

Sustainable Upper Ovens Annual Report



14 September 2022

This has been a year of some change for Sustainable Upper Ovens, taking the gears up a notch after reduced activity during the previous two years because of pandemic related restrictions.

Making information available to anyone who is interested about all areas of sustainability is a core focus and we have been distributing information on a regular basis via our email news subscriber list, facebook page, web site. This activity increased this year, particularly after our new Publicity and Communications Officer joined the committee. Importantly, we had a number of articles published in our local newspaper throughout the year as well as two radio interviews.

We cannot rely on grants alone to promote sustainability and undertake worthwhile projects. So there have been a number of fund-raising efforts (some regular and some one-off) as well as membership fees and donations from members which enable us to conduct and support worthwhile activities as well as cover the basic operational costs of an incorporated community organisation such as public liability insurance. The most recent was the Bright Brewery Community Keg fundraising initiative where \$675.00 was raised on the night. This was also an opportunity to promote our organisation during the evening and talk to patrons who were interested about our projects and events.

We continue to refine our back-end processes to reduce the load on our committee members and other volunteers. For example:

- We have purchased a Zoom license so that committee members can organise offsite virtual meetings, presentations and workshops as required.
- We have reduced the time burden on both the Secretary and Treasurer to manage memberships and renewals, by purchasing an annual license for *JoinIt* which can now manage and automate our member sign-ups and renewals online. This was made possible from a \$300 grant from the Hume Community to improve CRM capability. As members will now be automatically billed when their annual membership falls due, this gives us a more reliable and constant small income stream.
- In August, we were successful in obtaining an Alpine Shire Council Community Grant for a communication upgrade and additional promotional resources. Part of this will be used for a software upgrade to our website, in particular to make it easier to maintain and also automate

publication of news and events articles through multiple channels. This reduces the time burden on our volunteers also.

Sustainable Upper Ovens Sub Group Projects

As most of you are aware, Sustainable Upper Ovens is an umbrella organisation that comprises four distinct groups which focus on different areas of sustainability. It supports all these groups by being incorporated and able to apply for grants to support their activities, and also providing shared communication and publicity channels, such as the web site, and sharing volunteer effort across groups as the membership includes people who are interested in multiple issues such as energy, waste and sustainable food practices.

Each group has its own annual report below, but here are some highlights:

- **Community Carbon Action Plan Field Day** - this was the largest undertaking by Sustainable Upper Ovens this year and was held on the 26th March at the Bright Community Centre. We had support also from Upper Ovens Landcare and Toward Renewable Energy Kiewa (TREK). The event enabled us to build different kinds of resilience for our community and reduce our carbon footprint providing a better future for the generations to come. It will also support the Alpine Shire's commitment to progress in this area. A total of \$19,500 in funding from the Hume Community Power Hub, the Victorian Government (DELWP), Indigo Power and Mondo Energy Solutions enabled us to have 27 presentations running in two locations (inside the hall and outside), provide catering and support to presenters and exhibitors, provide a free lunch to participants and in particular to live stream all of the presentations and have the recordings available on our website for many more people to watch than were able to attend. They are still being downloaded now. We had over 150 attendees and 35 volunteers. The presentations covered:
 - Energy security challenges & a future vision
 - All electric homes
 - Batteries – household, neighbourhood & electric vehicle
 - Microgrids & Virtual Power Plants
 - Passive Homes – healthy, comfortable, energy efficient & more fire resilient
 - Electric vehicles
 - Biodiversity
- **The Alpine Unwrapped Project** started this year by Plasticwise Bright has been a great success. You have probably seen their logo in many businesses around town. This project encourages businesses and consumers to BYO reusable cups and containers for food and drinks. There has been a huge increase in take-away food container waste during the restrictions of the pandemic and reversing this trend is a very important initiative. Funding from DELWP and

the Alpine Shire contributed to make this project possible.

- The **Mug Library** is up and running again at the Bright Make It, Bake It, Grow It market every month on the third Saturday. This is a great service to reduce take-away cup waste. The stall is also an opportunity for volunteers to talk to anyone who is interested about all the activities of Sustainable Upper Ovens and how they might get involved or make use of our resources.

Partners and Supporters

Sustainable Upper Ovens is very grateful for the amount of grant funding we have received this year, financial and in-kind support from businesses and donations from members and the general public. We would like to thank you all for your generosity, commitment and trust in Sustainable Upper Ovens' ability to deliver outcomes.

