

### **Powering Change Campaign** Summary; September 2024

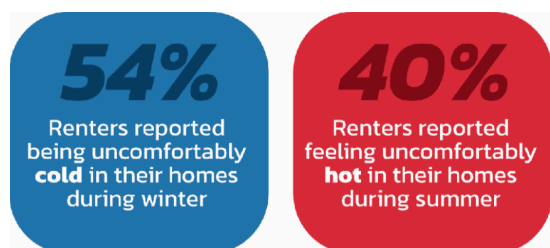
From October 2023 - September 2024 ACF Community Geelong delivered the 'Powering Change' campaign; a community engagement project and study of community perspectives on the energy transition and the challenges that households face in their energy needs.

Project Officer Lachie Chomley was engaged to deliver the project which initially focussed on surveying the local community about their concerns relating to household energy usage (particularly fossil gas) and desires for government support towards electrification and increased energy efficiency in homes. The findings of the survey particularly highlighted the plight of renters who are unable to stay comfortable in their homes during temperature extremes and their hunger to see policy change to support their circumstances.

From these findings a four part series of workshops, 'Energy Efficiency For Renters' was developed to provide immediate support for renters doing it tough, empowering renters with resources and knowledge to address their immediate needs as well as advocate for necessary policy change.

### **Powering Change Survey**

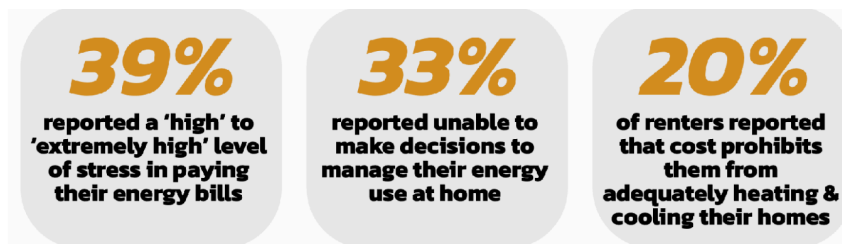
During October and November 2023, 269 surveys were taken at a variety of community events and online from people across the Geelong Region in a variety of living situations (75% homeowners, 20% renters, 2% social housing, 3% other).



The data showed that renters are struggling to remain comfortable in their homes. 54% reported being uncomfortably cold in their homes during winter. One tenant stated that they 'feel like they live in a tent,' due to lack of insulation and air gaps. 40% of renters reported feeling uncomfortably hot in their homes during summer.

The majority of people surveyed are concerned about gas use, with climate pollution and rising gas bills being points of greatest concern.

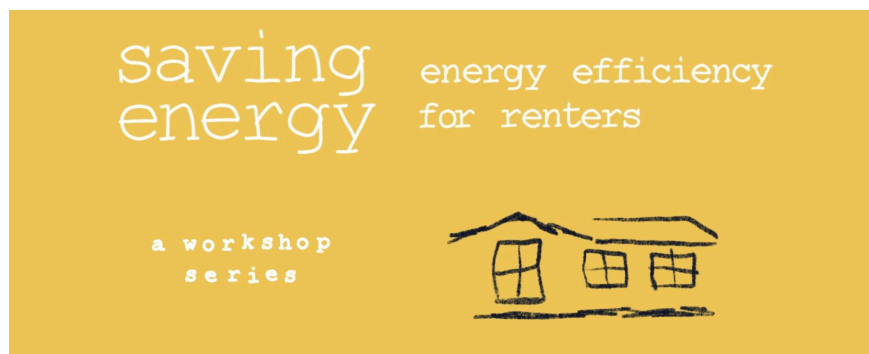
The data also showed that the rising cost of gas and energy bills is having an impact on our community. 39% of people expressed a 'high' to 'extremely high' level of stress in paying their energy bills, while 1 in 5 renters reported that cost prohibits them from adequately heating/cooling their homes. 33% of people indicated they feel unable to make decisions to manage their energy use at home for reasons including: cost, confusion, lack of information and not owning the property.



The data collected during the 'Powering Change,' campaign demonstrates the need for government intervention to support this energy transition, as well as the strong desire from the community for this support. We will advocate for these policy solutions with other member organisations of the Real Deal in Geelong.

To see the full report visit [this link](#).

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### **Saving Energy: Energy Efficiency For Renters**

In response to the findings of the survey a workshop series was developed, promoted and delivered in the Northern Suburbs of Geelong. The workshop covered the following topics;

- Make a Door Snake
- Make a Window Covering
- Dear Landlord; Asking For What You Need
- Greening Your Rental

Though it was challenging to gain interest from community members (even those who participated in the survey) the workshops were fairly well attended and all participants got a lot out of each session.

