



# ANNUAL REPORT

- 2023 / 2024 -



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 SUSTAINABLEUPPEROVENS

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

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## MISSION STATEMENT

***“To empower and connect residents and businesses in our community to develop low-impact lifestyles that are regenerative, restorative, low carbon and sustainable.”***

We promise our projects and outcomes will be:

**Inclusive** – Anyone who wants to participate can.

**Just** – Leave no one behind.

**Holistic** – In assessment of costs and benefits.

**Restorative and regenerative** – In their aim.

**Accessible** – To those who want to access.

**Valuable** – To the community.

**Empowering** – Helping people to make change.

**Collaborative** – Working constructively with other groups, associations and agencies.

Most importantly, Sustainable Upper Ovens will work towards delivering positive outcomes that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs i.e. the essential definition of sustainable development.



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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Prepared by Dennis Lambert, Acting President*



Dear Members,

As we reflect on the past year, it's clear that while we've faced some challenges, we remain optimistic and full of energy for the future. The resignation of our President, Graham Barrow, and long-time member Monica Omodei due to Monica's serious health issues marked a difficult moment for us. Both have been pillars of our organisation, contributing tirelessly over the years to our mission. Their leadership and dedication will be deeply missed, and our thoughts are with them both as they focus on their health and well-being.

Despite these setbacks, we remain a strong and passionate volunteer-driven organisation. Our vision for a more sustainable future continues to guide us, and we are incredibly proud of the progress we have made. As an umbrella group, we rely on the dedication of the volunteers within our member groups, and though our resources are limited, the collective effort and commitment of our members have enabled us to achieve meaningful progress.

As a small, local organisation, our influence extends far beyond our size. Through education and action, we've inspired many to make sustainable choices in their daily lives—encouraging locals to reduce waste, improve home energy efficiency, install solar power systems, transition to electric vehicles, and embrace energy-efficient technologies like heat pumps. These efforts, along with countless others, have made a tangible difference in our community.

At the regional and national levels, we have continued to build strong, collaborative relationships with key stakeholders such as the Alpine Shire, power generators, retailers, our federal representative Dr. Helen Haines, and like-minded organisations in neighbouring communities. These connections have strengthened our voice and broadened the impact we can have on policy and change.

Looking forward, we are excited about the possibilities for the year ahead. With the continued support of our members, sponsors, and partners, and the dedication of our wonderful volunteers, we are confident that together we can achieve even greater milestones.

A special thank you goes out to the 2023-2024 Committee members—Eliza, Vince, Michael, Brian, and Petula—for their ongoing support, guidance, and hard work.

Together, we have laid the foundation for a brighter, more sustainable future. The journey ahead is full of potential, and we are excited to continue working alongside you to make a lasting positive impact on our community and environment.

Thank you for your commitment to our shared mission.

Dennis Lambert  
Acting President

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# 2023-2024 COMMITTEE

<b>President</b> <i>(September 2023 - June 2024)</i>	Graham Barrow
<b>Acting President</b> <i>(June 2024 - present)</i>	Dennis Lambert
<b>Vice President</b>	Dennis Lambert
<b>Treasurer</b>	Vince Humphries
<b>Secretary</b>	Eliza Stokie
<b>PlasticWise Bright</b>	Anne Heupermann
<b>Community Energy &amp; EV</b>	Dennis Lambert
<b>Publicity &amp; Communications</b>	Eliza Stokie
<b>Bright Community Gardens</b>	Katie Steven
<b>General Committee Member</b>	Michael Block
<b>General Committee Member</b>	Brian Edwards
<b>General Committee Member</b>	Petula Edwards
<b>General Committee Member</b>	Monica Omodei

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# SECRETARY'S REPORT

*Prepared by Eliza Stokie*

## Meetings

Sustainable Upper Ovens held three general committee meetings. These were held via Zoom on March 17, June 16, and 4 August. The minutes of all general committee meetings were reviewed and approved.

