



RENEWABLE
ENERGY PARK
HORSHAM

Community Benefit Fund Consultation Report November 2025



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**The project will help accelerate
Victoria's energy transition to deliver
renewable, affordable, reliable
energy for Victorians.**

Project overview

The SEC Renewable Energy Park – Horsham is one of Australia's first 100% publicly owned, utility scale renewable energy projects.

SEC is working with renewable energy developer OX2 to build the energy park in two stages, starting with a 119-megawatt solar farm comprising more than 212,000 PV solar panels.

SEC's \$370 million investment allowed work on the solar farm to begin in late 2024 while supporting the addition of a 100-megawatt two-hour battery storage system (BESS) – making it one of Australia's first integrated solar and BESS projects with a single connection point.

Once operational, the facility will be capable of generating around 242,000 megawatt hours of renewable energy a year – enough renewable energy to power around 51,000 homes.

The project will create around 246 jobs over the construction period, including 20 roles for apprentices, trainees, and cadets.

SEC will also invest \$3 million in local projects, initiatives and services through the project's Community Benefit Fund across the 30-year operational life of the project.

Construction is underway, with the project expected to be operational by late 2027.

Project benefits



Capacity to power 51,000 homes



Job creation
246 during construction including 20 positions for apprentices, trainees and cadets



Opportunities for local businesses, social enterprises and First Peoples



Community Benefit Fund
\$126,000 during the construction period to the end of 2027
\$100,000 (increasing with CPI) per year over operational life

Purpose of this report

In June and July 2025, SEC undertook community consultation to help inform the design and delivery of the project's Community Benefit Fund (Fund).

This first stage of consultation focused on raising awareness and feedback on the Fund. We sought ideas on how the Fund should be designed and invested to best support local projects and priorities that matter most to the Horsham community.

SEC and its delivery partners would like to thank everyone who shared feedback. The insights are summarised in this report and will help shape the design of the Fund.

SEC is committed to keep engaging with community as we develop the Fund, with the aim to begin rolling out the program in early 2026.

This report provides:

- A summary of activities undertaken by SEC to seek feedback on the Fund from the community
- Key insights from the engagement including potential contribution areas
- Planned next steps for the Fund's delivery

Community Benefit Fund

The Community Benefit Fund is designed to support local initiatives and deliver lasting value to the community throughout both the construction and operational phases of the project.

There are two distinct phases of funding:

- \$126,000 from now until the end of the construction period in late 2027
- \$100,000 per year for the duration of the project's operational life, increasing with the Consumer Price Index.

The Fund aims to support Horsham by funding local projects, initiatives and services. To be effective, it needs to be accessible, practical, and administered with clear governance processes and aligned with local priorities.

Feedback during the engagement highlighted the importance of considering the unique role that the project has in Victoria's renewable energy landscape – as the first 100% publicly owned large-scale renewable energy asset in the state.

As a direct result of community feedback, SEC increased the benefits shared during the Project's operations to \$100,000 per year, up from an initial \$70,000 annual amount.

Broader community and stakeholder consultation

SEC has been engaging with the Horsham community, including project neighbours and local stakeholders, since it acquired the project in late 2024.

In addition to regular project updates and stakeholder meetings, SEC's engagement has included:

- ✔ Working closely with the CFA to ensure familiarisation with the site, enhancing safety during construction and operations.
- ✔ Hosting regular drop-in sessions at local cafes to provide opportunities for community members and organisations to meet the construction team and ask questions about the project.
- ✔ Engaging local businesses and group training organisations to maximise local employment and supplier opportunities.
- ✔ Hosting tours for local school groups to learn more about renewable energy projects and career pathways in the sector.
- ✔ Funding the project's own equipment to further enhance fire prevention and responsiveness capabilities on site.



Horsham Mens Shed at community information session.

Consultation summary

In mid-2025, we asked the Horsham community to provide input into how the Community Benefit Fund for the Renewable Energy Park should be designed and invested to best support local projects and priorities that matter most to Horsham and surrounding communities.

Consultation was open for six weeks between 11 June and 27 July 2025.

Community members had the opportunity to meet the project team, ask questions, and share their ideas on how the Fund could be used to provide meaningful impact and benefit the local region.

