

# Power back in our hands

By **Simon Ruppert**

Victorians could finally see a reduction in energy bills thanks to a state government initiative, which was released as part of last week's budget.

Privatisation of the energy market has been an unprecedented failure with Australia experiencing some of the highest energy bills in the developed world.

However, with the state government setting up the first-ever Victorian Default Offer, the public can potentially see savings of up to \$450 per year.

More than 130 000 Victorian households will benefit from July 1, when they are switched to the Victorian Default Offer from their current costly standing offers.

And Victorian small businesses will see even higher savings with more than 30 000 also projected to make savings of between \$1380 and \$2050 a year.

A Benalla business owner, who asked not to be named, said the reduction would only be a small amount of all costs incurred in a year — but it could make a difference to smaller businesses.

"With small businesses and start-ups there are so many costs," she said.

"A \$1000 to \$2000 cut isn't necessarily a big saving, but it could mean you can keep an extra staff member on, or you will be able to keep more stock to offer more options to customers.

"It's small breaks here and there that allow you to keep the doors open when you first set up a business.

"So that small amount could mean that a small business can survive and grow into a big business."

Energy, Environment and Climate Change Minister Lily D'Ambrosio said the new Default Offer was in line with advice from the Essential Services Commission.

"We've set a fair price based on advice from the experts — delivering automatic savings for thousands of Victorian households and small businesses from July 1," Ms D'Ambrosio said.

"This is one of the biggest reforms to the energy sector in over a decade — and it's not just available to people currently on standing

offers, anyone can ask for the Victorian Default Offer.

"This is just one of the ways we're putting power back into the hands of Victorians, as we put solar on 770 000 homes and cut the cost of energy."

From July 1, Victorians can ditch confusing, costly electricity offers and choose the Victorian Default Offer, a fair price on energy that has been assessed by experts.

The new measure is part of the state government's final response to the bipartisan Independent Review of the Electricity and Gas Retail Markets in Victoria.

Ms D'Ambrosio said in addition, the Solar Homes package was helping Victorians take control of their energy bills by rolling out solar panels, solar hot water or solar batteries to 770 000 homes in the next 10 years.

"The Labor Government has also helped more than 200 000 people compare their energy offer through our \$50 Power Saving Bonus, with Victorians who use the site saving an average of \$330 on their energy bills in the first year alone," Ms D'Ambrosio said.



**Savings:** From July 1 Victorians switching their energy plan to the state government's "Default Offer" will see savings on their bills of up to \$450 for individuals and \$2050 for small businesses.



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## Kennedys Creek & Lake Mokoan Solar Farms

COMMUNITY DROP-IN SESSION

South Energy is proposing to develop, construct and operate two new solar farms within the Rural City of Benalla. As a leading renewable energy developer that specialises in the delivery of utility-scale solar farms, South Energy is committed to Australia's transition to a clean, reliable energy future.

The Kennedys Creek Solar Farm is proposed to be located approximately 4 kilometres north-east of Benalla. The Lake Mokoan Solar Farm is proposed to be 4 kilometres further north along Benalla-Yarrowonga Road and is situated to the west of the Winton Wetlands.

The solar farms will predominately operate across 540 hectares of land within the Industrial 1 Zone

and the Farming Zone. Both of the chosen sites have been deemed suitable for development of a solar farm due to their relatively flat topography and access to existing infrastructure.

With a combined network capacity of up to 260 megawatts, the solar farms are expected to power approximately 92,000 households in total with green electricity. Through the production of clean energy, approximately 547,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions will be reduced each year, making a significant contribution towards Victoria and Australia's sustainable future.

The projects will not only deliver environmental benefits, but will also create economic benefits for the region, including creation of

approximately 500 jobs (indirect and direct) in total during the construction period, with up to 8 jobs required for the operation and maintenance of both solar farms on a long-term or permanent basis. There will also be opportunities for local businesses to be engaged during the construction, delivery and operation of the projects, diversifying and strengthening the economy and increasing the skilled workforce and economic output of the region.

Community consultation is a key next step for the projects and will help to inform the design and delivery of the projects. Planning permit applications are currently being prepared by AECOM on behalf of South Energy and will be submitted to Benalla Rural City Council once we have considered the feedback received from the community including landowners, community members, advocacy groups and local business owners.

Technical specialists from the fields of ecology, geotechnical, surface water, cultural heritage, visual impact, traffic and

agriculture have been engaged to support the applications, to ensure that all aspects of the projects are carefully assessed and any potential impacts are avoided or appropriately mitigated.

