



2023 AGM – Presidents Report

25 October 2023, Yackandandah Court House

This report provides a summary of the activities for Totally Renewable Yackandandah Inc during the 2022/23 financial year.

Overview

The 2022/23 reporting year has flown by and as always we are staggered by the tremendous support and interest we receive, not only nationally and internationally but from our own town of Yackandandah – the reason we are all here! Our *100% Feasibility Study* has directed us to where we need to go – more behind-the-meter solar, battery and heat pump systems on more community, residential and business buildings across the town. This is the work our volunteers are continuing to push with tenacity, creativity and skill.

In late January TRY was honoured to be awarded the *Community Group of the Year 2023* on Australia Day by Indigo Shire Council. After some solid achievements in 2022 it was a lovely acknowledgement of both the work and collaboration that TRY does with Indigo Shire, on nearly 100% volunteer power! Our relationship with them is based on mutual respect and is one that brings benefits to residents and the council.

One of the highlights of this year was a meeting with Energy and Climate Change Minister, the Hon. Chris Bowen, at his office in parliament after being introduced by Dr. Helen Haines, Independent Member for Indi. TRY representatives Clare Bishop, Matthew Charles-Jones and Kim McConchie presented Minister Bowen with a sculpture designed and crafted by Yackandandah's own Ben Gilbert of the Agency of Sculpture.

We delivered our strong view that communities need to be involved in the proposed National Energy Transformation Partnerships (NETP), rather than relying on a 'top-down' corporate approach. The motivated and mobilised community of Yackandandah have been a vital feature in the changing of our local energy landscape, one that must be valued when completing this process around the country. We are so excited that our little town of Yack is having such far-reaching impacts and gaining the attention of those who make meaningful decisions about our nation's future.

A ripple flowing through the last few years in both TRY and Yackandandah has been an increased focus on resilience alongside our broader goal of 100%. Yackandandah has been threatened by bushfire three times in the last 20 years. During climate driven weather events, it is vital that Yackandandah residents have access to power and emergency communication services. TRY has installed solar PV, battery and generator systems on both the CFA and SES buildings to provide enhanced resilience to these essential services and our Emergency Resilience project is expanding that into a broader town-wide framework. Further, our general focus on local, renewable energy and storage, bolsters our ability to pump water and communicate with our neighbours during events that we hope we don't encounter but are nonetheless becoming more prevalent in our changing climate.

Since the *Yack01* community battery was installed (or maybe even before!) we have declared that *Yack02* is very much in the works, and now a battery is ready to be ordered. This year regular meetings with stakeholders and partners have pushed this project along. *Yack02*, a \$360,000 project, is intended to dramatically reduce the electricity bills of the clubs that use the Sports Park facilities, and to be a place of emergency recovery in the aftermath of a disaster, which ties into our resilience goal.

We have been enormously grateful to accept a generous sum towards this project from the Yackandandah Folk Festival committee and we would like to thank them wholeheartedly for their ongoing support of TRY and enthusiasm in getting the festival to 100% renewables alongside our town.

Large projects like these continue to highlight the difficulty of relying on volunteers to project manage such complex projects with geographical, ownership and stakeholder nuances that keep throwing challenges into



our windshield no matter how far down the track we are! For projects such as this, we have multiple volunteers chasing grants, writing reports, project managing 3-4 stakeholder groups such as government, community groups and businesses, as well as working on other projects and general administration. It is no mean feat!

Thanks to financial support from YCDCo we have been able to fund a part-time Programs Coordinator role for a few months that has relieved the burden on our volunteers. This role includes a focus on administration, relationship building, fundraising and project management. We are extremely grateful for YCDCo's support and their ongoing commitment to work with TRY for the benefit of our town.

We have also engaged some expertise in fundraising to further hone TRY's ability to secure funding for our projects and ensure that the significant load of applying for and managing projects does not fall entirely on volunteers. This is a component of our strategic plan and will involve some assessment of our relevance in a wider context. As a town forging towards the 100% goal, we are considering how can we add value to other communities and provide valuable insights to help them achieve their goals.

All of our projects are made possible by the ongoing commitment of the TRY committee members. It was wonderful to have so many in-person meetings after the realities of Zoom meetings the previous year. We welcomed new committee members Kevin Poyner, Robynne Hall, Jervis Whitley, Katie Friedlieb and Blake Edwards this year, who have already proved themselves invaluable, with qualifications and experience ranging from engineering, energy, electric vehicles, architecture and communications. We sadly said goodbye to Donna Jones and Denis Ginnivan as they stepped back to focus on other commitments but are always with us in spirit and whenever we bump into them around town!