The Community Energy & EV subgroup held 8 meetings. These were held via Zoom on 22 November 2023, 17 January 2024, 20 March 2024, 17 April 2024, 19 June 2024, 31 July 2024, 21 August 2024 and 18 September 2024. The minutes of all meetings were reviewed and approved.

## Memberships

As of 30 September 2023, Sustainable Upper Ovens had 49 members and we received 11 new memberships. This is an increase of 7 members since the previous financial year. The membership breakdown consists of:

Individual Memberships = 42  
Concession Memberships = 2  
Business Memberships = 3  
Non Financial = 2

## Marketing and Public Relations

SUO actively engages with the community through its Facebook page, which has 657 followers. Our audience is predominantly women (65%) with most followers aged between 35 and 54. Geographically, 18% of our followers are from Bright, closely followed by Melbourne at 17%. Other notable locations include Geelong (6.7%), Wangaratta (4.7%), Myrtleford (2.9%), Harrietville (2.3%), and Beechworth (2.1%).



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## In the media




ALPINE OBSERVER AND MYRTLEFORD TIMES

### Next steps community energy

NOV 13 2024 > UPDATED NOVEMBER 13, 2024

 Leah Anderson-Byrne

Share this article  
[f](#) [X](#) [in](#)



*INTERESTED: Residents of Bright and surrounds have shown an interest in Sustainable Upper Ovens proposed battery microgrid.*

SUSTAINABLE Upper Ovens (SUO) will be coordinating free home energy audits for residents of Bright and other parts of the upper Ovens Valley in March next year, following large community interest in a battery microgrid system proposed by the group.

The microgrid was proposed with the aim of reducing energy costs and building energy resilience during extreme weather events, and would be community-led.

ALPINE OBSERVER AND MYRTLEFORD TIMES

## Electrifying your home can add up to big savings: SUO

SEP 18 2024 > UPDATED SEPTEMBER 18, 2024



Leah Anderson-Byrne

Share this article  
f X in



*SOLAR SAVES: Maximising solar can save home owners around \$1000 on energy bills per year.*

LOCAL sustainability groups are encouraging home owners to maximise their solar and save big on energy costs, joining some 726 households, businesses or organisations in the Alpine Shire who installed solar on their rooftop through the Solar Homes Program rebate scheme.

An article in the September 4 edition of the The Alpine Observer and Myrtleford Times reported customers who maximise their solar can save around \$1000 each year on their energy bill and, combined with hot water, heat pump savings can be up to \$1400 a year or at least \$1600 with a battery.



helenhainesindi • Follow



**helenhainesindi** Sustainable Upper Ovens is inviting residents to learn about their proposed community-based battery microgrid for Harrietteville and Bright at an information session on Thursday 31 October (5.30pm at the Bright Senior Citizens Hall).

Dennis Lambert is a passionate member of Sustainable Upper Ovens and is excited to share opportunities with his community to lower their power bills and build energy security through initiatives including community power and improving home energy efficiency.

Dennis has achieved 'Certified Premier Passive House' status for his



28 likes

October 22, 2024



Add a comment...

Post



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# TREASURER'S REPORT

Prepared by Vince Humphries

Sustainable Upper Ovens Inc.

Financial statements  
5 September 2023 to 30 September 2024

## Comprehensive Income Statement

The Comprehensive Income Statement lists our income and expenses. It is used to report our financial performance for the most recent accounting period, and compare that with the financial performance in the previous period. The difference between revenue and expenses represents our surplus or deficit for the accounting period.

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>INCOME</b>			
Adjustment		-	188.45
Cosy Homes Event Grant	3	-	500.00
Household Electrification Grant	4	-	49,680.00
Clothes Swap		-	105.00
Community Garden Grant 2023	5	-	591.00
Community Garden Grant 2024	6	1,600.00	-
Donation		20.00	1,190.72
Household Electrification Circular Fund	7	900.00	-
Interest	8	0.27	2.76
Membership		1,319.15	664.87
Community Carbon Action Plan Field Day Grant	9	-	1,500.00
Operations		127.15	-
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>3,966.57</b>	<b>54,422.80</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Adjustment		-	80.78
Household Electrification Grant	4	24,783.18	7,007.00
Clothes Swap		-	40.00
Community Garden Grant 2023	5	-	452.90
Community Garden Grant 2024	6	1,111.29	-
Website Redevelopment/Home Energy Assessment Kit Grant	10	-	3,050.99
Cosy Homes Event Grant	3	-	1,060.70
Mug Library		-	33.00
Operations		2,420.20	2,694.90
Picnic Sets		-	31.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>28,314.67</b>	<b>14,451.27</b>
<b>Surplus/(deficit) for the year</b>		<b>(24,348.1)</b>	<b>39,971.53</b>

