

Regional and Remote Communities
Reliability Fund - Microgrid

MyTown Microgrid

Community Engagement Report 2.0

Milestone 4.1 – July 2022





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Key support

Heyfield Community Resource Centre
Wattwatchers Digital Energy
Community Power Agency
Latrobe Valley Authority
AusNet Services

About the project

MyTown Microgrid is an innovative, multi-year, multi-stakeholder project that aims to undertake a detailed data-led microgrid feasibility for the town of Heyfield (Victoria), built on a platform of deep community engagement and capacity building.

The project received funding under the Australian Government's Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund Microgrids stage 1 funding round. It also received funding from the Latrobe Valley Authority as part of the Gippsland Smart Specialisation Strategy.

Citation

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Disclaimer

The authors have used all due care and skill to ensure the material is accurate as at the date of this report. Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Funds Microgrid and the authors do not accept any responsibility for any loss that may arise by anyone relying upon its contents.

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Abbreviations

CEP	Community Engagement Plan
CLO	Community Liaison Officer
CRG	Community Reference Group
HCRC	Heyfield Community Resource Centre
MTMG	MyTown Microgrid project

1. Introduction

“ The Heyfield MyTown Microgrid project is undertaking a detailed data-led microgrid and local energy solution feasibility for the town of Heyfield, built on a platform of deep community engagement and capacity building.

This document summarises the community engagement activities in the second year of the project with a brief review of first year’s initiatives and provides some lessons learnt for other communities. It should be reviewed alongside the other relevant project documents and reports.

At the core of this project is a novel community engagement approach which seeks to empower the local community to own and progress the idea of a local microgrid supported by a team of researchers from different disciplines. Despite the continuous challenges of the global pandemic, the project team intensified the capacity building within the community and their participation in the project activities.

Over the three-year duration, the project will also develop the knowledge and tools to make it faster, easier, and cheaper for other regional communities to understand local energy propositions for their community. The project serves as a blueprint for a community led approach towards understanding the suitability for a local microgrid.

Community Engagement – Our Approach

The COVID-19 *pandemic* and associated social restrictions have brought *unprecedented* challenges for local communities and individuals for example in regard to their ability to stay connected. We believe our project not only serves the overall purpose of empowering community members in the decision-making process and the co-creation of locally adequate energy solutions. We have also provided an opportunity for the local community to connect, discuss and exchange ideas during a quite difficult time.



Figure 2: Working groups in progress at the Vision Workshop.

2. First Year: Summary of Project Activities

Activities	Purpose and Details	Outcome/ Impact
Community Liaison Officers (CLOs)	The role of the CLOs is to build trusted relationships with all parts of the community and to work closely with the MyTown Microgrid project team in the delivery of its work program. This task was driven by the rationale that locally-based team members are an invaluable resource for energy projects in regional and rural areas.	Two people were hired in Feb 2021, with one continuing after four months inception period working between two and three days per week. Their involvement has proved highly effective, in particular for activities relating to technology deployment and community engagement.
Community Engagement Plan (CEP)	CEP constitutes the guiding document to introduce the project idea, mapping out key stakeholders, outline different engagement and participation methods and describe the process of recruiting and involving local community members in the project.	Set-up CEP as a live document - evolving as the project is underway. Engaging the community as early as possible (e.g. pre-feasibility study) gave a head start for understanding local visions and perspectives and was captured in an early version of the CEP.
Logo and visual identity	The aim was to provide an easily identifiable branding for the project which allows for recognition within Heyfield and beyond.	Project has its own logo and collateral design. Has proven as a valuable engagement tool with a logo design competition among local students and children in the early phases of the project.
Community Reference Group (CRG)	The aim was to provide platform for community input in the design of the microgrid project and offer advice and recommendations for each step of the process.	CRG was established between Feb and April 2021, constitutes of 10 people recruited from all parts of the community but also include representatives from project partners.
One on one meetings	Designed to increase awareness of the project amongst community individuals and groups, and promote participation and support. The meetings aimed at informing the community, answering queries, inviting people to workshops and recruit and assist participants with the registration process.	Since Feb 2021 CLOs conducted about 15 to 20 meetings. In a small community, in-person engagement and word-of-mouth is most effective method of engagement, as the interaction is personalised and any concerns or questions can be addressed immediately. Also highly useful to educate individuals and key stakeholders.
Launch Event	The aim was to present the project scope, deliverables and technology, as well as generate awareness and begin engaging with potential participants. In addition, the introduction of the project team was an essential step to give a face to the people carrying the project activities in particular the CLOs, Wattwatchers and ISF.	On 24th Feb 2021, the community of Heyfield and the entire project team including UTS, Wattwatchers, Latrobe Valley Authority and Community Power Agency, officially launched the MyTown Microgrid Project. The launch was well received and attended by more than 50 people. Local media coverage provided additional advertising about project.
Community Vision Workshop	It served as a collective process for advancing shared visions involving the CRG and a set of diverse stakeholders to better understand a perceived future of the energy supply in Heyfield. Offered a forum where attendees could learn more about what might be involved should a microgrid be implemented, from the capability of the energy monitoring devices to what distributed energy resource technologies might be deployed.	The 1.5 days' workshop was held back to back with the launch event. Important step to bring together members of the project team with members of the community, allowing open and transparent questioning. The CRG gained greater confidence in the project methodology and benefited through discussion of technical options with the technical team. The technical team could dispel myths around

<p>Community survey (Ecologic platform)</p>	<p>Project build on a data driven process which required additional information about building, energy services, and occupancy. This information was captured in form of a survey for those homes or businesses in the community where energy monitoring devices were being deployed. The software ecologic was used.</p>	<p>opportunities and costs with certain technologies.</p> <p>The survey was conducted by 96 community members offering detailed insights in their electricity use and demand. Although it has not been used in the technical analysis, the data will be valuable for further investigation of suitable local energy solutions.</p>
<p>Media reach out</p>	<p>Promoting and advertising the project within and beyond the borders of Heyfield is an important way to spread the word about the project's unique approach to a community microgrid feasibility.</p>	<p>The project was covered by multiple media outlets such as: Gippsland Times and Maffra, Spectator, Latrobe Valley Express, Renew Economy, Sustainability Matters, WIN News, Gippsland Times and Latrobe Valley Express.</p>



Picture 1: Heather Smith (ISF) at the Vision Workshop.



