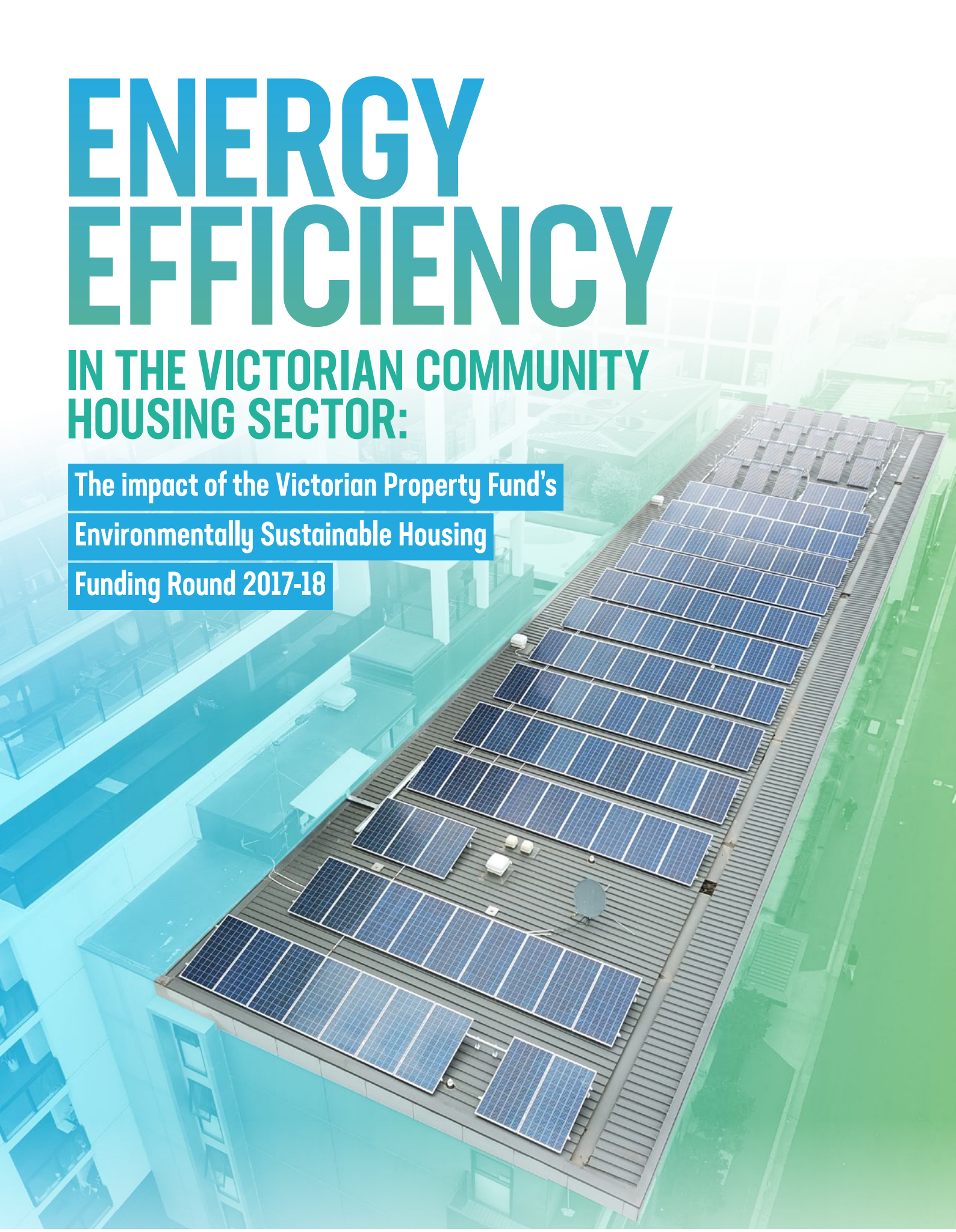
ENERGY EFFICIENCY

IN THE VICTORIAN COMMUNITY HOUSING SECTOR:

The impact of the Victorian Property Fund's Environmentally Sustainable Housing Funding Round 2017-18



Community Housing
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION VICTORIA

BOOM! SMART ENERGY

Energy efficiency in the Victorian Community Housing Sector:

The impact of the Victorian Property Fund's Environmentally Sustainable Housing Funding Round 2017-18

The $1.5 million *Victorian Property Fund Environmentally Sustainable Housing Funding Round 2017-18* was launched in February 2018 to assist registered community housing organisations (CHOs) to carry out a range of energy efficiency improvements to their properties.

