

Media Release: Donors enable interest-free solar at Mansfield Autism Statewide Services.

28 November 2024

Highlights:

- Victoria's Mansfield Autism Statewide Services has a new 99.6kW donor-enabled rooftop solar system.
- The project cost was funded by an interest-free loan from national climate action charity, CORENA.
- The \$138,488 interest-free loan is sourced entirely from community donations!
- CORENA has funded \$1.54 million in interest-free loans for 55 separate community emission reduction projects.

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services has a new 99.6kW rooftop solar system at their new therapeutic care farm at Mansfield, Victoria. An interest-free loan - sourced entirely from donations - financed the project and was provided by national climate action charity, Citizens Own Renewable Energy Network Australia (CORENA).

The new solar system is expected to avoid an estimated 118,720kWh of grid electricity/year, thereby avoiding 109 tonnes of carbon emissions/year. It's expected that solar will reduce the charity's electricity bills by approximately \$26,396 per year - and once their CORENA loan is repaid, the organisation can divert these energy bill savings towards their core purpose of supporting young autistic people and their families.

CEO of Mansfield Autism Statewide Services, Simone Reeves, states *"Being environmentally sustainable is very important to us, but the cost of solar was beyond our financial capacity. So it was wonderful to have CORENA partner with us. They raised the funds for our solar and this means both environmental savings and a reduction in operational costs well into the future, for our recently opened Centre of Excellence Therapeutic Care Farm."*

CORENA operates Australia's longest running donor-driven revolving fund for practical climate action. Interest-free loans are available to not-for-profit, community and social-enterprise organisations for projects that reduce their carbon emissions. Citizens across Australia [make tax-deductible donations](#) to collectively crowd-fund these community climate projects. These donations are then returned to CORENA's revolving 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 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 \$1.54 million for 55 climate action projects. These projects have avoided using over 6,290MWh of grid electricity which equates to reducing carbon emissions by approximately 4.069 tonnes.

Other community organisations are encouraged to apply for a CORENA interest-free loan. CORENA provides free technical advice and assistance and hosts monthly online Q&A sessions providing [information for community organisations](#) who want to learn more about CORENA loans.

Incidentally, this is one of three CORENA-funded emissions reduction projects that are being installed within weeks of each other. [Mansfield Statewide Autism Services](#) (Vic), plus [Northern Agricultural Catchments Council](#) (WA) and [Byron Community College](#) (NSW) will collectively install a total of 150.54kW of solar (and one solar battery), funded by a total of \$182,453 in CORENA interest-free loans.

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- CORENA's 54th project webpage <https://corenafund.org.au/54-mansfield-statewide-autism-services/>
- Mansfield Autism Statewide Services website <https://autismmansfield.org.au/>
- Mansfield Autism Statewide Services Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/mansfieldautism>

About Mansfield Autism Statewide Services

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services is an independent, not-for-profit, disability service that has been supporting young autistic people and their families for over 50 years. Their mission is to empower and support autistic people to achieve their goals, including building capacity and confidence through best practice services and supports. The charity provides in-home and place-based care including skill building placements, family camps, respite & acute care, special school, transition to mainstream school, independent living programs, outreach, vocational placements and professional development training.

“The child’s family is their most important teachers, and we aim to give them the understanding, the confidence and the determination necessary for the successful parenting of their child – that is our goal and nothing less is enough.”

Dr. Joan Curtis, Founder of Mansfield Autism