



emP^{owering} SA

Frequently Asked Questions for Councils





Thank you for being part of **emPowering SA**

We are excited to work with your Council to deliver the **emPowering SA** community battery fleet across South Australia.

emPowering SA will be a fleet of 18 community batteries across South Australia, working together to deliver direct benefits over time to more than 10,000 South Australian government nominated households facing cost of living pressure, through access a retail electricity rate 26 percent below the Default Market Offer (DMO, the default price for electricity).

On current figures, a typical household benefitting from **emPowering SA** could save up to \$608 off their annual electricity bill (based on the annual saving estimate for a new residential customer when compared to the DMO with an annual energy consumption of 4000 kilowatt-hours per year).

Over their operational life, **emPowering SA** is expected to deliver around \$60 million of value direct to low-income and energy hardship households across South Australia.

emPowering SA enables the benefits of community batteries to be realised by local residents who are currently locked out from accessing renewable energy technologies, and for whom lower energy bills means the most.

The **emPowering SA** community battery fleet is one of many South Australian government initiatives to reduce emissions and meet our climate change targets.





About this document

Your Council has an important role to play in **emPowering SA**, helping us ensure that the community is informed, heard, and supports the delivery of a community battery in their area.

It is also important that your Elected Members, staff, and other stakeholders are also informed about the project and can have their questions answered quickly and accurately.

To support you, this document outlines answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that you can use with your community and stakeholders.

We expect these FAQs will support you in delivering community engagement and consultation activities, addressing common questions from your ratepayers, and responding to internal queries you may receive about the project and why it should be supported.

These FAQs are provided to all Councils working with us on **emPowering SA** and are consistent with language the project team will use in other public communications. This ensures that regardless of where someone looks for information about **empowering SA**, they receive the same information which builds trust in what we are doing and what we will achieve.

Reading this document

We know that responding to some questions will require one level of detail for community, and another level of detail for internal stakeholders and technical audiences.

In recognition of this, two distinct formatting styles are applied to FAQ answers, to help guide you on the audience those words are intended for.

Information in this format is designed as information that can be used proactively and for all public audiences

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Information in this format is designed as additional, or technical, or more complex information primarily for internal Council use, but can be used in public forums if required.



1. What are the technical specifications of the community battery? Physical size and aesthetic, storage capability?

Each emPowering SA community battery will be a 700 kilowatt / 1828 kilowatt-hour battery comprising of:

- ⚡ an approximately 11.5 metre by 7.5 metre fence, with concrete slab below, with which all the community battery equipment will sit; and
- ⚡ a separate approximately 3.0 metre by 3.5 metre concrete slab/culvert on which an SA Power Networks high voltage/low voltage transformer will sit, as part of connecting the battery to the grid.

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The location of the smaller slab and the SA Power Networks high voltage/low voltage transformer will be determined on a site-by-site basis by SA Power Networks, based on existing infrastructure at the site. This transformer must sit separately to the other battery equipment due to safety and easement requirements of SA Power Networks to ensure its safe operation and maintenance. For safety and serviceability reasons SA Power Networks require the transformer to sit within a 3.5 metre by 6 metre easement.

The equipment on the larger concrete slab will be three (3) battery cabinets, one (1) battery connection panel, seven (7) power conversion systems, and one (1) switchboard.

This larger slab will be surrounded by a fence, which the emPowering SA project team intends to design in conjunction with each Council to ensure it meets Council, community, and project expectations regarding visual amenity, security, and maintenance.

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Where possible, consideration will be given not only to fence design but also complementary activities such as landscaping and opportunities for community education and engagement.

All equipment is rated for external conditions, meaning there is no need for roofing or shade structures.

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The exact layout of each site will be different, and the emPowering SA team is committed to working with Councils to keep them informed of the layout that is proposed for the safe, effective, and efficient installation and operation of the community battery in their area. Layouts for the battery in your Council area will be shared with your Council as they become available.



2. What is the ownership model of the battery, and who is responsible for any ongoing maintenance of the battery?

All emPowering SA community batteries will be owned by the Government of South Australia and operated by energy retailer AGL as part of a virtual power plant (VPP).