The aim was to improve the environmental sustainability of Victoria's social housing, increase the thermal comfort of tenants' homes, reduce utility bills for tenants and community housing organisations, and lower carbon emissions. These objectives supported government priorities outlined in a range of policies including the *Energy Efficiency and Productivity Strategy, Victoria's Renewable Energy Roadmap and Victoria's Climate Change Adaption Plan 2017-20.*

Over the course of 2018 and 2019, the Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) worked with BOOMPower to support the seven community housing organisations who were awarded grants through this program.

This report highlights the organisations' successes and identifies lessons for other community housing organisations looking to implement their own energy efficiency programs.

VICTORIA State Government

CHIA Vic acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

VPF launches first-ever energy efficiency upgrade funding round

The Victorian Property Fund (VPF), administered by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), awards grants for property-related purposes, including providing housing assistance for low income or disadvantaged Victorians.

In 2018, the VPF launched its first funding round focusing on improving the energy efficiency and environmental sustainability of Victoria's social housing and demonstrating the business case for investing in energy efficiency improvements. It also aimed to support the sector to develop the skills required to retrofit or upgrade their properties.

Five applications were submitted, involving seven CHOs, all of which were ultimately successful. The proposals used business case analyses of energy and cost savings to identify cost-effective improvement opportunities. To bolster the VPF contribution, the rules of the funding round required CHOs to contribute at least half of the cost of the improvements themselves.

Following an assessment process the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Marlene Kairouz, awarded grants totalling $1,227,017 (excl. GST). The seven CHOs made a further contribution of $1.5 million, bringing a total investment in energy efficiency improvements to Victoria's social housing stock of more than $2.7 million. A portion of these upgrades were later deemed eligible for Solar Homes rebates. This contributed an additional $467,118.50 to the VPF upgrade program, allowing the CHOs to repurpose some of their initial contribution to fund additional solar and energy efficiency upgrades across their portfolios.

The Minister also awarded CHIA Vic a $100,000 grant to support the community housing sector to apply for grant funding and implement the funded improvements. This role included promoting the funding round to the sector, holding education seminars on the benefits of energy efficiency improvements, coordinating application and technical support services, and capturing and sharing the lessons learned with the sector.

CHIA Vic subcontracted BOOMPower to provide specialist technical assistance to CHOs via the BOOM software, to prepare evidence-based grant applications (including assessing buildings and analysing their investment business case), procure cost-effective products and suppliers, implement improvements and evaluate the impact of the improvements on energy use and electricity bills.

The results of the grant round have been impressive, both in terms of deliverables on the ground and the upskilling of the sector.

Key players

CHIA Vic

The Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) is the peak body for the not-for-profit community housing sector in Victoria, which provides secure, affordable and decent housing for people on low to moderately-low incomes.

BOOMPower

The BOOM software platform makes solar, storage and energy efficiency easy and quick to assess, prioritise, implement and verify. Businesses, corporations, not-for-profits and government agencies use it to support and implement energy programs and ongoing asset management. boompower.com.au

South East Housing Cooperative

South East Housing Cooperative is the largest Rental Housing Cooperative in Victoria. It manages a portfolio of 166 properties in the South and East of Melbourne. South East was the lead partner in a joint application with United Housing, and used its grant to install 162 solar systems on standalone homes and villas.

United Rental Housing Co-op

United Rental Housing Co-op is a sustainable housing co-operative where tenant-members have ultimate control. United manages 102 secure and affordable rental housing properties and provides tenancy management for 40 properties for women at risk of homelessness. United partnered with South East to apply for a VPF grant and used its funding to install solar on 63 standalone homes.

Housing Choices Australia

Housing Choices Australia is a national, not-for-profit housing provider with a portfolio of over 7,000 properties across Australia. In Victoria, it owns or manages over 1,800 properties. Using the VPF grant, HCA installed solar and split system A/C on a mix of apartment buildings and standalone houses.

Cherry Energy Solutions (Echo Group)

Cherry Energy Solutions is owned by Energy Australia and operates as a commercial energy efficiency company. Its energy solutions portfolio includes LED lighting, solar systems, energy monitoring, and energy storage. cherryenergysolutions.com.au

Bunjil Energy

Bunjil Energy is a First Nations-owned and operated company specialising in commercial and industrial Solar PV and Battery solutions. It invests in the development of Indigenous communities by employing Indigenous staff for the installation, maintenance and other work for its projects. bunjilenergy.com.au

Energy Aware

Founded in 2009, Energy Aware has evolved from a business initially focused on small-scale residential solar and battery installations to delivering the largest industrial and commercial solar projects in Australia. energyaware.com.au

Austra Energy Group Pty Ltd

Austra Energy is one of Australia's fastest growing suppliers of renewable energy products and services. It works closely with the industry's expert manufacturers to deliver high-quality solar modules, alongside technical expertise and outstanding customer service. austraenergy.com.au

Unison

Unison is both a housing and homelessness service provider in Victoria, managing over 2,500 properties. Unison used the VPF funding to install solar on 17 apartment buildings.

