CASE STUDY 1

Whipper Snapper

Perth, WA

Whipper Snapper is a distillery in Western Australia. Established in 2014 by Alasdair Malloch and Jimmy McKeown, the business specialises in making corn whiskey. They also produce other spirits in smaller quantities, including rum and moonshine. Whipper Snapper currently operates out of a rented space in East Perth.

The business incurs annual energy costs of approximately $11,300 for gas and $11,000 for electricity.

Gas is used to generate steam to power distilling equipment such as the masher, the boiler, and the still, with all of Whipper Snapper's products produced on-site.

Electricity is primarily to power the attached tasting room and coffee bar. Approximately 3 years ago, Whipper Snapper installed a 10kW solar system, which has reduced the power bill, particularly given the business does not operate at night.

In installing the solar panels, Jimmy noted that the space they operate out of has an asbestos roof. The roof developed a small leak just over three years ago, prompting the landlord to convert the relevant section of the roof to tin. Whipper Snapper then covered this section of roof with solar panels — however, noted that they would be unable to increase the number of solar panels on their roof without the rest of the roof being converted, as installers do not want to deal with asbestos.

Jimmy stated that they had not considered electrification. While the business has considered and shifted to more sustainable practices in the back of house, changing power supply from gas has thus far not been a consideration. This was partially driven by the capital investment already made in the steam-powered appliances, and the relative safety of these appliances. Jimmy also noted that gas is cheaper and more efficient than electricity in powering the relevant heating processes. However, Jimmy noted that moving towards electric distilling equipment would likely have a benefit in reducing costs associated with maintenance.

HOW GAS IS USED

Whipper Snapper has a gas account and uses gas to generate steam for distilling equipment.

BARRIERS TO ELECTRIFICATION

Lack of motivation – perceived safety benefit of using existing appliances.
Lack of opportunity – lack of access to capital funds.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS

Financial support.
Information on the comparative safety of electric versus gas equipment.

CASE STUDY 2

Advisory firm electrification in a co-working space

Melbourne, Vic

We interviewed a small business in Melbourne that prefers to remain confidential. For the purposes of this case study, we will refer to them as the advisory firm.

The advisory firm, which provides research and advisory services to investors in the financial sector, was established by 3 late-Millennial employees following the COVID lockdowns in Melbourne. They have since grown to 10 employees.

The advisory firm has hybrid working arrangements with the employees working from home most of the week and come together one day a week in a shared workspace. The shared workspace provides them with the facilities required on a flexible basis – they have not entered into a subscription or long-term rental agreement. Rather, they pay for the services they require, as they need them.

When looking for a shared workspace, location was the main factor. They have strong environmental values so wanted to find a shared workspace that was easily accessible for their employees by public transport. The secondary factors considered to find a suitable workspace were that it had to have the facilities they needed and the "vibe" that was consistent with their generation. The workspace they use provides the options of shared desks, private offices, meeting spaces, kitchen facilities and technology, including internet access, videoconferencing facilities and printing, as well as end of day facilities for those that run or cycle to work.

The building in which the shared workspace is located has a gas boiler for space and water heating (and uses electricity for the appliances in the kitchen). The energy costs are included in the rates that are paid for accessing the workspace. As a result, the advisory firm has no energy bills but also has no control over the form of space and water heating that is used in the building. If they wished to electrify their energy use, their only option would be to relocate to a workspace that does not use gas.

HOW GAS IS USED

Does not have a gas account.
Use gas-fired water and space heating supplied by a common gas boiler for the building.

BARRIERS TO ELECTRIFICATION

Lack of opportunity – no scope to make a decision.
The advisory firm has no ability to make the decision to electrify while they continue to use their current co-working space as they have no control over the form of space and water heating.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS

The advisory firm would need to relocate to a different co-working space if they wanted space and water heating from an electrical source.
Alternatively, the owner of the co-working space could be required to electrify their gas use.

CASE STUDY 3

Mowbray Place Early Learning Centre

Sydney, NSW

Mowbray Place Early Learning Centre (the Centre) is a family-owned business located in Willoughby on Sydney's Lower North Shore. Angela Mellino has operated the centre since 2010, providing care for children aged 0-6 years.

