

Participant Info Guide: The Neighbourhood Battery Initiative 'Tariff Trial'



Part 1 - Overview:

What is it?

- ▶ A 12 month innovative trial with 100 local participants on Phillip Island
- ▶ A Tariff Trial will use a community battery to see how locally made renewable energy can be shared across the local community. It will also look at how people from different socio-economic backgrounds can benefit from the shared renewable energy.

Who can participate?

- ▶ People with houses on Phillip Island (owners, renters, holiday house)
- ▶ People without solar panels as well as people with solar panels
- ▶ Homes with a normal single phase power supply
- ▶ Phillip Island residents from all walks of life – families, couples and singles, working out and staying at home – we are looking for diversity and to make local renewable energy available to more people in our community
- ▶ People with a household battery cannot participate in the trial.

What is expected of participants?

Participants need to:

- ▶ Sign up for the 12-month trial period (28 April 2023 – 28 April 2024)
- ▶ Take part in a project workshop to help design how the energy sharing, and tariff trial will benefit the most people in our community. The workshop will be held before the tariff trial starts, in late 2022 or early 2023. We will let participants know the date well in advance
- ▶ Respond to Totally Renewable Phillip Island's seasonal surveys / catchup sessions during the trial period and give feedback on the trial process
- ▶ Have a small device fitted to your house during the 12-month trial, to monitor the energy use during the trial
- ▶ Switch to the selected trial electricity retailer for the 12-month trial. You can choose to switch back to your old retailer after the trial
- ▶ The findings of this trial will become public documents (published) but no participant will be named (all information will be de-identified)
- ▶ There is no cost to participants to take part in the trial. Benefits to participants include a better understanding of your power supply and bill and helping communities to make better use of renewable energy and community batteries.



Why is Totally Renewable Phillip Island involved?

- ▶ We are a local community-based group and have a vision to be carbon neutral and 100% renewable by 2030
- ▶ Along with the project partners, we are working with the community to co-design how we can access and share local renewable energy
- ▶ We believe community should have a say in the future of community energy – we are here to take the discussions from big corporate offices to our community
- ▶ TRPI did a recent survey where 95% of respondents said YES or MAYBE to consider donating their excess solar to others in the community to increase social equity – we are excited about what this may mean in the trial.

Part Two

What is the Neighbourhood Battery Initiative?

This tariff trial project is funded by the Victoria Government under the *Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's (DELWP)* Neighbourhood Battery Initiative (NBI).

The *Victorian Government* has committed \$10.92 million for NBI funding, with \$3.68 million in grants to 16 community, local council, and industry lead projects across Victoria. Two of these projects are being funded on Phillip Island with the project partners.

Who are the project partners and stakeholders?

Totally Renewable Phillip Island (TRPI) and *The Energy Innovation Co-operative (EI Co-op)* are partnering with *Mondo* on this clean energy project to enable our community to access part of the renewable energy stored in the *Phillip Island Community Energy Storage System (PICESS)* Big Battery commissioned by AusNet Services.

Totally Renewable Phillip Island (TRPI) - began in June 2018 at a public meeting. Today *TRPI* is a collective of 15 community organisations on Phillip Island that share the vision to be 100% renewable energy and carbon neutral by 2030. Member organisations work together towards their own and *TRPI* shared goals as part of their core business. This structure enables *TRPI's* influence to extend across the Island, reaching hundreds of people through its member organisations. Through the Clean Energy working group, *TRPI* is striving for renewable energy solutions that are economically feasible, socially acceptable and equitable, and environmentally sustainable.

Energy Innovation Co-operative – has been supporting Bass Coast and South Gippsland communities to switch to renewable, clean energy for over 10 years. The *Co-op* has a Public Fund that gives no interest loans to community not-for-profit groups to install solar on their rooves. They conducted extensive community engagement activities in 2019 as part of the *DELWP* funded Southern Gippsland Renewable Energy Roadmap project.

Bass Coast Shire Council – has leased the *PICESS* Big Battery site to *Mondo* and has given further written support for this project to be undertaken. Shire representatives have also attended Project Meetings to highlight local government matters.

Mondo – is supporting energy resilience and the uptake of renewables in Australian communities. They are pioneering community mini-grids and regional energy hubs that empower homes and businesses to generate, manage, store and share energy. *Mondo* believes they can play an important role in decreasing dependence on energy sourced from fossil fuels by using the existing network to generate, store and share renewable electricity.

Retailer – are the main interface between the electricity industry and customers such as households. The retailer for the tariff trial is yet to be appointed. They will be selected based on merit and through a transparent process.

AusNet – is the responsible Distribution Network Service Provider for Phillip Island and so therefore has regulatory responsibility to ensure all network connected assets are compliant with all relevant standards, codes and best practice.

What is the Big Battery (PICCESS)?

The Big Battery known as *PICESS* (Phillip Island Community Energy Storage System) is a large 4.95MW/10MWh battery that is currently being installed on *Bass Coast Shire Council's* 40 ha site at Gap Rd on Phillip Island. This battery will be owned and operated by *Mondo* to provide network support to *AusNet* during high energy demand periods and will be commissioned in late 2022.

What will the Retail Tariff Trial do? and how is it connected to the Big Battery (PICCESS)?