Community Housing Limited

Community Housing Limited (CHL) is the largest community housing provider in Australia, with a portfolio of close to 11,000 properties across six states. CHL installed solar systems and split system air conditioners on 63 standalone properties across Victoria through this upgrade program.

Prahran Malvern Community Housing

Prahran Malvern Community Housing manages 16 rooming house properties with a combination of self-contained and shared facilities in inner Melbourne. Prahran Malvern partnered with Unison Housing to deliver solar upgrades for several of its rooming house properties with VPF funding.

South Port

South Port manages 15 multi-unit affordable rental properties in the City of Port Phillip for single adults and young people. With its VPF grant, South Port installed solar and batteries on 8 rooming houses and 2 standalone homes.

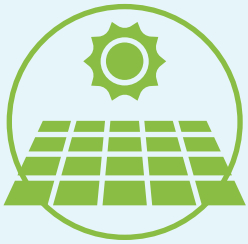
The program at a glance

NUMBER OF PROPERTIES UPGRADED:

STANDALONE HOUSES: **354**

APARTMENT BUILDINGS: **19**

ROOMING HOUSES: **12**



1,634 kW
OF SOLAR INSTALLED

26.2 kWh
OF BATTERIES INSTALLED

116 A/C Units
INSTALLED

1,428
households benefitting from solar as a result of this program:

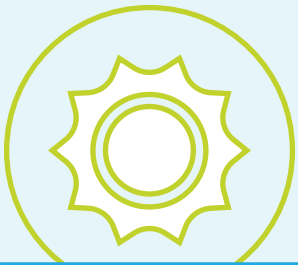
- **926** in apartments
- **171** in rooming houses