Picture 2: MyTown Microgrid project team members at the Community Launch Event. From left to right: Dr Moragh McKay (LVA), Julie Bryer (HCRC), Caroline Trevorrow (HCRC), Tim McCoy (Wattwatchers), Emma Birchall (Community Liaison Officer), Dr Scott Dwyer (UTS), Kristy Walters (CPA).

3. Second Year: Progressing community capacity building and participation

In the second project year the project team intensified the community engagement activities. This comprised multiple meetings with the CRG and local stakeholders, as well as broader community activities and reach out.

3.1 Webinars: education and discussing pertinent project questions

Between September 2021 and July 2022 three webinars were conducted.

At the **first webinar** researcher and community energy expert, Heather Smith. She illustrated the potential of the large local solar rooftop deployment for further local energy solutions. The webinar was held in September 2021 as an online event. Heather used the project's data analysis to highlight the importance of balancing supply and demand, and the role of individual energy consumption.



Figure 1: Slides from the first webinar by Heather Smith, Sept. 2021.

“ Project energy data captured from:

- 90+ smart energy monitoring devices installed
- Covering 75+ homes, businesses, schools
- Additional data is being collected from questionnaire and the local network and industry sites

Murray Hogarth, Head of Impact and Communications at Wattwatchers presented at the **second webinar**, held in March 2022. His talk was titled “*Microgrid vs The Grid*” which explored the broader energy context of the project. With mass electrification and a desire for Australia to be powered by 100% by renewable energy, by 2030, community energy projects such as MyTown are no longer rare. Rapid expansion in digital technology and greater awareness of energy efficiency,

The screenshot shows a webinar slide for MyTown Microgrid. At the top left is the MyTown Microgrid logo. At the top right is a small video feed of Murray Hogarth with the email address murray@wattwatchers.com.au. The main heading is "Heyfield has options (and they aren't mutually exclusive):". Below this is a list of six options:

- Net Zero for electricity by when? 2025? 2030?
- A local energy cooperative or retailer (like a Bendigo community bank branch for electricity?)
- A community battery and critical sites back-up
- A Virtual Power Plant (VPP) model - a coordinated network of small-scale distributed energy resources including rooftop solar, batteries, electric vehicles and smart appliances
- Other 'Virtual Microgrid' solutions, especially as EVs proliferate
- Energy efficiency, solar expansion and optimisation, load shaping and shifting, while working towards greater self-sufficiency and maybe a microgrid 'one day'

 To the right of the list are three small images: a hand stacking blocks with icons, a modern building, and a person plugging a cable into a car. Further right is a grey box with the heading "REMEMBER THIS..." and two statistics:

- When the project polled the local community, we found that:
 - 83.8%** would like to see Heyfield powered by 100% renewable energy
 - 88.2%** would change their energy retailer to a local community-owned alternative

Figure 2: Slide/ screenshot from the 2nd Webinar.

makes for a dynamic environment and more opportunities for communities, consumers and providers. In fact, Murray argued for the grid, as an invaluable asset soon becoming 100% renewable powered and led the discussion about alternatives posing the provocative question “*if not a microgrid, what else can we do?*”

The **third webinar** was held on the 25th July based on the community interest to learn more about community energy governance structures and how other communities tackle the challenges of building a group and moving on with the tasks involved.

Kristy Walters from Community Power Agency, Darren McCubbin from Gippsland Climate CCN and Zoe Geyer Total Renewable Philip Island gave inspirational talks about the great opportunities of local community action and local partnerships to contribute and part take in the ongoing energy transition.

Purpose

Webinars are a useful tool to educate on specific project related issues, provide updates and insights on project activities and answer community questions directly.

Process

The webinars were held in the evening hours usually between 6:30pm and 8pm of a week day to enable broad participation of local community. The webinars were advertised through multiple channels including newsletter, email and the regular (hardcopy) Heyfield Newsletter, word to mouth, as well as social media such as Facebook pages from the project and Heyfield Community Centre. The invitees received the link to online meeting and were encouraged to ask post questions in the meeting chat.

Details will be announced via this newsletter, the MyTown Microgrid website, Facebook page and in the weekly Heyfield News



Figure 3: Examples of a poster and flyer format distributed to announce and promote the webinars.



Invitation
Free Community Webinar Series
MyTown Microgrid Heyfield Project
Microgrid vs The Grid
Monday 28th March 2022, 7.00pm via Zoom

The Heyfield MyTown Microgrid project aims to undertake a detailed data-led microgrid and local energy feasibility for the town of Heyfield (Victoria), built on a platform of deep community engagement and capacity building.

At the core of this project is a novel community engagement approach which seeks to empower the local community to own and progress the idea of a local microgrid supported by a team of researchers from different disciplines. Over the three-year duration, the project will also develop the knowledge and tools to make it faster, easier, and cheaper for other regional communities to understand local energy propositions for their community. The project serves as a blueprint for a community led approach to towards a local microgrid solution.

