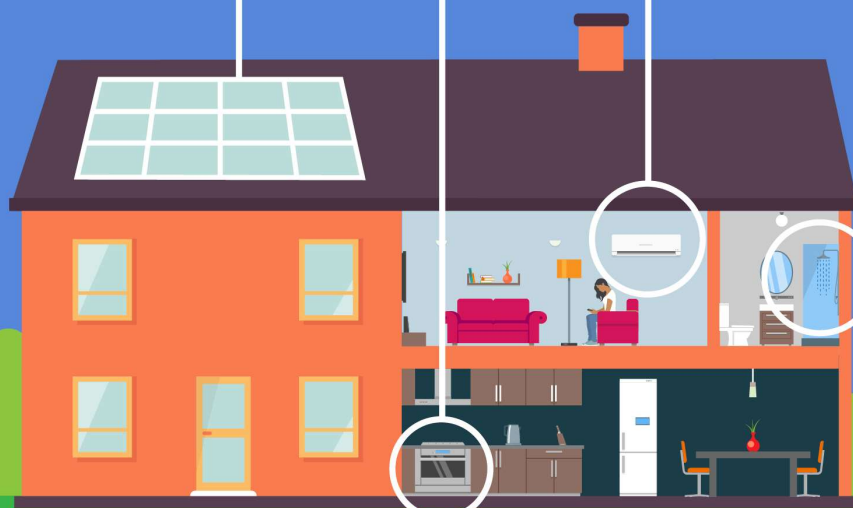
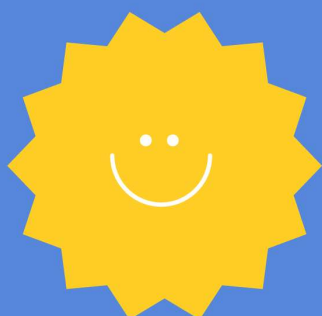




Moreland  
City Council

# Electrify Everything!

## Communications Message Guide for Households



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# Background

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## An Australia powered by safe, clean renewable energy for a bright future.

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Electrification - and Victorians - are key to achieving this goal.

Our households account for 40% of gas use, with gas making up approximately 17% of the state's total greenhouse gas emissions. We use more gas in our homes than cold climates like the UK or Netherlands and we use more gas in our homes than any other Australian state or territory, including Tasmania.

Water heating makes up 24% of total gas household use, with cooking just 2%. This leaves 74% of household gas used in Victoria for space heating.

Given the at-scale opportunity for impact through space heating, this communications guide prioritises heating.

## About this guide

Moreland City Council declared a climate emergency in September 2018. We have committed to urgent action to respond to this emergency.

[Zero Carbon Moreland](#) was co-created by Moreland City Council and the Moreland community. It aims to engage all members of the Moreland community – residents, businesses, schools, local community groups, as well as Council itself – to take action to transition our community to zero carbon. The [Zero Carbon Moreland Framework](#) outlines the steps required to reach this goal. We are currently implementing the first [Five Year Action Plan](#).

As part of the framework, Zero Carbon Moreland will run a public campaign advocating for powering all homes and businesses by electricity. To underpin this campaign, Moreland City Council undertook qualitative research. From the research findings, we wrote this message guide. We hope you find it useful for your campaigns.

## Acknowledgements

This guide is informed by research commissioned by the Zero Carbon Moreland team at Moreland Council and led by Essential Media.

We are grateful for the work done by the [Passing the Message Stick](#) project, [Climate Outreach](#), [ASO Communications](#), [Monash Climate Change Research Communication Hub](#) and [Common Cause Australia](#).

Thank you also to the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA), Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action (WAGA), Brimbank City Council, Darebin City Council and Yarra City Council for their support and input into this guide.

This guide was written by Verity Campbell, strategic communications consultant, and designed and illustrated by Jason Mildren.