7 CHOs involved

60 JOBS CREATED or 12 full-time equivalents (FTE) across a range of professions and activities:

385

EMISSIONS SAVINGS:
1,788 t CO_2e/year or **385** cars taken off the road



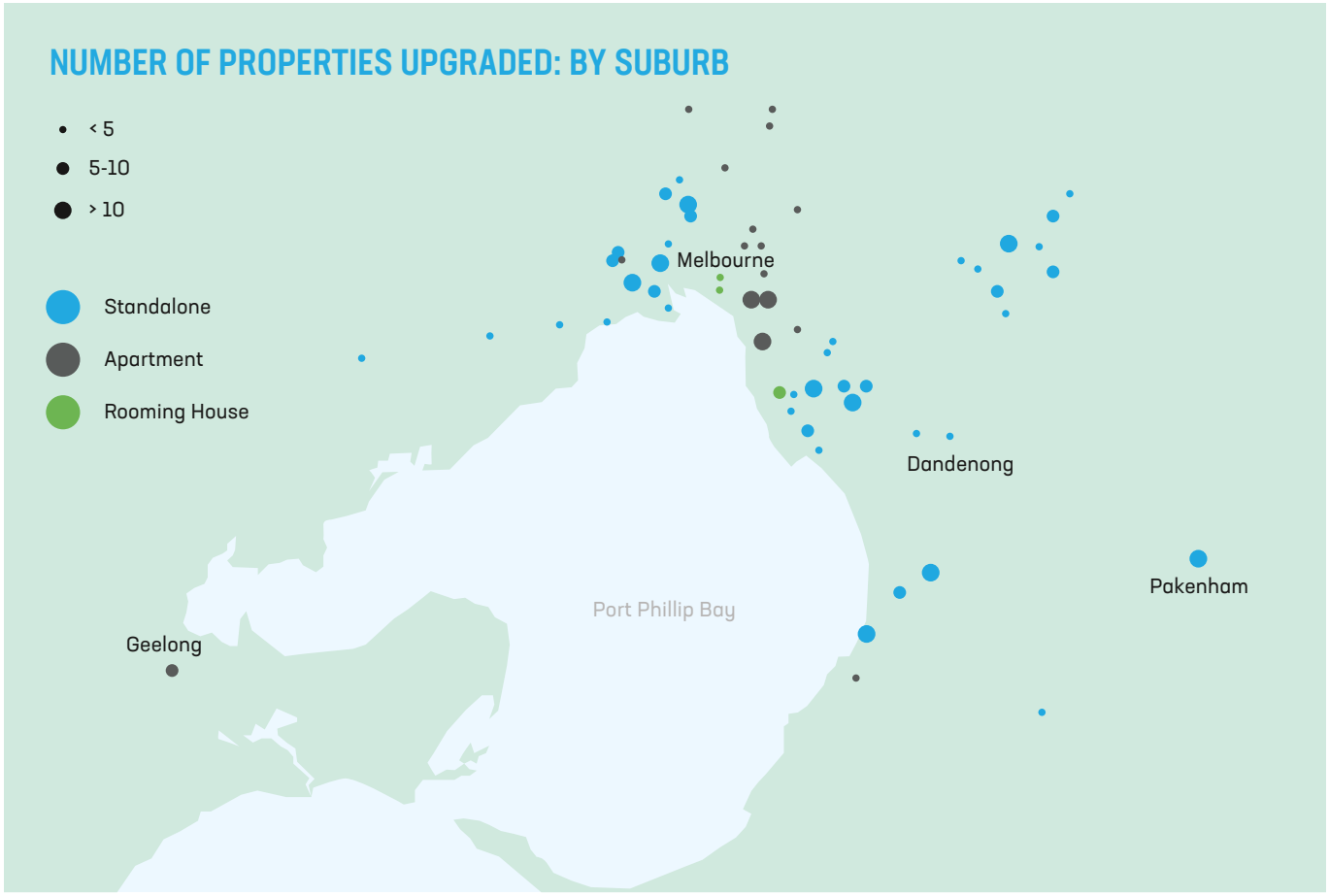
1,746 MW/year

SOLAR GENERATED/YEAR

$2.7 million

TOTAL INVESTMENT

NUMBER OF PROPERTIES UPGRADED: BY SUBURB



KEY CHALLENGES

1. **Switchboards and existing infrastructure**

2. **Staff considerations**

3. **Working with tenants**

4. **Heritage issues**

5. **Grid capacity**

6. **Accessing smart meter data**

Upgrade program and process

When the VPF funding round was announced, CHIA Vic was funded to support CHOs through the application process. This support included acting as a 'match maker' for smaller organisations who needed to be part of a joint application to meet the grant's minimum size criteria. CHIA Vic also ran a series of information sessions for CHOs about the grant.

BOOMPower was subcontracted to provide technical support to CHOs who were interested in applying for VPF funding. Although some CHOs had already conducted energy assessments and analysed business cases for installing solar or energy efficiency upgrades on their properties, others had to pull together bills and other property data to assess which properties were good candidates for solar or energy efficiency upgrades.

CHOs were free to do this work on their own or with any consultants they wished but were required to demonstrate that their proposed upgrades made financial sense, with the benefit to tenants outweighing the cost of the upgrade. With limited time to develop their grant proposals, many opted to take advantage of BOOMPower's ability to automate business case analyses.

Once the successful CHOs were awarded the grant they chose to undertake a joint procurement exercise using BOOMPower's list of pre-qualified suppliers, a precursor to the BOOM! e-procurement service. This resulted in significant cost savings for the CHOs, with successful tenders from four solar suppliers being 18 per cent or $416,128 lower than had been anticipated. With CAV's approval, the CHOs applied these savings towards carrying out additional improvements on the same terms as the original proposals, increasing the scope of work completed for the grant funding awarded.

Upon signing contracts with preferred suppliers, work began to finalise the systems to be installed at each property. This included site inspections of roofs, electrical systems, and an assessment of access requirements by solar suppliers. It also included work by tenancy and asset managers to coordinate site inspections with tenants to ensure they would be home, and making sure tenants understood the process and what they had to do. For apartment buildings, the tenancy teams also had to organise the required power outages and communicate them to all tenants.

Asset managers needed to consider the installation of the solar systems in the context of the condition of the individual properties if, for example, ageing roofs or electrical systems would be unable to cope with the new solar system.

The solar installations began in October 2018 and were completed by June 2019. CHOs then worked with tenants to ensure their metering and electricity plans were adjusted to receive feed in tariffs for the solar generated in excess of the energy used.

Program outcomes

The VPF Environmentally Sustainable Housing grants drove a program of energy efficiency and solar upgrades in excess of $2.7 million and impacted over 1,400 households living in social housing. It funded the installation of 1,634 kW of solar, 26.2 kWh of batteries and 116 split system air conditioners.

CHIA Vic has developed separate case studies on six of the upgrade programs of the CHOs who received grant funding and these case studies provide additional detail on the successes and challenges faced by organisations tackling different types of upgrades.

