

**FRIDAY 13 AUGUST, 2021**

## **\$1 MILLION INVESTMENT IN REGIONAL SOLAR ON TRACK**

RACV's \$1 million investment in free solar energy systems for regional Victorians is on track with the program reaching its halfway mark in the two-year program of installations.

As part of the program, twenty-four towns across Victoria are receiving a solar and battery system worth about \$40,000 on average. This is the largest program of its kind being rolled out by a non-government organisation in Australia with twelve installations already completed.

Solar panels and batteries are being installed on community halls, sporting grounds and recreation reserves that act as emergency safe places and relief centres during bushfires and other extreme weather events. Each installation includes rooftop solar plus a battery that can provide back-up power in case the grid goes down.

As well as being designated meeting points in an emergency, these facilities play a broader community role as hubs for events, sport and other activities.

The twelve completed installations have taken place across Victorian regions, 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, Harrierville, Hawkesdale, Warrnambool, Balmoral and Mirranatwa.

Community events have been hosted by RACV in Omeo and Tallangatta providing opportunities for local communities to come together and learn more about solar power and its benefits. Further events have been planned throughout 2021, restrictions permitting.

RACV Solar CEO Andy McCarthy said RACV is making solar energy more accessible for Victorians.

"The bushfires of summer 2020 that devastated many regional towns highlighted the importance of energy resilience during a natural disaster," Mr McCarthy said.

"We're not just putting solar panels on the roof so people can save on electricity. We are providing energy so people will have electricity when they really need it in critical situations.

"This is particularly important as so many regions across Victoria are becoming increasingly bushfire prone and vulnerable to more extreme weather events, such as the recent storms that saw many without power across the state."

RACV has proactively reached out to local councils and community groups to identify the most suitable sites that would deliver the greatest benefit to each community. Many of the sites are in remote locations where electricity supply from the grid is unstable and where access can often be constrained.

**-ENDS-**

**The following quotes can be attributed to some of the community partners who have received a donation as part of the program:**

**Jamie Mackenzie, President of the Anglesea Football Netball Club:** "On behalf of the Anglesea Football Netball Club, I would like to thank RACV for installing solar panels and a battery system on our clubhouse. Taking practical steps like this to prepare for extreme weather events is a welcome necessity and it's fantastic RACV has the foresight and motivation to do this."

**Wendy Graham, Secretary, Dederang Recreation Reserve Committee of Management Inc:** "Our solar system is up and running as of yesterday and I want to thank RACV sincerely for including Dederang in this program. The young men who completed the installation were a lovely group of people, very professional in their approach and explained the working of the system to me very simply as I requested. Little communities like Dederang are often forgotten, we are very grateful to RACV."

**Peter Haysey, Projects Coordinator, Tallangatta Sports Centre:** "I cannot emphasise enough how important our community buildings are in an extreme weather event. During the 2020 bushfires, Rowen Park in Tallangatta provided critical infrastructure to the emergency services. This project will now provide emergency back-up power in the event of any future natural disaster. The donation of a solar and battery system from RACV gives us peace of mind that we will still have power to run the facility during an emergency. Thank you RACV."

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