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Call to cut energy bills for people on low incomes while acting on climate change

Community, health and research groups are calling on Energy Ministers to cut energy bills, reduce carbon emissions and create jobs by committing at the COAG Energy Council meeting to implement measures to substantially improve the energy efficiency of millions of existing homes.

Forty organisations have written to energy ministers asking them to not only endorse the work plan on the COAG agenda to progress energy efficiency measures for existing homes, but to also commit to implement the measures quickly, especially for the most vulnerable people in our society.

ACOSS CEO, Dr Cassandra Goldie, said “Millions of people are living in homes that are too cold in winter and too hot in summer and cost a fortune to run; people are sadly dying as a result.

“People on low incomes who spend on average more than 4 times their income on energy bills than high income earners, cannot afford to invest in energy efficiency measures and if they rent they have no choice.

“We absolutely want COAG to endorse the work plan to develop a rating tool for existing homes, national framework for mandated energy efficiency standards for rental properties, and explore funding options for social housing and low income home owners, said Dr Goldie, “but we also want to see a commitment that these measures will be prioritised and not left on a shelf.

“Acting on energy efficiency for people on low income is critical to tackling poverty and inequality as well as providing broader benefits for everyone, including job creation, economic stimulus and reduced carbon emissions.”

National Shelter Executive Officer, Adrian Pisarski, said “Renters, including those living in private and social housing, face the greatest barriers to improving energy efficiency.

“Renters can live in some of the worst housing and have little control over the energy efficiency of their homes. They either go without food and other essentials or they limit energy use to the detriment of their health, in some cases people end up homeless because they prioritise energy bills over rent.

Regionally based community housing provider, Housing Plus CEO David Fisher, said “We’ve seen the real benefits that energy efficiency measures can have on the quality of life of our tenants, especially elderly people, who too often will not turn on their heating or cooling for fear of the costs.

“We and other community housing providers lack necessary support to retrofit existing homes, which is where the need is great.

Brotherhood of St Laurence Executive Director, Conny Lenneberg said, “We’ve found the benefits for low-income households of installing energy efficient appliances like efficient hot water, heating and cooling are almost immediate – lower energy bills, with healthier homes and people. People with chronic health issues and those struggling to heat or cool their homes tend to benefit most from these upgrades.

"We need systemic investment to substantially upgrade homes for all residents on low incomes, whether they live in their own homes, or in social and community housing or rent privately, so that all benefit regardless of their financial circumstances," said Ms Lenneberg.

Modelling for COAG Energy Council also found that if measures proposed in the work plan were introduced by 2022 in all jurisdictions, they could deliver a net present value (NPV) of \$5 billion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 52.7 MtCO₂-e and save 429.3 PJ of energy by 2050.

Renew CEO, Donna Luckman, said "Cutting energy waste by improving the efficiency of our homes is one of the quickest and cheapest ways to reduce carbon emissions that is causing the climate crisis, with households contributing 11% of Australia's emissions.

"More efficient homes will also save energy, reducing the need to invest in new energy generation and improve the reliability of the electricity grid, everyone benefits."

Rob Murray-Leach, Head of Policy for the Energy Efficiency Council, said "Helping households save energy will boost investment and job creation by the private sector. Recent research showed an ambitious energy efficiency strategy would create 120,000 jobs across Australia."

Read the open letter to COAG Energy Ministers [here](#).

Ends.

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