



Supporting CALD Australians to be empowered energy consumers.



TOOLKIT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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Toolkit of recommendations

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PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES



1

Consider how current narratives produced by energy market stakeholders represent & engage CALD energy consumers.



2

Generate insight regarding the lived experiences and everyday energy narratives of CALD consumers.



3

Co-design recommendations for supporting CALD energy consumers.



PROJECT DESIGN



STAGE 1

Text analysis of
Energy Policy &
Program



STAGE 2

Qualitative
interviews
& video
ethnography
with CALD
energy
consumers



STAGE 3

Co-design
workshop



FINDINGS

The lived experiences of CALD Energy Consumers

Diverse CALD households and energy practices



Conservative approach to energy use

“ I find it very strange that my kids were brought up here and with this generation where it’s all about climate change, they don’t see it. And I’m trying to instil that you’ve got to recycle, you’ve got to recycle, you’ve got to stop wasting water. So, trying to remind them all the time. And I did question that of late. Why is it that I’m in an older generation and I’m more conscious than a younger generation that happens to be right now it’s all about climate change?

Lan, 49-year-old female, Vietnamese



Energy use that supports traditional cultural practices

“ My mom always says, “Oh, you need to learn (to cook these foods) because if I’m not here...” and I said “Stop talking that way. I don’t want you to talk that way.” She goes, “But it’s the truth. And if I don’t do this for you guys, your kids can’t have these meals. Their kid’s kids won’t even be eating these meals.” And she’s absolutely right about that. And it’ll be a shame. It’s just like our culture, it’s fading away. Because if we don’t teach our children and others from our community, if they don’t teach our children because we don’t even have our country of our own, it makes it even extra hard to know who we are.

Hadiya, 45-year-old female, Armenian



Mix and diversity of cultures in the same household

“ At my home, we prefer to eat at home more than outside. Yeah, that why I have to cook every day, two-time, three time, like that. I cook traditional Thai food, and for my husband because we from different country, my husband Pakistani, then I have to make Pakistani food for him. I have to make roti. I have to make like a curry.

32-year-old Porntip, female, Thai



Bill shock

“I think it’s probably the same, like a lot of people especially culturally, myself definitely, we get the bill shock and we’re like, “Oh, why is it so much?” But then you need to think about actually what needs to be done, I guess. And then, like I said, the practice of talking about the dishwasher, or the dryer, and doing less of that. Or using less of the air con, and just sacrificing things to ensure that you don’t get that bill shock.”

Ahn, 36-year-old male, Vietnamese



High energy bills

“My bill was always zero. And I also had credit for probably more than a year. I went overseas late last year. I came back, all of a sudden, I’ve been paying huge bills and I just don’t understand when nothing much has changed in my house. So, until the energy providers tell us how the meter is read and how consumers can assess their meters and read them intelligently to make sure that they are consuming more or not, I don’t know. Nothing has changed. But within a period of being overseas and coming back, from surplus to huge bills for the past three or four months. And I just don’t understand why that should be the case.”

Harouna, 62-year-old, Ghanaian



Reduced comfort

“One of the things that we do is just increase what we wear. So, looking at my wife, sometimes has to have her gloves on at night. So, when she goes to bed, she puts gloves on, I can’t do it. So, it’s all through clothing really. I wear a hat or a little beanie to keep my head warm and obviously, we increase what we wear on a jumper is a must and no shorts, and long night gear, all that. So, the only way we’ve been able to handle it is through increasing our clothing and obviously, no doors open or anything like that. So yeah, that’s the only option we have.”

Hamed, 49-year-old male, Turkish



Using energy to foster a sense of security

“I don’t know the good old thing that we have in Asian cultures when we leave the household, we like to leave the lights on, leave the TV on just to avoid robberies. But that’s probably a well-known thing, their lights are on. Yeah, the TV’s on. Like something’s definitely on. They’re not aware of the electricity usage but that’s a common thing a lot of Asian people do, I guess. Even like using the radio, for example, they would leave that on.”

Hà, 36-year-old male, Dinka (Sudanese)



Family practices to decrease energy consumption

“Because when I turn on (RCAC) for bedroom is mean all the room, all the bedroom, because we have four bedrooms. But we live in only one bedroom, that why is not necessary.”

