



## Metro Community Power Hub (MCPH)

# FAQs for Councils

### What is the Metro Community Power Hub (MCPH)?

The MCPH's mission is to work with metropolitan communities to offer trusted advice on clean energy solutions and support, develop and deliver local, cost-effective renewable energy projects.

As Victoria's first metropolitan Community Power Hub, the MCPH is a forward-thinking network of energy practitioners, climate action groups, councils, social enterprises and community organisations, businesses and local communities, all focused on accelerating Melbourne's transition to renewable energy.

As a high-impact "one-stop shop" for clean energy solutions and community energy projects, the MCPH leverages the expertise, vision and networks of its Roundtable Partners, supporters and local communities in the pursuit of a zero carbon future.

At the heart of the MCPH is a commitment to knowledge-sharing and public involvement in positive climate action which delivers tangible and equitable outcomes.

### What is community energy?

Community energy refers to projects where a community initiates, develops, operates and benefits from a renewable energy resource or energy efficiency initiative.

Community energy is a broad concept, and can include any community-driven energy project, including community-owned renewable energy, mini-grids or community scale batteries, community action on renewable energy, energy efficiency or energy projects assisting renters and low-income households.

The needs, motivations, scale, legal structures, governance and financing will likely differ by project, group and location.

(Thanks to <http://www.energeticcommunities.org.au/> for this definition).

### How is the Metro Community Power Hub funded?

The MCPH is funded as part of the Community Power Hubs program by the Victorian Government through Sustainability Victoria.



Comprising seven hubs across Victoria, the \$3.73 million Community Power Hubs program is part of a \$1.6 billion renewable energy package in the 2020-21 Victorian Budget.

### Who are the Hub's members and who can participate?

The MCPH Steering Committee is made up of the following Roundtable Partners:

- Bayside Climate Crisis Action Group (BCCAG)
- Darebin Climate Action Now (DCAN)
- Glen Eira Emergency Climate Action Network (GECAN)
- Jewish Climate Network (JCN)
- Lighter Footprints (Boroondara region)
- Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN)
- SEAM (Schools Network)
- Yarra Climate Action Now (YCAN)
- Port Phillip EcoCentre

Local councils, other metro climate groups, businesses, social enterprises and community organisations can also participate in the MCPH - we'd love to hear from you.

### How will councils be involved?

This is largely up to councils themselves! The MCPH welcomes council involvement and understands the various constraints councils are subject to – political, financial, resourcing and scope – that could make high levels of direct involvement a challenge. In part, that is why the MCPH is here – to deliver projects and programs councils would love to offer but may not have capacity to do so.

Council involvement could range from contributing ideas and resources for community energy projects, to participating in a consultative role, or directly co-funding projects delivered by the MCPH – it's up to the councils themselves. The MCPH is keen to work with councils in whatever capacity is deemed appropriate.

There is also scope for a Committee of Local Government Representatives (placeholder name), which would bring together councils that wish to be involved in some capacity. The Committee would provide a forum for consultation, knowledge sharing, and in some cases, active involvement. Participation of councils in this committee would be voluntary, and its scope is to be determined largely by councils and their representatives with YEF, within the terms of the agreement with Sustainability Victoria.



If you work for a council and wish to discuss your involvement in the MCPH, contact Peter Mercouriou: [peter.m@yef.org.au](mailto:peter.m@yef.org.au)

### Is there any cost involved in participating or partnering with the MCPH?

No. The MCPH is currently funded by Sustainability Victoria, led by a not-for-profit in YEF, and invites collaboration among partners on an opt-in, opt-out basis. While certain energy projects may require finance in order to be delivered, a key strength of the Community Power Hub model is that it allows resource-constrained organisations to pursue community energy projects by sharing experience, knowledge, and effort, rather than through financial investment.

### For how long will the MCPH operate?

The MCPH is currently funded to operate until 30 June 2022 and is committed to achieving significant outcomes within this timeframe, while maintaining an eye to the future.

Our foundation programs and certain flagship projects will deliver emissions reductions, community benefits, cost savings, energy literacy, and knowledge sharing within this timeframe. Additionally, by developing a suite of implementation ready projects, the MCPH can support the proliferation of community energy projects beyond 30 June 2022.

For instance, while this timeframe may not accommodate the installation of a new neighbourhood battery, a feasibility study could be completed that would support funding applications and/or the business case for such a project. We hope that by demonstrating the effectiveness of the CPH model, funding may be secured to sustain the MCPH into the future.

### Are there risks Councils should be aware of?

The MCPH is part of Sustainability Victoria's Community Power Hubs program and does not engage in political activism or advocacy. However, councils should be aware that energy can be a contentious policy issue, and that local energy projects need to be sensitive to the values and context of their local communities.

A risk to the success of some local community energy projects is community pushback or objections, which may make it politically unpalatable – for example, due to negative media coverage – or result in longer timelines and unexpected costs. The MCPH engages closely with community groups on tangible, outcome-focused projects backed by strong community support and aims to nurture co-creative processes to avoid these types of risks.

In addition to providing independent advice on solar and electric appliances, other MCPH activities focus on energy literacy and energy efficiency, and do not involve campaigning.