Communication and engagement snapshot

2,417

visits on the SEC Renewable Energy Park – Horsham page on the Engage Victoria online consultation hub

66

participants joined four information sessions held in the Horsham region

77

Community Benefit Fund surveys completed



Project Update sent to around **8,000** surrounding properties

Over

150

pieces of feedback on the Engage Victoria online consultation hub and via our information sessions



Social media advertising resulting in nearly **2,000** engagements



3 written submissions received



10 participants joined our online webinar

Who we heard from

We received feedback from a diverse group of participants in the Horsham community, including:

- Residents from Horsham and surrounding areas
- Community groups and clubs including:
- Multicultural groups
- Sporting clubs
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Federation University, Horsham
- West Vic Business
- Wimmera Southern Mallee Development
- Women's Health Grampians
- Salvation Army, Horsham
- Project neighbours

What we heard

We heard a range of great ideas and perspectives. A consistent view from participants was a larger amount of funding to support one or two legacy projects would provide greater impact than a program of smaller grants.

We also heard that community members would like to see funds distributed evenly across the Horsham Rural City municipality and managed by a community-led committee.

There were some common themes on areas that the community would like to see supported:

- Local jobs, skills and education – we heard that a priority area is to support local jobs in the region, provide education and traineeship opportunities in the region.

“It’s important to invest in the education of our young people: they are the future of our economy, and I’d love to see SEC working with them to help the region.”

- Youth, accessibility and inclusion – we heard that promoting inclusion and supporting vulnerable communities by funding social facilities and programs is important to the community.

“Young people, families doing it tough and people with a disability should be at the front of the line for support.”

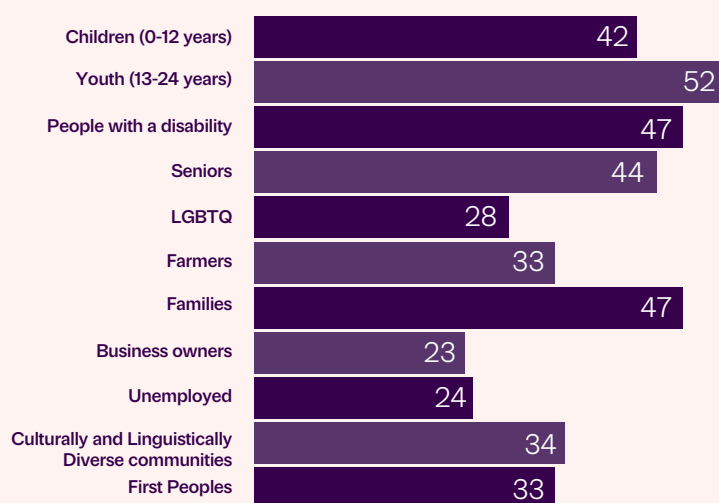
- Community infrastructure and upgrades – we heard that the community want more multi-purpose community spaces in the local area including upgrading playgrounds, walking and cycling paths, community facilities and open spaces that everyone can enjoy.

“Community asset upgrades are a priority.”

Key feedback themes

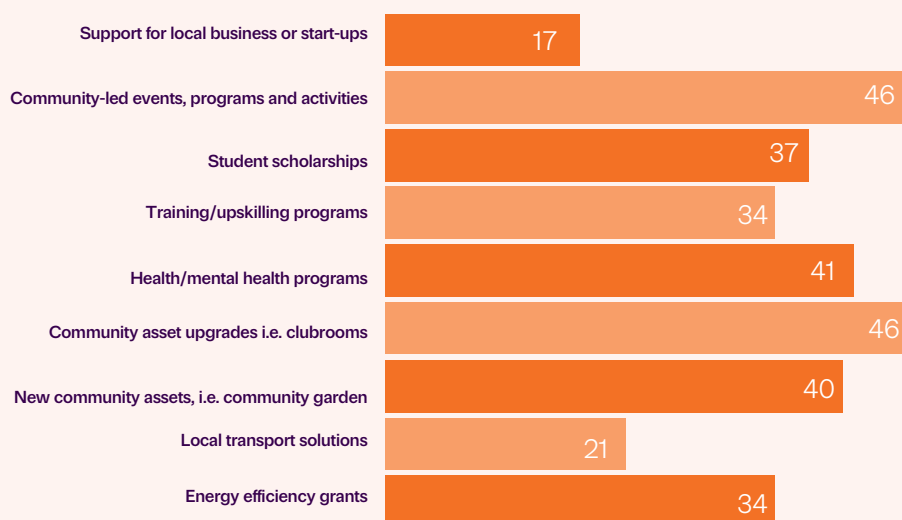
Who the Fund could support

We heard that the community wants the Community Benefit Fund to support youth (aged 13 to 24), people living with a disability, and local families.