Microgrid vs The Grid seeks to explore the context MyTown Microgrid exists in. With mass electrification and a desire for Australia to be powered by 100% by renewable energy, by 2030, Community Energy projects such as MyTown are no longer rare. Rapid expansion in digital technology and greater awareness of energy efficiency, makes for a dynamic environment and more opportunities for communities, consumers and providers. Murray Hogarth presents a case for The Grid and asks, if not a microgrid, what else can we do?

Agenda

Time	Item	
7:00pm – 7:05pm	Welcome and introductions	Emma Birchall (CLO)
7:05pm – 7:25pm	Presentation	Murray Hogarth
7:25 – 7:35pm	Panel discussion	Members of MyTown Community Reference Group and Project Team
7:35 – 8:10pm	Questions and Answers	Everyone
8:10 – 8:15	Next steps and close	Emma Birchall (CLO)

To register for this free webinar simply email: info@mytownmicrogrid.com.au to have the link sent to you or call the Heyfield Community Resource Centre on 5148 2100.

Outcome and lessons learnt

Each webinar was attended by about 15 to 25 people including CRG members, local stakeholders and representatives from other communities. The webinars offered a platform for learning and discussing fundamental questions of the energy market development and their implications for local communities. It also provided the project team with useful insights to better understand local concerns and needs regarding everyday energy issues on site (e.g. occurrences of black/brownouts, electricity costs/ affordability etc.).

The last webinar particularly highlighted the importance of networking and collaboration within and beyond the community (e.g. local businesses, local government, schools and other government bodies) to drive local initiatives forward.

Overall, the webinars received very positive feedback from the participants who emphasised their knowledge gain and inspirations for bottom-up actions in Heyfield.

3.2 Business Development Workshops

Over the last ten years, Australian communities have demonstrated that community (co-)ownership models for energy assets work and are scalable. However, community microgrids are a new and very complex technology options, with only few examples in Australia yet. In all cases, the network provider and/ or third-party partners enabled the community to implement the project and played the instrumental role for creating a viable business model.

In MyTown Microgrid project’s definition, a business model describes how an organisation creates value, and how it gets paid – or rewarded through other means – for doing so. It comprises three key elements: value creation, value delivery and value capture.

Hence, between October and November 2021, the project team conducted four initial business development workshops attended by all CRG members and local stakeholders.

Purpose

The overall purpose of the business model workshop is to identify and co-design a viable option for a local energy solution in Heyfield. There is common understanding that in the wide variety of microgrid components, the industry will never converge on one business model, and the 'right choice' will need to consider community goals, renewable resources, geography, regulations and who is doing what in the market at the time. Hence a series of business model workshops with the CRG sought to progress the community vision into potential business cases for local energy solutions.

The workshops introduced possible local energy system pathways with a specific focus on energy efficiency and relevant business models.

Process

Due to the Covid restrictions (limiting travel) the workshops were held as 2 to 2.5 hour sessions in a hybrid format – with the majority of CRG members gathering at the HCRC and the project team members dialling in via zoom. The workshops were held Monday evenings at the regular meeting time of the CRG.

The discussion were facilitated by the CLO who captured the feedback, insights and questions for the project team.

Outcomes and lessons learnt

Workshop 1

The first workshop revisited and confirmed community preferences and introduce key concepts (e.g. business model canvas) and processes how to pursue business models for positive outcomes drawing on the human centred design (desirable, feasible and viable).

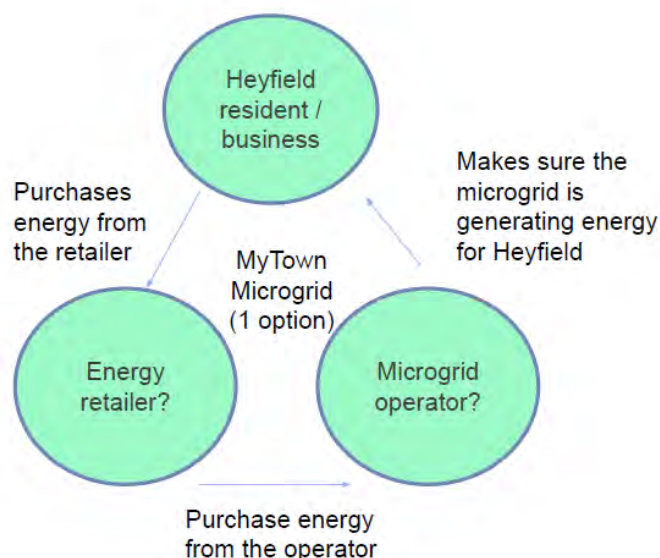


Figure 4: Very simplified concept of key components of business model for microgrid

The group learnt that there is a not *one* business model, in fact there will be several business models for the different components of local energy solutions (e.g. bioenergy owned by private facility, community solar farm, individual rooftop solar etc.). A microgrid project appears as the highest level for coordinating the multiple components and processes (simplified in Fig 5).

The project team raised and discussed the following questions, required for the development of a business model:

- What are the benefits you are trying to create, who is it for?
- Who are all the partners and what do they bring to the table?
- How should it be paid for?
- Who should own it? Should the private or community owned?
- What are the risks and who will be responsible for it?

In order to identify desirable energy pathways, the CRG reconfirmed the priorities and values of the local community. They were asked to vote on each motivation and perceived benefit of local energy solutions with the highest rating for cost reduction and improved reliability and resilience of supply.