Pornpip, 32-year-old, female, Thai

Lack of energy literacy and understanding of the energy market



Lack of energy literacy

“like if I’m coming from my family or relatives, they don’t care, they don’t understand. So, they’re high users. They would have no idea. If you asked them, like to look at something, at a bill, or come to electricity, no idea.

Hà, 36-year-old male, Vietnamese



Lack of digital literacy

“My auntie, for example. As far as the electricity, power, any energy, or anything for that matter, goes, what we tell her is her... reference. So, they don’t really use iPads, they don’t use internet. They will see on TV, most of the time they will not understand what is actually saying into the deal.”

Azad, 36-year-old male, Indian



Lack of understanding about energy bills.

“People also don’t understand much about their energy bill itself, the daily supply charge, or the usage charge. So, they know that they’re getting a bill of \$400, \$500, but they don’t exactly know how it’s been calculated. So, some companies might have a higher supply charge and a lower usage rate.

Junaid, male, Indian, 36



Problems with energy meter readings due to lack of access or estimations

“So if you come to a new complex, the meter might be somewhere whereby you don’t access them. So, the house is okay, you find your meter at the house just around the front somewhere there. You have access to it. But at the complex, people that renting at the complex, they have no access. You move in until you move out. So, few years later on, you never seen where the meter is. And that alone, with somebody that is new in the country or even if you have been here for some time, you have no control of what you consume because you don’t know where it’s located.

Cali, 36-year-old male, Sudanese

“Sometimes they just guess because when they read your meter last year June, they believe that this year June probably the same or a bit more. They would just take one, the June meter they read two years ago and add maybe 10%. When I heard of that, I was really, really annoyed. Well, that was why probably our meter bills are always going up. They don’t come in; they just stay there. Stay in the offices and then guess. Possibly because two years ago, you were on this particular reading so they will probably add 10% to it and that’s it.

Harouna, 62-year-old male, Ghanaian

FINDINGS

The lived experiences of CALD Energy Consumers



Difficulties with energy provider comparison websites

“I don’t think an energy company should be the company that is trying to help us with saving energy because that’s counter intuitive. They definitely want us to use more energy so they can make more profits.

Ahn, 38-year-old male, Vietnamese



Monitoring the energy use of different appliances

“Maybe we could hook up an energy monitor to an app and then we download the apps on our phone. And then we can target our energy usage in real time. And most importantly, we would want to have an in-built multilingual option. That means you can change the language to whatever your native language is or your first language, so that even if your first language is not English, you still understand what the purpose of the app is, you know how to navigate it. And I think that’s the most important thing in order to reach out to as many communities as possible.

Xue, 26-year-old female, Singaporean

FINDINGS

The lived experiences of CALD Energy Consumers



The importance of social support



The extended family and intergenerational households

“ I live with my wife and three children, plus my son’s wife and their three children. They recently moved to join us because of all these economic hardships, they wanted to save some money, so they had to move back home.

Harouna, 62-year-old male, Ghanaian



Community support

“ If you go to, like there’s a Turkish club that all the people go to, so if those people will give it (information) to them, they will know. But otherwise, they don’t know how to access, they don’t know what exists. They don’t know anything, really. So, I mean, yeah, it’s great the government puts out the different languages, but I don’t know how much they’re accessed.

Hamed, 49-year-old male, Turkish



Scepticism about energy policy and the transition to clean energy

“ What I realized with my community when I was in Sydney, so it’s more word of mouth or experiences of other people. But instead of actually doing your own research like you just told me. I’ve never crossed my mind to even search, or that was even possible. It’s more of word of mouth of experience of a relative or a friend that you know, and how they went with it.

Abeno, 27-year-old female, Sudanese

Transitioning to sustainable energy



Minimizing energy use

“my mom always washes her clothes by hands, all the time, wherever possible. And I said, “Mom, stop doing it because it’s a lot of effort.” But somehow, I don’t know why... There’s a washing machine there, but she will wash loads of buckets of clothes by hand.

