



Case Study

Community Power Hub & Geelong Food Relief

Case Study

Community Power Hub & Geelong Food Relief

Background

Geelong Food Relief (GFR) is an organisation dedicated to providing emergency food relief to families experiencing food insecurity in the Geelong region. Operating since 1990, they supply food to over 50 community organisations who prepare meals, operate community pantries and markets, run children's homework classes or similar food relief services, as well as run small marts for individuals to visit.

Challenges

Geelong Food Relief faced challenges related to rising electricity rates, inefficient use of existing solar infrastructure, and the need for additional funding to upgrade their refrigeration systems. The organisation was also seeking ways to reduce its carbon footprint and allocate more resources to its core service and food relief programs.

Since July 2023, Geelong Food Relief has been working with Geelong Sustainability's Community Power Hub team with three main objectives related to these challenges:

- Review of options for electricity supply, (keeping in mind the large walk in cool-rooms and freezers to supply food relief services across the region).
- Audit existing solar and battery infrastructure, and assess the case for increased solar.

This case study highlights the successful initiatives undertaken by the partnership to enhance energy efficiency, reduce costs and support Geelong Food Relief's mission.

Solutions Implemented

1. Electricity Procurement

In response to increased electricity prices, the program assisted GFR in finding a more cost-effective electricity deal. By switching to a new energy provider, Geelong Food Relief will cut their energy costs by \$12,000 per year.

3. Solar Expansion Business Case

A business case assessment was completed for additional solar to offset the site's increasing load. This is especially important given a new freezer is being installed to accommodate their growing need. Geelong Food Relief's new 28kW solar system will further reduce operating costs and will cut emissions by 32 tonnes of CO2 per year.

4. Battery Optimisation

Recommendations were provided to enhance the use of existing batteries, ensuring they were utilised effectively to store and distribute energy during peak times, further reducing electricity costs.



Outcomes

1. Financial Savings

By changing energy providers and installing solar, GFR has achieved financial savings of \$17,500 per year, allowing them to allocate more resources back into their core purpose of providing food relief.

2. Environmental Impact

The implemented solar solutions and energy-efficient upgrades, significantly reduced the organisation's carbon footprint (32 tonnes of CO2 per year), aligning GFR with sustainable and environmentally conscious practices.

3. Community Impact

The energy cost savings are expected to increase each year, allowing GFR to support an even larger number of families in need. The community impact extends beyond immediate relief, contributing to long-term sustainability.

Program Impact

The Community Power Hub's engagement with Geelong Food Relief is part of a broader initiative that has so far provided advice to 10 organisations and 16 facilities. The program's comprehensive services include on-load assessments, energy audits, solar feasibility assessments, business cases for various upgrades, and assistance in transitioning from gas to electric.

Geelong Sustainability shares similar values and desired outcomes as other not-for-profit organisations, which includes empowering community-based not-for-profit organisations to adopt sustainable energy practices while enabling them to focus on their core service.

Conclusion

The partnership between Geelong Food Relief and the Community Power Hub exemplifies the positive impact that sustainable energy practices can have on community organisations. Through strategic planning, efficient use of resources and a commitment to environmental responsibility, Geelong Food Relief has not only reduced operational costs but has also strengthened its ability to serve the community.

**Contact Emma Chessell, Community Energy Officer
to discuss your energy challenges and needs.**