#	Community Priorities	Votes
1	Reduce energy costs	15
2	Improve reliability & resilience of energy supply	14
3	Promote local ownership & investment	11
4	Improve environmental outcomes (emissions, resource use)	11
5	Unlock new local social & economic opportunities (enterprise, employment, skills, community infrastructure)	10
6	Reduce reliance on the grid (local sourcing of energy)	8
7	Community control over governance/decision-making	6
8	Create social/community connection	6
9	Future-proof (e.g. compatible w/ emerging tech, against climate risk)	5
10	Breadth of community access to benefits	4
11	Risks are clear & manageable	2

Workshop 2

In order to further clarify the community’s priorities, the second session of the workshop delved into the possible physical boundaries of a local microgrid solution.

The feedback from the CRG highlighted the importance of discussing the reasoning for modelling the specific microgrid locations with implications for “*who’s in and who’s outside*” the physical boundary. The CRG confirmed specifically Boundary Option 3 and 4 aligned with the expectation of the community (Fig. 5). The CRG stressed that the microgrid should be as inclusive as possible to the entire community, not only cover critical sites.

**Finding a pathway to a more resilient local energy system
(which may or may not be a microgrid!)**



Boundary option 3 – Heyfield & Denison West



Key features (option 3)

- Includes Heyfield centre (homes, businesses, timber mills, DELWP, hospital)
- **Is it a microgrid? Yes** – a small one
- **Pros:** Good balance of community served vs low cost/complexity (rel. simple operation and control, no network augmentation required, low maintenance)
- **Cons:** Voltage and frequency regulation difficult due to the size of the small network



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Figure 5: Slide from 2nd Business Model Workshop

In addition, the session including an introduction to energy efficiency as an on-site energy option and what types are available and what are they used for e.g. building fabric upgrades and efficient appliances, smart flexible home and demand management, generation and storage. While energy efficiency is usually underestimated as a local community activities, this session helped the CRG better understand the importance and benefits of efficiency measures on the town’s energy pathway.

The project team emphasised again the importance of energy modelling and the data input for better understanding the costs – what makes it expensive and cheap. In addition, the team concluded that more discussions and input regarding critical sites and the element of sharing are needed.

Workshop 3

In the third workshop, the CRG did a *test-drive* of the “Business Model Canvas” process for energy efficiency+ on-site options. The energy efficiency option is understood as a “critical stepping stone” to a microgrid. It’s a win-win process which can help anyone in the community that wants to get the benefits of local energy project, and creates the foundation for a cost-effective locally-served microgrid. To this purpose the group discussed the following key questions:

- What is the Customer Value Proposition?
- How to create broader community benefit?
- Potential partners & roles on the supplier side

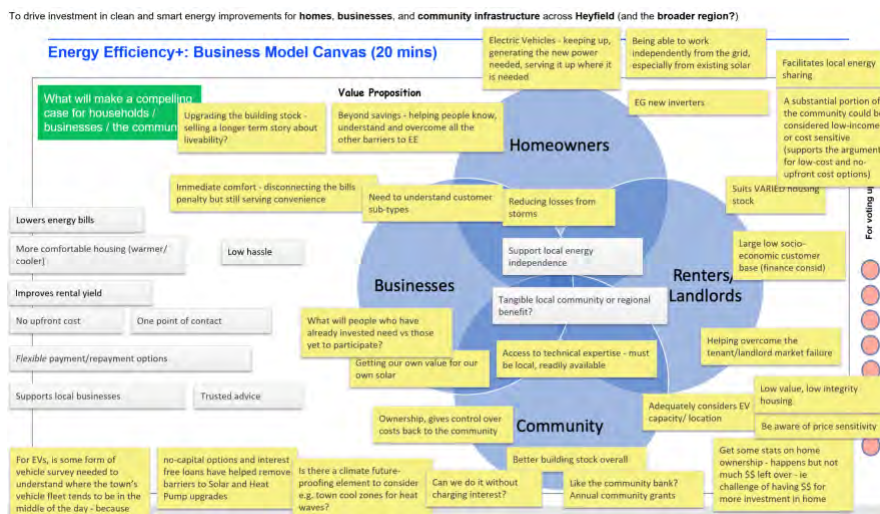


Figure 6: Workshop 3 - Business Model Canvas – output one

Much of the discussion was spent discussing the potential community benefits (Fig. 6), partnerships, and collaboration options (Fig. 7) that would be needed to initiate a potential business in town. The CRG identified local Trading Association and the Tourist Association as important collaboration partners to further investigate.

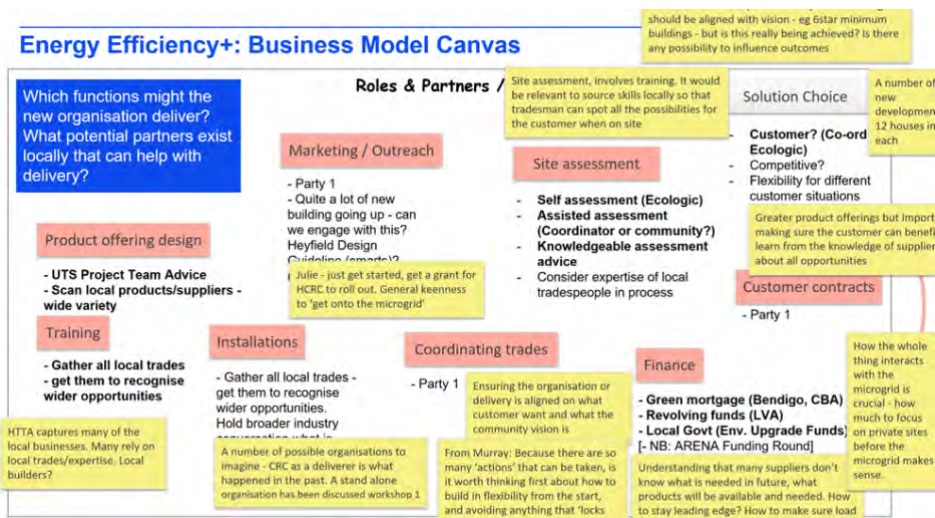


Figure 7: Workshop 3 - Business Model Canvas – output two

Workshop 4

The fourth workshop was used to reflect and recap on the earlier sessions. CRG emphasised that more time is required to discuss the technical options (boundaries) and better understand business model implications, which was taken on board by the project team.