Lan, 49-year-old female, Vietnamese



Multiple fridges, and older appliances

“Fridge, we have two fridges, so we spend energy... I think fridge not more like the central heating and the hot water, but we spend two fridge we have. We can’t one fridge because we have more vegetables, more fruit every day, more meat, so I can’t depend to one fridge. I have two.

Kamal, 60-year-old male, Syrian



Lack of engagement with environmental responsibility

“I guess speaking from my own family, I think we do not take any responsibility in finding the steps to sort of decarbonize our energy. Because number one, probably we’re not aware of the fact that we are actually able to take steps to decarbonize our source of energy that’s powering this house. And number two is truth be told, I don’t think we have really considered or thought about it at all.

Yu, 26-year-old male, Singaporean



Frustrations about how to plan for a sustainable future

“Well, parents don’t have it (Solar PV) and even my siblings, they don’t have it. But my dad’s... One of his close mates and he said, “We’ve put it and we’re not even happy with it. I feel like as if we’re using even much more now.” So, I don’t know how he could be using much more. It doesn’t make sense to me. And I’ve heard through a few friends, they said, “We haven’t seen the benefit from it.

Hadiya, 45-year-old female, Armenian



Feelings of empowerment and disempowerment



Low income

“the other people in our culture depends on Centrelink, it’s so hard to them to spend more electricity. Because then 600 per every three months, it’s so expensive. So expensive for them.

Kamal, 60-year-old male, Syrian



Lack of multi-lingual information

“It is helpful if it’s in different languages as well, because I think there’s some groups where there’s still a lot of people who don’t speak English much, so it’ll be good for them if they’re things available in different languages, people actually explaining in different language as well as have printouts in different languages, explaining them all the benefits, have them in the library maybe too because a lot of people come to the library as well to just those read their own languages”.

Hayida, 45-year-old female, Armenian



Lack of agency

“When you call real estate, they say “No, we don’t know it (location of electricity meter). Call your energy provider.” When you call them, they put you back to real estate. You just get lost with the wind. And then eventually you just give up”.

Cali, 36-year-old male, Sudanese



Australian energy market narratives don’t represent or engage CALD energy consumers.

“I think they need maybe a culturally appropriate... I don’t know. There’s the wider Australian community or society or whatever, but then they need to keep in mind there’s also different people in the wider Australia that are migrants, and don’t even know... Let’s say coming from Africa, people are used to generators. You know what I mean? And you pay for your generator, they don’t know that you pay for your bills for the electricity and stuff like that. So, if there was some sort of a culturally appropriate information session for newly arrivals, or for migrants to understand how energy works and for families to understand how energy works. And to know exactly what provider will be best for your financial situation as well. It will be really beneficial.

Abeno, 27-year-old female, Vietnamese



Access to monitoring & control over energy consumption

“I feel that’s difficult to be a responsible energy consumer mainly because one of the key areas is I can’t keep track of what energy is being used within the household, because I don’t have something that monitors it that I can look at real time. I find that if I have that feature it might make it a bit easier.

Ahn, 38-year-old male, Vietnamese

FINDINGS

The lived experiences of CALD Energy Consumers



Issues with rental housing

“Maybe some owners put something over the house and get power from the sun (solar PV). This... I like that because why you spend more money for electricity, why? We can change this for another things, but not me because I just rent the house.

Cali, 36-year-old male, Sudanese



Lack of trust in the energy market and towards energy stakeholders

“I had a friend of mine a few years ago, not long before Covid. The usage was way high with energy before, two couple and then one child was over 1000 every time, every three months. They struggled to find out why. After a long fight with the energy provider, this and then nothing came. Finally, they sent someone and then they said, “Your meter is an old meter. It’s using a lot of energy.” That was it. There was no plan who was going to handle it, either the owner or them so that was it.

Cali, 36-year-old male, Sudanese



Poor Retailer Behaviour

“Until now, I’m still looking and searching information about this thing (Solar PV). But I think one month ago, I had become to know if, for the consumer, because my bill is lower than 300, then I could not get any benefit if I want to install the solar panel for my home. Then I surprised because then someone say, “If you want to install the solar panel and get some rebate from the government like that, and you should try to use more energy.