The major sources of revenue for the 2024 accounting period were a grant to the Community Garden and membership. Unlike the 2023 accounting period, we did not receive any large grants and few donations.

The major expenses for the 2024 accounting period were our grants to 3 households associated with the Household Electrification Grant, and purchases of equipment and consumables for the Community Garden. Operational expenses were also a significant expense.

The 2024 accounting period shows a deficit. Our expenses were met by drawing heavily on the surplus from the 2023 accounting period.

The following income statement instead presents income and expenses for the most recent accounting period for each of the groups within Sustainable Upper Ovens together with general income and expenses. It also allows a comparison with group income and expenses in the previous period.

<b>2024</b>	Community Energy \$	Plasticwise \$	Community Garden \$	Boomerang Bags \$	General \$	Total \$
Opening Balance	44,726.78	1,346.10	70.38	0.00	1,946.50	48,089.76
Income	900.00	0.00	1,600.00	20.00	1,446.57	3,966.57
Expenses	(24,783.18)	0.00	(1,111.29)	0.00	(2,420.20)	(28,314.67)
Closing Balance	20,843.60	1,346.10	559.09	20.00	972.87	23,741.66
<b>Surplus/(deficit) for year</b>	<b>(23,883.18)</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>488.71</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>(973.63)</b>	<b>(24,348.10)</b>
<b>2023</b>	Community Energy \$	Plasticwise \$	Community Garden \$	Boomerang Bags \$	General \$	Total \$
Opening Balance	877.27	1,039.22	(67.72)	0.00	6,219.46	8,068.23
Income	51,875.00	410.88	591.00	0.00	1,545.92	54,422.80
Expenses	(8,025.49)	(104.00)	(452.90)	0.00	(5,868.88)	(14,451.27)
Closing Balance	44,726.78	1,346.10	70.38	0.00	1,946.50	48,089.76
<b>Surplus/(deficit) for year</b>	<b>43,849.51</b>	<b>306.88</b>	<b>138.10</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>(4,272.96)</b>	<b>40,021.53</b>

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## Statement of Changes in Equity

The Statement of Changes in Equity is a measure of our existing net wealth in the most recent and previous accounting periods. Equity is important in assessing our financial viability.

	\$
Balance at 11 September 2022	8,068.23
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	40,021.53
<b>Balance at 3 September 2023</b>	<b>48,089.76</b>

	\$
Balance at 4 September 2023	48,089.76
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	<b>(24,348.10)</b>
<b>Balance at 30 September 2024</b>	<b>23,741.66</b>

Our equity has declined by approximately a half from the 2023 accounting period to the 2024 accounting period. This reflects a significant decrease in revenue and a significant increase in expenses between the two years. However, it should be recognised that the largest component of revenue in 2023 was the household electrification grant, and expending this grant constituted our largest expense in 2024.

## Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement summarises the flow of cash through our bank accounts for the most recent and the previous accounting periods, and shows the cash at the end of each period.

