



MEDIA RELEASE

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**CITIPOWER AND YARRA ENERGY FOUNDATION PURSUE VICTORIAN FIRST “SOLAR SPONGE”
COMMUNITY BATTERY NETWORK**

MELBOURNE — Victorian electricity distributor, CitiPower, and the Yarra Energy Foundation (YEF) have signed a new agreement to unlock the potential of community-scale battery storage in the Melbourne CBD and inner-city suburbs.

The partnership will investigate a ground-breaking new model of community battery ownership including crowdsourcing local investment in what is considered a Victorian-first. The aim is to create a network of batteries, or “solar sponges”, located on the low-voltage electricity network across inner-Melbourne operated by CitiPower. This unique trial will focus on creating a sustainable commercial model that delivers benefits for consumers and networks.

The project’s first phase is underway to identify the trial sites and gauge community sentiment as well as develop the potential funding model and relationships with market service providers including energy retailers. This will inform the second phase, which will aim to deploy the batteries on a broader scale in late 2021.

“The battery network would work as a solar sponge, absorbing power from solar during the day and releasing it during peak times and at night. This would provide customer, community and network benefits,” said Dean Kline, Chief Executive Officer at the Yarra Energy Foundation.

As household batteries remain relatively expensive, “shared batteries are a smart solution to give households and businesses reliable and affordable energy when they need it,” Mr Kline said.

Forecasts for the Australian solar market¹ indicate that with more people working from home, higher than normal electricity consumption could make solar an even more attractive option for families and small businesses.

CitiPower’s General Manager, Electricity Networks, Mark Clarke said the penetration of rooftop solar in the CitiPower network was currently low at around 5% of the 332,000 customers but was expected to reach 24% by 2026.

“With this renewable energy source growing it is a good time to be investigating the potential for connecting batteries to support the whole community,” Mr Clarke said.

“By sharing the batteries, customers can make the most of their investment in solar. It benefits all CitiPower customers, even if they don’t have rooftop solar, as batteries help reduce the cost of building network capacity to accommodate more power and manage localised peak demand, particularly in summer.”

The first battery is expected to be trialed later in 2021. Financial modelling has commenced and the project has already received interest from investors.

Yarra Energy Foundation is a not-for-profit providing services and advice to homes and businesses that want better energy, with core funding provided by Yarra City Council.

CitiPower owns and operates the distribution network that delivers electricity to over 332,000 residential households and commercial customers across Melbourne’s CBD and inner suburbs and is one of the most efficient networks in the National Electricity Market.

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¹ <https://www.sunwiz.com.au/end-of-year-forecast-for-the-australian-pv-solar-market-2020/>



**YARRA
ENERGY
FOUNDATION**

About CitiPower

CitiPower supplies power to a 157 kilometre square area across the CBD and inner suburbs and has the highest customer density in the National Electricity Market with 107 customers per kilometre square. Each day, about one million people occupy the CBD including 470,000 workers, residents and tourist.

Residential households account for 83 per cent of CitiPower's 332,000 customer connections.

Our network also supports a diversity of commercial and industrial customers, ranging from cafes and 51,000 small businesses to restaurants and major office buildings as well as world-class sporting precincts, public health, education, government and cultural facilities.

Electricity is distributed in the region via a network comprising over 7,500 kilometres of wires, supported by more than 58,123 poles and associated infrastructure.

About the Yarra Energy Foundation

Yarra Energy Foundation is a not-for-profit providing services and advice to homes and businesses that want better energy. Yarra City Council established the foundation as an independent not-for-profit in 2010, and the council remains our core funder. We partner with others to bring expert sustainability services beyond Yarra's borders, and are governed by an independent board of directors.

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