What local initiatives do you think the Community Benefit Fund could support?

There were varied suggestions from the local community about initiatives that could be supported by the Community Benefit Fund.



Other suggestions from the community included support for emergency services and local volunteers, sports, arts and cultural programs, and social services.



Key local initiatives in more detail

For the key themes that locals highlighted were most important, a number of local initiatives were suggested. They are summarised in the table below:

Key themes and priorities	Examples
Jobs, skills and training 	- Supporting career opportunities in the renewable energy sector, short courses, work experience, training and apprenticeships - Local procurement and workforce development - Collaborating with local schools and universities to provide education and skill development in the region - Student scholarships
Community infrastructure and facilities including parks, recreation and public space 	- Upgrades for recreational spaces (e.g. sports grounds, multipurpose spaces and community hubs) - Improvement and upgrade of municipal parks, reserves, and open spaces (e.g. Wimmera River frontage, walking tracks) - Partnership with local government to support recreational space development - Support for local clubs (sporting, arts, service groups)
Health and Education 	- Health facility upgrades or establishment - Early years and school-based initiatives, including kindergartens - Educational engagement infrastructure such as playgrounds - Support for vulnerable groups including youth, women, and people with disabilities - Mental health support for farmers and families - Homelessness and housing assistance
Youth, accessibility and inclusion 	- Improving accessibility of local infrastructure (upgrades to footpaths) - Mental health programs - Youth leadership initiatives - Adaptive sports equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, modified bikes) - Support for community hubs (food relief, family wellbeing) which provide direct and critical assistance
Environment and sustainability 	- Biodiversity and river restoration projects - Tree planting, nest boxes, and revegetation - Circular economy and energy efficiency initiatives - EV charging infrastructure - Initiatives that reduce electricity bills for the Horsham community and support the local volunteer services

Other suggestions from the community included support for emergency services and local volunteers, sports, arts and cultural programs and social services.

Funds management

We heard the community is interested in maximising impacts for the local region by supporting initiatives that could create a legacy for the community.

For projects that required more investment than the Fund's annual allocation, local feedback suggested this could be achieved by:

- joining the Fund's funding applications with other grant opportunities; and/or
- funding larger amounts to support legacy initiatives.

Locals also highlighted the operation of the Fund should include clear guidelines on eligibility, community involvement and a simple application process.

There was overwhelming preference for a community-led committee to manage the Fund, with some locals interested in working with other entities in the region to align strategic priorities and projects.

“Ensure local (Fund) management with a simple, fair and transparent process.”

“Ensure grants are widely distributed — not just to individual clubs or well-resourced groups.”

“I'd like to see the Fund be part of a foundation for legacy outcomes in the area.”

Next steps

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share ideas and thoughts about the Community Benefit Fund.

This feedback will be used to inform the framework for how funds will be delivered to the community throughout the construction and operational phases of the project.

In early 2026, we will be in touch to provide more information about the release of the \$126,000 construction fund allocation into the community.

This will include information on:

- Key dates
- Fund Guidelines, including criteria, eligibility, and support during the application process
- Fund administration
- Next steps to award the first funds by mid-2026

Construction is now underway and will continue until late 2027.

We will continue to work closely with the local community, businesses and neighbours throughout construction.

Keeping in touch

If you would like more information:

- **Visit our website:** <https://www.secvictoria.com.au/investments/sec-renewable-energy-park>
- **Read our latest project update:** [SEC-Renewable-Energy-Park-Horsham-Project-Update-September-2025.pdf](#)
- **Read our latest factsheet:** [Factsheet-SEC-Renewable-Energy-Park-Horsham.pdf](#)