**Moreland City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area known as Moreland.**

## The research

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**The research behind this message guide was commissioned by Moreland City Council and led by Essential Media.**

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The objectives of the research were to:

- Explore people's knowledge about residential gas usage
- Understand the language people use around gas
- Test messages and draft narratives
- Explore participants' attitudes towards climate change and how this relates to the campaign objectives

Fifty-eight participants were drawn from Moreland and Melbourne's growth corridors. Two live focus groups (via zoom) and two online focus groups (via text-based discussion board) were conducted in June 2021. Participants were made up of:

- Home upgraders – i.e., owner-occupiers looking to upgrade their kitchen, bathroom or heating installations in the next 24 months; and
- New home buyers – i.e., renters who are looking to buy or build a new house or townhouse in the next 24 months.

## What we learned

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**From the research, we learned a lot about participants' perspectives – much we expected to hear, with some surprises.**

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From the research we discovered that:

- Most participants saw gas as an efficient, reliable and cheap energy source for residential usage.
- The environmental impact of gas was not top-of mind for most participants. Some don't know its impacts and some don't care.
- People had heard about the health risks of gas or were interested enough to hear more.
- They did not agree that electricity is currently cheaper than gas. Some even suspect that the transition to renewables will drive prices up in the short- to mid-term.
- Building electrification is not seen as a key component of a modern, sustainable home. Participants tend to focus on insulation, double-glazed windows and rooftop solar.
- When prompted, participants agree that switching from gas to electrical appliances would be a smart next step for households with solar panels.
- Climate action language is polarising eg, take climate action/climate emergency/reduce emissions.
- Participants generally react better to aspirational messages that show a positive, actionable way to improve outcomes for both households and the planet.
- Home upgrader and people with solar panels are likely to be a key target audience of this campaign.
- Owner-occupiers who are looking to renovate their bathroom, kitchen or heating installations are a lot more receptive to the campaign messages, than renters who are looking to buy.
- Encouraging people who are building and renovating to build for the future, rather than installing appliances that will eventually require retro-fitting, could be a persuasive argument.

Alongside this research, for this message guide we have also learnt from and utilised key Theory of Change resources such as [Climate Outreach's Theory of Change](#) and the [Passing the Message Stick](#) project.

From these findings we recommend that we:

1. **Support the transition.** Share resources that help people install solar, buy electric appliances, access available rebates and learn more about the benefits of electrification.
2. **Be careful with savings-based messaging.** People may dismiss cost-based messages, particularly given their own experiences and the difficulty of making comparisons.
3. **Don't focus on environmental benefit.** It's not a broad lever for behaviour change with the general public.
4. **Do focus on the inevitability of electrification.** Highlight the inevitability and exciting opportunity of going all-electric.
5. **Do talk about health and safety**
6. **Do celebrate renewable energy** which is widely supported.

Also:

***"What You Fight, You Feed. To sustain long-term movements, we must shift from cataloguing what we're resisting to painting a desirable portrait of the world we seek." - ASO Communications***

Another key tactic of this campaign is that we are not fighting gas. The campaign is not mentioning gas, negating the gas industry's point of view, or providing FAQs or education sessions on gas vs electric homes.

Our research showed that participants think gas is "natural" and cheaper: the gas brand is strong and stubborn. Changing this incumbent "story" is difficult and, arguably, not our role. Our objective for this campaign is to "paint a desirable portrait of the world we seek". We aim to focus on the future and sell the benefits and inevitability of electrification.

## Who we aim to reach

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To achieve significant climate action, we need to move beyond the climate-active base and activate the public.

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These campaign materials have been written to resonate with residents in Moreland. Within this larger audience, three subset target audiences have been identified.

This guide doesn't specifically cater for landlords and tenants at this stage, but the language and framing principles could be readily applied. As Solar Victoria's programs launch for these audiences, we will update this guide.

### **General public**

This is Moreland's renters, homeowners, singles, families, couples, young, old – everyone!

The key campaign goals for this audience is to encourage them to switch to electricity when appliances – particularly heating - need upgrading and to consider rooftop solar, highlighting available rebates wherever possible. We want to focus on normative messaging and highlighting locals.