Overall, the workshop sessions provided valuable learnings and feedback:

- Smaller workshops sessions are more effective with a slow the pace. It is important to establish some basic knowledge first and let it sink in, before moving to detailed discussion and decision-making processes.
- On site workshops and face to face conversations will allow for a seamless discussion and communication. Due to Covid restrictions, the project experts were not able to present in person, which provided some challenges for the communication.
- Start workshops with asking a few key directional questions.
- Plan and allow enough time for each session – at least 20 to 30 minutes including questions and streamline the workshop design with some strategic questions as much as possible.

3.3 Community Reference Group Meetings

The CRG is well established group of 10 local community members (plus CLO and local project members) who meet regularly either at the HCRC or informally at the local pub. The group has been very active and generous with their time to provide input and feedback on the project development and research findings.

Purpose

The aim of setting up a Community Reference Group was to enable community input in the design of the microgrid project and offer advice and recommendations for each step of the process

Process

The group established a regular schedule meeting once per months (more often if required) on a Monday evening.

The meetings are coordinated and prepared by the CLO who sends the agenda (in collaboration with the rest of the project team), zoom invite and further instructions to the CRG members via email. Minutes are taken by the CLO and send after each meeting to all attendees.

The CRG usually meets in person or (occasionally) online with the project team dialling in via zoom. The webinars

Outcomes and lessons learnt

Apart from the business model workshops, the group had a number of intensive sessions (each around 2 hours or more) in the 2nd Quarter of 2022. At the meetings in May, the project team presented the results from technical and economic feasibility analysis. The CRG learnt that although a microgrid is technical possible, the regulatory feasibility and economic viability are problematic. The investigations regarding the regulatory requirements did not provide a clear conclusion, yet it would certainly involve enormously complex negotiations and may still be turned down by the regulator. None of the standard exemptions apply, and there is no clear route to comply with required consumer protections. Two scenario assessment (one with and one without bioenergy option) further revealed that a local microgrid would only be economically viable with a local bioenergy component. Yet, household power bills would still be adversely impacted, and high CAPEX remains for both cases.

The CRG concluded that although there is a great desire, the less than ideal economic and regulatory conditions constitute a high-risk venture for both the community and any businesses involved. And although a microgrid is not yet viable, there are many opportunities to support the community's vision with local energy solutions based on different pathways already mapped out.

The group decided to have the project team scoping and exploring further options on the pathway towards an integrated local energy system including:

- Energy efficiency
- Load flex and control
- Community battery
- Community renewable generator
- Community retailer
- SAPS at critical sites

	↓ energy bills	↑ reliability & resilience	↑ community involvement	↑ environmental benefit	↑ future proofing
Energy efficiency upgrade program	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Load flexibility & control	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community battery	?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community renewable generator	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
Community retailer	?	✗	?	?	✗
Stand-alone power at critical sites	✗	✓	?	✗	✗

Figure 8: High level assessment of integrative local energy options against community priorities.

An additional, still very important outcome of the sessions was the group’s decision to form a new community energy group called “MyTown Energy Heyfield” to carry forward the work of the project team beyond the funding life of the MTMG project and ensure the implementation of local energy options. This new group will be established under the auspices of the HCRC with governance structures and roles still to be determined.

3.4 Engaging local schools

The project team has established an ongoing relationship with local schools, both at primary and secondary level.

The two primary schools, Heyfield Primary School and St. Michael’s Catholic Primary School participate in the feasibility study, by having Wattwatchers Energy Monitors installed on their switchboards. The primary schools have a subscription to the Solar Schools, a STEM education package using data collected by the Wattwatchers monitors.

The CLO has also engaged in the Collabor8 program, which is part of the Broadening Horizons Program with Year 8 students from Maffra Secondary College.

Purpose

The school programs provide a unique opportunity to educate local students on the potential of localised renewable energy solutions, inspire new ideas and integrate their creativity into our project.

Process

The Solar Schools training is designed to familiarise teaching staff with the education package and demonstrate how it can be used in the classroom, both to further numeracy as well promote sustainable behaviours.

In the ‘Collabor8’ program, industry representatives are asked to present to students, giving an overview of their industry and some of the opportunities and challenges it faces.

Problems are presented to the students, who are given the opportunity to ask questions of the industry representatives. They then go through a process of:

- Selecting a question
- Defining the problem

- Ideation
- Creation of a prototype
- Testing the prototype
- Presentation of their solution to the industry representatives and teachers.

Industry representatives are given the opportunity to mentor the students throughout the process.

Outcomes and lessons learnt

Project's logo design

In 2020, students chose to create a logo and branding for the feasibility study. The chosen design is below.

This logo features across all MyTown stationery, presentations, media releases and social media.