This trial will explore how a portion of the Big Battery (*PICESS*) could be used to provide the participants with virtual storage for their excess solar energy. This means that trial participants who generate solar energy through panels on their rooftops can virtually store their excess solar energy in the battery. Then, when the sun is not shining, they can withdraw their energy for use, with the left-over energy to be consumed by the non-solar participants of the trial. By virtual, we mean the battery is connected to the customer through the existing network. There is not a specific connection directly from Big Battery (*PICESS*) to the participants.

The trial will aim to provide the participants with similar benefits to home batteries, but without the upfront costs. Once the retailer has been selected for this trial, a new retail tariff structure will be co-designed with the participants to suit the specific requirements of the trial and allow the export, consumption, and sharing of the excess solar energy amongst the participants.

Lastly the energy usage behaviour of all participants will be monitored, and tailored alerts will aim to help the participants understand how to be more efficient in the way they produce and consume electricity.

This Retail Tariff Trial will explore how both solar and non-solar customers can reap the benefits of locally produced renewable energy, increasing social equity.

Part Three

FAQS and References:

1. How much does it cost to take part in the Tariff Trial?

There is no cost to you to join the Tariff Trial.

2. What happens at the end of the 12-month Tariff Trial period?

This depends on what the trial shows and other factors – we do not know yet! At the conclusion of the trial, participants will be free to select a retailer of their choice.

3. Who decides the tariffs for the Tariff Trial?
Can I choose to donate my excess solar?
Will we know who the retailer is before we are signed up?

Ultimately the retailer decides on the tariffs during the trial. The participants and project partners will be part of the discussion in the co-design workshop. These questions will be answered in the workshop.

4. Will the electricity bills change?

The bills may change during the trial dependent on the retailer and the tariffs. This question will be answered more fully in the co-design workshop.

5. Will there be discounts for pension cards, pay on time and these types of discounts?

The Victorian Energy Savings package that includes pension discounts is a government initiative. Victorian customers using any retailer will be eligible.

6. Do I need to change from my current retailer to take part in the Tariff Trial?

Yes, participants in the trial will need to sign up with the chosen retailer for the Trial.

7. What happens if I have a fixed contract with my current retailer?

People considering participating in the tariff trial will need to speak to their retailer about the impacts of changing retailers.

8. What happens if I have an early high solar export rate 60c per kWh, also known as the 'Premium Feed-in Tariff (PFIT)?

The solar feed in tariff for Victorian customers is set by the Victorian Essential Services Commissioner. Once the retailer is selected, they will advise if people with this early high solar export rate are able to participate in the trial.

9. Can you opt out of the Trial?

For the trial to be successful and to contribute to the vision to be 100% renewable on Phillip Island, it is important to retain the 100 participants for the trial. Yes, you can opt out during the trial, however there might be some impacts from leaving the trial. These will be covered in more detail prior to sign-up.

10. Is it more beneficial to participate in the Tariff Trial if you have solar?

The trial relies on a significant portion of participants having solar. That said, solar is not a prerequisite for participation in this trial, and some participants who do not have solar are needed to explore the community energy sharing benefits.

11. Is the Big Battery (PICESS) a community-owned battery?

No, the Big Battery (PICESS) is owned and operated by Mondo. The Tariff Trial is funded by the Victorian Government's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The findings of this Tariff Trial will help communities (potentially including Phillip Island) who may own a community battery in the future.

12. Will the Big Battery (PICESS) still work during a power outage?

No, the main operation of the Big Battery (PICESS) is to stabilise electricity supply for high-demand periods. The intention of the Big Battery (PICESS) is to provide extra power during periods of high-power use, e.g. Grand Prix weekends and the summer holiday period. This will reduce the need for diesel generators to be brought onto the island to cover these times.

13. Are we potentially looking towards an islanded battery?

At this stage, the Big Battery (PICESS) is not intended or programmed for islanding. It is technically possible to achieve this, and some other communities' batteries are intended for community islanding.

Islanding is where the renewable energy and battery power cover all the community's power needs, making it independent of the grid when needed. Islanding Trials are underway in other parts of Victoria in remote communities.

14. I do not live on Phillip Island, but I live locally, can I take part in the Tariff Trial?

Unfortunately not at the moment.

15. Is this happening anywhere else?

We believe this the first virtual storage retail tariff trial in Victoria.

R. At what point is the retailer decided upon? Is it correct that at the moment expressions of interests are out to select a retailer? Is the retailer decided at about the same time as the participants? In which case the participants won't have the ability to decide on the retailer?

That is correct.

16. Did TRPI get this idea going?

TRPI in partnership with Mondo and Energy Innovation Cooperative developed the idea and wrote the successful funding application. The application was supported by the Bass Coast Shire Council.

17. Will I potentially get more for my solar input?

Maybe, maybe not. We will be able to answer this question when the retailer is selected and negotiations are complete.

More references:

What is the Neighbourhood Battery Initiative?

<https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/batteries-and-energy-storage/neighbourhood-battery-initiative>

What is a Tariff?

<https://www.aer.gov.au/consumers/my-energy-bill/tariff-and-fees-explained>

What is PICESS?

<https://mondo.com.au/community/energy-hubs-and-projects/phillip-island-battery>

For more information and to register interest in the Tariff Trial, contact TRPI co-ordinator Zoë Geyer at totally.renewable.phillip.island@gmail.com

(live links to the above are on the TRPI webpage)