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Operating activities</b>			
Income from grants		1,600.00	52,271.00
Income from membership fees and donations		1,339.15	1,855.59
Income from clothes swaps		-	105.00
Voluntary repayments	7	900.00	-
Interest received	8	0.27	2.76
Income adjustment	11	-	188.45
Net administrative expenses		<b>(2,533.05)</b>	<b>(4,125.99)</b>
Household electrification grants to households		<b>(24,783.18)</b>	-
Event expenses		-	<b>(1,145.70)</b>
Legal expenses		-	<b>(7,007.00)</b>
Purchases of equipment		<b>(831.72)</b>	<b>(2,091.80)</b>
Purchases of consumables		<b>(39.57)</b>	-
Expenditure adjustment	12	-	<b>(80.78)</b>
<b>Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities</b>		<b>(24,348.10)</b>	<b>39,971.53</b>

### Investing activities

Net purchases from equipment	13	-	-
<i>Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities</i>		<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>

### Financing activities

Proceeds from borrowings		-	-
Repayments of borrowings		-	-
<i>Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities</i>		<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>

### Net increase/(decrease) in cash held

Cash at beginning of reporting period		(24,348.10)	39,971.53
<b>Cash at end of reporting period</b>		<u><b>23,741.66</b></u>	<u><b>48,039.76</b></u>

## Banking

The balances of our bank accounts are as shown below.

	Opening balance, 5 September 2023 \$	Closing balance, 30 September 2024 \$
Operating Account	121.15	997.75
Projects Account	1,895.73	534.22
Boomerang Account	0.00	20.00
Plasticwise Bright	1,346.10	1,346.10
Community Energy	44,726.78	20,843.60
<b>Total</b>	<u><b>48,089.76</b></u>	<u><b>23,741.67</b></u>

## Notes

### 1. Basis of measurement

The financial statements have been prepared on a cash basis; that is, it has not been prepared on an accrual basis, and consequently does not recognise expected future income or liabilities.

### 2. Income tax

Until the current accounting period, it was assumed that, as a not-for-profit association, we were exempt from income tax. Recent advice received is that only some not-for-profit associations qualify for an income tax-exemption; all other not-for-profit associations must pay income tax.

However, the same advice indicates that if –

- our purposes as specified in our governing document align with one or more of the charitable purposes defined in the *Charities Act 2013*

- 
- we operate for the public benefit; that is, the achievement of our purposes will be of benefit widely
  - none of the disqualifying purposes or other disqualifiers specified in the *Charities Act 2013* apply

– then we are, in effect, a charity. As such, if we were to register successfully as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, we may be endorsed as ‘income tax-exempt’. An income tax-exemption does not, however, apply automatically.

If we do not meet the above criteria, or we meet the criteria but have not been registered as a charity, we must either:

- lodge a self-review return annually with the Australian Taxation Office, to allow it to assess whether we meet certain specified criteria of a not-for-profit association that is not a charity that may qualify us to receive an income tax-exemption
- pay income tax.

This requirement applies starting from the 2023/24 financial year.

As we had recently sought funding via a grant from the Alpine Shire to engage an accountant to review our finances and prepare a self-review return for the Australian Taxation Office, no actions have as yet been taken either to register as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, or to prepare a self-review return to lodge with the Australian Taxation Office. We were unsuccessful in obtaining such a grant.

It is now necessary to decide how to deal with a potential liability for payment of income tax on our income for the 2023/24 financial year. The income tax rates that potentially apply to us are as follows:

- taxable income is between \$0 and \$416 — no tax payable
- taxable income is between \$417 and \$915 — no tax payable on first \$416, then 55% tax on all taxable income between \$417 and \$915
- taxable income is \$916 or above — 30% tax on all taxable income.

The options open to us are either to:

- prepare and lodge a self-review return with the Australian Taxation Office
- prepare and submit an application to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission for registration as a charity.

Under either option, we should consider if it would be prudent to reserve funds equivalent to our potential tax liability.

### **1. Cosy Homes Event Grant**

Grant received from Alpine Shire in 2023 and fully expended in the same year.

### **2. Household Electrification Grant**

Grant received from Bendigo Bank in 2023. Not yet fully expended.

### **3. Community Garden Grant 2023**

Grant received from Alpine Shire in 2023 and fully expended in the same year.



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#### **4. Community Garden Grant 2024**

Grant received from Porepunkah Op Shop in 2024. Not yet fully expended.

#### **5. Household Electrification Circular Fund**

Fund established in 2024 to receive voluntary repayments by recipients of funds distributed under the Household Electrification Grant, and to make future funds available for household electrification purposes.