South East (SEHC) and **United Housing** demonstrate the possibilities created under a co-operative housing model, including the decision by United's tenant-members to contribute their own money to ensure the organisation could also fund expansion.

Community Housing Ltd (CHL) and **Housing Choices Australia** focused predominantly on standalone dwellings and included split-system air conditioners powered by solar to improve thermal comfort for their tenants without increasing energy costs.

South Port provides an example of what can be done in a rooming house environment and highlights the challenges in upgrading heritage properties.

Finally, **Unison's** upgrade program focused on apartment buildings and showcases the different types of communications required when installing solar in this environment.

The key challenges and learnings from all of these upgrade programs are summarised below to assist other CHOs in thinking through their own upgrade programs.

One core aim of this program was to demonstrate the cost savings the upgrades made possible for tenants and CHOs. In late 2019, BOOMPower worked with CHOs asking tenants for recent bills or for permission to access smart meter data, where available, to evaluate the amount of solar being generated. BOOMPower's technical expertise assisted with accessing smart meter data and they planned to analyse the energy usage and bill data to quantify savings.

BOOMPower were able to source bills for 61 per cent of properties, and over half of these properties (38 per cent) provided smart meter data for analysis. This is an excellent result given the privacy concerns of residents and the challenges in getting responses from community housing tenants more generally - surveys often garner response rates of between 20-35 per cent (see for example, AIHW's 2018 National Social Housing Survey).

However, a detailed analysis of tenants' energy use and savings proved to be challenging for a range of reasons. Smart meter data could not be accessed for most SEHC properties because Ausnet Services (the network company for the vast majority of SEHC's houses) would only allow tenants to access smart meter data directly, rather than allow BOOMPower to access data with written permission from the tenant. This meant that tenants had to access their smart meter data and then share it with BOOMPower or their CHO. Only 16 SEHC tenants did this.

Further, even when smart meter data was available it did not always provide the full 12 months of electricity usage that is required to reflect seasonal fluctuations.

The average savings are expected to improve over time as tenants' meters are reconfigured...

The estimated savings that could be calculated showed a smaller reduction in annual bills than predicted in the best-case simulation but it was slightly higher than what was predicted in the initial business cases, which were deliberately conservative. These early figures are not shared here as they are not based on a big enough sample of properties to be a reliable benchmark. However, they represent only the first six months of solar use by these tenants, many of whom did not have their meter reconfigured to track how much surplus energy was fed back into the grid. The average savings are expected to improve over time as tenants' meters are reconfigured, enabling them to receive feed-in tariffs, and as they become more savvy in how to get the best use out of their solar systems.

Key challenges

1. Switchboards and existing infrastructure

Roofs, existing electrical systems and electricity meters sometimes required additional work to support the solar installation.

Some CHOs identified ageing or damaged roofs during site inspections and had to replace the roof before installing solar.

Other properties required switchboard upgrades before solar could be installed and, in a few properties, other electrical equipment failed following the solar install and needed to be replaced. This was more likely to be the case if the property had an older switchboard, however some CHOs found they needed to budget additional contingency funds for call outs following the solar upgrades.

Electricity meters often had to be reconfigured to recognise the flow of excess solar power into the grid. This was an additional one-off cost that tenants had to pay their energy retailer before they could receive feed-in tariffs.

Roofs, existing electrical systems and electricity meters sometimes required additional work to support the solar installation.

Initially, CHL was unaware of this cost and so paid the charge for its tenants in the first tranche of upgrades. For its subsequent upgrades, tenants were informed that there might be an additional cost, depending on their energy retailer and distributor. However, other CHOs who offered to reimburse tenants for the cost of reconfiguring their meter were surprised how few tenants applied. They attributed this to the cost of the reconfiguration being more than offset by the reduction in tenants' energy bills due to the solar installation.

2. Staff considerations

Solar and energy efficiency upgrade programs such as those undertaken with the VPF funding require significant additional work by CHO staff, and not just those with direct responsibility for delivering the upgrade project.

Those CHOs who had a dedicated project team or project lead found that very helpful for keeping the project on track. Those organisations who did not, commented they would invest in a dedicated role for future projects.

This work involved not only asset management teams, but senior staff, tenancy and place management teams and admin staff across a range of different activities, including:

- Organising property assessments with experts such as BOOMPower.
- Getting Board sign off for the upgrade program.
- Preparing the VPF funding application and fulfilling the grant reporting requirements.
- Training other teams within the organisation about the new systems.
- Working with tenants to understand the upgrade opportunity, and what it entailed.
- Co-ordinating with support workers where tenants needed additional assistance to engage with the solar upgrade program.
- Co-ordinating with the solar suppliers.
- Seeking council permits and permissions when cranes or road closures were required.
- Supporting tenants to update their energy plan and ensure they were getting feed-in tariffs.
- Educating tenants on how to get the most out of their solar systems.
- Building up a database of information on existing assets to inform future upgrade plans.