## What will be the MCPH's main activities?

Key activities of the Metro Community Power Hub will be:

- Delivering a solar PV program to Roundtable Partner communities. This program will connect interested residents and businesses with vetted suppliers and installers, offer advice on appropriate systems, arrange quotes and access to rebates where relevant, and offer discounts of up to 20% on retail prices;
- Run initiatives with Roundtable Partners which work towards our goal of an all-electric home, including advice on how to switch from gas appliances, and procurement of commercial partners for hot water heat pumps, split systems and induction cooktops;
- Offer Roundtable Partners relevant training and support to run energy literacy workshops for their networks and the wider community;
- Support Roundtable Partners to build greater community awareness on renewable energy options and support the development and delivery of local energy projects, such as community batteries;
- Assist Roundtable Partners to normalise and support models of community energy through information events, digital & print communications, forums and workshops;
- Support Roundtable Partners in scoping, developing and delivering flagship projects in their communities.
- The MCPH will also provide guidance and assistance with all areas of communications around the MCPH, and work with Roundtable Partners within the context of their specific needs and audiences.

## What is the MCPH governance structure?

Representatives from each Roundtable Partner will meet at least once a month as a Steering Committee to discuss MCPH priorities and the status of projects and programs.

Steering Committee meetings will be facilitated by the Yarra Energy Foundation (YEF). As the lead partner YEF must report to Sustainability Victoria (SV) quarterly and attend bi-weekly meetings with SV.

The Steering Committee will ensure that the ownership and development of the MCPH is shared.

## What is the role of Roundtable Partners (RTPs) in the MCPH?

Roundtable Partners are central to the Hub's success, and may be involved in a number of ways, including:

- Distributing letterbox flyers in their areas to promote MCPH foundation programs such as solar and electrify-your-home initiatives;
- Sharing information on the MCPH and its projects and events with their own networks, as well as their local communities;
- Co-hosting with YEF or leading events, workshops and other community events;
- Participating in training on how to run community sessions on energy bill literacy and other clean energy solutions;
- Sharing expertise and knowledge with other RTPs through the MCPH Steering Committee;
- Bringing proposals for flagship projects to the MCPH and working with YEF to investigate the potential feasibility and development of these projects.

## What is a foundation program?

MCPH foundation programs will include solar PV programs for local communities, all-electric home initiatives, and energy literacy training and workshops.

Information sessions will feature keynote speakers and Q&A sessions. Events on specific topics such as renewable energy options for apartment dwellers, renters and those interested in the surging momentum around community batteries in Victoria will also be offered as foundation programs.

## What is a flagship project?

A flagship project is any stand-alone MCPH community energy project outside the realm of foundation programs.

Examples could include installing solar panels on the roof of a Girl Guides' hall or a group of businesses joining forces to convert their neighbourhood shopping strip to renewable energy. The possibilities are enormous.

Roundtable Partners are encouraged to bring their ideas on possible flagship projects to the MCPH Steering Committee.

Working with its vetted commercial partners, YEF can accelerate feasibility and scoping work, offer its many years of expertise and, where possible, fast-track relevant processes on projects.



## Who is the Yarra Energy Foundation?

The Yarra Energy Foundation (YEF) was set up as a not-for-profit in 2010 by Yarra City Council.

With a team of highly-experienced energy experts, YEF's mission is to reduce carbon emissions reduce from energy to zero. To get there, YEF helps residents and businesses with services and independent advice to make better energy choices. YEF also partners with local councils across Australia to support the nation's transition to better energy.

To date YEF has:

- Installed more than 18,000 rooftop solar panels on homes and businesses across the City of Yarra;
- Arranged the install of around 3MW of solar across more than 1,250 homes and businesses across Victoria;
- Advised more than 13,000 residents and businesses, on the phone and online, on better energy choices;
- Assisted more than 1,000 low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) residents to retrofit their homes for better energy;
- Supported more than 50 businesses and schools in switching to LED lights and rooftop solar;
- Presented at more than 100 information sessions, workshops, forums, and events to accelerate the transition to clean energy. That includes solar and battery information, billing and energy efficiency information, and the state of the energy market.

## What is YEF's role in the MCPH?

YEF was selected as the lead partner organisation for the MCPH and has been awarded funding for a 12-month period by Sustainability Victoria on behalf of the Victorian Government.

As a not-for-profit with a proven track record, YEF brings to the MCPH highly-regarded energy industry expertise and extensive experience in providing trusted and independent advice on innovative and cost-effective energy solutions.

YEF will deliver foundation programs through the MCPH for all Roundtable Partners, as well as providing tailored assistance to individual flagship projects.

It will also work with each Roundtable Partner to identify marginal and CALD communities and leverage resources and strategic partnerships to help effectively engage with these communities.



### How are preferred suppliers and installers for MCPH projects chosen?

YEF has more than a decade's experience in running rigorous procurement processes for installers and suppliers of solar and other products and services.

All suppliers and installers must satisfy YEF's extensive EOI requirements, and are selected on criteria including strong customer service, high-quality products and competitive prices.

### How do we get involved?

The Metro Community Power Hub welcomes input from anyone who's passionate about community energy and positive action.

If you work for a council and wish to discuss your involvement in the MCPH, contact Peter Mercouriou: [peter.m@yef.org.au](mailto:peter.m@yef.org.au)