

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS

Running a business, creating employment opportunities or engaging in education and training are activities many of us in urban centers take for granted. However for people living in remote outstations, these opportunities can be difficult to access.

Bushlight has recently embarked on an exciting new project that will support residents of a select number of outstations to achieve a more secure future for their communities. More specifically we will assist them to create opportunities to undertake the activities described above that in some way are dependent on, or are linked to the renewable energy system in the outstation. Bushlight staff will work with outstation residents to develop community plans, secure funding, develop partnerships and implement the projects.

Regular updates will be provided as the project progresses.

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FOCUS ON TRAINING



Residents of Wogyala outstation with Bushlight trainer and Maintenance Project Officer Chris Nuss (right)



The training involves hands on practice in system operation

Bushlight has recently developed a new training package targeting residents of outstations with renewable energy systems that have been installed under separate arrangements to the Bushlight capital works program.

Bushlight has visited the majority of outstations in central and northern Australia with renewable energy systems to determine their eligibility for incorporation into the Bushlight maintenance program. In carrying out the site visits, it became clear residents of many of the outstations could benefit from additional training in the operation of their power system.

The training package developed by Bushlight has been designed to:

- lead to improved system performance and longevity;
- reduce system operating costs;
- increase the confidence of

system users to carry out basic operational and troubleshooting tasks; and

- reduce reliance on external service providers and contractors to carry out minor tasks.

For example, being able to troubleshoot a tripped circuit breaker can potentially save thousands of dollars in contractor call-out costs. Knowing how to carry out an appropriate shut-down procedure can make the system safe in an emergency. Choosing more energy efficient appliances can save residents a significant amount of money in diesel.

The training package is now ready to be rolled out across the regions having been trialed in several outstations near Alice Springs. Residents of these outstations provided valuable feedback on the training and allowed Bushlight staff to fine-tune the resources that support it.

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As Bushlight continues to work with these communities through the Maintenance program, it will become evident the extent to which the system operation training has assisted residents to undertake basic maintenance and troubleshooting.

In Central and Northern Australia:

350 outstations have a renewable energy system

112 of these have Bushlight systems

114 of these have 'non-Bushlight' systems and are incorporated into the Bushlight Maintenance Program



A full suite of image-based resources are an integral element of the training package

PROJECT UPDATE

With the recent resolution of funding arrangements for the current year, the Bushlight team is now pushing ahead with a full agenda. Highlights of the coming months will be:

- Completion of a number of projects affected by the closure of the Remote Renewable Power Generation Program earlier this year (see story below)
- Commencement of a new round of Community Energy Planning in all four Bushlight regions
- Initial implementation of a new Bushlight program targeting energy efficiency in Indigenous households in larger communities (look for more information in future newsletters)

REMOTE RENEWABLE POWER GENERATION PROGRAM

In June of this year, the Remote Renewable Power Generation Program was closed to further applications by the Australian Government. This important program had been providing rebates of up to 50% of the cost of renewable energy power systems for people not able to economically connect to a power grid, including the communities Bushlight has worked with. The value of the Program was that despite renewable energy power systems generally being the most cost-efficient power supply option over a 10 year period, the high up-front capital costs of the systems was often an impediment to potential system owners.

The issue of future financial support for off-grid renewable energy systems has now been referred to COAG by the Australian Government. Bushlight is hopeful Indigenous communities and other off-grid power users will soon have access to an alternative mechanism that will off-set the up-front costs of renewable energy systems.

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