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The operation of the batteries as part of a VPP will generate revenue from electricity market trading. This revenue, together with additional commitments direct from AGL, will be used to fund electricity bill savings that AGL will provide to more than 10,000 low-income households for ten years through access to an exclusive price for electricity that is 26 percent below the Default Market Offer (DMO, the default price for electricity).

AGL is responsible for all ongoing maintenance of the community battery equipment. This will include annual maintenance in line with manufacturer's recommendations, and remote monitoring at all times.

SA Power Networks is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the high voltage/low voltage transformer.

3. How does the battery work?

The emPowering SA batteries store excess energy from the grid when renewable energy is abundant.

They then make that energy available at night, during periods of high demand, or when the grid needs support.

By operating in this way and orchestrated together as part of a virtual power plant, the emPowering SA fleet will provide benefits to South Australia at significant scale. It will mean cheaper electricity for more than 10,000 households, and increased stability and resilience to South Australia's grid.

By powering communities with low-cost renewable energy stored in these batteries, we can deliver cheaper electricity to those who can't access renewable energy technologies of their own and will benefit most.



4. Who in the community can access the benefit, and how?

emPowering SA will deliver direct benefits to more than 10,000 South Australian government nominated households facing cost of living pressure, through a retail electricity rate 26 percent below the Default Market Offer (DMO, the default price for electricity).

On current figures, a typical household benefitting from emPowering SA could save up to \$608 off their annual electricity bill (based on the annual saving estimate for a new residential customer when compared to the 2026-2027 DMO with an annual energy consumption of 4000 kilowatt-hours per year).

Every household benefitting from emPowering SA will be in a home that cannot support its own solar panels or a battery. This ensures these South Australians are not locked out from accessing renewable energy technologies and the benefits it can provide.

SA Housing Trust tenants can register their interest to benefit from emPowering SA by completing the form on www.empowering.sa.gov.au/join.

The government is currently prioritising access for SA Housing Trust tenants in council areas where a battery is already installed and is operational. These council areas are currently the City of Marion, Campbelltown City Council, and the Port Pirie Regional Council. However new community batteries will be joining our fleet regularly, so we recommend registering your interest now. We will contact you as soon as places become available.

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The Government of South Australia wants to ensure that communities hosting a battery receive priority access to emPowering SA benefits for their community members. For this reason, eligible Housing SA tenants in your LGA will be among the first to be offered the opportunity to take up places in emPowering SA made available by the battery in your LGA, once it is installed and operational.



5. How many estimated households will it benefit?

emPowering SA will deliver direct benefits to more than 10,000 South Australian households.

6. What is the estimated annual savings per customer?

On current figures, a typical household benefitting from emPowering SA could save up to \$608 off their annual electricity bill (based on the annual saving estimate for a new residential customer when compared to the 2026-2027 DMO with an annual energy consumption of 4000 kilowatt-hours per year).

7. Data attached to other community batteries estimate a \$1.9million direct value to the community over the expected 15-year life of the asset – is it a similar estimate for this battery?

It is expected that around \$60 million of value will be provided directly to nominated low-income households over the operational life of emPowering SA.

8. Has grant funding been secured through ARENA for this project?

emPowering SA is jointly funded by the Government of South Australia, energy retailer AGL, and the Australian Government's Community Batteries for Household Solar program.

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All funding has been secured through relevant contracts and agreements.

9. What are the timeframes for the project and when is a decision required by Council?

Each emPowering SA battery is expected to take approximately 12 to 18 months from approval to commencing operation.

As a total fleet, emPowering SA will be delivered in a staged approach across 2026 and 2027.



10. Concerns have been raised regarding the fire risk and associated impacts – what are the safety features of the battery, and are there any mitigation measures in place in the event a fire occurs?

The energy storage technology of the batteries is certified to the most stringent safety standards for energy storage.

This includes lithium cell and battery safety standards IEC 62619:2022 and IEC 63056:2020, and grid connection, installation, and inverter standards AS/NZS 5139, AS/NZS 4777.2, AS 3000, and AS 3008.

In the unlikely event it is required, the battery cabinets also contain fire detection and an automatically activated fire suppression system.