Clare Bishop stepped back from the President's position in July this year to take on the aforementioned Programs Coordinator role. This is an exciting development for TRY and will facilitate better day-to-day operations for the many projects we undertake in pursuit of Yack's 100% mission. Thankfully, Matthew Charles-Jones has stepped into his former role as President, for which we are all very appreciative!

TRY is enormously grateful for the continuous contributions of our committee members, our wider members and the Yackandandah community. This support is vital as we continue to forge our path to the 100% renewables goal for our town. As a volunteer committee, there are ebbs and flows as always. However, it is the knowledge, commitment and tenacity in our ranks that ensures we are consistently practicing creativity and innovation as we push towards our goal.

Clare Bishop (President)
October 2022 – July 2023

Matthew Charles-Jones (Acting President)
July 2023 onwards



Projects

Yackandandah's first EV charger

What a long road this has been! The completion of a new EV Charger in Yackandandah occurred in August 2022, with a significant amount of work towards the project occurring in the previous financial year. The charger commenced operation on the 16th of September last year and had 741 plug-ins recorded up until 29th August this year – what a result!

We were excited to gather most of the supporting partners of the Tritium 50kW DC public electric vehicle charger in the council owned carpark for a small celebration and photo. This included YCDCo, Halliday Solicitors, Indigo Power and TRY. This project was funded by grants from the Victorian Government's Destination Charging Across Victoria (DCAV) Program.

YCDCo were also a key funder and own the charger, and they have entrusted Indigo Power with the responsibility to operate and maintain the charger.

In addition, Yackandandah is very proud to have a start-up second-hand EV business in town, independent of TRY. Russell Klose's Kilowatt Cars is the perfect accompaniment to the community-driven EV charger, and we are excited to be collaborating for a shared goal.

TRY also supported a Hyundai launch event for their latest EV model, the IONIQ 6, held in Yackandandah on 28th March this year. This included national media attention on the charger and the efforts and achievements by Yackandandah and TRY more broadly in the renewable energy space.

Yackandandah Folk Festival

TRY has continued to be a big supporter of the folk festival (YFF) and we support the event each year with volunteers. The festival truly is a remarkable example of good-willed collaboration and community spiritedness. We have also been highly appreciative of the enduring benefit sharing from the festival. Excitingly, TRY has been able to support the festival by investing in more than sufficient renewable energy installations to offset the electricity demand of the festival event.

TRY continues to directly support festival venues to add solar, and increasingly battery storage so that festival events can both remove emissions and operate during outages.

A huge thank you to the folk festival committee for the continued support, and we are preparing some publication materials to celebrate the partnership.

Community battery Yack02

The vision for *Yack02*, Yackandandah's second community battery, has been emerging over the last year and started to feel real with a sizable philanthropic donation of \$250,000 and a \$40,000 grant from the Australian Ethical Foundation. Followed up with smaller grants from the Yackandandah Community Centre and Yackandandah Folk Festival, we are now only \$15,000 short of the \$360,000 target, with strong prospects of some grant applications that we are waiting to hear back on (and some backup options in the wings).

As the project has taken shape, initial surveys of potential sites have settled on the Yackandandah Sports Park with benefits to the multiple local community groups that use the facility and the ability to provide recovery facilities for communities in the aftermath of crises. The Sports Park cannot be used as a place of refuge, but with cooking, change and washing facilities, plenty of space and a resilient power supply, it is well placed to offer recovery options for community members after an emergency. This could not only serve Yackandandah residents but also those from nearby affected towns.



The scope for the project includes installation of an additional 60 kW of solar panels on the facility roof, complementing the existing 8 kW of panels and a 200 kWh RedFlow battery. The battery is a bromine chemistry which is a non-toxic technology, non-flammable, doesn't require cooling, and does not contain lithium. These batteries are not as compact as lithium-ion batteries but are perfect for the Sports Park facility where space is not critical, and the better environmental and safety characteristics and no need for cooling are distinct advantages.

The Sports Park Committee has been an integral part of the concept development over the last year and has participated in discussions with all parties. Engineering assessments were carried out at the start of the year and the potential battery site at the Sports Park was decided upon, with discussions held with Indigo Shire Council and Indigo Power regarding the ownership, operation and maintenance of the battery. We are hopeful that the final details will be resolved soon, and the project can enter the implementation phase, with installation to occur sometime in the middle of 2024.

