Future bright for Highfields Pioneer Village after Solar Installation

The installation of 123 solar panels at the Highfields Pioneer Village is set to save the village thousands each year.

The electricity required to power the 70 historical buildings on the 20 acre property is one of the largest costs the nonprofit faces.

“Our electricity bill was a whopping $5,000 per quarter. Because of the high costs of electricity, it put the Village in an awkward position during the Coronavirus outbreak,” said Ray Ashford OAM, Volunteer Manager.

“We had to shut our gates from March to July last year and the bills were still coming in, and with no gate takings we were in dire straits.”

Highfields Pioneer Village is funded entirely by donations and visitors, with its largest event, the Easter Vintage Festival, bringing in enough visitors to pay a large portion of the museum’s expenses.

Covid-19’s impact put the future of the Village at risk with the cancellation of the festival in 2020, and limitations on visitor numbers.

A Community Grant from Heritage Bank Highfields and Crows Nest Community, via the Progressive Community Crows Nest Ltd (PCCN Ltd), offered the Village hope for the future.

“With the help of Heritage Bank, it has put us in good stead for the future, and we are back to opening 7 days a week and have restarted our school excursions program,” said Ray.

“We are just so thankful to Heritage and the team at PCCN Ltd for their support and foresight in supporting the purchase of renewable energy for the Pioneer Village”.

The grant provided the Village with the funds to install a 40kw solar system on one of the larger buildings on the property, which houses the Queensland Energy Museum.

Peter Sutrin, Director of Proven Energy, said the 30KW solar system’s 325 Twin Peak 2 panels are designed and warranted for 25 years, ensuring long term savings, backed by a Delta inverter with a 15 year warranty, too.

“We are privileged to be able to offer our expertise to this project and support such a great community organisation in saving for many years into the future,” said Peter Sutrin.

Proven Energy also donated labour and resources during the installation and before the recent opening of the Big Cow. Manufacturers REC Solar, Delta Electronics and Solar Analytics provided additional support for the installation.

The solar system is now fully operational, and a display inside the Queensland Energy Museum will allow visitors to see how the system works in real time, tracking the journey of energy from sunlight into electricity to power the village.

The display also tells the story of solar from its earliest forms, Australia’s role as a solar innovation leader, through to the modern installations we know today.

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