#### **6. Interest**

3 of our bank accounts pay interest: the Projects Account, Operating Account and Boomerang Account. These accounts are held with the Bendigo Bank; the type of account used was intended for not-for-profit associations but is no longer available for new accounts. Our remaining 2 bank accounts — Plasticwise Bright and Community Energy — do not pay interest. These accounts are also held with the Bendigo Bank, but are of a different type to the other 3 accounts as they were set up more recently.

#### **7. Community Carbon Action Plan Field Day Grant**

Grant received from the Mondo Project in 2023 to cover catering for Community Carbon Action Plan Field Day held in March 2022. Fully expended in 2022 prior to receipt of the grant.

#### **8. Website Redevelopment/Home Energy Assessment Kit Grant**

Grant received from Alpine Shire and Bendigo Bank in 2022 and fully expended in 2023. A correction has been made to the expenses in the financial statements for the previous accounting period, increasing them by \$50.00. This correction affects the surplus for 2023 and the balance carried over from 2023 to 2024.

#### **9. Income adjustment**

An income adjustment was made in the previous financial statement to reflect that, since 2021, the funds in the bank account exceeded the balance reported in the financial statement by \$188.45.

#### **10. Expenditure adjustment**

An expenditure adjustment was made in the previous financial statement corresponding to a transfer of a portion of donations to Plasticwise on the establishment of a bank account for the group.

#### **11. Net purchases from equipment**

Equipment purchases expenses are accounted for at the time of their purchase. Consequently, asset depreciation expenses are not reflected in the financial statements, and a value for net purchases from equipment — that is, the value of equipment net of accumulated depreciation expenses — is not included.

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**Schedule 1**  
**Regulations 18, 19 and 20**  
**Form 1**

Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012

Sections 94(2)(b), 97(2)(b) and 100(2)(b)

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**Annual statements give true and fair view of financial position of incorporated association**

We, Dennis Lambert and Eliza Stokie, being members of the Committee of Sustainable Upper Ovens Inc., certify that –

The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial position of Sustainable Upper Ovens Inc. during and at the end of the financial year of the association ending on 30 September 2024.

Signed: Dennis Lambert

Dated: 27/11/2024

Signed: Eliza Stokie

Dated: 03/01/2025

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# SUB GROUP REPORTS

Sustainable Upper Ovens is an umbrella organisation encompassing three unique groups, each dedicated to various facets of sustainability. By being an incorporated entity, Sustainable Upper Ovens is well-positioned to secure grants that bolster the activities of these groups. Moreover, it enhances collaboration by offering shared communication tools like our website and fostering a unified volunteer effort. Notably, our diverse membership is passionate about a range of sustainability issues, from energy and waste management to sustainable food practices.

## COMMUNITY ENERGY & EV REPORT

*Prepared by Dennis Lambert*

As we transition to a renewable energy future, significant opportunities to assist our homeowners, businesses, and community are evolving. Collectively, these are known as Community Energy Resources (CER) and are increasingly focused on rewarding homeowners and businesses for their contribution to our grid resilience and security.

Thank you to our small band of dedicated volunteers helping make this happen. This year, our significant projects included:

### Household Electrification Grants

Funded by a solar PV and hot water grant from the Bendigo Bank Bushfire Recovery Fund.

We received \$49600 from the fund to:

- Install up to \$10000 of solar PV in each of four low-income homes, together with a switch on the hot water electrical circuit to enable daytime heating using the solar PV electricity
- \$9600 to obtain legal advice on the status of giving interest-free loans to homeowners under the Credit Act.

We will provide a report to Bendigo Bank in December 2024 detailing our use of the grant.

Highlights and features:

- Five homes have been assisted in installing a total of 38kW of solar panel systems at a total cost of \$41000. \$1000 of this came from voluntary grant repayments by householders of the cost of their installation. The average 8kW system will save about \$1500 per household, assuming the home uses 40-50% of the power produced

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- 12 months after installation, SUO will obtain data on household electricity usage collected by Ausnet for the previous two years, with the homeowner's permission. This data will allow us to measure the benefits of the system and provide a basis for further advice on ways to increase their savings
  - Homeowners are invited to repay the grant, interest-free, over ten years voluntarily
  - Homeowners get a grant - not an interest-free loan - as any gaps in repayments might otherwise adversely impact their credit rating.