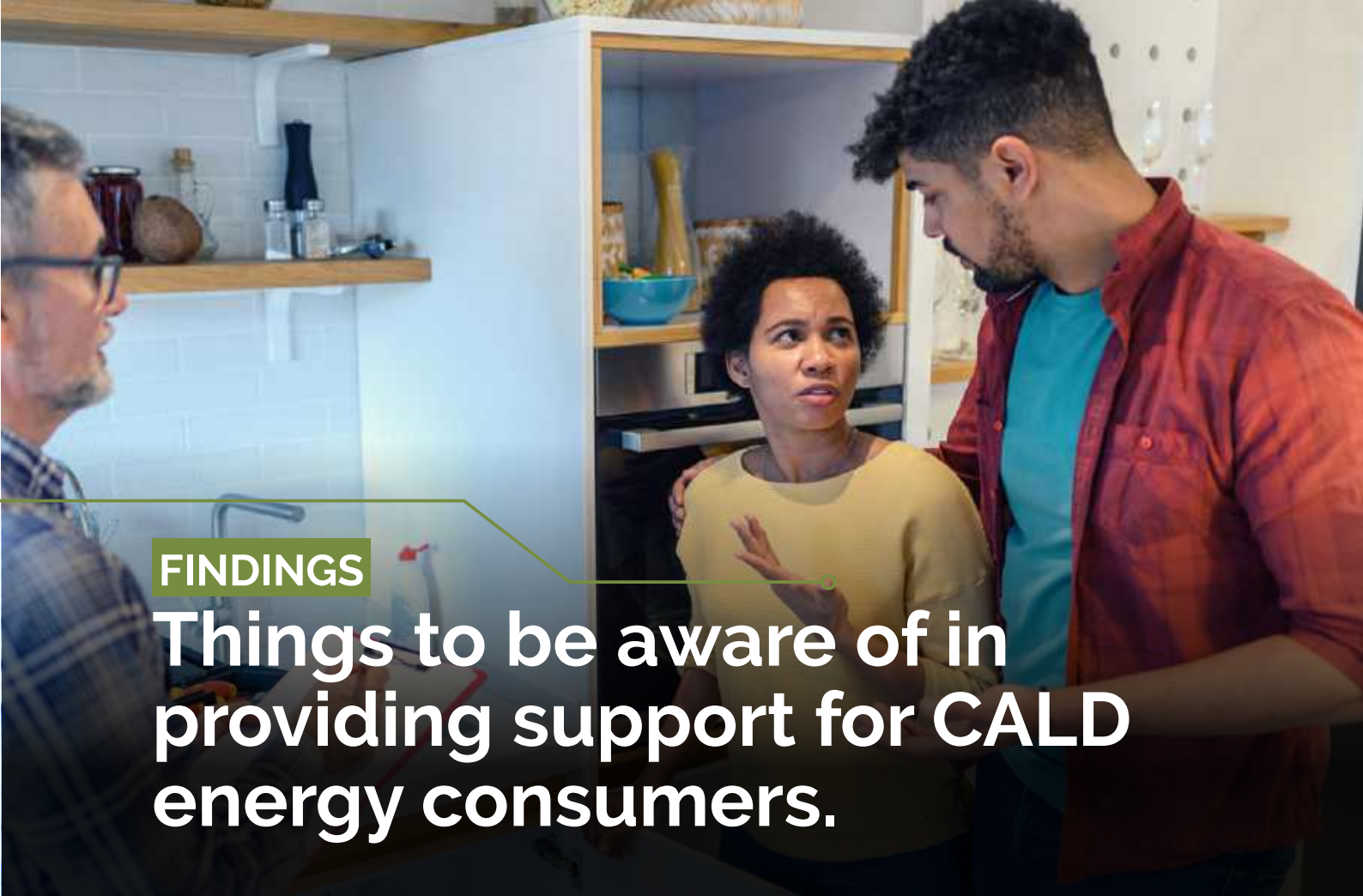
Porntip, 32-year-old female, Thai



Lack of engagement with CALD communities

“I think just if you have information, to make information more known and accessible. So, they don’t have to wait to get a large bill that they can’t afford, for them to end up knowing this information before, so prevented before. Even if they liaise with migrant resource centres because every council has a migrant resource centre and are connected with community associations. So, just for them, if they can’t reach the people directly, they use services like migrant resource centres, community organizations associations, to get your information aware.

