



2024 AGM – Presidents Report

16 October 2024, Yackandandah Court House

This report provides a summary of the activities by Totally Renewable Yackandandah Inc during the 2023/24 financial year.

Overview

2024 represents a substantial milestone for TRY with the advent of our tenth year of operation. We feel this is a huge achievement in shifting to clean energy, noting how quickly the technology and the complexity is changing. So, a huge ‘hats off’ to the many and diverse supporters of a campaign in local power, shared purpose and inspired projects. All this is achieved with a small team of volunteers who plug away daily at the task of balancing what we would like to do against constrained resources and finite funds.

TRY must acknowledge the remarkable support we have received from the Victorian Government who continue to invest in robust state targets, initiatives and programs to support the uptake of renewable energy across the state. Consistently, TRY has been able to use our own financial resources to seed a range of projects to secure state funding, especially noting Emergency Recovery Victoria and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

At the same time, we have been beneficiaries of substantial support from the Yackandandah Folk Festival and YCDCo, who we consistently work together with in shared purpose, to further the broad successes of our creative endeavours.

Remarkably, we are also humbled by a small but dedicated range of donors who, without recognition, gift money to advance our own little exemplar of localised power. Their interest is not in acknowledgement but rather to help unlock a future sustainable energy supply that replaces the coal-fired generators, which the Australian Energy Market Operator suggests will be 90% closed by 2035.

Successes in Yackandandah, whilst significant and addressing local needs, are only relevant to the extent that we can help to inform a national practice of energy innovation – with equity, nature and people at its centre. The 100% target serves not only our own needs but shines a light on a transition that is necessary and completely plausible.

Looking beyond 2024, we are examining options for the scaling of efficiency, solar and battery projects, that suit Yackandandah’s context, in order to reach the 100% goal. We are now beyond 60% renewable energy in Yackandandah, and one task is to update the data collected three years ago during our feasibility study and clarify Yack’s current renewables status. As ever, we are opportunity and action led, and the push for the final 35+% has some exciting prospects on the horizon in the next year!

Matthew Charles-Jones

President, Totally Renewable Yackandandah



Project updates

TRY Committee and TRY Coordinator

As anyone who has served on a community volunteer committee knows, it can be tricky to meet the needs and aspirations of the team and balance that with work, family and downtime. So as always, I would like to formally thank all the committee members for their tireless work in the pursuit of a more hopeful place-based approach to energy.

Kim McConchie will stand down as the Secretary having been in the position since June 2017 and joining TRY in February of the same year. Fortunately, Kim will continue to serve on the committee and support a new secretary once that is formalised at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

Treasurer Bernie Wilson is passing on the TRY calculator to a person also to be voted in at the 2024 AGM. Bernie has taken the treasurer role from our embryonic spreadsheet effort in 2017 to a highly tuned Xero-based system of work and been faultless in the keeping of financial records in partnership with our professional accounting support, Stewart, Tracy & Mylon.

Heartfelt thanks from the TRY community to Kim and Bernie. Their unselfish donations of personal time and expertise have been essential contributions to TRY's efforts over a sustained period of time. This acknowledgement seems barely sufficient!

We are also very thankful to enter a second year of the support of Clare Bishop. Clare is TRY's trusty Coordinator who ensures the smooth administrative management of committee activities and strives to fill in the gaps between projects and volunteers. The funding for Clare's contribution is substantially underwritten by a grant from YCDCo, coupled with other fundraising efforts by TRY.

Emergency Recovery Victoria and Township Resilience

Over the past two years a diverse mix of organisations across Yackandandah has considered the ways in which our town might positively respond to extended power outages. This is especially relevant after emergency events.

In collaboration with YCDCo and the Yackandandah Community Centre, TRY has implemented a work schedule with substantial grant funds from Emergency Recovery Victoria, previously Bushfire Recovery Victoria. The \$276,500 grant (excl. GST) allowed a wide-ranging study to achieve two goals:

1. To consider what other gaps and opportunities exist to improve Yackandandah's readiness to face future emergencies, including the social and governance structures required, and
2. To review and prepare key public buildings to provide backup power to the community during sustained outages and after emergencies.