### **Aggregated Community Battery Feasibility Study by Indigo Power**

Nick Mason-Smith (Indigo Power Analyst) and Ben McGowan (CEO of Indigo Power) ran bimonthly meetings as part of this study from early 2022 to February 2024. The study was funded by a federal government grant and covered NE Victoria and the Tumbarumba region of NSW. It examined the feasibility of a network of community batteries, like the Yack 01 battery in Yackandandah. This study provided the basis for Indigo Power to submit an ARENA Community Battery funding application (see Point 3 below) with its community partners.

Brian Edwards and Dennis Lambert represented SUO at these meetings, and Bron Westbrook and Michelle Stark represented the Alpine Shire Council. The Shire's participation resulted from an Alpine Shire Budget presentation by Dennis Lambert and Nick Mason-Smith. This followed encouragement by Councillor Sarah Nicholas (a SUO member) to ensure inclusion of community batteries in the Shire's 2020-24 budget papers.

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## **ARENA Community Batteries Round 1 June 30th 2023**

Indigo Power successfully applied to ARENA for funding for 10 community batteries across NE Victoria, allowing it to advance to full modeling. This includes three Alpine Shire sites, which are now in the final stages of developing a financial ownership model. The Alpine Shire Council is the partner in the three Alpine Shire sites.

SUO has been actively involved in initiating this project and has provided a letter of support for this submission. ARENA has a requirement for a high level of community consultation for grant submissions to be successful.

### **Conferences and Meetings**

Keeping up to date and benefiting from other volunteer groups' experiences working with strategic partners makes conferences and other networking opportunities an essential part of this volunteer community energy group. Such events included:

#### **All-Energy Conference October 2023**

This is one of Australia's leading conferences and exhibitions on energy transition for professionals working on grid issues, solar installers workshops, community engagement presentations, community energy groups, batteries, electric vehicles, etc.

Helen Meggs, Vince Humphries, and Dennis Lambert (SUO), Bron Westbrook and Michelle Stark (Alpine Shire Council,) and Heath Shakespeare and Dena Shultz (Indigo Power) attended.

Some of the highlights discussed were:

- The importance and benefits of electrification of homes and businesses
- Benefits of energy efficiency and, in particular, the role of high-quality heat pumps and hot water in the energy transition
- Electric vehicles and the role they will play in helping stabilise the grid and as part of a Community Energy Resource (CEN), particularly once vehicle-to-grid bidirectional charging becomes available in late 2025-2026
- Community Energy is now a major theme at the conference, emphasising how the customer and community will benefit. This is a big change in the energy discussion from just a year or two ago.

#### **Community Energy Network (CEN)**

This is the key community energy group platform that meets bimonthly via Zoom. It started in NE Victoria with support and coordination from Indigo Power and then the Indigo Power Foundation. It is now evolving into a national platform, coordinated by the Coalition for Community Energy (C4CE), for volunteer community energy groups to share their experiences and challenges.



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Each meeting includes updates from community energy groups and features a keynote speaker.

### **Community Energy Congress March 2024**

The Congress highlighted the challenges and successes of volunteer community energy groups around Australia. Discussion revolved around community batteries, community solar farms, a solar garden project (a form of solar farm where panels in the 'garden' are purchased by households, typically those that are unable to install their own solar PV panels), community microgrids (a group of homes, all having household batteries that a Virtual Power Plan controller can control); and programs to help electrify our homes. It was inspiring and provided valuable information for community energy groups like ourselves.

### **AGL Community Dialogue Group**

This group meets in Mt Beauty bimonthly to input local knowledge into AGL's hydro planning and decision-making. Brian Edwards has been a regular participant.