The following three audiences are subsets of General public:

### **Home upgraders**

We aim to reach Moreland owner-occupiers renovating kitchens, bathrooms or heating appliances who are at the cusp of purchasing appliances and energy systems and are already committed to investment. This group is also open to solar power.

### **Existing solar customers**

We aim to reach Moreland owner-occupiers who have installed solar power and would be open to going all-electric. Some solar owners will be climate active, so with this audience we can tap into existing climate-active communications channels and tactics.

### **Low income households**

Another audience is eligible Moreland residents who can access subsidised Home Heating and Cooling Upgrades and solar power installation services. Key messages should focus on any Council and government assistance, to help improve their financial position and home comfort.

# Shaping the message

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From the research and other social science resources, we created message principles.

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The social science evidence base shows that people do not form their attitudes or change behaviours as a result primarily of weighing up expert information and making rational cost-benefit calculations. Instead, they are influenced by stories that ‘feel right’ – narratives that resonate with their values and identity, presented by people they trust, and made acceptable by the social norms around them. – [Climate Outreach: Theory of Change](#)

For this campaign we created three framing principles for crafting narratives that ‘feel right’:

- Lead with shared values
- Name the action people can take
- Show how this helps make a better Moreland

## 1. Lead with shared values

Campaigns that encourage homeowners to go all-electric have typically led with technical, factual and cost-benefit messages such as “make the switch to all-electric” or “save emissions and on bills”. While these messages resonate with a climate-active audience, they can disengage the general public. Research shows that leading with communal values – narratives that resonate with universal values and identity – is a better way to hook in a wider audience.

Shared values shift attention to big-picture, future desired goals such as “creating brighter futures for our kids” – things we can all agree on and work towards. They don’t activate a polarising political frame.

Embrace	Replace
A brighter future for our kids	Take climate action
Clean energy future	Save emissions and on bills
Creating a healthier future	Going off gas
Improving safety for families	Make the switch from gas to electricity
Healthy, green and clean parks, creeks	

## 2. Name the action people can take

People take action when they understand the reasons for doing so, and where these reasons resonate with their concerns – [Climate Outreach: Theory of Change](#)

Our research showed that environmental concerns are not top-of-mind for most Moreland residents. Therefore, actions that enlist environmental concerns – “reduce carbon emissions” or “take climate action” – don’t engage this audience and can even activate a polarising political frame.

The research also demonstrated that people weren’t convinced about the cost benefits of switching to electricity; that they didn’t believe electricity was cheaper or would even be so in the future. Therefore, messages that pitch electricity as a cheaper more comfortable and more convenient solution don’t necessarily work.

Upfront costs to switching are also a barrier for most people – no matter how much we talk about long-term savings. We need to highlight available rebates and initiatives wherever possible.

Embrace	Replace
Improve safety for your family by.. Upgrade to energy efficient.. Keep family warm this winter with.. Warms kids bedrooms...	Reduce carbon emissions Take climate action Switch to clean electricity to help save the planet.

### 3. Show how this helps make a better Moreland

Local messages are more effective than global messages, which is great news for a campaign led by local councils. We have local stories at our fingertips and a mission to build strong and diverse communities.

We also know that enabling communities to feel part of the solution is not only good community service, but a critical climate change response. We can capitalise on the sense of ‘us’ as the ones who make a difference. For this campaign, we are encouraging people to be part of the solution by linking environmental responses to creating leafier neighbourhoods, parks and gardens, and healthier suburbs – non polarising “climate action” per se.

Social norms are a powerful motivator. People’s need to belong can be used to our advantage by focussing on what actions others are taking. Normalising actions through local spokespeople is essential.

Embrace	Replace
Join 8055 other homes in Moreland.. Join the shift to ... Highlight local heroes and spokespeople	Polar bears and other unrelatable stories Help save the planet Australia’s emissions are rising...



