



## 2022 AGM – Presidents Report

### 26 October 2022, Yackandandah Court House

This report provides a summary of the activities for Totally Renewable Yackandandah Inc during the 2021/22 financial year.

### Overview

The 2021 / 2022 reporting year recorded some keystone projects coming to an end and set the path for an ostensibly smooth transition into the next phase of projects. But there is nothing smooth about it beyond the persistence to keep turning up and always saying, “what needs to be done now?” And then starting the process of doing all over again!

July 2021 saw Yackandandah launch the [Yack01](#) community battery with a fantastic event that got strong media coverage, both before and afterwards. The battery is owned by Indigo Power and has now been operating for a year and doing well despite the hiccups that any pilot project encounters. It has been a significant learning exercise and TRY and Indigo Power will certainly take that experience into future community battery projects.

Much of our energy up until May this year was directed to finishing our [100% Feasibility Study](#). This almost two-year effort has given us valuable insight into how we can reach our 100% renewables goal and where to concentrate our energies. The major realisation was that mid-scale renewable energy generation (2-5MW) in the narrow Yackandandah Valley is challenging, but that we can still reach our 100% goal by 2024 by continuing with rooftop installations, community batteries and energy efficiency measures. In addition, the Black Summer bushfires, Covid pandemic, storms in Victoria late last year, and widespread floods across NSW and Victoria this year have sharpened the imperative for resilience in our thinking. This has been evident not only among our committee but also strongly in the Yackandandah community throughout the Feasibility Study.

Responding to the Feasibility Study results, we put together a grant application late last year for funding to resource further household battery and solar installations, with an emphasis on low-income households. This was not successful, but has evolved into a more comprehensive strategy that has community resilience at its core. With the assistance of a significant philanthropic donation, we are now seeking co-funding to undertake a second community battery, augmented solar and battery installations on more community buildings, and a mobile backup generator to service prepared community facilities – all aiding in resilience during emergencies. This will allow our community to access critical services like heating and cooling, cooking, toileting and shelter during sustained outages and emergencies, and also reduces costs and emissions.

We have hopes that this will form part of a broader resilience framework. This is a truly exciting project that emphasises how the resilience pieces we have been working on are real and useful at a systems level; making a difference to how we navigate increasing climate variability as well as reducing emissions.

In the background to these activities, several smaller projects have continued. After some sustained hard work, the long-hoped for EV charger is now complete and operating in the Wyndham St Council carpark at the Senior Citizens Centre. We have also purchased an infrared thermal camera, which is now available for use by residents. And a long-awaited installation of a solar/battery system and backup generator at the SES is almost complete and is a core resilience component in our plans.

With the increasing scope of TRY’s activities, we have also long contemplated how we can continue to operate with only volunteer labour. The governance of both TRY and the grant funds for the projects we manage is significant and, if added together across the committee, would involve at least two days each week. In recent months we have been working on this issue in earnest and hope that in the not-too-distant future we will have secured sufficient funds to enable us to fund a coordinator to run the day-to-day



operations. This would allow the committee to concentrate on the strategic and creative work that TRY's mission involves.

Also in the background to all the above are the many enquiries from communities, organisations and media to which we continue to respond. Quite a few of the committee have contributed to this effort by giving talks, interviews and presentations in the last year. The interest in TRY's activities is stronger than ever and has included participating in research interviews, presenting a submission to a Parliamentary Inquiry, presentations to the "Battery Fever" event at Beechworth, and an online community energy seminar in Adelaide.

A significant event was a day of interviews in March this year with the ABC Science unit. They released a podcast series called "[Who's Gonna Save Us](#)" with TRY forming a key part of Episode 6 on Community Power, which was released with an accompanying detailed online article and news item in September 2022. The attention has been a gratifying if exhausting recognition of Yackandandah's work and the significance it holds for Australian communities.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of the TRY committee members. The prevalence of zoom meetings in the last two years has somewhat damped our committee interactions but notwithstanding, new committee members Clare Bishop, Frank Dyall and Chris Glanville have cemented their valuable contributions and have been joined by a new committee member Chris Murphy.

Sadly, Juliette Milbank had to step back from the President's position in March this year due to other commitments, but is continuing in the communications role. Thankfully, Matthew Charles-Jones has stepped into his former role without missing a beat.

TRY is forever grateful for the contributions of all of our committee members and the Yackandandah community. The combined passion, commitment, care and sheer doggedness mean that Yackandandah is still forging ahead to the 100% goal. It continues to feel more important than ever and quietly (and sometimes not so quietly) we 'try' to serve the Yackandandah community to meet the many challenges with ambition and innovation.