These include the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Alpine Shire Council, Hume Community Power Hub, Mondo Energy Solutions, Bright Brewery, Sixpence Coffee, Bright Food Co-Op, Dumu Balcony Café, Espire Clothing, Bright Chamber of Commerce, Mr Brojangles coffee van, Alpine Valley Getaways, BangOn Marketing & Communications and many more.

We have a number of businesses who have taken out a business membership subscription with Sustainable Upper Ovens. These will be listed on our website once we have completed the redevelopment.

We have valued our partnerships this year with the Bright Food Co-op, Upper Ovens Landcare, Toward Renewable Energy Kiewa (TREK), Indigo Power and the Hume Community Power Hub

Member Activities

- Eliza Stokie was accepted into the Regional Disaster Recovery and Climate Change Adaptation Leadership program in August. This is an eight day course spread across various locations in NE Victoria that explores leadership, community, change, beliefs and values. This program is funded by the Australian Government through the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Scheme and Alpine Valleys Community Leadership.
- Dennis Lambert, Graham Barrow, Michael Block and Brian Edwards attended three days' of training to become Volunteer Home Energy Advisors. This was organised and funded by the Hume Community Power Hub and trained volunteers will be available to visit homes in our community to provide free energy efficiency advice based on the occupant's needs in a written report.
- Dennis Lambert worked with Claire Birch of the Hume Community Power Hub to coordinate three live webinars in late 2021 in response to being unable to hold physical events.
- Brian Edwards and Dennis Lambert attended the four meetings held each year by the Hume Community Energy Network
- Dennis Lambert participated in the Hume Community Power Hub workshop in Beechworth to help communities develop proposals for community batteries looking at the Yackandandah feasibility study.

- Dennis Lambert attends bi-monthly meetings of the Aggregated Community Battery Project run by Indigo Power
- Eliza Stokie attended a Social Media and Digital Comms Workshop run by Indigo Power in May

Plans for Next Year

Future plans are detailed in the reports for each group but in addition to continuing current activities a brief summary is:

- Redevelop the website and increase its value as a resource to find useful information, contacts and events
- Expand the Alpine Unwrapped project into more townships and by partnering with Tourism and Accommodation Providers
- Broaden the Mug Library to operate at more events in the region
- Develop a strategic plan for the Community Energy and eV group
- Take the 3D solar studies completed of three potential large solar PV installations on community buildings and advance to a funding model to seek funding support.
- Start conducting volunteer home energy assessments using the toolkit purchased with the grant just received

All of these require expanding our base of active members willing to put their shoulders to the wheel. Committee members and existing volunteers are at risk of burn-out unless more members come forward to assist in both activities and in committee roles. There are many different types of skills that are useful, so everyone has a way to contribute.

The Committee

The committee elected at the last AGM was:

President: Lily O'Neill

Vice President: Dennis Lambert

Secretary: Jessica Cox

Treasurer: Monica Omodei

General committee members: Anne Heuperman, Michael Block, Brian Edwards

Each of our groups has one of their own members on the SUO committee to ensure the common services meet the needs of each group.

During the year a new member, Eliza Stokie, was appointed to the vacant role of Publicity and Communications Officer and has since made a great contribution given her background in Digital Marketing.

Sadly our president proffered her resignation in July due to the travel and time commitments of a new job. Monica Omodei, the Treasurer, was appointed by the committee to fulfill the duties of the president until the AGM in September.

Plasticwise Bright Annual Report

Plasticwise has had a very successful year, particularly in the past 6 months. Here is a short summary of our projects over the past year:

- We held two Clothes Swaps, both of which had an excellent turnout.
- We ran the Mug Library each month since April at the monthly Make It, Bake It, Grow It market at Howitt Park.
- We launched the Alpine Unwrapped Project which encourages businesses and consumers to BYO reusable cups and containers for food and drinks – something we think is really important post pandemic and lockdowns.

We estimate that through the Mug Libraries we have prevented over 600 take-away cups from going to landfill !