All CHOs noted that their first major solar upgrade program had involved significant upskilling, but that they were now in a very good position for any future upgrade works as a result.

> *'You have to go through that cycle of a trial to figure it all out. We're now in a much better position: we are much more carbon literate; we understand what we're delivering and how we're delivering it; and, we've had the benefit of going through that upskilling activity and our team is now super confident at rolling out a second solar installation project.'*

Staff had to learn about the systems and educate colleagues in other teams and tenants' support agencies. For example, Unison held information sessions for its Place Management teams during its solar upgrades rollout and

its solar team prepared a frequently asked questions document for its Place Managers to share with tenants.

Tenancy teams and housing workers were communicating with tenants throughout the rollout, explaining the process, expected costs, and assisting them to understand what it would mean for them.

Property maintenance teams were involved in coordinating works, power outages and managing the solar suppliers. Some CHOs were involved in site inductions but relied on the solar suppliers to coordinate site visits with tenants.

Members emphasised the importance of being ready to apply for funding, with those who had already conducted property assessments being well placed to take advantage of the VPF funding round when it was announced. CHOs without property assessments were under time pressure to complete them.

> *'The BOOM! platform was really handy. We wouldn't have been able to do the desktop analysis without their help and there were a lot of tight timeframes to meet for the VPF application and lots of questions that Alex and his team helped us to answer.'*

Following the VPF upgrades, several of the participants are assessing their properties for upgrades to complement the new solar systems, such as electrical split systems or battery systems. Many are gathering information on the thermal properties of their portfolio, such as which properties have roof insulation, so they are ready to take advantage of future funding opportunities.

Key challenges

3. Working with tenants

a. Selecting properties

Tenants were a key focus in selecting properties for solar upgrades, with one CHO prioritising properties occupied by elderly tenants and another giving all tenant-members the choice to opt-in to solar. In some cases, CHOs chose to upgrade all properties within a cluster of units to meet tenant expectations, even if the desktop analysis showed they would provide less of a cost benefit than other properties. One CHO made the business decision to upgrade all suitable properties to enable the benefits to be enjoyed by future, as well as current, tenants. In some cases, reluctant tenants needed to be persuaded of the benefits that the solar system would bring.

b. Managing expectations

Managing tenants' expectations was critical, and CHOs developed processes to balance the need to communicate with them early in the process against the need to avoid raising false hopes of having an upgrade.

Due to the grid being unable to support the amount of solar that they wanted to install, a couple of sites were unable to proceed post application stage to the energy provider. To compensate tenants for the lost opportunity, the CHO installed more efficient hot water and heating components instead.

c. Communicating with tenants

One of the challenges was bringing tenants along on the journey by identifying touch points for communication, including sending out information such as, 'Your home has been identified for solar. A contractor will be in touch to make a time to do a site visit'.

Members involved in the VPF upgrades stressed the importance of having a clear communication plan with tenants and being upfront about any costs. Having some caveats about issues beyond the CHO's control, such as connecting to the grid, was also important.

Unison posted signage in its buildings to inform tenants that contractors were working on the roof and that there would be a short period of time when the power was disconnected so that the solar could be connected.

Housing Choices created a communications plan for each block of units being upgraded. This included signage and face-to-face events, like a barbecue or afternoon tea, where staff could talk to the residents as a group and individually.

Some of the things that CHOs are considering for their next round of upgrades include:

- Translating communications for people with limited English.
- How to ensure tenants understand the benefits of solar and how to maximise it.
- Simplifying the process for reporting issues with the solar system, such as having stickers on the inverters showing what a common fault or a common light sequence looks like, and the language to report issues clearly.

d. Site visits and installation

The scheduling of site visits and the placement of inverters involved negotiating with tenants. Often solar suppliers were responsible for coordinating a time for the installation but CHOs reported the occasional problem with electrical contractors turning up without contacting the tenants first, or without communicating with the CHO, resulting in inverters having to be moved.

Getting the right people involved in assisting tenants and having empathetic installation personnel was vital to the project's success. This included housing staff who were personally familiar with tenants and could identify those likely to have issues with the project. Following up with tenants to ensure they had contacted their retailer was also important to ensure tenants received the full benefit of the panels.

e. Connection and feed-in tariffs

Vulnerable tenants needed support through the process of dealing with retailers to get their meters reconfigured and start receiving feed-in tariffs. CHOs highlighted that some tenants found it challenging and/or confusing to ring their retailers. Often there were delays when people couldn't explain themselves properly.