Juliette Milbank                      &                      Matthew Charles-Jones  
July 2021 – May 2022                      May 2022 onwards



## Projects

### ***100% Feasibility Study***

Our \$346,000 *100% Feasibility Study* finally wound up in May 2022 after almost two years of determined and committed effort. The final year saw the completion of the technical report and the production of a reader-friendly Community Outcomes report (both on our website on the [Publications](#) page). The long-planned for, but COVID delayed, community engagement activities went ahead in April and May, with a town-wide survey, consultation with community groups, a public focus group, and a town-hall celebration. Funded by AusIndustry's *Rural and Remote Communities Reliability Fund*, the feasibility study examined the medium-scale energy generation and storage infrastructure required to transition Yackandandah to 100% renewable energy. The results showed that, due to opportunity costs and lack of scale, continuing with rooftop solar and battery installations, energy efficiency measures, and community batteries was the simplest and best-value way for Yackandandah to reach a 100% renewables target – and was achievable by 2024. The detailed energy consumption analysis and modelling, and technical and financial feasibility modelling, have provided critical information both for Yackandandah and other towns considering similarly ambitious targets. The study also identified potential community battery and pumped hydro sites that can be actioned as the market better incorporates renewable energy, energy prices increase and sufficient funds are raised.

### ***SES solar, battery and generator installation***

Over the past two years, TRY has been working alongside the VICSES and the Yackandandah SES Unit to build support and raise money to add a truly redundant power supply for the Yack facility. TRY and SES are now thrilled to confirm that the local SES unit is now the proud owner of a power supply that will withstand electricity network outages – a fully installed 6kW solar array, 16kWh battery and a 10kVA diesel generator.

The system will reduce the operating budget for the SES volunteers and we hope allow them to invest in other needed equipment. But more importantly, the system will both reduce carbon emissions day by day and mean that during emergencies, the volunteer capability can focus on the critical work of caring for community. As always – big shout out to the dedicated volunteers!

So TRY now enjoys back up power supplies at both the SES and the CFA and work is underway to repeat the same in other critical community buildings.

As is always the case with these projects, TRY has leaned heavily on the support of others, so huge note of thanks to funding support from Indigo Shire Council, FRRR and the ANZ Foundation. Special note of thanks also to Solar Integrity who supported the project over a sustained period both financially and with patience.

### ***EV Charger***

Many of TRY's projects take more than a matter of moments to activate. The completion of a new EV Charger in Yackandandah occurred in August 2022. Though it occurred outside the reporting period TRY did much of the key EV installation works during the 21/22 financial year.

Along with local supporters, businesses and Indigo Shire Council, TRY gathered on August 28<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the installation of a Tritium 50kW DC public electric vehicle charger in a council owned carpark. Representing Indigo Shire, Mayor Gaffney cut the ribbon on the charger and acknowledged contributions from across the community. Fortunately, all this was activated with funds granted from the Victorian Government's Destination Charging Across Victoria (DCAV) Program.

Critically, YCDCo has been a key funder of the charger and has also taken on ownership of the unit and entrusting Indigo Power with the responsibility to operate and maintain the charger. Huge thanks are also



extended to Indigo Shire who have facilitated the lease of car parking places, project management inputs and civil works on site.

Amazing to see this projected realised and may it be the first of many, and a volume of EVs to match!

### ***Solar and Battery Systems for low-income households***

One continuing effort by TRY is the scouting for and application to many grant and funding opportunities. Some of which we are lucky enough to succeed in winning! But we also miss some.

During the reporting year, and in recognition of the need to ensure everyone in our community can participate in the many benefits of an energy transition, TRY applied for funds to support people living on low incomes.

The grant application was to the federal 'Black Summer Bushfire Fund.' Unfortunately, we were not successful in receiving funds, but we have created a template we hope to apply to other opportunities. Our project adopts a simple principle of chasing funds to subsidise solar systems, batteries and heat pumps. The emphasis is simple, it is very powerful to not so much reduce the price of electricity, but rather help dramatically slash their consumption – and at the same time build a corpus of energy systems across town to build resilience and progress toward 100%, and eventually a town-wide microgrid.

### ***Yack02 and Resilience Project***

Works with the Yack SES and CFA, along with the public halls have been foretelling of a larger effort to build resilience for our township. Already Yackandandah enjoys solar and battery systems at the Public Hall and Sports Park. Our effort now extends to make these energy systems large enough to offer genuine service during an emergency – especially if we establish ways to connect generators as required.

Efforts are underway to raise funds to provide emergency services to other critical buildings which could include the Yackandandah Community Centre, supermarket, school, pubs and other critical commercial buildings.

More, the critical questions we are facing consider just how does Yack prepare for future emergencies and town wide struggles? Watch this space..

### ***Project EDGE***

Over the past two years, TRY has also been nudging along the nation-leading virtual power plant trial, titled Project EDGE. This program is an Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) funded program with the Australian Energy Market Operator, Mondo, AusNet and communities across northeast Victoria.

The program simulates a dynamic and two-way energy marketplace capable of hosting increasing volumes of renewable energy – both on the electricity grid and in electricity trading. To achieve this simulation Mondo is offering extra subsidies to the already attractive funds from Solar Victoria. If you are a business or a resident in northeast Victoria, please refer to the Mondo website to learn more or even express interest.

[www.mondo.com.au/edge](http://www.mondo.com.au/edge)