

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS



Local empowerment

Empowering communities to make decisions about their own development not only gives people control over their energy future, but builds social cohesion around shared goals. For many regional communities facing drought, bushfires and economic challenges, these projects are critical to building community spirit.



Disaster resilience

Generating and storing power locally can ensure electricity supply in disasters like bushfires and storms. In the 2019-20 fires, towns like Corryong and Mallacoota were cut off from the grid for days. Local solar and storage infrastructure would build resilience for future disasters.



Energy reliability

Renewable energy, planned properly with storage and interconnectors, builds reliability for the grid. One major study found that hundreds of mid-scale renewable power stations are more reliable than centralised fossil fuel generators because there is more redundancy in the system²⁰.



Climate action

Many regional areas turn to community energy as a tangible way to reduce their emissions. Some towns have set the goal of being 100% renewable. For instance, the 15 projects delivered through the Victorian community power Hub program avoid 1839 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year²¹.



Social licence

Social licence is where a project has ongoing approval and broad acceptance within the local community and among other stakeholders. Projects that are driven by or deliver benefits to the local community enjoy greater social licence and faster approvals²².



Energy access

Often low-income households are unable to access the benefits of renewable energy due to upfront investment costs. Community energy often targets these households. For instance, Renewable Albury Wodonga installed rooftop solar on social housing in Wodonga, helping residents to lower their power bills.



Indigenous empowerment

Many Indigenous communities are developing energy projects to foster a sense of local empowerment and create economic opportunities on Country. For instance, Original Power in the NT is working on a solar-powered micro-grid in Borroloola to build opportunities for the Garrwa traditional owners.