### **Alpine Shire Council consultations**

The CE EV group has actively participated in several of the Alpine Shire's programs and is regularly meeting with its staff and councillors.

- The Alpine Shire's Community Energy and EV Prospectus March 2024 was an extension of the Aggregated Community Battery Study (Item 2 above). This study has resulted in an application to the Victorian government's Neighbourhood Battery Program as part of a joint application by Greater Murray Community Alliance (a collective of 17 councils) and Indigo Power. An outcome of this application is expected in the coming months.
- Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP) Roadmap October 2023. SUO is seeking opportunities to encourage funding of initiatives that help educate the community about electrifying their homes and increasing energy efficiency. SUO plans to help coordinate a Free Home Energy Audit program in 2025 with support from the Alpine Shire Council through the CCAP.

### **Presentations to Alpine Shire Councillors and the CEO:**

- Household batteries for solar PV and the issues with lithium-ion chemistry if batteries catch on fire were discussed. Such batteries cannot be extinguished with water, and the fumes are highly toxic. This is a serious issue for our valley communities during bushfires. SUO is looking at a program to use non-flammable zinc bromide chemistry batteries with low toxicity issues.
- The heat island impact of future buildings and renovations. As climate change increases temperatures, the impact of heat islands can raise the temperature by

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2-10°C above the surrounding area, greatly increasing the bushfire risk from ember attacks during extreme weather events. To counter this effect, NSW has banned black roofs. Examples of other measures that should be considered are permanently shading external masonry from summer sun, and laying roads that are not black-coloured. This issue requires urgent attention as part of the building process.

- Federal Government Community Energy Upgrade Fund to upgrade Community Halls. A discussion occurred around the need to upgrade the Senior Citizens Hall in Bright, plus the halls in Myrtleford and Mt Beauty. These could also operate as 'education centres' to promote quality and energy-efficient appliances for use in the electrification of homes. This is important because cold callers are signing up people to buy cheap appliances that often fail and/or carry inadequate warranties. This is also part of the CCAP roadmap.
- Feasibility study into an electric commuter bus to pick up and drop off people from key locations like the caravan parks and CBD. This would help reduce parking issues, air and noise pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.
- A Bushfire Resilience Rating home self-assessment app is now available and free. The app allows households to assess their home, measure how well it would perform in a bushfire event, and receive an action plan specific to their individual property and local risk. SUO recommends use of the self-assessment app should be a part of all building applications in the Alpine Shire.

### **Community Battery Microgrid Program**

#### **ARENA Regional Microgrid Program (RMP)**

An investigation of a community battery microgrid in the upper Ovens Valley is in its early stages to lead to the development of a funding proposal that can be put to ARENA. It would build on Project Edge, a microgrid trial conducted in NE Victoria by Mondo. Key elements of the proposal being considered are:

- a) The benefits of zinc bromide chemistry household batteries:
  - Non-flammable or no toxic fumes should the batteries catch on fire. Consideration of this is essential in a bushfire-prone area like Harrietville with its steep valley, making the toxic fumes produced if lithium-ion batteries catch fire extremely dangerous
  - Lithium-ion phosphate batteries have a low risk of catching fire and if properly housed, could be suitable in the Bright, Wandiligong, and Porepunkah end of the upper Ovens Valley.

- 
- 20kWh of battery storage on homes with limited or solar PV potential could give up to 24 hours of energy resilience
  - Adding batteries to homes with solar PV increases energy resilience by enabling the solar PV to keep generating when the grid is down
  - Household batteries are now recyclable

b) Benefits of a Virtual Power Plan

- This would enable batteries to charge without solar PV during the day from the grid, thus using cheaper power
- It could coordinate the discharge of batteries to the grid if needed for battery management or to assist the grid

c) Benefits of energy efficiency additions

- CO2 heat pump hot water systems use 1-3kWh of electricity to heat 315L of hot water compared to 12-15kWh for a normal electric hot water system, saving households \$2-3 per day.
- Electric vehicle charging points will maximise the use of cheaper renewable power.