## ○ MAKE A DOORSNAKE: MANAGING TEMPERATURES AT HOME

This workshop was held at Cloverdale Community Centre. There were 10 people who attended on 21st April from 2-5pm. Participants were given a chance to share about their energy efficiency struggles in rentals. Then got crafty together making a door snake to stop the drafts under doorways in their homes. We discussed how air gaps contribute to increased energy bills, helping participants identify where the air gaps are in their homes and offer practical advice on what can be done (even in rentals) to seal these gaps.



## ○ MAKE A WINDOW COVERING



Also held at Cloverdale Community Centre on 21st July, 'Make a Window Covering' was well attended with 17 people coming through throughout the afternoon. Participants had an opportunity to understand the basics of passive solar design and how they could strategically place window coverings to protect their homes from summer heat and keep the winter warmth in.



Local home-retrofit guru Vicky Grosser was engaged to support people in the design, creation and implementation of their window coverings.

## ○ "DEAR LANDLORD": ASKING FOR WHAT YOU NEED

The third workshop, 'Dear Landlord,' was held at Lab Square Commons on Sunday 4th August. People were offered a chance to share their experiences navigating rental property dilemmas. 15 people attended and some great connections were made.

They looked into how to request specific upgrades from landlords for household energy efficiency then did some learning about what their rights are as renters and what the minimum standards are for renters. They heard from Sal Fisher about how 'The Real Deal' uses peoples stories to advocate for policy reform from local government to support renters rights. Then to wrap things up, heard from local band, 'Seal Prince and the Roof Rats' who performed their song of utter rental frustration 'Dear Landlord.' There was some great feedback from this event. People left with a greater sense of community connection and some steps forward to address their particular rental property concerns.

## ○ GREENING YOUR RENTAL : GROWING PLANTS TO SAVE ENERGY

The fourth and final workshop 'Greening Your Rental' was held at 'The Farm Next Door,' Norlane on 1st September. There were 10 people who came along on a very windy Sunday afternoon, and some great sharing and learning was had.

We looked at what your rights are in the garden as a renter, what you're allowed to grow and where. We looked at the basics of plant growing (how to make a garden bed) as well exploring growing plants for energy efficiency... ie. how to get shade from the summer sun but still let in the winter sun. We also explored different methods of trellising and ways to do it in the rental context.

The afternoon was supported by Shaun McLeod from 'Intuitive Garden Design and Maintenance' who was able to share his gardening knowledge and specifics from his experience gardening in rentals.

Everyone who came along already had significant gardening experience and so there was a great amount of 'cross-pollination' of ideas and inspiration.



### **'Energy efficiency in the Home' LearnLocal Course:**

During 2024 Lachie worked with Jeanette and Liz from Cloverdale Community Centre to explore the possibility of these workshops being turned into an accredited 'LearnLocal' course which could be run at Cloverdale. This would see an on-going impact from the



work that has been created here, though it has yet to be finalised and approved.

### **Workshop series overview:**

The workshop series was very well received by those involved. It was a challenging space to be engaging in as (like we discovered in the survey) lots of renters feel very powerless, stressed and hopeless in their living situations.

It was helpful for people to be able to share their experiences with other community members in the same boat. People really appreciated the effort that went into hosting these events and the work behind the information presented (not to mention the afternoon teas). It was very clear that this kind of grass-roots action within the community is only one small piece of the puzzle for renters seeking security and comfort in their homes. Policy change is urgently needed to support renters to see the changes they need.

### **Powering Change Campaign overview**

The Powering Change survey was a very effective study of community perspectives on the energy transition and the challenges that households face in their energy needs.

It engaged with a diverse community from across Geelong and the Bellarine highlighting the need for government intervention to support this energy transition. It also highlighted the strong desire from the community for these changes. The Powering Change Survey clearly showed the immediate need for support of renters who are highly stressed and struggling to stay comfortable in their homes. The campaign veered in this direction focussing the 'energy efficiency for renters' workshops on those who need the support most. There were lots of benefits for renters in these workshops though it was clear that change is urgently needed on a systemic/policy level to address these issues they are facing.

I'm very glad to have taken on this role as project officer for the Powering Change Campaign. I've gained insight into how advocacy for policy change works and the multitude/complexity of challenges facing our local community. I felt I was able to contribute my gifts in sensitively engaging with survey participants, and the challenging nature of some of their situations. Facilitating the workshops was a joy for me, to see people coming out of their shells in the short time we had together as they connected with each other and sensing their satisfaction and renewed inspiration as they walked out the door. Thanks to ACF Community Geelong for this opportunity to undertake this really important work and I look forward to seeing this work being built upon, by ACF Community Geelong, Real Deal Geelong, Cloverdale Community Centre or any other organisations who are taking this energy transition seriously.