Solar Schools and presentation for the Collabor8 program

To date, Heyfield Primary School has engaged in two training sessions via Zoom, one in June 2021 and another recently in May 2022. The recent training in May 2022, involved other staff members at Heyfield Primary as well, so hopefully, we will see staff begin to use it in the second half of 2022. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the school schedule significantly and so the adoption of new teaching resources had a bit of a slow start. Yet, in term 3, CLO will instigate a sustainability and energy challenge with the staff and pupils of HPS, to promote the use of the package and increase awareness of energy usage.

Wattwatchers has also donated a smart TV for Heyfield Primary School to display the Solar Schools dashboard and the energy data available from the Wattwatchers device.

In June 2021, Community Liaison Officers were also invited to present the MyTown Microgrid Feasibility Study to Year 9 Environmental Science students at Gippsland Grammar. In 2021, although shortened by the Covid-19 pandemic the Collabor8 program continued and MyTown had the opportunity to participate again. The program used the same process. This time the students assigned to MyTown chose to build a prototype focussing on hydro-electric power.

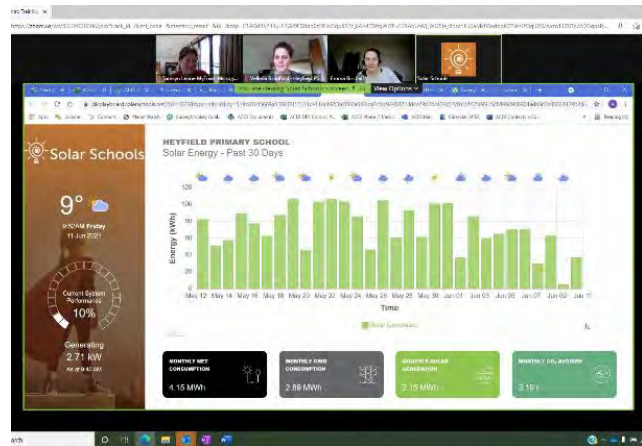


Hydro-electric prototype designed by the students. This was inspired by the hydro-electric turbines installed at Glenmaggie Weir



CLO Emma Birchall with year 8 students

CLO presenting the students with other industry partners



Screenshot is from the Solar School training in June 2021, with the Principal Velleda Bradford from Heyfield Primary School and the two CLO's from MyTown.

4.5 Community Dashboards

As part of the Community Engagement Plan and the Technology Deployment stream, Community Dashboards have been developed to communicate information on the project to the wider Heyfield community at highly visible sites accessible to the public.

Purpose

The purpose of the Community Dashboard Displays is to:

- Provide a summary of the anonymised data being collected by the Wattwatchers energy monitors installed in residential and commercial properties in and around Heyfield.
- Increase awareness, energy literacy and engagement with the Feasibility Study throughout the community and amongst visitors to the town

Process

The locations to host the Community Dashboards were selected to maximise the number of members of the public that would see the information at highly visible sites. Community Dashboard displays have now been installed at the Heyfield Community Resource Centre and the Heyfield Post Office sites and there is one more site expected to be installed at another prominent location by September 2022.

In order to engage and incentivise the host locations, the displays were to be installed and operated with the project content until the end of the project in June 2023. As a gesture of thanks for their engagement, after this time, the ownership of the display would pass to the host business for their own use.

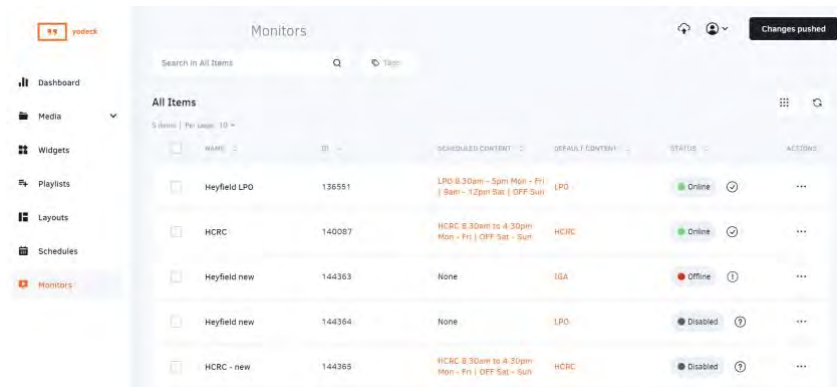
A number of display and digital signage solutions were evaluated and the project selected high-quality Samsung BE43T-H 43inch 4K UHD Business TVs for reliable operation during business hours which at some sites may be 16 hours per day. The content is managed using a Yodeck digital signage solution that uses a RaspberryPi as a small, low cost digital media device that can receive updated content via the internet for continuous engagement over the next 12 months.

The content is a combination of static general information on the project as well as displaying the live Community Dashboards provided by the Wattwatchers ADEPT solution. At some sites, a summary dashboard of that site's energy usage is also displayed.

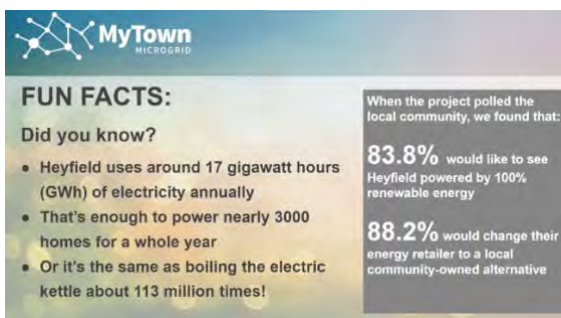
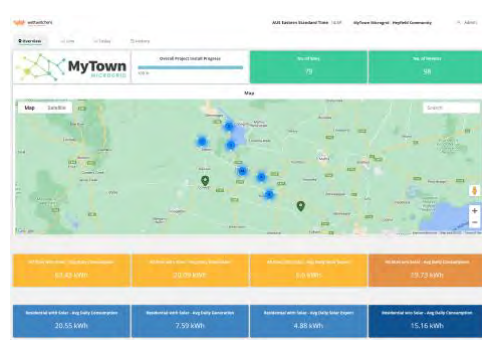
Outcome

This solution has now been operating at the Heyfield Community Resource Centre since April 2022 and Post Office since June 2022 and has proven to be extremely reliable as well as engaging with the broader community who have shown further interest in the project.

