

Club's solar overhaul is well underway

By Zoe McMaugh Mar 18, 2022



Photo by Contributed

One year after being approved by its Board, the Deniliquin RSL Club has started implementing a multi-million-dollar solar project at the club.

Stage one will include the reconstruction of the club car park, with new shade structures laden with solar panels. Electric vehicle charging stations and landscaping will also be included in this stage. Club CEO David Hart said the panels installed during stage one should be enough to cover most of the club's electricity usage.

Additional panels proposed in stage two, which is yet to receive development application approval from Edward River Council, would be enough to allow for storage of power and potential re-sale of power. Mr Hart said while development approval has been received for stage one, the club is still waiting for a construction certificate. Preparatory works have started in anticipation, with the former carpark shade sails system dismantled and stored for potential future usage.

The work is being carried out by Vellocet Clean Energy, which has also completed a similar project for Moama Bowling Club. Mr Hart said the Moama development is "impressive" and has heightened his excitement of this project finally moving ahead.

Stage one of the project is costed at between \$1.6 and \$1.8 million. Some council reserves will be used on the project, with the remainder sourced from loans. Conservative estimates are that stage one will be "paid back" within 15 years. He anticipates stage one will be completed by June or July this year. Until then, the dirt car park opposite the club's entry driveway — next to the old ambulance station — can be utilised by members and guests, in addition to street parking.

Mr Hart said the overhaul of the car park will provide wider parking spaces for patrons and will see the dated gardens replaced with newer landscaping. "The landscaping component is amazing, and the structural elements blend well into the club's surroundings. It gives people a bit of an idea of what we're doing here." said Mr Hart.

But he said the big win will be the electricity cost saving to the club. "We would spend between \$25,000 and \$30,000 a month on electricity, and these days we need to be proactive about our usage. "In this first stage 231.84 kW is being produced and will be used by the club. Our project is what is called a microgrid and will have a smart component which will alert us when solar resources might be low that will require us to go back to mains energy. We may even be able to sell electricity back to the grid and earn income. There may even be opportunities to sell energy to our members at a discounted rate."

"We anticipate that after stage two all club facilities — including ancillary buildings like the sports complex, boxing gym and FitNow! — will all be running on solar."

Stage two will look at converting the currently disused tennis courts in the adjacent RSL Sporting Complex into another carpark, with the same solar shading structures. A battery with the capacity to store 1400 kW of energy will also be created in this stage, as well as the provision of a back-up generator.

Stages one and two combined are costed at \$4.5 million.