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The project team has also actively engaged with the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS) on the project and the battery technology. The MFS and CFS have advised they have no concerns with the project or the technology proposed for use.

11. Is there any land contamination issues due the battery being installed on the land?

There are no known contamination risks. Whilst community batteries are a relatively new concept, the technology and operating models behind them are already widely used across Australia in use cases from household batteries through to grid-scale installations, with no known environmental issues.

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For these specific installations, the battery cells are sealed and the systems as a whole are designed in compliance with relevant standards including AS/NZS5139 regarding battery system safety, and IEC62619:2022 and IEC63056:2020 regarding product safety and safe operation of lithium cells and batteries.





12. It was mentioned that a new SA Power network transformer would need to be installed on the land to support the battery infrastructure. Can you provide more details of this?

Each emPowering SA community battery will be a 700 kilowatt / 1828 kilowatt-hour battery comprising of:

- ⚡ an approximately 11.5 metre by 7.5 metre fence, with concrete slab below, with which all the community battery equipment will sit; and
- ⚡ a separate approximately 3.0 metre by 3.5 metre concrete slab/culvert on which an SA Power Networks high voltage/low voltage transformer will sit, as part of connecting the battery to the grid.

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The location of the smaller slab and the SA Power Networks high voltage/low voltage transformer will be determined on a site-by-site basis by SA Power Networks, based on existing infrastructure at the site. This transformer must sit separately to the other battery equipment due to safety and easement requirements of SA Power Networks to ensure its safe operation and maintenance. For safety and serviceability reasons SA Power Networks require the transformer to sit within a 3.5 metre by 6 metre easement.

Transformers are a common piece of electrical infrastructure, and it is likely your council already has several of them in place. More detail of the transformers that may be used for emPowering SA can be found through SA Power Networks.

13. What ongoing site management measures will be in place to ensure the battery is maintained to appropriate standards? Who will be responsible for this, and how often will physical inspections or maintenance visits occur?

AGL is responsible for all ongoing maintenance of the community battery equipment. This will include annual maintenance in line with manufacturer's recommendations, and remote monitoring at all times.

SA Power Networks is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the high voltage.



14. Given the site currently permits public access, what security measures (e.g. fencing, monitoring, signage) are proposed to prevent unauthorised access and ensure safety compliance?

This battery equipment will be surrounded by a fence, which the emPowering SA project team intends to design in conjunction with each Council to ensure it meets Council, community, and project expectations regarding visual amenity, security, and maintenance.

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Where possible, consideration will be given not only to fence design but also complementary activities such as landscaping and opportunities for community education and engagement.

15. Have any long-term safety studies or environmental assessments been conducted in relation to community batteries of this type, particularly in relation to potential emissions, noise, or electromagnetic impacts?

Whilst community batteries are a relatively new concept, the technology and operating models behind them are already widely used across Australia in use cases from household batteries through to grid-scale installations, with no known environmental issues.

16. Who is responsible for responding to incidents, and what response time is expected?

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DEM expects that any incidents will be managed and responded to consistent with other electrical infrastructure existing within urban and community settings.

17. Will it be clearly identified that the state government is responsible for the infrastructure. If issues occur will our ratepayers have easy access to communications with necessary individuals to manage their concerns, or is it expected to come through us.

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The emPowering SA team welcomes the opportunity to work with Council to ensure the site includes appropriate information on the battery, its operation, and where to go for further information. Subject to discussions, this could include the use of signage, QR codes, and links to online resources such as webpages.



18. What reporting mechanisms are in place to monitor the performance, safety, and community impact of the battery over time? Will Council receive periodic updates?

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AGL and the Government of South Australia are committed to ongoing monitoring of all emPowering SA batteries, their effect on the grid, and the benefits they provide to households and the communities in which they are located. These commitments are also captured in commercial agreements between the Government of South Australia and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), and between the Government of South Australia and AGL.

The Government of South Australia is also committed to fostering an open and transparent relationship with Council, and will at all times welcome requests for host Councils on any specific performance, safety, or community impact information regarding the battery in their area or the fleet as a whole.



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