

12 December 2023

Highlights:

- National charity CORENA calls on the community to help Mansfield Autism Statewide Services to install solar.
- Victoria's Mansfield Autism Statewide Services will soon have a new 99.6 kW donor-funded rooftop solar system.
- The project cost will be funded by an interest-free loan from climate action charity, CORENA.
- The \$138,488 interest-free loan is sourced entirely from community donations - Fundraising is now underway!
- CORENA has funded \$1.35 million in interest-free loans for 52 separate community emission reduction projects.

Citizens Own Renewable Energy Network Australia (CORENA), a national grassroots climate action charity, is calling on donors to help Mansfield Autism Statewide Services install a new 99.6 kW rooftop solar system.

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services is an independent charity supporting young autistic people and their families. Their upcoming solar system will reduce carbon emissions, energy consumption and long-term operating costs.

A new 99.6 kW grid-connected rooftop solar system will be installed at the organisation's new therapeutic care farm located on their 100 acre rural farm at Mansfield, Victoria. This \$50m expansion, which is driven by demand and huge waiting lists, is dubbed Operation Gamechanger. Currently under construction with key elements nearing completion, the farm will have a new special school campus, student residences for term therapeutic placements, respite and crisis care, activity centre with commercial kitchen and dining room, family retreat cabins, equine facilitated learning centre, swimming pools, walking and cycling tracks and professional development training facilities. More information is here

<https://autismmansfield.org.au/operation-gamechanger/>

CORENA's funding is sourced entirely from ordinary Australians who donate to their revolving climate fund which assists community organisations to install renewable energy projects and reduce their carbon emissions.

Part-funding for this \$138,488 solar loan has already been achieved - thanks to CORENA's amazing ongoing donors and loan repayments from past project loans - with fundraising underway to raise the remaining funds. For details of the upcoming Mansfield Autism Statewide Services solar project or to assist with a tax-deductible donation, click here <https://corenafund.org.au/54-mansfield-statewide-autism-services/>

The soon to be installed solar system is expected to avoid an estimated 118,720 kWh of grid electricity/year, which is equivalent to 21 average homes using zero-emission renewable energy instead of grid electricity. It's expected that solar will reduce Mansfield Autism Statewide Services electricity bills by approximately \$26,396 per year - and once their loan is repaid, the charity can divert these energy bill savings towards their core purpose of supporting young people and their families living with autism.

CEO of Mansfield Autism Statewide Services, Simone Reeves, states *“Being sustainable and having solar on our new buildings is incredibly important to us, but we are very limited financially. So it is wonderful to have CORENA partner with us, to raise the funds for our solar and enable us to tick that extremely important box. Our brave vision of a Centre of Excellence Therapeutic Care Farm is fast becoming a reality and I’m thrilled that solar and all the benefits that come with it, for our environment and to reduce our operational costs, will now be a big part of it.”*

CORENA operates Australia's longest running donor-driven revolving fund for practical climate action. CORENA offers interest-free loans to not-for-profit, community and social-enterprise organisations for projects that reduce their carbon emissions. Citizens who want to help reduce emissions make donations to collectively crowd-fund these community climate projects. These donations are then returned to the fund in the form of loan repayments, and these funds, plus new donations, are then used again to fund future projects.

CORENA offers interest-free loans to community focused organisations to fund the following project types:

- Solar installations
- Energy efficiency upgrades (including LED lighting, building insulation etc)
- Replacing gas appliances (including water/space heating, cooking) with energy efficient electric alternatives.
- Purchasing electric vehicles
- Any combination of the above - or talk to us about any other project type that will reduce emissions.

To date, CORENA has funded over \$1.35 million for 52 climate action projects. These projects have avoided 4,995 MWh of grid electricity which equates to 325 average households having switched to using 100% renewable energy instead of grid electricity for a year.

CORENA's Head of Operations, Sarah McCabe, states *“On behalf of our wonderful donors, CORENA is very pleased to assist yet another organisation doing vital work in the community. It’s terrific that Mansfield Autism Statewide Services will be able to reduce their carbon emissions and long term operating costs, while supporting the Victorian community”*.

Other community organisations are encouraged to apply for a CORENA interest-free loan. CORENA provides technical advice and assistance and hosts monthly online Q&A sessions to assist community organisations who want to learn more about CORENA loans - full details are here <https://corenafund.org.au/apply-for-a-project-loan/>

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