

Action on Climate & Clean, Affordable Energy

This note provides ACT-specific commentary and information on this action area from ACOSS 2019 federal election commitment priorities.

Question: The ACT experiences climate extremes of both heat and cold across most average years. These periods are getting longer, with many people experiencing hardship from energy bills. As a Federal candidate, what are you proposing to do to respond to climate change and ensure a just response?

The facts

- Electricity and gas bills have increased significantly in the ACT – in the past two years (2017 and 2018) we have seen electricity prices increase by 10.6% and 11.2% and gas prices increase by 17.8% and 6.8%.¹
- In 2017-18, across the National Electricity Market, the ACT saw the largest price rises for market contracts for electricity (22.6%) and gas (16.8%).²
- In 2017-18, there were 501 electricity customers and 433 gas customers in the ACT disconnected for non-payment.³

1 ACTCOSS, *ACT Cost of Living Report: Tracking changes in the cost of living for low-income households in the Australian Capital Territory*, ACTCOSS, Canberra, May 2018 & May 2019, <<https://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/advocacy-publications/act-cost-living-report-2019>>.

2 Australian Energy Regulator, *Annual report on compliance and performance of the retail energy market 2017-18*, AER, Melbourne, December 2018, <<https://www.aer.gov.au/retail-markets/performance-reporting/annual-report-on-compliance-and-performance-of-the-retail-energy-market-2017-18>>.

3 *ibid*, pp. 65 & 66.

- 43% of rental properties in the ACT with Energy Efficiency Ratings (EERs) had an EER of 0, compared with only 4% of properties for sale.⁴
- For an average-sized property with an EER of 0, it would cost \$2,800 to produce the same amount of heat that would be free in a property with an EER of 5.⁵

Speaking from experience...

“There’s no heating, no air-conditioning, no clothesline. In winter... I don’t know what to do to keep the cold out.”

— *Trish speaking about the lack of energy efficient private rental in the ACT.*⁶

“Ideally I’d like to live in housing that was soundproofed and insulated – neither of these things apply to where I live now. Some of the social problems are caused by lack of sound proofing. It’s very cold in winter and hot in summer. The heater in the wall is ineffective and I don’t use it. Instead I use some column heaters that I’ve obtained. I actually think this summer has been our worst one.”

— *Freya, a person with a disability, speaking about the lack of heating, cooling and soundproofing in older social housing.*⁷

“It’s so cold that there’s condensation dripping down our windows, there’s mould issues in winter, then in summer it’s hot. There’s no air con.

“The heat in our house is a real issue right now. We don’t get a lot of cross-ventilation even when all the windows are open. It’s not pleasant at all. We notice a lack of sleep building up through the week.

“Even if we invested in an air con, I’m not sure we’d use it. We would be mindful of the electricity costs... the electricity bills are going up anyway, even without excess use.”

— *Pip and David, a working couple with part-time work in the community sector, on cooling costs and renting.*⁸

4 Better Renting, *The energy efficiency of rental properties in the ACT*, Better Renting, Canberra, 2018, <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/betterrenting/pages/42/attachments/original/1523488292/The_energy_efficiency_of_rental_properties_in_the_ACT.pdf?1523488292>.

5 *ibid.*

6 ACTCOSS, *Stories of Home*, ACTCOSS, Canberra, April 2016, <<https://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/advocacy-publications/stories-home>>.

7 *ibid.*

8 *ibid.*

Further reading

- [Factsheet: Energy hardship in the ACT](#), July 2018

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ACTCOSS is committed to reconciliation, acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to elders past and present.

ACTCOSS represents not-for-profit community organisations and advocates for social justice in the ACT.