Community Battery Proposal – Lease of Community Land

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Rural City of Murray Bridge is collaborating with the Government of South Australia and other councils on community battery projects, such as the one in Murray Bridge, to store excess renewable energy, which helps lower electricity bills and reduce grid pressure.

What is being proposed?

It is proposed that a portion of Community Land in Homburg Park, on Homburg Drive is leased for 15 years to the South Australian Minister for Energy and Mining to host a 700kW/ 1,828kWh community battery.

The battery is one of 18 community batteries planned for South Australia as part of the South Australian Government's emPowering SA program. emPowering SA is jointly funded by the Government of South Australia, energy retailer AGL, and the Australian Government's Community Batteries for Household Solar program through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency's (ARENA's) Advancing Renewables Program.

What is a community battery?

Community batteries are bigger than household batteries and smaller than utility scale batteries.

They are typically located within a local community and provide benefits both for that community and for the wider electricity grid. They store excess energy from the grid when renewable energy is abundant. They then make that energy available at night, during periods of high demand, or when the grid needs support.

Community batteries can:

- Lower electricity bills
- Support more households to install rooftop solar
- Allow households who cannot install solar panels to enjoy renewable energy
- Reduce pressure on the electricity grid
- Absorb excess energy that might cause voltage spikes in the electricity grid
- Lower emissions.

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Is it safe?

The batteries selected for emPowering SA are designed, built and tested to the most stringent requirements. This includes lithium cell and battery safety standards IEC 62619:2022 and IEC 63056:2020, and grid connection, installation, and inverter standards AS/NZS 5139, AS/NZS 4777.2, AS 3000, and AS 3008.

The batteries have internal fire detection sensors and an automatically activated fire suppression system, cooling systems, and regular check-ups to make sure they are safe. To further mitigate any possible issues during operation, safety measures including temperature monitoring, and voltage regulation are also included in each of the battery systems.

Once construction is complete, local fire brigades will be provided with fire response plans, secure site access details, and an orientation session at the battery site. Both the Country Fire Service (CFS) and Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) were involved early in the emPowering SA project design and approvals. Their advice, along with national fire safety guidelines, has helped shape these design and safety features.

The batteries also have remote monitoring capabilities and will be monitored by AGL. If abnormal conditions are detected, the battery and power conversion equipment will disconnect to protect the local electrical network until an investigation can be undertaken.

The fencing around the battery also provides a protective enclosure to ensure the community does not accidently or intentionally damage the equipment.

All equipment is rated for outdoor installation and operation in Australian conditions.

Will the proposed Community Battery cost Council and the ratepayer money?

No. The community battery will be fully funded and owned by the South Australia Government and operated by an energy retailer. The only cost to Council will be the small amount of staff time required to process the lease agreement, as is the case with any lease.

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How many local residents will benefit from this initiative?

As a program, emPowering SA will deliver direct benefits to more than 10,000 South Australian government nominated households facing cost of living pressure, through a retail electricity rate 25 percent below the Default Market Offer (DMO, the default price for electricity). The Rural City of Murray Bridge community battery will contribute to this with a capacity sufficient to support benefits for between 600 – 650 houses, with eligible SA Housing Trust tenants in the Council area being among the first to be offered the opportunity to take up these places, once the battery is installed and operational.

emPowering SA also works in conjunction with the complementary project South Australia's Virtual Power Plant. Between these two programs, the South Australian government's intention is for every SA Housing Trust tenant in the state, including all in the Rural City of Murray Bridge, to have access to renewable energy and cheaper energy bills. Council has no role in determining which households are included in the program.

How can Residents register for emPowering SA?

There is no need for households to register their interest for emPowering SA. The South Australian government is following a detailed process to identify suitable homes to participate, and those households will receive information from the government to let them know their home has been shortlisted and how to join.

This ensures that emPowering SA enables the benefits of community batteries to be realised by local residents who are currently locked out from accessing renewable energy technologies and for whom lower energy bills means the most.

Will everyone who is selected to be part of the project receive the same benefit?

On current figures, a typical household benefitting from emPowering SA could save up to $575 off their annual electricity bill (based on the annual saving estimate for a new residential customer when compared to the DMO with an annual energy consumption of 4,000 kilowatt-hours per year).

South Australian government nominated households facing cost of living pressure will directly financially benefit from emPowering SA, through access to a retail electricity rate 25 percent below the Default Market Offer (DMO), the default price for electricity.