Issues included being confused about the specifications of the system, such as the number of kW. Language barriers and missing calls or visits from retailers were common problems. Supported residents depended on their support worker being available, which often caused connection delays. People with English as second language or with mental health issues were identified as two groups that really struggled with the process.

Some CHOs assisted tenants by giving them scripts to use in dealing with retailers. For a few particularly challenged tenants, they went to the extent of getting authorisation to access the electricity suppliers to arrange to get the meter reconfigured.

Clear communications on what tenants need to do to reconfigure their meters and get feed-in tariffs, including details on system specification, would be helpful for future upgrade programs. CHOs could consider putting together information packs for support workers and tenants.

f. Maximising solar

CHOs acknowledged that even once solar was installed and tenants were getting the benefits of feed-in tariffs, tenants still needed to be educated on how to get the most out of their new system.

Unison are considering providing tenants with a handover pack that is pictorial, with clear language and simple dot points, rather than a complex inverter manual.

Several CHOs ran workshops and information sessions to help tenants understand the impact of things like doing their washing during the day to utilise solar rather than grid power. United has tenant advocates who offer one-on-one sessions with other co-op members, while another CHOs is providing information to tenants on the impact different kinds of appliances have on energy bills.

Key challenges

4. Heritage issues

One CHO, South Port, encountered issues with Heritage Victoria due to heritage overlay restrictions on two of the buildings that it wanted to target.

Complying with Heritage Victoria's requirements made the install too expensive for one property, while work on the roof of the other was totally banned due to the heritage value of its tiles.

'One of the things that we actually were not expecting was some of the properties being denied solar because of heritage issues. We did a risk diagram before the project and that was actually not even there because we always anticipated that you'd be able to get them on the part of the roof that is not visible,' says South Port's Manuel Andrés Solano Castro.

'Heritage Victoria told me that they have specific roof tiles that need to be maintained because of how they look or because of the material, so we didn't push it.'

Where properties are subject to heritage overlays, CHOs would be wise to include a conversation with Heritage Victoria as part of their assessment process in case restrictions limit the project's viability.

In this instance, South Port was unable to substitute different properties within its portfolio but was able to increase the amount of solar installed at a property that was already part of its upgrade program to utilise all of its grant.

5. Grid capacity

In a few cases, participating CHOs found that some of the properties that they had targeted for solar were unable to proceed due to the grid being at capacity.

Electricity distributors can prevent or restrict CHOs from installing solar on properties if it could impact their ability to meet standards. This typically occurs in locations that already have a lot of solar or in weaker parts of the network, such as in rural areas, although this may change as more sophisticated technology becomes available.

CHOs can find out whether a particular property is impacted by submitting a pre-approval application to the relevant distributor. However, this can be impractical for a large-scale solar upgrade project. In these cases, it may be best left to the solar supplier to determine before proceeding with an application and installation. This will mean a level of uncertainty around network approvals remains until the solar supplier confirms grid capacity as part of its site inspection process. This might affect the CHOs' business case prioritisation of properties, however CHOs who experienced this issue were able to replace the original properties with new properties.

A government-mandated and standardised process for submitting bulk pre-approval requests across all Victorian Distribution Network Supply Providers could help to minimise connection risks prior to procurement.

6. Accessing smart meter data

Participating CHOs and BOOMPower faced significant challenges in accessing the smart meter data needed to accurately measure tenant savings from their new solar system.

There were a range of factors that contributed to these difficulties, including:

- Reluctance by tenants to share their energy bills, both pre and post-installation, or provide access to smart meter data.
- Restrictive practices by some network companies, including Ausnet Services, that meant only tenants were able to access their own smart meter data, not a third party organisation such as BOOMPower.
- Insufficient smart meter data either before or after the installation, with some tenants not having a full 12 months' worth of electricity usage (required to accurately reflect seasonal fluctuations).
- Electricity meters not being reconfigured to measure surplus energy fed back into the grid, which is required to calculate feed-in tariffs (this was the case in 58 per cent of properties where interval data was available).

The challenges that CHIA Vic and BOOMPower faced in collecting bills and usage data post-installation offer some key learnings on how to work with tenants throughout the process, and the types of messaging that should be provided.

For example, it is clear tenants need to know upfront if there is an obligation to provide bills both pre and post-installation. CHOs could consider incentivising cooperation, for example through draw prizes or gift cards. Providing information to tenants on how they can save energy and money may also increase their level of trust and willingness to provide access to bills and data.