Practically, TRY commissioned consultant engineers to support the following activities:

1. Add an extra 13 kWh battery to the Yackandandah Public Hall and upgrade the solar system at the Yackandandah Community Centre to be a large 13 kW solar system and 16 kWh battery, so the facilities can continue to operate and support community, responding nearly instantly during outages



2. Purchase two trailer-mounted generators as compared with the originally forecast one generator, with YCDCo assuming ownership / responsibility on behalf of the community,
3. Purchase audio visual equipment for the Yackandandah Public Hall,
4. Purchase two Starlink internet connections, one at the Yackandandah Community Centre, the other a mobile unit with portable batteries, deployable to places of need during or following emergencies,
5. Expand the number of community buildings assessed - to a total of nine buildings,
6. Prepare four public buildings to receive the community trailer-mounted generators (Public Hall, Senior Citizens Centre, Yackandandah Primary School, and Yackandandah Community Centre).

TRY extends our strongest gratitude to the Victorian Government and the team at Emergency Recovery Victoria for their support for this productive resilience project.

People further interested in the project can view a small report and video case study on the TRY website at: <https://totallyrenewableyack.org.au/2024/09/being-prepared/>

Community Battery, Yack02

After the milestone of Yack01, our first community battery (now owned by Indigo Power), TRY has successfully gathered the financial resources to proceed with a second community battery, Yack02.

TRY secured funds through the Victorian Governments' *100 Neighbourhood Battery Program (Round One)*, with \$288,000 (excl. GST) to proceed with the installation, in combination with \$40,000 from the Australian Ethical Foundation. These funds were augmented with \$3,000 from the Yackandandah Community Centre's grants program.

Indigo Power were successful in a bid to manage the procurement, design and construction process of the battery and it is terrific to again be partnering with the team at Indigo Power – a community-owned social enterprise. Together with local solar and battery installer, KDEC, Indigo Power will install a 200 kWh 'Pixii' brand battery, combined with a 65 kW solar system on the roof of the stadium.

Yack02 will deliver strong savings in power bills to the volunteer Sports Park Committee, reduce carbon emissions, and critically, be capable of islanding key parts of the facility so during extended power outages the stadium can still provide power to key power circuits. As a result, people will be able to charge devices, access cooking, toileting and showering facilities during outages.

TRY is now preparing the way for the physical installation to commence during December 2024, and we expect the system to be fully commissioned by the end of March 2024.

More content will shortly be available on the TRY website, which will continue to be updated as we progress through the installation process at the Sports Park.

Presentations

TRY continues to serve a diverse range of speaking contributions and engagements to ensure we share our learning to people working on their own community energy plans. Presentations ranged from the national 2024 Community Energy Congress in Sydney to a presentation on Neighbourhood Batteries to the Borough of Queenscliffe community.



During the reporting year we were also interviewed by Pollination Group, as part of an ARENA-commissioned report to the Federal Energy Minister on the community energy sector, “Community Energy: Hope & Headwinds”. This included an hour-long interview, followed a few weeks later by a four-hour guided tour of many of our projects for the consultants and ARENA representative. TRY is one of five case studies from around Australia included in the report, which examines the sector’s contributions to the clean energy transition. The full report, along with other significant publications involving TRY, is linked to from our media page, <https://totallyrenewablejack.org.au/about/press/>.

This part of TRY’s contribution continues to be a great passion... making sure the diverse learning of Yackandandah is shared with others, such that communities beyond our own can also quickly find their way with clean local power.

Osbornes Flat Community Centre (Hall)

Way back in 2019, the Osbornes Flat Community Centre received a 4 kW solar system as part of the Public Virtual Power Plant (VPP) program and it has served the community well with much cheaper power bills. More recently the Centre committee identified the opportunity to continue their push with electrification and this year have gone on to install an extra 3 kW of solar and added a 16 kWh battery.

Whilst the project was managed by the Centre committee, TRY assisted with substantial fundraising efforts, including a \$10,000 contribution from the Commonwealth Bank Foundation and smaller contributions from TRY and YCDCo. Congratulations to the committee and we look forward to the next steps as they slash their power bills, remove carbon emissions, provide a location of energy resilience and usher in another 100 years of community celebrations, club meetings and other fantastic events.

2014 to 2024: 10th Anniversary Celebration

TRY was first formally launched with incorporation in April 2014 and a public launch in November 2014. This has been followed by an enormous amount of work to arrive at a ten-year anniversary, to be celebrated at the Yackandandah Public Hall on 16th November 2024. To help celebrate the idea of local action we will be joined by the thought leader and community democracy expert, Tim Hollo, and the remarkable music icon Shane Howard and his band.

Please jump aboard the celebration – tickets are available now – it is sure to be a fantastic evening, reflecting a remarkable ten years of community enterprise and action, and the richness of community efforts.