

Briefing for Victorian Members of Parliament

Benefits of repowering homes from gas to all-electric

Summary

- Too many Australians are struggling with household energy bills. More and more Australian households are taking back control of their energy bills using rooftop solar and batteries and switching to energy-efficient, electric appliances. But many more people, especially renters and those on lower incomes, are locked out of this opportunity to cut their bills.
- In Victoria, gas supplies are running out. The Victorian Government is taking the right approach – reducing gas demand by helping households repower their homes with all-electric appliances.
- The Victorian Government’s commonsense plans should be supported with Federal investment to expand upfront subsidies and incentives, making it easy and affordable for every household to switch to efficient electric appliances and cut their energy bills.
- Repowering our homes with efficient electric appliances will lower energy bills, create healthier homes, reduce emissions, and avoid the need for more expensive, politically unpopular and environmentally destructive gas projects.
- Please support the Victorian Government to stay the course by advocating for the measures in the Gas Substitution Roadmap, and by letting your constituents know how they can access existing support and subsidies to repower their homes.

Background

Victoria’s old offshore gas fields are running dry. The few new projects, such as Beach Energy’s gas field near the Twelve Apostles, are small-scale efforts to wring remaining supplies from the Gippsland and Otway basins. Fracking and coal seam gas are outlawed in Victoria – supported by a majority of voters – and other gas fields on the east coast are committed to exporting rather than supplying to Victoria. Governments have recently turned their attention to costly gas import terminals to alleviate supply concerns.

But supply is only half of the story. Burning gas in homes and businesses makes up nearly two thirds of Victoria’s gas use, and much of this can feasibly be substituted with electricity. Because our grid is increasingly powered by cheap renewable energy, efficient electric appliances are already cheaper to run and cut emissions. Even better, electric appliances don’t harm our health like gas appliances do, and – as anyone cooking with modern induction or heating their home with a heat pump will tell you – they do a much better job.

The Victorian Government, through the Gas Substitution Roadmap, has been taking a commonsense approach to reducing gas demand. New gas connections have already been banned for most new homes,

and they are now considering new rental standards which would ensure expensive gas heaters and hot water systems are replaced with efficient electric appliances, bringing energy bill relief to those in need.

This year we are also expecting a proposal from the Victorian Government for new standards which will progressively phase in efficient electric appliances, and end gas connections for *all* new builds.

Together these measures, alongside the important work to scale up renewables and transmission, will help Victoria meet its climate targets, bring down Victorians' energy bills, and help to avoid politically unpopular and environmentally destructive gas supply projects.

How the Victorian Government can support

We need the Victorian Government to implement minimum rental standards, ensure all new appliances sold are electric (not gas), and make it easy and affordable for Victorians to switch away from gas appliances by:

- Lowering or removing the cost barriers for all households and small businesses to electrify, whether owned, rented, apartments and regardless of location across the state.
- Prioritising workforce development, including a local manufacturing supply chain and retraining programs for plumbers and gas fitters to take up electrification jobs.

We urge you to support the Victorian Government to stay the course on these policy proposals to repower Victorian homes, specifically by:

- Informing Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Climate Action Lily D'Ambrosio that your constituents support moves to electrify all Victorian homes.
- Asking that all gas appliance types are included in the proposal to phase in all-electric appliances – including heating, hot water and cooking.

In addition, we ask that you engage with and inform constituents about the benefits of going all-electric and support them to access the subsidies and support already available to them.

How the Federal Government can support

As a member of the Renew Australia for All alliance, Environment Victoria is calling on the Federal Government to invest now and over the next decade to support households and communities to upgrade to healthier, safer homes that are easier to heat and cool by:

- Partnering with the Victorian Government to expand upfront subsidies and incentives.
- Enabling more prioritised support for those doing it tough, like low-income homes, private renters, tenants in public and social housing, as well as First Nations, multicultural, and regional and remote communities.
- Ensuring investment is coupled with strong and nationally consistent appliance standards and industry labour standards for workers.

We urge you to support relief from skyrocketing cost of living, bring down energy bills and cut climate pollution, specifically by:

- Informing Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese and Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen that your constituents support investment in an efficient, all-electric future.
- Asking that the government invests urgently to cut power bills by increasing access to affordable solar, batteries, electric appliances and thermal improvements.

In addition, we ask that you engage with and inform constituents about the benefits of going all-electric and support them to access the subsidies and support already available to them.

What do constituents think?

In winter 2023, Environment Victoria volunteers held 582 in-depth conversations with everyday Victorians to find out what they think about gas. The conversations took place in local shopping strips, libraries and sporting clubs, via door-knocking homes, including social housing, and at train stations, markets and local events across the state, from Bairnsdale to Ballarat and everywhere in between.

83% of respondents supported Victoria switching away from gas by 2035.

Many shared dramatic stories of gas leaks and explosions, asthma and respiratory problems, gas bill shock and stress from rising costs, and growing concern about climate impacts. More than half of respondents had personal experience or knew someone directly impacted by these concerns.

From our conversations we know that Victorians support repowering homes with efficient electric appliances, because it tackles so many problems that they're facing at once.

More information about gas in Victoria and beyond

1. Environment Victoria & Renew (2024), *How We Electrify: Easy cost-saving options to replace gas heating*.
2. Renew Australia for All (2024), *Repowering Our homes: Energy Bill Savings Plan*, available to download from renewaustraliaforall.org
3. Environment Victoria (2023), *Briefer: What do Victorians think about gas?*
4. Environment Victoria (2024), *A pipeline of profits: How gas lobbyists are keeping us hooked on expensive, climate-wrecking gas appliances*.
5. Brotherhood of St Laurence & Life Course Centre (2023) *Enabling electrification: Addressing the barriers to moving off gas faced by lower-income households*.

About Environment Victoria

We're an independent charity, funded by donations. Established in 1969, we've grown into a community of 40 grassroots member groups and more than 200,000 supporters. Together we're campaigning to solve the climate crisis and build a thriving, sustainable society that protects and values nature.