

Media release

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For immediate release

Solar powered stimulus

A successful program that has enabled almost 700 low income households to benefit from reduced power bills could be used as the basis of a solar-powered stimulus package that could benefit more vulnerable Victorians and the environment, create employment and support the economy.

The Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) and BOOMPower are partners on a project that has seen solar power and other energy efficiency products and solutions installed in social housing properties, including standalone properties and multi-unit apartment buildings.

With funding from the Victorian Government's New Energy Jobs Fund, CHIA Vic and BOOMPower developed the BOOM! software platform. The platform makes it easy for organisations to produce a clear business case on the impact of installing energy efficiencies, as well as providing a seamless procurement process, and measuring and verifying performance and outcomes on an ongoing basis.

Additional funding from Solar Homes and the Victorian Property Fund saw seven community housing organisations use the platform to plan and implement \$3.5 million worth of energy upgrades on social housing properties and counting.

CHIA Vic CEO Lesley Dredge says, 'People on low incomes are the most vulnerable to high energy prices. It can have a real impact on their day-to-day lives, as they can avoid using heating and cooling even in extreme temperatures, which reduces their quality of life and their health and wellbeing.'

BOOMPower Director Alex Houlston says new funding for solar and energy efficiency from the Victorian Property Fund (VPF), along with the introduction of Solar Homes in 2018 and the availability of the BOOM! platform caused a surge in the level of engagement from the sector for a range of energy solutions.

'This is evidence a stimulus package would be welcomed; in addition to construction projects, the community housing sector has \$14 million in solar and energy efficiency upgrades that are ready to be undertaken in the next six to 18 months,' Mr Houlston says.

Based on jobs figures provided by product suppliers and retailers for the initial projects, Ms Dredge says, 'We can confidently say that a \$14 million program would also directly support up to 356 jobs.' CHIA Vic and BOOM! are hopeful Solar Homes will develop a separate funding stream for community housing, in recognition of the fact that, unlike private landlords or homeowners, they are unable to receive any of the financial benefits of their investment in energy efficiencies.

‘When community housing organisations upgrade their properties, it is the tenants who receive lower energy bills and improved quality of life,’ Ms Dredge says.

Mr Houlston says similar markets, including NFP aged care and retirement living, childcare and early learning centres, as well as commercial and industrial properties, are already using the BOOM! platform to develop business cases and implement, monitor, measure and verify the financial and environmental impacts of solar and energy efficiency.

‘We need to get the economy moving and having a solar powered stimulus would be a great way to increase jobs and help vulnerable Victorians while also being kind to the environment,’ Mr Houlston says.

For further information, contact:

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Note: hi-res images are available