

Light and Life in the Bush



BUSH

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www.bushlight.org.au

Welcome to the second Bushlight Newsletter.

There has been a lot of progress since the Project's launch in June last year!

Bushlight regional staff have been forging relationships and agreements with Regional Councils and communities and regional planning is at an advanced stage in Central Australia, the North West and Top End. Eligible communities have been identified and prioritised, and it is expected around 20 renewable energy power systems will be installed in these areas initially.



The Bushlight team recently visited homelands around Numbulwar.

However, communities don't just get an energy system. Bushlight provides a planning and education package to support them using the system. Good planning means the system will be designed to meet community needs and we back up the system with warranties and education to help the community use the system and deal with any problems.



Bushlight's Ernie Hunter, at Malaburra, WA

While regional energy planning has been going on, Bushlight technical staff have also been working hard to ensure reliable and durable systems are available to install. System components have been pre-tested and the first system supplied under contract by Ergon Energy has undergone testing at ACRELab to ensure it meets our specifications.

In this issue, we focus on a meeting that took place with the Tapatjatjaka Community (Central Australia) where we introduced our programs and discussed the Community's energy needs. There's also information on the general process of accessing Bushlight energy systems, together with planning and education packages. And we go to Djibbinj, in the Kimberley region of WA, which is the first outstation to have started developing a Community Energy Plan.

First Contract to Supply Bushlight Energy Systems

Late last year, Bushlight awarded its first contract to Ergon Energy Corporation, to supply and install the first twenty Bushlight small renewable energy (RE) power supply systems.

"The tender process was very competitive and was closely contested by RAPS industry participants throughout Australia," said Jim Bray, Chairman of Bushlight. "Ergon Energy will work with a network of high quality, regionally based small businesses to provide a comprehensive installation and support capability throughout northern Australia.



Assessing a generator – Ben Purcell, Bushlight Central Australia

Visit the Bushlight website www.bushlight.org.au to view the full media release. Click on What's New and then on Media Releases.

Testing the Bushlight Systems

Bushlight is actively working with Ergon Energy to develop a high quality, appropriate solution to meet community energy needs. Ergon supplied the first Bushlight renewable energy power system for testing and review in March 2003.

What is the Bushlight renewable energy power system?

Bushlight's first system is a "standalone" solar powered system, designed to provide 100% of the design load from renewable energy. This system is designed mainly to meet the energy service needs of a single dwelling.

ACRELab, at Murdoch University in Perth, carried out testing, which included a delivery



Front view of the first system delivered to ACRELab, Perth, for testing.

evaluation, a stress test (designed to simulate the most extreme or worst case conditions the system is likely to experience), system operation under 'typical' conditions, insulation and earth testing, and a post-test evaluation. Bushlight and Ergon are analysing the results of the testing. When this is complete, Bushlight will move ahead with installation of the systems.

To find out more about the technical details on the first Bushlight RE system and the testing process, visit our website www.bushlight.org.au, click on RE industry.

Bushlight Establishes Memorandums Of Understanding with ATSI Regions

Bushlight's approach is to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each ATSI Regional Council wishing to participate in the Bushlight Project.

The MOUs provide a framework for Bushlight and Regional Councils to work together, in a spirit of cooperation, to improve participating remote Indigenous communities' access to sustainable renewable energy services.

ATSI Regional Councils that have either signed, or signalled their intention to sign the MOUs include Kullarri (Broome), Malarabah (Derby), Wunan (Kununurra), Nulla Wimila Kutju (Port Augusta), Yapakurlangu (Tennant Creek), Garrak-Jarru (Katherine) and Miwatj (Nhulunbuy).

Bushlight Regional Manager, John Schmidt, based in Derby, Western Australia, says working co-operatively with the Wunan, Malarabah and Kullarri Regional Councils to establish priorities and help prepare Regional Energy Plans has so far been productive and helpful for the communities concerned. The Regional Councils have already agreed on the first few communities and work on their Community Energy Plans has commenced.

Community Energy Planning : What is it?

Bushlight doesn't just install energy systems. We are working hard on developing and refining a Community Energy Planning Model and education and training materials related to energy services.

Why? The aim of this is for Bushlight to work closely with each individual community to plan the right combination of energy services to meet the needs of that community.

We are working to support the livelihoods of each community and to provide energy services that help them achieve good outcomes in other areas, such as housing, enterprises, education, training, community development and health.

How? The energy planning model is based around workshops that community members can participate in. In the workshops people will work through ideas that the community has for the future. We then plan energy services that will help them to achieve what they want for their communities.

Education and training is also essential to this. Through the planning we will look at what education and training needs each community has. We design materials and support for that community so that they are able to manage their energy, and keep their systems working well into the future.