Yackandandah Emergency Readiness Project

TRY successfully received \$276,543 funding from Emergency Recovery Victoria, announced in February this year, to assess and augment Yackandandah's emergency energy readiness capacity. This has involved ensuring that community facilities have extra resilience in their power supplies, and assessment of the best locations in the town for mobile generators to be deployed in times of emergencies or more likely in the recovery phase.

A town-wide Community Reference Group with membership from key groups such as the CFA and SES was convened in March to provide input to project decisions. Works so far have included installation of an extra 12 kWh battery at the Public Hall in February, and a 13 kW solar and 16 kWh battery system at the Yackandandah Community Centre (YCC) (and home of the local radio station) in July. Both facilities now enjoy vastly expanded capabilities to provide support to our community, especially when the power network experiences an outage – obviously most impactful during extreme temperature events or after emergencies.

Cameron McKern was engaged to undertake a resilience research project, analysing town-wide options and reviewing these in the context of best practice across Australia, to inform our emergency readiness. A review of potential community buildings for mobile generators to be plugged in was completed in April, identifying seven suitable sites, with further analysis works on the supermarket and school completed recently. It is expected that the generators and plug-in installations will be in place by January 2024, and the results of the resilience research available by December 2023. Final milestone for the project will occur in January 2024.

TRY also participated in a Redi Red Cross/Yackandandah Community Centre program in the early part of 2023, looking at community emergency readiness and the administrative, governance and social systems that need to be in place in times of emergency. Congratulation to the Yackandandah Community Centre for their leadership role for nurturing existing readiness structures and forging new programs to build strength in our supporting capabilities.

Overall, this project has demonstrated a high collaboration across the Yack community, providing enhanced redundancy in energy supply for key community buildings and helping raise awareness about emergency readiness as a whole. Key groups involved include the Yack Halls Committee, YCC, Indigo Shire Council, Yackandandah Primary School, the supermarket, Star Hotel, and Yackandandah Hotel. It has also drawn together key decision makers to build an enhanced community-wide emergency preparedness framework, and involved the Chair and Manager of YCC, Indigo Shire Council emergency management personnel, Yackandandah CFA Fire Captain, senior regional reps from the CFA, the SES Unit Controller, and leadership from YCDCo.



Yack01 Performance

In 2021 TRY and Indigo Power launched our very first community battery, *Yack01*. *Yack01* is Yackandandah's first piece of community-scale energy infrastructure and supplies power through the network to Indigo Power customers. Coupling 274 kWh of storage with a 65 kW solar array installed at the site of an old sawmill, the battery charges with solar during the day and discharges to Indigo Power customers in the evening.

As this was a pilot project to assess the viability of installing a mid-size battery to serve a community's energy and emission reduction needs, the data we received from Indigo Power earlier this month on the batteries performance to date is illuminating and really valuable.

Storage technology and the companies that sell them have come a long way since the planning for *Yack01* began in 2019 and the lessons learnt from our first installation are welcome. We have received feedback that the noise from the cooling system for the battery can be problematic if not planned for – a note that has been taken on board when planning for future installations. Big thanks to battery owner, Indigo Power for adjusting battery cooling arrangements and going a long way to addressing the unexpected acoustic impacts.

TRY and other organisations are working on the opportunities for community batteries to be economically sustainable. Standard economic analysis doesn't take account of the emissions reductions and improved resilience for communities, or the improvements in local network stability that can accrue. It also doesn't take account of the significant experience gained by communities in becoming more energy literate and energy resilient, something which is extremely valuable for regional communities. There are also opportunities to add value to battery installations that could bolster the conventional economic viability. *Yack01*'s value will continue to be assessed in terms of the benefit it brings to the community in emissions reduction and the value of the project as the first step on a vital journey towards energy resilience and reliance on clean, renewable energy in place of fossil fuels.

Project EDGE

TRY was also a foundation partner in the two-way energy market trial, Project Edge. EDGE, or the Energy Demand and Generation Exchange, examined the technologies, platforms and customer protections needed to advance to a more dynamic, responsive energy market that paves the way for a 100% renewable energy future. Funded by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and significant partners including AusNet, Mondo and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), plus some retailers, the program supported 46 existing and new battery owners to use their energy equipment to respond to network and market performance for better overall outcomes.

Yackandandah is now looking forward to what EDGE 02 might look like!