Abeno, 27-year-old female, Vietnamese



FINDINGS

Things to be aware of in providing support for CALD energy consumers.



Adopt an ethics of care perspective

“We need to be happy after the war in my country. So, everything easy, we like people, we like to meet people in our house and don't take care for electricity, we care just for everyone be happy.

Kamal, 60-year-old male, Syrian



Don't exacerbate the situation

“And if they estimate, let's say, about \$1,000 and the budget for that house sometime could not be within that three month, then they'll be threatened that your energy will be cut. And it happened sometime, some of the energy providers just came and just cut it. And then the family will be left with nothing but to run around to go to the services for them to support them”.

Cali, 36-year-old male, Sudanese



Language, framing & messaging

“I just think maybe use those community events to kind of explain people more about what they can do to save energy, what are the different options available, educate them on how to better save energy, electricity, and that stuff, and just for them to providing more options to people really. I don't think with the marketing that they're doing currently, I'm not sure if it's reaching everyone. They probably have to do more to meet them personally and explain it to them. I think that will work much better.

Azad, 36-year-old male, Indian



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION

Develop representative energy narratives.

Aim and rationale

Appropriate framing in energy market literature is essential to ensure engagement with CALD communities and that can assist with the transition to sustainable energy futures.

Features and characteristics of the recommendation

Use effective storytelling to communicate with CALD energy consumers. Integrate the four important key elements:

1. Use identifiable characters: Share stories that are culturally competent, that feature people identifiable with CALD community members, are in-language, reflect the everyday lived experiences of energy use of CALD people.
2. Feature an imaginable plot: role model CALD energy consumers who have received support and benefitted from this – and/or are successfully managing their energy use efficiently and sustainably, while also supporting their comfort, health, safety, and well-being.
3. Verisimilitude (believability): Stories should reflect everyday energy experiences, frustrations, tensions, and challenges between managing energy costs and managing comfort.
4. Situated knowledge: stories should depict CALD consumers in their own homes and in the context of their communities.

Use an intersectional approach.

Acknowledge how factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, and (dis)ability as well as complex experiences and past histories intersect creating privilege and oppression and can influence current behaviours. Adopt an attitude that is respectful and non-judgemental and avoid stigma or judging people's actions. Instead create a sense of safety and reassurance that it is okay to talk things through.

Use sensitive and approachable language.

Avoid referring to people as being at fault for struggling to manage their energy use or experiencing vulnerability to or entering energy hardship. Instead, relate to them as a person who happens to be experiencing issues or difficulties, or who may benefit from some support. Avoid calling people vulnerable – better to say that someone may be experiencing vulnerabilities.

Listening is key.

Make people feel heard and then act in support.

Reassurance

Assure customers that your organisation is here to help not to judge, punish or compound the issue.

Understand the context.

Check with customers about other complex issues (e.g., language barriers, cultural assimilation, mental health, financial stress) that may coincide with issues in managing their energy use and refer for appropriate wraparound support.

Acknowledge intersectionalities.

Customers' experiences may be shaped by intersections of gender, class, race, (dis)ability etc. These factors should be acknowledged in communication. Consider in-language communications for people from CALD backgrounds and employing more people from CALD communities in Australia in your organization.

Timing

Within the next 1-2 years.

Resources required

Multi-lingual information & staff, cultural competency training

Target Segment(s)

Multiple cultural groups, workplace training

Value benefit

Energy market stakeholders can more proactively engage and support CALD customers experiencing energy related harm.

“ I live with my Portuguese husband and 2 children. I am of Thai background. I feel it a bit difficult to be a responsible energy consumer because I have never heard about this thing before join the participant.

Porntip, 32-year-old female, Thai, Co-design workshop participant



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION

Community engagement & partnerships.

Aim and rationale

To assist CALD energy consumers to access information that can support energy efficiency and enable the transition to a sustainable energy future. CALD communities have a mistrust of energy providers that can be remedied by developing outreach programs that engage with groups and agencies in the community.