Discussions have started with potential partners in the establishment of a community battery microgrid in the upper Ovens Valley. The potential partners include Indigo Power to conduct a feasibility study into the proposal, RMIT's engineering school to conduct a solar PV study of Harrietville, Mondo, and the Alpine Shire under its CCAP.

Every homeowner in the upper Ovens Valley could be eligible to participate in the project.



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# SUB GROUP REPORTS

## PLASTICWISE BRIGHT REPORT

*Prepared by Anne Heupermann*



Plasticwise has had a steady year in 2024, with the Dish Pig operating at every market monthly. We have been unable to keep track of the mugs washed each month, but it would be around 150 per market, more in the busy season. A fabulous effort, and many thanks to our team of volunteers and the Alpine Shire for the Dish Pig and for making this possible.

We also took the Dish Pig to the Wandj Nut Festival in April, a massive event. More work is needed with this event to ensure food and drink vendors are on board with the reusable philosophy, but we hope 2026 will see more plates and bowls used.

### The Udder Way

Plasticwise has also supported Bright Food Coop with their purchase of The Udder Way milk-on-tap system, with a contribution of \$300. This system uses milk (from How Now Dairy) in 18L reusable kegs, enabling customers to refill their own glass milk bottles. It's an excellent circular initiative and means less plastic out there!



### The Mug Library and Dish Pig

The Dish Pig is currently having some repairs so our upcoming markets will see our "old school" set up - many thanks to Bright Brewery for allowing us to hijack their dishwasher to ensure a clean supply of reusable mugs.



The Alpine Unwrapped project continues to encourage the community to take up the habit of using reusables for takeaway consumables. The project has worked with various accommodation providers to promote this project with guests to our town. We now have twenty local businesses that support this initiative.





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# SUB GROUP REPORTS

## BRIGHT COMMUNITY GARDENS

*Prepared by Katie Steven, President/Secretary*

### Active Members

The Bright Community Gardens (BCG) has continued to thrive due to the dedication and hard work of its active members. Our leadership team, led by Katie Steven as President/Secretary, has ensured smooth operations throughout the year, supported by the following committed individuals:

- Jean-Louis Calvayrac
- Philip More
- Sue Tighe
- Jan Davey
- Paula Hall
- Rod Hall



### Monthly Working Bees

The BCG has maintained a consistent schedule of monthly working bees, where members come together to tend the gardens, complete maintenance tasks, and collaborate on various projects. These working bees are essential to the success of the gardens, fostering a strong sense of community and shared responsibility.

### Additional Volunteer Days (November 2024)



In November, we were fortunate to have additional volunteer support from the Korowa Anglican School and Infuse Travel. A group of 14 students and 3 teachers dedicated two days to assist with various garden tasks. Their hard work included clearing wicking beds, moving mulch, painting signs, and performing a general tidy-up of the garden. Their contribution was invaluable and greatly appreciated.

### Financial Overview and Expenses (2024)

The Bright Community Gardens had the following key expenses in 2024:



- 
- **\$240** – Insurance for BCG (paid in June 2024, covered by SUO grant funding)
  - **\$871** – Purchase of a new whipper snipper (paid from a grant provided by Porepunkah Opp Shop, administered by SUO)

As of the end of the year, the BCG balance with SUO is approximately **\$488.71**.

### Projects for 2025 – Seeking Finance:

Looking ahead to 2025, there are several essential projects that require funding to ensure the continued success and sustainability of the Bright Community Gardens. These projects include:

- **Check, Repair, Replace, and Install Swale Drip Feed Lines:** Ensuring proper irrigation for our garden beds is crucial for their health and productivity.
- **Remove Pile of Dead Wood and Cuttings:** A necessary cleanup project to maintain a safe and attractive environment for all garden members.

We will be seeking financial support to carry out these important tasks and ensure that the BCG remains a vibrant and well-maintained space for the community.



### Conclusion:

2024 has been a year of continued growth and community engagement for the Bright Community Gardens. Thanks to the dedication of our members and volunteers, as well as the support from grants, we have been able to maintain and improve the garden space. We look forward to further development in 2025 with your continued support and involvement.



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THANK YOU!