A big thank you to the many local businesses and organisations who have supported our projects:

- Dumu Balcony Café, Bright Food Co-op and Espire Clothing (*Clothes Swap*)
- Bright Chamber of Commerce and Sixpence coffee, Mr Brojangles coffee van & Bright Brewery (*Mug Library*)
- Alpine Shire Council, Alpine Valley Getaways, BangOn Marketing & Communications (*Alpine Unwrapped*)

Our Alpine Unwrapped Project was successful in receiving two grants during the year to assist us in making this project a success and expanding its reach

- \$2000 from the Department of Energy, Water, Land and Planning (DEWLP Hume)
- \$650 from the Alpine Shire

Future Plans:

Alpine Unwrapped continues to operate in Bright and our future plans for this project include:

- Rollout the project in other towns – Harrierville, Myrtleford and Mt Beauty
- Promote the project to visitors and tourists by partnering with holiday accommodation providers

Our next Clothes Swap is scheduled for Friday October 7th at Dumu Balcony Cafe.

The Mug Library continues to run at each monthly market, and we would love to broaden the scope of the Mug Library by taking it to more events within the region – ideally anywhere there is a mobile coffee van. We are always keen to have new helpers at the Mug Library – it's always fun, social and a really easy way to have a positive impact on the environment.

Contact Us

If anyone has any ideas, suggestions or would like to become involved with Plasticwise don't

hesitate to get in touch!

Anne Heupermann and Jess Cox

Plasticwise Co-ordinators

plasticwise@sustainableupperovens.org.au

Community Energy and Electric Vehicles Annual Report

It has been both a busy and successful year for our Community Energy and EV group in its work towards developing better energy outcomes in the Upper Ovens Valley. Our principal achievements are listed below. There may not be many of us but we worked extremely hard for our community this year and we hope to attract new members and volunteers this coming year..

Our Community Energy and EV meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month at 7pm at the Bright Uniting Church and Zoomed live. Please join us on this very interesting and challenging journey.

Webinars

We started the year with a short series of three webinars. It was Sarah Buckley's presentation on the Alpine Shire's Carbon Action Plan to be carbon neutral by June 2023 at our last AGM, which triggered these follow up webinars.

The Community Energy Network (CEN)

Formerly Northeast Community Energy Network, the CEN is a network of 14 community energy groups across the Hume region. Totally Renewable Yackandandah would be the best known of this group. The network meets four times a year to share ideas and was successful in getting funding to form the Hume Community Power Hub (HCPH) to fund some important projects across our region. This included our Community Carbon Action Plan Field Day, Yea's, 2030 Yea, Battery Fever in Beechworth, plus more events across our region. Brian Edwards and Dennis Lambert represented SUO at the CEN meetings.

The Community Carbon Action Plan (CCAP) Field Day

This was a very successful event and was designed for the community to share ideas that would build on the Alpine Shire's Carbon Action Plan. It was funded by grants from the HCPH, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) mini grants program and Mondo Energy (the retail arm of AusNet Services). This event built on the very successful All About Solar weekend we ran in 2018. All of the key presenters, except one, came from within 100km of Bright. This emphasises the depth of expertise and knowledge we have in our region.

All the sessions were recorded and are on the Sustainable Upper Ovens website under Video Resources. Topics included buying quality solar PV, heat pump hot water systems, electric vehicles, composting, rehabilitating the natural environment, plus others.

Thank you to all the community groups and individuals who volunteered their time to help make the field day such a success. We had over 150 in-person participants and more online, plus over 30 presenters and stall holders.

3D solar PV analysis of community assets by ARUP

ARUP is a large international engineering consulting firm who has been involved in major projects including the Sydney Opera House, the Optus Stadium and the famous circular La Sagrada Familia Cathedral in Barcelona. ARUP funded our project pro bono for \$23,000 and completed an analysis regarding future solar installations on public buildings. Its analysis included:

- the Bright Railway Museum railway carriages
- the Bright Community Centre car park
- the Bright Courthouse Theatre car park

The funding and undertaking of this project amounts to a substantial contribution to our community and for this we owe a huge thanks to Sean McGinn, a SUO member whose support of this project to his employer (ARUP) resulted in their commitment to it.

Our aim is to try and extend these projects further this year and includes batteries and electric vehicle destination charging and slow low amperage (7A) charging points, enabling half day or all -day charging.

The Solar for Good program

This program was also funded by the Hume Community Power Hub. It was designed to help groups prepare for either self-funded projects or ways to seek funding. To this end, Murray Goulburn Community Energy assisted the Bright Golf Club in preparing a solar PV installation plan and costing for a self-funded project. Graham Barrow, a SUO member, helped facilitate this program and his assistance is much appreciated.