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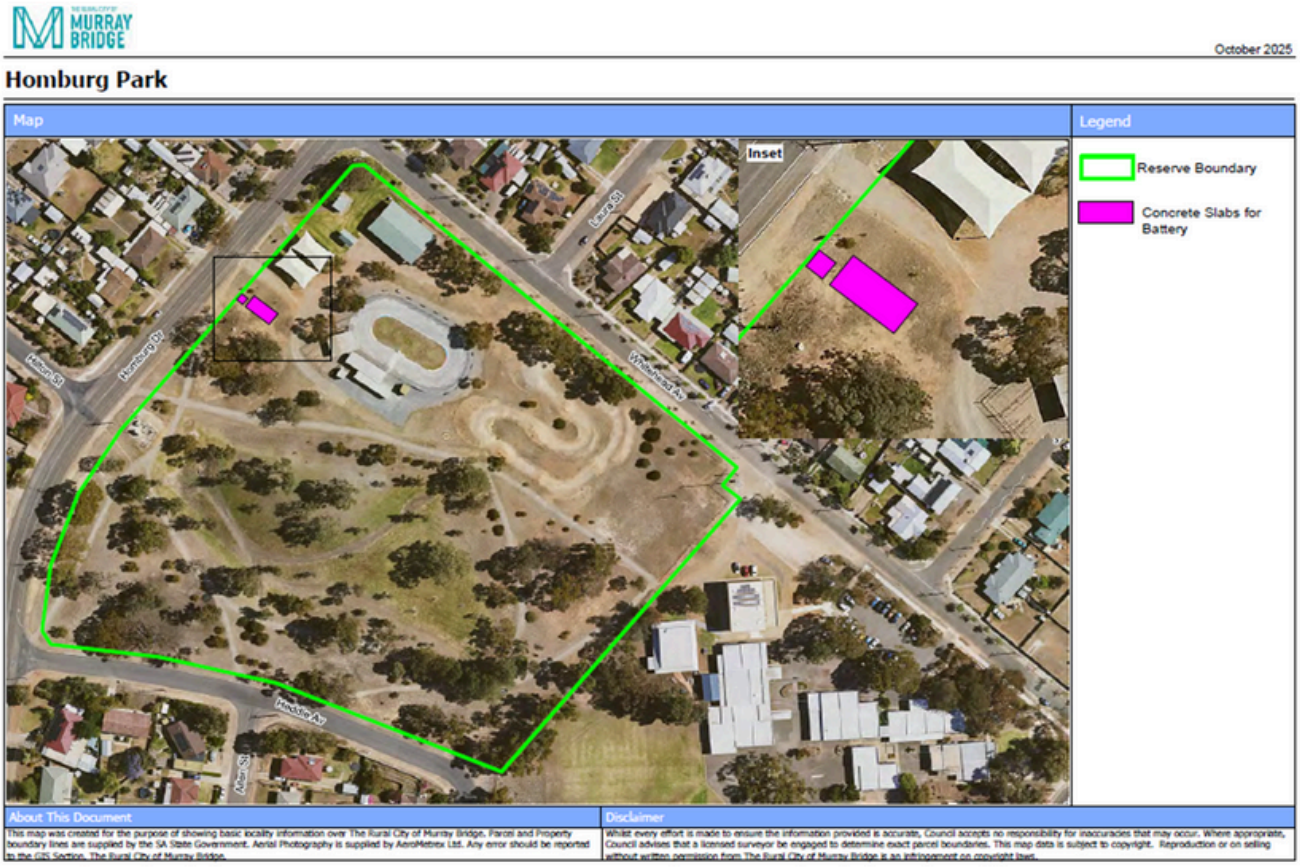
What capacity are the batteries?

The Murray Bridge battery, under emPowering SA, will have a capacity of 700 kilowatts and 1,828 kilowatt-hours. Once all batteries are commissioned, the combined capacity of the fleet will be 11.5 megawatts and 30 megawatt-hours.

Where is the proposed locatetion for emPowering SA Murray Bridge?

The proposed location for emPowering SA Murray Bridge is in Homburg Park, on Homburg Drive.

Please see map below:



How are the batteries kept cool?

All equipment is rated for outdoor installation and operation in Australian conditions. All batteries are also installed to provide necessary natural ventilation around key equipment.

What do the batteries look like?

All batteries under this stage of emPowering SA will consist of equipment located on two outdoor concrete slabs. One slab will be approximately 12 metres by 6 metres and will hold all battery equipment, and the other slab will be approximately 3 metres by 3 metres and hold a high voltage to low voltage transformer. The larger slab will be surrounded by a fence, which will be designed in collaboration with emPowering SA to ensure it meets Council, community and project expectations regarding security and maintenance, while ensuring it is visually appealing.

All equipment is rated for external conditions, meaning there is no need for roofing or shade structures.

Do the batteries generate noise?

Noise from the batteries will be limited to the operation of small ventilation fans and is expected to be well below environmental noise requirements, and likely inaudible, at nearby homes.

Is there a fire risk?

The energy storage technology of the batteries is certified to the most stringent safety standards for energy storage.

This includes lithium cell and battery safety standards IEC 62619:2022 and IEC 63056:2020, and grid connection, installation, and inverter standards AS/NZS 5139, AS/NZS 4777.2, AS 3000, and AS 3008. In the unlikely event it is required, the battery cabinets also contain fire detection and an automatically activated fire suppression system.

Will the batteries interfere with radio and television signals?

Similar community batteries have been installed across Australia with no known interference.

Will there be regular maintenance on the batteries?

Yes. AGL will carry out annual maintenance on the batteries in line with manufacturer's recommendations.

Who will be the contact agency for technical information?

Technical information is best requested through Department for Energy and Mining (DEM).

Will the battery affect any function of the Park?

No, the Community Battery will not have any impact on the current users of Homburg Park.