The Centre operates Monday through Friday (7:45am-5:45pm) and serves 39 children across three age-specific groups: Nursery (0-2 years), Toddler (2-3.5 years), and Preschool (3.5-6 years). Each group has dedicated spaces, and all meals — including morning and afternoon teas and hot lunches — are prepared on-site by a trained cook using gas cooking equipment. The Centre employs 13 staff members.

The Centre occupies the ground floor of a two-level mixed-use property owned by Angela and her husband. Their daughter resides in a three-bedroom apartment on the upper level.

There is a single gas account for the building and split electricity accounts for the Centre (a business account) and the residence (a residential account). Gas supplied through the mains gas system is used for water heating and cooking. Angela installed solar panels a few months ago after receiving repeated cold calls marketing the benefits of solar systems and the rebates offered through the Commonwealth Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme. A 6 kW system was installed for the private residence and a 19 kW system was installed for the Centre (which consumes electricity primarily during daylight hour) at a cost of around $10,000. Though she hasn't received a post-installation electricity bill, Angela anticipates a 4-5 year payback period on the solar system.

All light fittings in the building were also replaced for more energy efficient lights through the NSW Energy Savings Scheme a few years ago.

Prior to the installation of the solar panels the electricity bill for the Centre was around $820 per quarter (with slightly lower bills in spring and autumn). The joint gas account for the building (including both the Centre and the private residence) is around $340 per quarter and remains relatively constant over the year.

Despite awareness of electrification trends (particularly Willoughby Council's consideration of banning new gas connections), Angela hasn't seriously contemplated transitioning the Centre away from gas. She strongly prefers gas for cooking and believes it provides faster, more efficient water heating. Angela anticipates resistance from her cook regarding adapting to induction cooking methods and modifying established food preparation processes.

Given these preferences, Angela has not researched the costs associated with converting the Centre's gas appliances and equipment to electric alternatives.

HOW GAS IS USED

Single gas account for the business and a residence. Use gas for water heating and non-commercial cooking.

BARRIERS TO ELECTRIFICATION

Lack of motivation – personal preferences.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS

Information / advice on the benefits of electrification.

CASE STUDY 4

Champi restaurant

Canberra, ACT

Champi Restaurant, established by Aiden and Bianca in Kingston, Canberra in March 2022, serves Southeast Asian cuisine inspired by Aiden's grandmother's recipes from Champi, a province in the Southwest of Laos near the borders of Thailand and Cambodia. The restaurant employs 10-15 staff and specialises in wok-fried dishes.

They currently rent space in a 40-year-old building and are operating at capacity. Around 12–18 months ago, they began discussions with a developer about relocating to a new site 5 km away in the commercial district, set to open in February 2026. Six months ago, they learned from the builder that the new premises would not have a gas connection.

Without gas, they will need to adapt their cooking methods and the menu. Fortunately, the long lead time has allowed them to come to terms with the required changes and begin planning. While they acknowledge that people (including their team) often resist change, they are committed to bringing their staff along on the journey.

The biggest challenge for Aiden and Bianca is replicating the "firey" flavour traditionally achieved through high-heat wok cooking. They plan to install a charcoal grill, returning to how food was originally cooked in Champi before gas woks became standard for speed. This transition requires considering charcoal storage, higher fuel costs, and the fact that charcoal grills cannot be turned off like gas or electric alternatives. Additionally, the food will taste different, so their customers will also need to adapt.

They have researched what is needed to set up a new kitchen and the costs. This research has proven difficult due to limited examples of commercial all-electric kitchens in Canberra. Without local showrooms for commercial electric appliances, they have relied on big-city builders and video demonstrations for information.

On the basis of current cost estimates, they expect the cost to set up a new electric kitchen will be significantly higher. While a gas kitchen setup would cost approximately $50,000, the electric alternative costs around $100,000, including expensive exhaust systems and higher labour costs due to tradespeople's unfamiliarity with the equipment.