Yodeck Digital Signage Solution



Digital Signage Content



4.5 Community Communications

Communication is an essential part for engaging the community in the project activities while also promoting project activities to a broader audience at regional and national level.

Newsletter

The CLO prepares regular newsletters informing the community about the latest project developments, local and regional energy events and relevant community energy initiatives.

A unique feature in the newsletter are interviews with CRG members giving voice to the local perspective and insights in MTMG project activities. The newsletter is distributed via Mailchimp to a contact list of more than 200 people. In addition, regular updates are also posted in the HCRC Newsletter, mailed to 300 people in hard copy and 50 people via email.

The latest newsletters can be found here:

[August 2021](#)

[September 2021](#)

[December 2021](#)

[March 2022](#)

Website

The project online platform is hosted by the HCRC and integrated into their existing website. The CLO maintains the platform posting updates, links and further resources.

In addition, the platform also provides an additional subpage with exclusive access for CRG members (password protected) to project internal resources such as CRG meeting minutes and project reports (early versions).

MyTown website: <https://www.heyfieldcommunity.org.au/mytown-microgrid>

The screenshot shows the 'MyTown Microgrid' subpage on the Heyfield Community Resource Centre website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links: Home, Who We Are, Get Involved, Learn, What We Offer, Child Care, Heyfield News, and Say Hello!. Below the menu is a large image of solar panels. The main content area includes:

- MyTown Microgrid**: A section describing the project as an innovative, multi-year, multi-stakeholder project. It mentions funding from the Federal Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund and the Lettice Valley Authority. It also lists partners: the Heyfield Community Resource Centre, Wattwatchers Digital Energy, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), the Public Interest Advocacy Centre Ltd (PIAC), Federation University Australia, Aquafit Services, RMIT University, Lettice Valley Authority (LVA), and the Community Power Agency (CPA).
- In case you missed it**: A section for a 'Free Community Webinar: Microgrid vs The Grid' presented by Murray Hogarth, Head of Impact and Communications at project partner Wattwatchers Digital Energy. It includes a link to the webinar presentation.
- Tell us about your energy usage**: A call to action for a feasibility study, asking residents and businesses to participate by clicking a registration and consent form link.

Figure 9: Screenshot of the project subpage on the HCRC website

Conferences, workshops and networks presentations

Knowledge sharing through presenting at local events (Rotary Club Meetings, Community Climate Action Groups), national (Energy Efficiency Expo 2020, 2nd Virtual Power Plants, Microgrid, Large Scale Solar and Energy Storage Innovations Forum 2021) and international events (Asia Week 2021, Microgrid Knowledge 2021) has enabled MTMG to widely communicate its message around helping to empower local communities through taking more control over how they use and generate energy. It helps to generate interest in your project and in sustainable energy which can have a multiplier effect, support the exchange of ideas, and reach and inspire other communities.

July Bryer and Emma Birchall (CLO) introduced the project at regional conferences and network meetings such as the Wellington Renewable Energy Network and the Smart Grids Innovation Group.

The development of a portfolio of presentation materials has been very useful to become proactive in seeking out opportunities to present the project activities to a wider audience. This has also enabled other team members to present, especially the CLOs or CRG members and build capacity at a local level.

Social Media – Facebook

The project has a Facebook page posting regular project updates and other relevant energy information – at least two posts per week.

The Facebook page has about 200 followers.

5. Outlook: Next Steps

In the final year of the project, the team focuses on investigating the feasibility of the selected local energy options and provide plans to smooth the pathway for implementation by the local community. At least one additional webinar will be held related to the key issues identified by the detailed feasibility study that is still in progress and the CRG/community energy group will progress local partnerships building and seeking out further funding opportunities.



“

Why Heyfield?

High level of volunteerism, being familiar with the sustainability work of the HCRC, and because the participants consistently reported that Heyfield had a strong community spirit.

Annex 1: Newsletter Example

[View this email in your browser](#)



MyTown Microgrid Newsletter

Welcome to the official newsletter of the MyTown Microgrid Project; a multi-stakeholder, three-year, federally funded feasibility study to find a replicable energy solution for the rural Victorian town of Heyfield in the Wellington Shire.

This newsletter is intended to be a regular update on project progress and articles of interest for members of the MyTown Microgrid Community Reference Group, feasibility study participants and project partners.

We request that you do not share the content of the newsletter, rather encourage those who are interested to subscribe by emailing: info@mytownmicrogrid.com.au

We welcome your feedback, so if you have any comments or suggestions please let us know.



Back to work for the Community Reference Group, who met for their first 2022 meeting in February. (Left -right: Darcy Jones, Jessica Cox, Mike Kube, Julie Bryer, Paul Brookes, Pete Collings, Rosemary Dunworth. Some CRG members attended remotely.)

Project Update March 2022

After the business model workshops of late 2021, members of the Community Reference Group had a break over Christmas and the New Year and reconvened at the end of February. The project team is always grateful for the Group's ongoing commitment to MyTown.

