MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 4 March 2021

50,000 solar customers set to benefit from power upgrades in Western Victoria

Rooftop solar systems supporting an estimated 50,000 homes in western Victoria will operate better following an intensive program of works by electricity distributor, Powercor, over the next four months.

Targeting areas with high levels of rooftop solar penetration, the Solar Hotspots Program will improve export capacity and reduce tripping of solar systems that can otherwise be caused by voltage issues when excess solar is exported into the electricity network.

In addition, scoping and preparation work is also underway to improve export capacity for thousands more customers within the CitiPower network over the next six months.

General Manager Electricity Networks, Mark Clarke, said in the past 18 months, the rate of new applications for solar connections in Powercor has more than doubled resulting in 21% of customers now generating a total of 580MW of electricity, while in CitiPower 5% of customers are generating 50MW of electricity.

“In the hotspot areas, greater than one in three homes has solar connected so our program of works is important to helping these customers make the most of their investment,” Mr Clarke said.

“We recognise the future of energy is being driven by customer choices and we have a big role in enabling them.”

Between March and June 2021, dedicated field crews will be working on up to 30 locations a week to increase power network capacity in Ballarat, Bendigo and Portland as well as the precinct between Sunshine and Point Cook in Melbourne’s western suburbs. In the CitiPower network, work will be conducted over the next six months across Melbourne’s inner suburbs, including Northcote, Brunswick, Fitzroy, Kew and Camberwell.

This includes working on the poles and wires to make sure the voltage is well balanced across all powerlines and changing the settings on major transformers in zone substations to reduce the overall voltage levels.

In association with this work, CitiPower and Powercor have also reviewed the technical assessment used to guide export agreements with customers. This has been updated to take into consideration all network upgrades and aims to enable at least 80% of new solar export applications to export 5kW.

Mr Clarke said that by July, an estimated 50,000 current or potential solar customers within the Powercor hotspot areas will benefit from being able to export more. Powercor will invite some currently constrained solar customers to apply for a new export agreement.

“We do not prevent customers from installing rooftop solar but we have a responsibility to all our customers to make sure any excess electricity is safely exported into the network,” Mr Clarke said.

Solar exports can affect the quality of power supplied by electricity networks because by injecting electricity, they impact on voltage. This potentially impacts other customers including those without solar.

During the solar hotspot programs, some customers may experience planned outages to allow crews to safely conduct their work. Powercor will directly notify customers well in advance of any planned outages.

For media inquiries, please contact CitiPower and Powercor’s media line on (03) 9683 4342.

Between July 2021 and 2026, CitiPower and Powercor will be undertaking ongoing works enabling more customers to connect solar, electric vehicles, and batteries.

The Solar Hotspot Program will involve network upgrades in the following postcode areas:

Postcode	Suburbs in postcode
3029	Hoppers Crossing, Tarneit, Truganina
3030	Cocoroc, Derrimut, Point Cook, Werribee, Werribee South
3551	Ascot (Greater Bendigo), Axe Creek, Axedale, Bagshot, East Bendigo, Emu Creek, Eppalock, Epsom
3337	Kurunjang, Melton, Melton West, Toolern Vale
3340	Bacchus Marsh, Balliang, Coimadai, Darley, Hopetoun Park, Long Forest, Maddingley, Merrimu
3352	Bonshaw, Bungaree, Bunkers Hill, Burrumbeet, Cambrian Hill, Cardigan, Cardigan Village, Clarendon
3305	Bolwarra, Cape Bridgewater, Gorae West, Heathmere, Portland, Portland North, Portland West
3444	Baynton, Kyneton, Lauriston, Lyal, Metcalfe, Redesdale, Tylden
3465	Alma, Bowenvale, Daisy Hill, Maryborough

More information about the program and how customers can get the most out of their rooftop solar is available at www.powercor.com.au/solar-energy

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About CitiPower and Powercor

CitiPower and Powercor move electricity to and from more than 1.1 million homes and businesses across the western suburbs of Melbourne, central and western Victoria, Melbourne's CBD and inner suburbs.

We are playing a critical role in enabling Victoria's clean energy transition. More than 1765MW of solar, wind and other renewable generation is connected to the Powercor network, which is home to four of Victoria's Renewable Energy Zones, while more than 67MW of solar generation is connected to the CitiPower network

CitiPower and Powercor are at the forefront of finding innovative ways to support Victoria's energy transition through projects and trials investigating community batteries, smart charging for electric vehicles, and microgrids and other community energy projects.

The Powercor network is made up of almost 90,000 kilometres of wires and more than 588,000 poles and associated infrastructure, and supports 11,200 medium, commercial and industrial businesses and 106,500 small businesses. The CitiPower network comprises almost 7600 kilometres of wires and more than 57,000 poles and associated infrastructure, and has the highest customer density in the National Electricity Market with 107 customers per kilometre square.

Our teams operate from 14 depots, our Bendigo-based customer contact centre and our CBD headquarters, to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity by operating, managing and maintaining all network assets and metering services. This means managing a network that is reliable and safe, particularly in relation to bushfire risks.

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