The Volunteer Home Energy Assessment program

This was another HCPH funded program. It involved a two-day training program in Benalla followed by locally supervised assessments on five homes. Michael Block, Brian Edwards, Graham Barrow and Dennis Lambert completed the training.

We would like to thank the Bendigo Bank which has just supplied funding to purchase the equipment needed to do the home assessments, so hopefully we will complete further assessments in the coming months.

Supporting Heat Pump and Solar Installations

A key focus of our group is to increase the number of homes and buildings with quality solar PV and heat pump hot water installations. Brian Edwards has been working tirelessly on getting heat pumps for the Uniting Church and members of the congregation. On the solar PV front the manse at the Uniting Church has presented difficulties. But it looks like he has not only solved it for the Bright Uniting Church

but for ALL Uniting Churches in Victoria. A great achievement. The ongoing commitment to this committee from Brian and Petula Edwards is indeed appreciated.

The Aggregated Community Battery Project.

A study is being conducted by Indigo Power's analyst Nick Mason-Smith in Bright, Mt Beauty, Myrtleford, Beechworth, Towong Shire and Tumbarumba to explore the feasibility of having community batteries, similar to the one in Yackandandah. If successful, the batteries will be set up to work together as a Virtual Power Plant and help manage our rapidly changing electricity grid and improve our resilience during catastrophic events. Bronwyn Westbrook represents the Alpine Shire and Dennis Lambert represents SUO at bimonthly consultation meetings regarding this project.

Mondo Community Consumer Advisory Group

Mondo is the retail arm of AusNet Services. The advisory group is set up to monitor programs like Project Edge and also, to receive community feedback. Project Edge is a scientific program to look at how households with a solar PV system, battery and smart controller (Ubi) can benefit both the householder and the grid operator. Dennis Lambert is the SUO representative on this advisory group.

Those interested in participating in this scheme, need to sign up by the end of 2022 by registering an interest and getting a quote from Solar Integrity in Wodonga.

We are hearing of increasing numbers of people who want to install solar PV or add extra solar panels but are limited in how much excess electricity they can export. Currently the limit is 5kW per phase and some households are being restricted to less or even zero. As we strive to have all electric homes plus the likelihood of an electric vehicle, this is a serious issue. Not only does it hinder the electrification of everything but also, the building of community energy resilience and the decarbonizing of the grid.

Contact Us

Dennis Lambert
Community Energy and eV Sub-Committee Chair
energy@sustainableupperovens.org.au

Bright Community Garden

Since 2014 the BCG community has grown and flourished, creating a self-sustaining, edible garden based predominantly on Permaculture and Water Saving Design principles. It includes a large food forest built on a swale system, zero chemical input, wicking beds, worm farms and a community waste composting system, providing a closed system cycling of nutrients for the garden.

We are located behind the Anglican Church at the top of Church Street in Bright. We are tucked away but very central. Follow the signs to find your way.

We are currently very happy to see spring arriving and with it, more regular working bees will be happening. We have so far planted more veggie seeds and prepped the wicking beds. However there is lots of weeding still needed in the swales and of course the grass is starting to need regular cutting as the weather warms up.

At this stage we are having a working bee with a couple of people every Monday at 1pm. We need more people to join in and may move our Bee's back to Saturday mornings, depending on people's availability.

Activities to note for this year are:

- We ran tours of the garden as part of the Community Carbon Action Plan Field Day in March which was a very well attended event.
- We were successful in obtaining a grant of \$591 in August from the Alpine Shire Council Community Grants funding round which will be used to purchase composting bins so we can deal with more food waste from events.

Future Plans

The most pressing aspect for us now is bringing in new members to assist with maintaining the garden but also to help with planning, communication and deciding on new developments by joining a newly formed BCG committee.

Contact Us

If you are new and would like to come along and check out our garden or join in with a Bee, please call Katie on 0425 763 434

You can join our Bright Community Garden Facebook Group to keep up-to-date and we also have a web page on the Sustainable Upper Ovens Web Site
<https://sustainableupperovens.org.au/bright-community-gardens/>

Katie Steven
Bright Community Garden Coordinator
brightcommunitygarden@sustainableupperovens.org.au