A community drop-in session about the proposed solar farms will be held next week. We wish to take this opportunity to share with the community our vision and would welcome your ideas on the projects. Please feel free to join us anytime from 3:30pm to 6:30pm on Thursday, 13 June 2019 at the Mokoan Hub and Cafe (652 Lake Mokoan Rd, Winton North VIC 3675)

Should you have any questions or wish to know more about the projects, please feel free to contact Jo Barnett: [Joanna.Barnett@aecom.com](mailto:Joanna.Barnett@aecom.com) or via direct dial: 03 9653 2618 or visit our websites: [www.kennedyscreeksolar.com.au](http://www.kennedyscreeksolar.com.au) and [www.lakemokoansolar.com.au](http://www.lakemokoansolar.com.au).

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5 June 2019



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## **Invitation to Solar Farm Proposal Community Consultation Kennedys Creek Solar Farm and Lake Mokoan Solar Farm**

### **1.0 Introduction**

AECOM Australia Pty Ltd (AECOM) acts on behalf of our client, South Energy in relation to two upcoming planning permit applications for the use and development of two solar farms; Kennedys Creek Solar Farm and Lake Mokoan Solar Farm. Both proposed solar farms are located in proximity to the Winton Wetlands.

With great respect to your effort and dedication to the region, we wish to inform the Winton Wetlands Committee of Management of the upcoming planning applications to ensure that members are aware of both proposals and are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the projects.

Community consultation is a key next step for the proposals and will help to inform the design and delivery of the projects. An information session about the proposed solar farms will be held at the Mokoan Hub and Café at 4pm to 7pm on Thursday, 13 June 2019. AECOM and South Energy would like to formally invite members of the Winton Wetlands Committee of Management to the information session and welcome member's comments on the proposed solar farms.

### **2.0 Site and Project Overviews**

In response to the Australian Government's initiative to mitigate the risk of climate change and global warming, the purpose of the proposed projects is to supply green electricity generated from solar irradiation into the National Energy Market. The projects will contribute significantly to Australian and Victorian renewable energy targets by reducing carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 547,000 tonnes a year in total. The following two sections provide an overview of each solar farm.

#### **2.1.1 Kennedys Creek Solar Farm**

The Kennedys Creek Solar Farm will be located at:

- Murray Road, Benalla;
- 51 Nelson Road, Benalla;
- 67 Nelson Road, Benalla
- 125 Nelson Road, Benalla; and
- 284 Benalla-Yarrawonga Road, Benalla.

The site is located within the Industrial 1 Zone and the Farming Zone. Currently, it is being used for broad acre farming. Upon completion, the project is expected to have a network capacity of up to 145 megawatts (MW), providing green electricity to approximately 51,000 households each year.

#### **2.1.2 Lake Mokoan Solar Farm**

The Lake Mokoan Solar Farm will be located at:

- 892 Benalla-Yarrawonga Road;
- 81 Lake Mokoan Road, Goorambat; and
- Benalla-Yarrawonga Road, Benalla.

The project is approximately 4 kilometres north of the proposed Kennedys Creek Solar Farm and is situated to the west of the Winton Wetlands. The project is located wholly within the Farming Zone and is also currently used for broad acre farming.

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The project is expected to have a network capacity of up to 115 MW and is anticipated to provide green electricity to approximately 41,000 households each year.



Figure 1 Location of Kennedy's Creek Solar Farm (south) and Lake Mokoan Solar Farm (north).

### 3.0 What's Next?

Both of the chosen sites have been deemed suitable for development of a solar farm due to their topography and proximity to existing infrastructure.

We understand the importance of community engagement to ensure that local opinions, perspectives and ideas are heard and considered by the projects. Once we have considered the feedback received from all stakeholders, it is anticipated that the planning application will be submitted to Benalla Rural City Council in July 2019.

Should you have any questions or queries regarding the projects, please do not hesitate to contact Jo [REDACTED]

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

Senior Urban Planner

[REDACTED]

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We recognise that the Regent Honeyeater Project works exclusively in the Lurg Hills, which is in close proximity to Benalla and the locations of the proposed solar farms. With great respect to your effort and dedication to the region, we wish to inform members of the Regent Honeyeater Project of the upcoming planning applications to ensure that members are aware of the proposals and are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the projects.

Community consultation is a key next step for the proposals and will help to inform the design and delivery of the projects. An information session about the proposed solar farms will be held at the Mokoan Hub and Café at 4pm to 7pm on Thursday, 13 June 2019. AECOM and South Energy would like to formally invite members of the Regent Honeyeater Project to the information session and welcome member's comments on the proposed solar farms.

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[Redacted contact information]

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted signature]

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