The minimum information CHOs require to evaluate the savings to tenants are:

- A bill from before solar is installed, which should include a graph of usage for the prior 12 months.
- A bill approximately 12 months after solar is installed, again including a usage graph, allowing a full year of usage to be compared.

Getting both bills allows CHOs to use actual (rather than assumed) tariffs in calculating savings, as well as verify that a solar feed-in tariff is being paid to the tenant.

Better results can be obtained with access to smart meter (interval) data, covering 12 months before and after solar installation. Usually requested data covers the 24 months prior, so multiple requests over time might be needed. Some distributors allow access to interval data to be delegated to a third-party like BOOM Power, allowing it or the CHO to request it on tenants' behalf at the required intervals. Other distributors will require tenants to access the data themselves, and this will need to be clearly explained to tenants. It is likely that some tenants would require assistance in doing this.

A live monitoring system, which is installed at the property and records solar generation and energy consumption, provides the best insights. This would upload to a web-based portal for tenants and a platform like BOOM for asset managers, without tenants and property managers needing to handle data manually. Multiple CHOs are now working with BOOMPower to ensure they include these types of solutions in future.

Key learnings

- Be proactive in assessing properties for solar and other energy efficiency upgrades. This allows CHOs to think strategically about how cyclical maintenance and replacement of ageing appliances can form part of an energy efficiency program. It also makes CHOs well positioned to act when funding becomes available.
- Consider whether a dedicated project lead or team is required to oversee the upgrades.
- Be clear about the need for bills both pre and post-solar or energy upgrade, or any other method that is being used to verify tenant savings. Consider ways to incentivise the sharing of bills or smart meter data.
- Develop a communications plan for tenants as well as staff and support workers who may be involved with the upgrade process.
- Manage tenant expectations and have back-up plans in case a property is not suited to a specific energy upgrade, like solar.
- Work with suppliers to ensure they communicate with staff and tenants, and are aware of any tenants who require support workers to assist with site visits and installation.
- Consider alternate ways of communicating with tenants about their solar system, including pictorial aids and stickers on inverters in case of any issues.
- Look at ways to support tenants to have their electricity meter reconfigured to receive feed-in tariffs.
- Build in follow-ups and education on maximising solar for tenants. Consider how this can be incorporated into welcome packs for future tenants.
- Think through what needs to be repaired or replaced prior to installing solar. Have contingency funds set aside for unexpected issues, such as a new switchboard.

'Having solar power across some of South Port's properties means we're not only saving on electricity costs but doing something important for the environment. Every little bit counts. It's good knowing we're doing our bit.'

– Sheryl, SPCHG board member and tenant

About CHIA Vic

The Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) is the peak body that represents the not-for-profit community housing sector in Victoria.

CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing. CHIA Vic takes a key role in building the capacity of the sector, including championing energy efficiencies.

CHIA Vic has been assisting its member organisations to implement energy efficiency projects for the past four years. This has been underpinned by a collaboration with BOOMPower (formerly Energy for the People) that resulted in funding from the Victorian Government's 'New Energy Jobs Fund' grant program for the creation of the BOOM! platform. This platform provides seamless support for energy projects, including property assessments, automated business cases, options analysis of energy opportunities, competitive procurement, and monitoring, measurement and verification of the costs and benefits achieved.

Community Housing
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION VICTORIA

About BOOMPower Pty Ltd

BOOMPower makes clean energy easy by helping organisations and businesses manage their energy assets by assessing, understanding, procuring, monitoring and verifying energy solutions at scale, without needing to engage expensive consultants. By automating and streamlining the process through the BOOM! software platform, it saves customers their two most precious commodities - time and money.

BOOM! is a software platform, which can be used by (non-energy expert) property professionals to develop and deliver their own energy projects with only basic training and support. Users quickly and easily input billing details, existing appliances and products and building fabric to build a picture of where you're using energy using their mobile, laptop, tablet or desktop computer. Business case reports and options analysis reports are generated at the click of a button. Building information and specifications (including images) are provided to suppliers within the BOOM competitive e-procurement module, avoiding double-handling of data and ensuring business case reports translate seamlessly into investments. Suppliers upload documentation during projects, and the BOOM platform enables ongoing measurement and verification of the costs and benefits of energy products installed, and monitoring of solar systems.

BOOM! SMART ENERGY

boompower.com.au

Community Housing
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION VICTORIA

BOOM! SMART ENERGY

Level 1/ 128 Exhibition Street, Melbourne 3000 T: 03 9654 6077 W: chiavic.com.au