Currently, the restaurant spends about $10,000 per year on gas and $15,000 on electricity (equating to roughly 35MWh of electricity annually). After relocating, they anticipate their electricity bill will rise to at least $37,500 per year, or approximately 90 MWh annually. Although they hope the new, more energy-efficient building will help reduce use, this expected increase would bring them close to the 100 MWh threshold that defines a small electricity customer in the ACT.

Aiden and Bianca do not believe they will be able to raise menu prices to offset the higher costs. Instead, they expect to work smarter and adopt other operational strategies to absorb the additional expenses.

Given the financial pressures and the compromises, they must make to their cooking methods and menu, they are strongly in favour of government support to help small businesses transition away from gas. This could include grants to offset upfront electrification costs or ongoing electricity bill subsidies. At the same time, they question the logic of requiring full electrification when they are shifting to a charcoal grill—a method that, while traditional, still creates greenhouse gas emissions.

HOW GAS IS USED

Currently have a gas account and use gas for commercial cooking. When they move to new premises, they won't be able to use gas.

BARRIERS TO ELECTRIFICATION

Champi will be electrifying when they move to their new premises. Prior to moving premises, Champi's barriers to electrification were lack of motivation (personal preferences) and lack of opportunity (no scope to make a decision).

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS

Access to information.
When they move they will not have the option to continue to use gas, but would appreciate financial support to defray higher energy costs.

CASE STUDY

5

Treats Café

Tawonga South, Vic.

Treats is a café-turned-restaurant in Tawonga South, northeast Victoria, run by Liz for the past 26 years. Originally a café, it now operates 4 nights a week as a restaurant and employs 4 staff. Liz has been involved in food businesses across Tawonga South, Mt Beauty, and Falls Creek since 1981. Her main challenges are staffing and rising input costs

The restaurant is co-located with a residence and the recently closed Bogong Ski Centre in a building owned by Liz and her husband. It has a single electricity account and a 1,960-litre LPG tank, which fuels a gas boiler for water and space heating for the entire building, as well as cooking for both the restaurant and the residence. Before the Bogong Ski Centre closed, the building used around 12,000 litres (327,000 MJ) of LPG annually — about 25% in each winter month (June–August) and the remainder spread across the rest of the year. Treats is estimated to use around 40% of this gas, mainly for space and water heating

To offset rising electricity costs, Liz installed solar panels a few years ago, reducing the annual bill from about $20,000 to a much lower figure, allowing recovery of the $43,000 installation cost of the solar panels. Electricity consumption dropped from 60 MWh to around 20 MWh per year — below the small customer protection threshold. She also replaced 103 lights through the Victorian Energy Upgrades program.

Liz has heard about a lot about the electrification of gas use through television and radio, and thought about it, but now has no interest in electrifying the gas use of Treats. She is unsure of the long term future of the business and so is not investing any more capital into the business; she will continue to operate with the existing facilities that were installed around 21 years ago when the restaurant was expanded.

She is continuing to operate the business for the enjoyment she gets from the business but it is not generating an income. Given the financial position of the restaurant and the closure of the Bogong Ski Centre, she cannot justify the cost to replace the gas boiler for the entire building.

Even if she could justify replacing the gas boiler, she is not likely to do it. Electricity prices are too high – they are higher in the north east of Victoria than in other parts of the state. She would want to install more solar panels but they do not produce much electricity during the 3 months of the year when gas use is at its highest.

Liz has 2 gas ranges and a chargrill in the restaurant and has a strong preference to continue to use them. She is not motivated to learn how to cook using induction, to train her staff and change her processes. Liz is of the view that it would be relatively easy for her to convert to induction for batch cooking, such as soups, but she would find it more difficult to prepare individual orders within a short amount of time.

HOW GAS IS USED

There is a single LPG account that covers 2 businesses and a residence. Gas is used for commercial cooking, water heating and space heating.

BARRIERS TO ELECTRIFICATION

Lack of motivation – perceived benefits not expected to exceed perceived costs within the expected life of the business; personal preferences

Lack of opportunity – access to liquid funds.

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS

Financial support.