Features and characteristics of the recommendation

CALD communities need access to information that is tailored for their needs. This means that they are better able to amend their practices to reduce their energy bills without sacrificing comfort. Because of the strong reliance on community relations, service providers need to engage with CALD communities on a personal level. This may involve direct engagement with community leaders (churches, mosques, schools etc.) to develop pathways to more effective communication channels.

Timing

As soon as possible and ongoing.

Resources required

Multilingual information, plain language information in a variety of formats e.g., printed brochures, videos, video books, audio etc., information about energy efficiency, appliances and star ratings, support, and subsidies available. Information on the benefits of solar PV and battery storage options. Independent information about retailer services and suppliers (e.g., Australian owned, source of energy). Targeted social marketing behaviour change programs for CALD consumers. Training programs for CALD community leaders.

Target Segment(s)

Leaders and mentors in CALD communities, community groups and events

Value benefit

Funding, establishment, and maintenance of partnerships with key stakeholders and service providers, ongoing partnership workshops/ meetings. This study has identified some connections that can possibly be expanded in the future.

“ I think the other things they could do is send people out to inspect people’s houses who might be interested because one of the things is my parents who aren’t that great in English, they’re not going to know anything about energy or anything like that. I would like if someone who’s really knowledgeable about energy and how to save energy could be sent out to my parents’ house to have a look and inspect, “You are doing this, you could potentially save if you switch to this appliance or that appliance or something like that.” And someone who’s multilingual. Again, because I would think that they’re an expert in it and that would definitely at least put them in the right direction.

Ahn, 38-year-old male, Vietnamese, Co-design workshop participant





PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION

Energy billing, monitoring & tracking.

Aim and rationale

CALD consumers need to better understand their energy consumption patterns and how their energy costs are calculated. Billing information needs to be presented in a form that promotes greater understanding of how energy is used, how to achieve energy efficiency and reduce energy costs. Options for monitoring and tracking energy usage empower CALD energy consumers.

Features and characteristics of the recommendation

Energy bills need to provide more information in plain language and rely less on less technical information. Visual aids such as graphs or charts can convey information more simply and dollar values are more easily understood than Kilowatt hours. Bills should include categories of energy usage (e.g., hot water, lighting etc.) so that energy consumers can understand which household practices consume more, or less energy. Bills should be calculated as actual rather than estimated costs and CALD customers who live in rental housing should be given access to their energy meters. More options for monitoring and tracking energy use should be provided (e.g., in the form of apps that allow connection to energy meters, or in home devices.)

Timing

As soon as possible and ongoing.

Resources required

Review of billing calculations and presentation. Investigate options for developing relations with rental bodies to provide access to energy customers. Development of options that allow energy monitoring and tracking.

Target Segment(s)

Energy providers, real estate organisations, community groups.

Value benefit

A lack of understanding of how bills are calculated leads to CALD disengagement with energy providers and limits their potential to manage their energy usage in a responsible way.

“ Everything else is going online so it should be the meter reading connected to the internet and then shared with users through an app or something like that. I don't think that should be too difficult. I totally support that because awareness makes you start to control what you're using. If you don't know, you just continue your track of how you are using energy.

Oni, 42-year-old male, South African, Co-design workshop participant

“ From the various energy providers side, in order to be more transparent to us, they could simply create a wide range of resources like infographics or very short informative videos that could simply inform us on how they actually calculate the charges and how we could measure our own electricity consumption rates.

Ahn, 38-year-old male, Vietnamese, Co-design workshop participant



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION

Familiarization and targeting of energy policy & programs.



Aim and rationale

To assist CALD energy consumers to understand the direction of government energy policies. To enable participation in the transition to sustainable energy futures as CALD energy consumers move from rental to privately owned properties. Energy Policy should be developed in consultation with CALD communities to ensure inclusion. Greater knowledge of Energy programs and policies need to be targeted to CALD consumers.



Features and characteristics of the recommendation

Provide plain language information about energy policies and strategies, subsidies, rebates, or schemes which support a sustainable energy transition. Familiarize CALD customers through relevant support services and pathways (e.g., migrant resource centres, churches, mosques). And through energy social marketing programmes for CALD communities that go beyond basic demographics such as age or gender but reflect different lifestyle and cultural practices.