Community planning meeting at Wulunjurr, WA

Meeting with Tapatjatjaka

In March, Margaret Carew and Gerry West from Bushlight and Andrew Lane from CAT had a meeting with people from Tapatjatjaka Community Council communities – these are all communities near Titjikala. The idea behind this meeting was for people to get information about the Bushlight program. Some communities already have renewable energy systems, but need to know more about using them, or how to get resources to replace parts of their systems, and how to upgrade systems.

Gerry, Margaret and Andrew heard about the difficulties these communities face with their current systems. For example, a few people mentioned the problems with maintenance and repairs on renewable energy systems. In some communities there might be more than one system, and these are all different brands of panels, inverters and batteries, put in by different installers and serviced by different people.

It's important to remember that Bushlight doesn't just provide an energy system: the communities get a planning and education package to support them using the system. Bushlight develops resources to give information and to help people make choices about their system. It backs up the system with warranties and education to help the community use their system, and to deal with any problems that might come up.

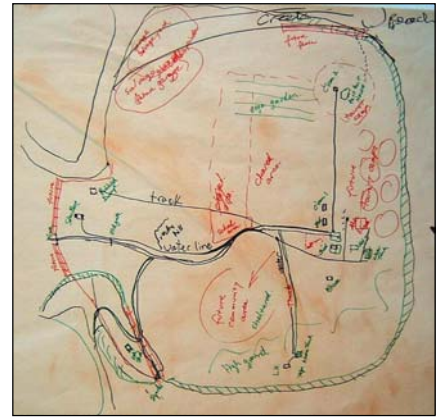
We need to manage energy when we are using renewable energy systems.

Renewable energy is energy made from the sun and wind. So it's totally different to town power, which you can use as much as you want (as long as you can pay for it!). Renewable energy systems are a bit like a water tank - once the water runs out there isn't any more. People who live with water tanks know how to make the most of their water and not waste it. People who live with renewable energy need to learn to manage their power and to make the most of it. Bushlight will work with the community to help them plan a system that is the right size for what they need and give the community the training they need to manage the energy.

Djibbinj first to develop community energy plan

Djibbinj, a small outstation on the Beagle Bay Reserve on the Dampier Peninsula north of Broome is the first community to develop an energy plan as part of the Bushlight renewable energy project.

Developing a community energy plan is the first step in building community confidence and capacity in operating a renewable energy service. Bushlight staff work with residents to survey energy needs and build a community profile. The location of housing and other infrastructure obviously is important. The community's knowledge of its mobility and demography is also vital. How often do residents travel to a major town for shopping and other business, and for how many days? Do all family members come back here during the school holidays?



Cyril Shaw's community map

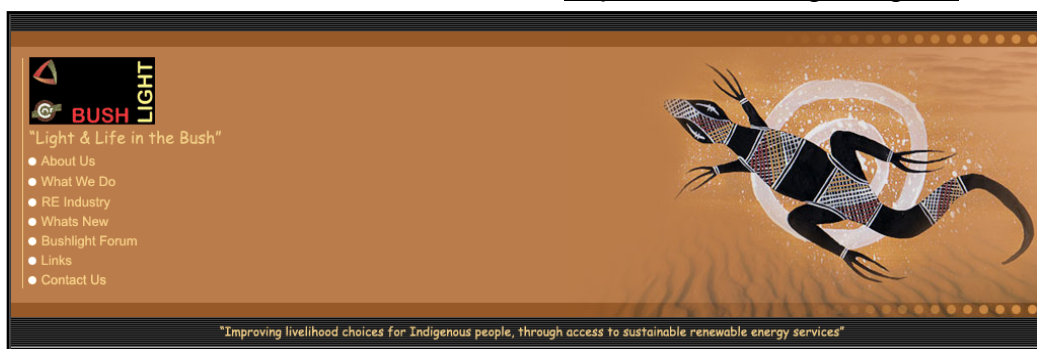
At Djibbinj, Bushlight's John Schmidt worked with Cyril Shaw to draw a community map. Land features like high ground were mapped, alongside improvements like shelters, a garden and tracks. Cyril also drew in the community's aspirations for the future; basic home comforts for families and economic development through a small tourism venture.

Djibbinj has a small generator in good condition but the cost of diesel fuel absorbs a large portion of community funds and the generator is run only at night. Bushlight is proposing a solar energy system on call 24 hours a day, with the diesel generator retained as back up.

Once the system is installed, Bushlight staff will return regularly in the months following installation and ensure it is meeting community needs and expectations. Devices like timers, sensors and automatic switches may be introduced to assist a community in managing its energy plan.

Bushlight has a NEW WEBSITE

Be sure to visit our new website: <http://www.bushlight.org.au/>.



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