Meanwhile, the Project Team was busy writing a report on "Lessons Learned for Future Projects", as part of its milestone reporting to the Commonwealth.

Knowledge sharing is at the heart of the MyTown Microgrid study design and a summary of the report will be made available via the MyTown Microgrid website. The full report is available on request. Please email: emma@mytownmicrogrid.com.au

Their 2022 schedule of activities is looking no less busy, with the CRG to be presented with initial results on local energy options by mid-March.

A summary of the results will be made available at the beginning of April.

A key part of the project is deploying energy monitoring devices (supplied by project lead Wattwatchers) in the home, businesses, and schools of Heyfield. This will help us understand how energy is used in our town and therefore what options might be available to help improve energy affordability, reliability, resilience, and locally generated renewable energy.

DEPLOYMENT - as at 28th February 2022

91 devices installed

74 sites

Sites Installed

60 Residential

11 Commercial

2 Schools

1 Farm

Planned sites remaining

7 Commercial

12 Residential

Planned installations have progressed well since the start of 2022, with the goal of completing these by Easter.

Interview with Jessica Cox, Community Reference Group Member

MyTown Microgrid caught up with CRG member, Jessica Cox (pictured above) and to talk about why she decided to get involved and volunteer with MyTown and why the project is important to her. Many thanks for your time Jess.

MTMG: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

JC: I'm originally from Melbourne and moved to Heyfield about 11 years ago. I studied Environmental Management at Uni and I'm an Environmental Advisor at Southern Rural Water (SWR). My job includes management of our Environmental Management System, water quality monitoring, management of native vegetation offset sites, obtaining legislative approvals.

MTMG: Why did you decide to get involved with MyTown Microgrid CRG?

JC: I spoke with Julie (Bryer) and decided to join in. It's very geared towards sustainability and fits in with

my values and ethos.

MTMG: Did your employer encourage you to get involved?

JC: Our previous MD was very encouraging and curious about the study, but I got involved of my own volition. SRW is obviously keen to know how the study is going and what we get up to, and I've been asked to write about my volunteering.

MTMG: Has the study matched your expectations?

JC: I didn't know what it would be. I understood and still understand that it's a feasibility study and not an implementation project.

MTMG: Do you feel that it has been communicated sufficiently?

JC: It's hard to quantify if community literacy has increased. I think it's been communicated well, although you can always find more ways to capture the community. Some people are willingly illiterate when it comes to bills and utilities. They seem to have a phobia around making a change.

MTMG: How did the Wattwatchers' monitor and MyEnergy data app change things for you?

JC: I was already on a journey to using more renewable power and living more sustainably (Jess has PV Solar). I now know what my base load is, that's the power I'm using overnight. I actually haven't paid for power since 2019 when I installed my solar panels.

My children are now app literate enough to put the kettle on and actually see the power spike on the app. I live off the credit that I have from exporting my power to the grid, during the winter.

Working from home, as I have been doing, you can see the optimal times for running the washing machine or dishwasher. Obviously, more people are returning to work in offices now, so their empty buildings will be exporting more power.

MTMG: Yes from the aggregated information, you can really see the spikes during the day...

JC: The 3pm onwards of kids coming home and the houses being used. You can really see how the app would help energy literacy. It's very user friendly. I think the project is well run. You can hear everyone's [the CRG's, CLO's] energy literacy increasing. Especially around other benefits, such as energy efficiency.

MTMG: Can you see yourself taking the results of the feasibility study to the next level; to implementing something?

JC: Potentially yes. I can see that we are in a bit of a 'bubble', however that will improve with more events and greater community education.

MTMG: Why do you think the project is important?

JC: I think the MyTown Microgrid is important to the community of Heyfield as it is an opportunity to create a sense of ownership of an important resource, be in control of the reliability and pricing of energy, potentially helping out those less fortunate as part of the project.

If you live in the 3858 postcode and are interested in becoming part of the MyTown Microgrid Community Reference Group, the please email the **Community Liaison Officer at:**
emma@mytownmicrogrid.com.au



MyTown
MICROGRID

Making energy work better for our community.

Webinar Series
Microgrid vs The Grid

Delivered by Murray Hogarth.
Head of Impact and Communications, Wattwatchers

Join Murray and our panel of community and project guests to explore what will serve Heyfield's energy future best: a local microgrid, or a main grid that works better for us?

WHEN: Monday 28th March 2022,
7.00-8.15 PM, via ZOOM
To register, email
info@mytownmicrogrid.com.au



This work was funded by the Australian Government under the Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund Microgrids.

Community Webinar 28th March 2022, at 7pm

Microgrid vs The Grid seeks to explore the context MyTown Microgrid exists in.

With mass electrification and a desire for Australia to be powered by 100% by renewable energy, by 2030, Community Energy projects such as MyTown are no longer rare.

Rapid expansion in digital technology and greater awareness of energy efficiency, makes for a dynamic environment and more opportunities for communities, consumers and providers.

Murray Hogarth presents a case for The Grid and asks, if not a microgrid, what else can we do?

What's Next?

Community Reference Group Meeting

Proposed Dates: Early May 2022

Community Webinar 28th March 2022, 7.00-8.15pm

Microgrid vs The Grid

With Murray Hogarth, Head of Impact and Communications, Wattwatchers

Installation of Community Dashboard Displays

Proposed date: April 2022

Town Hall Meeting

Community members are invited to come along and get an update on the MyTown Microgrid Feasibility Study, and meet some of the team.

Proposed Date: June 2022

Previous Editions

[August 2021](#)

[September 2021](#)

[December 2021](#)



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info@mytownmicrogrid.com.au

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