Timing

As soon as possible and should be maintained ongoing once developed.

Resources required

Multilingual information in a range of formats. Aligned promotional material that can support energy efficiency (e.g., home insulation schemes, solar heat pump hot water systems, energy efficient lighting).

Target Segment(s)

CALD energy customers.

Value benefit

Programs to encourage energy efficiency will enable CALD communities to better understand how to manage their energy consumption. More awareness of the support and benefits of renewable energy options will encourage greater uptake and reduce energy consumption costs. Improving home energy efficiency through home insulation can reduce energy costs and improve comfort levels.

“ We were saying that if we knew that we could be subsidized to do anything, I think we would be most inclined to... We would want to have government subsidies that help us install energy saving infrastructure or even maybe receiving subsidies to install solar panels, for example.

Ahn, 38-year-old male, Vietnamese, Co-design workshop participant



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION

Social responsibility & cultural competency.



Aim and rationale

It is important for energy market stakeholders to develop their social responsibility & cultural competency to support CALD consumers. This would involve training staff and adopting a whole-of-organisation approach, regarding the nature, complexities and characteristics of energy harm and CALD customers who may be experiencing it. We recommend this to familiarise & upskill energy provider staff, help identify customers experiencing energy hardship & intervene, & enable a whole of organisation approach to tackling the issue.



Features and characteristics of the recommendation

Training to understand the needs of CALD community, staff who are from multicultural backgrounds. Respectful and appropriate communication available in a range of languages. More detailed information about billing calculations and energy costs to be provided by an independent source. More transparency of energy providers credentials and ownership, energy sources, and green energy uptake. Provision of ongoing support for CALD customers that purchase and install energy efficient devices, solar PV, battery storage, or car charging stations.

Timing

As soon as possible and every 1-2 years after.

Resources required

Facilitated trainers drawing on stakeholder partnerships, funding to pay for training resources (e.g., information and activity packs), budget for staff hours spent on training.

Target Segment(s)

All energy market stakeholder's staff.

Value benefit

Improved customer care provision, ethical approach to energy harm reduction. Improved reputation and credibility for energy market stakeholders, improved outcomes for CALD energy customers in terms of lower energy bills and improved capacity to participate in transition to sustainable energy futures.

“ Sometimes they just guess because when they read your meter last year June, they believe that this year June probably the same or a bit more. They would just take one, the June meter they read two years ago and add maybe 10%. It doesn't really...When I heard of that, I was really, really annoyed. Well, that was why probably our meter bills are always going up. They don't come in; they just stay there. Stay in the offices and then guess. Possibly because two years ago, you were on this particular reading so they will probably add 10% to it and that's it.

Harouna, 62-year-old male, Ghanaian, Co-design workshop participant





PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION

Social Marketing.



Aim and rationale

To achieve behavioural change through targeted social marketing programmes with CALD energy customers that feature strategies, tools, and options for energy efficiency. needs to be culturally appropriate.



Features and characteristics of the recommendation

Social marketing is a systematic and multi-level approach to behaviour change. The program should involve: (1) promotion and communication campaigns, (2) product and service development, (3) advocacy and policy change.

Timing

1-2 years.

Resources required

Funding, commissioning of social marketers.

Target Segment(s)

All customers, the general CALD community.

Value benefit

Increase energy efficient behaviours, save CALD customers money on their bills, improve energy well-being, raise energy providers' profile as active in the energy support and customer hardship space, improved brand value, build ethical and social responsibility reputation, raise awareness, and destigmatize energy hardship, improve uptake of energy support provision, improve knowledge of how to transition to sustainable energy future, support and reinforce all our other recommendations.

“ I want to compare more; I need more information... I want to save money for my pocket, but for the solar panel, this is another choice for me to use the energy in the future and to save my budget. Why should I use more to get the benefit because then who will guarantee after I consume more that I will get this thing? No one guarantee and for the quality because they say, “Oh, be careful. They have so many quality in the market. Some solar panel maybe they keep in the stock for many years and maybe they take from the old stock, install for you, then how will you know?”

Portnip, 32-year-old female, Thai, Co-design workshop participant

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