

# The role of local government and community in energy





## **Purpose**

Explain the role that the City of Mitcham is playing in green energy generation, storage and distribution.

## **Getting oriented**

The City of Mitcham is a local government area in Adelaide, SA. The Council area is 75 square kms with 30,000 rateable properties (86% residential) and a population of approximately 70,000.

## **Vision**

Our Mayor, Dr Heather Holmes-Ross, ran for election with a vision for a self-sustaining solar city. The Mayor was elected, and begun work on an innovative Council and community renewables program.

The City of Mitcham supported the program for several reasons:

1. The Council had declared a Climate Emergency.
2. Cost of living pressures are rising, and Council were looking for ways to help residents and businesses save money.
3. The Council wanted the benefits of renewables to flow to renters and those unable to put panels and batteries on their properties.
4. The Council wanted to generate both savings and on-going revenue.





## Barriers

Whilst the Council had an ambitious vision, they also understood that there would be several significant barriers to increasing uptake and access to renewables.

- Traditionally solar and batteries have been very expensive with a significant up-front cost.
- There is confusion in the community about what to buy from whom.
- Council also knew that whilst there was a lot of existing solar power, there was a huge gap in battery storage leading to a lot of solar energy simply going to waste.

## Getting started

To design a program that overcame these barriers and culminated in the vision of a solar city, there were some key actions.

1. Council wrote and released a non-proscriptive outcomes-based tender looking for a company to help work towards their vision. In short, this tender stated where we wanted to get to, but allowed space for proponents to suggest how we got there.
2. Council undertook due diligence on companies shortlisted in the tender that no average citizen could afford to do. This looked like legal, risk, financial and technical capability checks to ensure that whoever was selected was the safest bet for our community.
3. The tender and due diligence process resulted in Shine Hub being selected to help us design and deliver.

## The Program

The components we're currently working on to create a self-sufficient green local power plant.

### 1. Community Renewables Program

*Affordable solar and battery through a bulk buy offer for residents.*

- Council launched the first community bulk buy for Mitcham residents in 2022.
- The Bulk Buy offers solar and battery packages to residents at a reduced cost, with options to buy at no upfront cost.
- Mitcham Council promotes Shine Hub through rates notices, social media channels and newsletter, and community information nights.
- Information nights are fronted by the Mayor who shares the vision before handing over to the technical experts (Shine Hub) to present. To date 815 people have attended these information nights.

### 2. Council Green Energy Plan

*Solar and Batteries across Council's buildings and assets.*

- Council is in the process of investigating putting solar and batteries on all Council Buildings so that we can be self-sufficient.
- That will give us power that is 100% green with no coal and no carbon offset certificates, matching the amount of power that Council need to operate.
- Operations include streetlights, Civic buildings, libraries, community centres, sporting clubs and the like.
- Because the energy is generated and stored behind the metre, it's cheap.

### 3. Charge Local

*Public EV Charging Network with a role for local government.*

- The City of Mitcham are trialing a role for local government in managing a public EV charging network, including public charging on Stobie and light poles to democratise EV charging [in partnership with SAPN].
- Local government's interest is in equitable access to charging infrastructure for all citizens.

### 4. Virtual Power Plant

*Connecting with the grid to generate local benefit.*

- City of Mitcham are connecting all the solar and storage from homes and Council buildings and pooling them in our very own solar power plant.
- This will support our City's power needs, take pressure off the grid and also be a source of income for residents and Council.

### 5. Community Retail Plan

*Access to cheaper green energy for those who usually miss out.*

- The program delivers significant profit. Council wants some of that profit to subsidise the cost of green power for renters and people that don't have access to green energy.
- Council wants the benefits of this program to be as broad as possible and bring everyone along.

## Results so far

- 901 residential sign ups through Bulk Buy offer to community.
- Average bill saving of \$228 per quarter for participating residents.
- \$1,779,625 community savings on electricity bills (September 2023).
- 1368 tCO<sub>2</sub>e of carbon reduction per annum via the Bulk Buy program (September 2023).
- 1267tCO<sub>2</sub>e of carbon emission reduction per annum across fleet of 100 Council owned buildings (equivalent of planting 5000 trees).
- Savings and revenue for Council.

## Sharing our program across Australia

- In the context of the Climate Emergency, the City of Mitcham is pleased to share its learnings across the local government sector.
- To date, Mitcham has done more than 30 presentations to other Councils across Australia.
- Three Councils have made decisions to undertake parts of the program and several other Councils across Australia are investigating.
- Use the QR code below to download the tender pack and documents that have been part of the City of Mitcham program design.

## Future opportunities for integration

- Bi-directional charging
- Landfill waste to energy conversion

## Learn more

[Shinehub.com.au/Mitcham](https://shinehub.com.au/Mitcham)

[mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/our-environment/Community-Renewables-Program](https://mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/our-environment/Community-Renewables-Program)

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