## Other Campaign Dos and Don'ts

Further messaging principles including the following:

<b>Dos</b>	
DO be hopeful about the future	Research shows that negative, fear-based messages can encourage feelings of helplessness. Focus on solutions, growth and transition to inspire more people to take action.
DO make it about us	Use 'we', 'us', and 'our' in all messages. This is a shared opportunity and we are all part of the solution.
DO focus on renewable energy	Research shows that "renewable energy" is strongly supported by most Australians. Climate change and environmental messages are polarising for Australians.
DO link electrification with modern, comfortable homes	Our research showed that solar panels, insulation and double glazing are seen key components of modern, sustainable homes, but not building electrification. We want to change this!
DO talk about health & safety	Research participants mentioned human health and safety as drawbacks of gas, so we could talk about the health and safety of electrification/all electric.

<b>Don't</b>	
DON'T talk about gas	In this campaign, we are focussing on the future, ignoring the competition (gas) and campaigning on our own terms.
DON'T ask people to give things up	"Going off gas" didn't resonate as well with the participants as "take advantage of the benefits of electrical". Avoid taking things away from people or asking them to give things up.
DON'T be technical	Using technical terms and statistics disempowers and distances people. Use grade 6 level English.
DON'T talk about reducing emissions	Research shows that talking about the need to reduce emissions can evoke anxiety about people's future quality of life and their financial security. Instead, talk about reducing emissions as a co-benefit of electrification, not a personal responsibility.
DON'T pit renewables against gas	Research showed that although most Australians feel positively about renewable energy, they feel neutral about fossil fuels, and pitting them against each other can activate a political frame that disengages the message.

# Sample facebook posts

## Sample message 1 (general public)



Personalisation

Local impact and social norms

Lead with Shared values

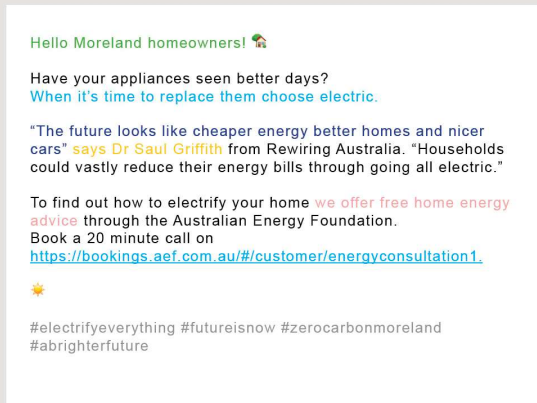
Name the action people can take

Social and local norms

Scarcity incentive

Hopeful about the future  
Focussing on renewables  
No mention of gas  
No mention of reducing emissions  
Not technical  
Highlights rebates

## Sample message 2 (general public)



Personalisation

Name the action people can take

Lead with shared values

Medical Spokesperson for credibility

Highlight pathways

Hopeful about the future  
Focussing on renewables  
No mention of gas  
No mention of reducing emissions  
Not technical

# Sample message 3 (general public)

**Winter version:**  
Feeling the cold? ❄️

Keep warm this winter with efficient air-con heating.

Oak Park electrician Andrew M says: "renewable electricity is the cleanest and cheapest form of energy, so the sooner you can upgrade to efficient air-con heating, the better."

**Summer Version:**  
Feeling the heat? ☀️

Keep cool this summer with electric fans and efficient air-con cooling.

Oak Park electrician Andrew M says: "renewable electricity is the cleanest and cheapest form of energy, so the sooner you can upgrade to efficient air-con heating, the better."

To find out more, we offer free home energy advice through the Australian Energy Foundation. Book a 20 minute call on <https://bookings.aef.com.au/#/customer/energyconsultation1>.

#abrighterfuture #futureready #renewableenergy #electrifyeverything



Personalisation

Local impact and social norms

Name the action people can take

Highlight pathways

Hopeful about the future  
Focussing on renewables  
No mention of gas  
No mention of reducing emissions  
Not technical