire. Several recent modifications to the site have created a building that can now better withstand different weather conditions.

Surf Coast Shire Council Mayor, Cr Libby Stapleton said the project delivers an important action in the Council's Climate Emergency Corporate Response Plan to establish a best practice building demonstration site.

"This location demonstrates environmental leadership and will improve the resilience of this community facility both now and in the future.

"The new solar system and the battery will complement several safety upgrades including the addition of a new rooftop sprinkler, which will increase the building's capacity to resist fire impact and its capacity to support community recovery after emergency events," Cr Stapleton said.

"This work will ensure our community facilities are adapting to the impacts of our changing climate and helping to keep our communities safe."

RACV Solar CEO Andy McCarthy expects there will be other projects modelled off the Aireys Inlet site and that councils in the G21 Geelong Region Alliance have all demonstrated exceptional leadership.

"It is great to have a future-proof and retrofitted centre incorporating solar and state-of-the-art technologies on the surf coast not only for emergencies, but also for everyday use. The costs associated with power bills can now instead be put towards other initiatives the community can enjoy," Mr McCarthy said.

The solar installation at Aireys includes rooftop solar plus a battery that can provide backup power, in addition to the extensive weather proofing work done across the whole site.

The project has reduced the flammability of the grounds through fire-wise landscaping, and the surrounding bushland encompasses open forest and woodland, which is being actively managed to reduce the overall fire risk to the area.

Other works include ember-proof mesh to protect the assets, the relocation of the pipes and water tank and recalculating running times on the external sprinkler system.

Future renewal works on site will also be in-step with climate adaptation considerations so the hall can continue to keep the community in good stead for the future.

-ENDS-

Further information

Aireys Inlet is one of 25 towns across Victoria where RACV is installing solar panels and batteries on regional community halls, sporting grounds and recreation reserves as part of its Solar in the Regions program. 16 installations have already taken place including at sites in Omeo, Tallangatta, Wairewa, Wodonga, Goongerah, Clifton Creek, Yea, Aireys Inlet, Calivil, Anglesea, Heathcote and Dederang and will be followed by sites including Winchelsea, Hamilton, Harrietville, Hawkesdale, Warrnambool, Balmoral and Mirranatwa. For more information, please visit racv.com.au/solar and geelongcommunitysolar.com.au.

Media enquiries:

Video News Reel footage and **high-resolution images** are available for use.

Photo opportunity at Aireys Inlet Community Centre Wednesday 1 December 2021 at 2pm with RACV Solar team and Surf Coast Shire Council Mayor and other stakeholders.

RACV Media

Phone: 0417 041 398

Email: media@racv.com.au