

# Everyday People

## Final Report

Prepared by Australian Energy Foundation

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## 1. Introduction

All the information the community needs to better manage their energy costs and associated actions is already out there. Unfortunately, it is spread across the internet and requires multiple internet searches, or it is in places or formats everyday people do not or cannot access. Everyday people' in this context simply refers to people across all communities in Australia that don't work in the energy industry and require straightforward independent energy information.

Furthermore, most of the information is not written or delivered in a way that everyday people understand. Often the people most in need of the information, and the services they allow access to, are least capable or likely of finding or using the services. In some cases, the social services that people access to help them with energy concerns are also struggling to provide people with information that is relevant to them and is easily accessed.

Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) provided grant funding to Australian Energy Foundation (AEF) to find, collate or develop information that would be relevant to everyday people and make it available in a format that would work for all people. This included materials on getting the best price for energy, energy efficiency, knowing your rights, contacting the right people as well as providing information in different languages.

This work will be disseminated to a wide range of organisations across Australia to use in servicing their clients or providing the information to them in a manner that suits them.

This information will be freely available to organisations to utilise, pass on to others or print and distribute.

We would like to thank Energy Consumers Australia for their assistance in this project.

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## 2. Research

### 2.1. Desktop review of existing material

Our first action in the project was to undertake desktop research and talk to a range of people to understand where they look for energy information currently.

AEF researched and collated information from across the energy sector and assessed it based on the value it represented to everyday people:

- Was it simple to understand?
- Was it available in different languages?
- Was it printable?
- Did it address common issues?
- How easy was it to find?

We then undertook a gaps analysis of the information gathered to understand what wasn't being covered in currently available information.

This was completed in a simple matrix (see below) which identified the type of material, the sector it was developed by and organisations within the sector. We utilised retailers who had an Australia-wide presence to ensure consistency.

	Online	Printable	Language	Accessible	Online	Printable	Language	Accessible
Sector:	Energy Efficiency				Bill Management			
Retailers								
Government								
Local Govt								
Community organisations								
Ombudsman								

We have not identified the community organisations we scored in the example matrix in fairness to the organisations. The highest rated sector was the State Ombudsman's who in general provided excellent information which was reasonably easily accessible. In particular the ability to translate their websites at the click of a mouse to include people with English language challenges was exemplary.

We then identified gaps in the available material and developed material to suit.

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## 2.2. Participant experience with existing material

We worked with our existing cohort of people (pensioner groups, cultural groups, etc.) to determine the methods people use to access energy information. A majority of people were accessing information through the internet (as was to be expected for people who were tech savvy with good English). This made accessing information simple. There was no specific website or area that people accessed, it was simply a Google search with the top results being used.

For people who did not access the internet<sup>1</sup> (the elderly in many cases) they relied on their friends, family or acquaintances for. This demonstrated a lack of easily accessible information about energy in a cohort of people who have historically paid too much for energy. It also presented an opportunity to disseminate information through community and social groups to reach people who were previously hard to access.

The people in this cohort did acknowledge TV and radio advertising as being a source of information however the common thread in the conversation was that “they’re all as bad as each other and none of them will give you a good deal”. The vast majority of the elderly cohorts we worked with had been with the same company for a long time and were hesitant to change providers.

This demonstrated two things: we need to provide the information directly into these communities if they are to access the information, and there is no single place that people believe they can easily access information. These findings needed to be factored into our dissemination strategy, in particular the need to provide information in a number of formats (including diverse languages and printed materials) and the need to directly approach organisations to make them aware of this resource.

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<sup>1</sup> Information provided by elderly citizens in Ethnic Social Clubs and Community Groups.

### 3. Materials development

The project capitalised on good work already done by multiple organisations but made their work more accessible and therefore more likely to be used by everyday people.

The major issues noted in the gaps analysis were very simple pictorially based information on energy efficiency in English and in different languages. Further research with culturally diverse organisations identified the issue of information in other languages for well-educated people. There was a perception that literacy issues with English equated to literacy issues in the mother tongue which was inaccurate. As such we developed a series of material that focused on low literacy (any language) and high literacy (diverse languages) where none existed previously. Material was developed in the following languages as they were the most commonly used:

- Arabic
- Chinese
- Greek
- Italian
- Macedonian
- Turkish
- Vietnamese

Where possible we ensured all the information provided was easily printable for organisations to print their own copies and disseminate to their membership.



用冷水洗衣服，在晾衣架上晾干，每年  
能节省\$150。

#### 4. Focus Groups

After materials were prepared, they were presented to a series of focus groups and people working in the industry to ensure they met the identified needs of the project and would be helpful and used within the cohort of target people. Focus groups included:

- Pensioner associations
- Ethnic associations
- Information providers
- Social Service Organisations

The feedback from the focus groups was very positive.

There was an overall consensus that this type of material had not been available previously. This was surprising as this type of material had been available in the past, although evidently it was hard to find. Upon further questioning we were told that internet searches on energy often led directly to retailers' sites which promoted energy deals more than the required information, translated material was very hard to find, there was very little available in printed format for people who did not use computers. This confirmed the assumptions behind the project.

The translated material was welcomed by all ethnic focus groups. The two-level translation where there was a simple image-based booklet and a more in-depth booklet were highly popular. This resulted from initial feedback from the community that while some people were illiterate in English, they were highly literate in their mother tongue so providing information at their level of literacy made sense. There was a small amount of negative feedback in the Greek translation that the language was "a little modern" but was still fully understandable.

The section of the website we developed that provided contact details/phone numbers of retailers and their translation services was unexpectedly popular. All focus groups expressed a frustration with finding retailer phone numbers. Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) commented that this webpage alone would make their lives a lot easier. From our point of view many of these numbers were not commonly available and required access to a paper bill to find the numbers.

The provision of material in unbranded printable formats was also seen as a bonus as many of the organisations we dealt with often printed information for their clients or members. Material on the internet was often in a format that did not print well.

## 5. Dissemination Plan

While most Pyramid schemes are unacceptable, we believe the dissemination of these resources is well suited to one.

Our initial email list of contacts for the dissemination of the material includes:

- ACTCOSS
- Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
- NCOSS
- NTCOSS
- QCOSS
- SACOSS
- TasCOS
- VCOSS
- WACOSS
- Alevi Community Council
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Australian JiangXi Association
- Brotherhood of St Lawrence
- Chinese Seniors Manningham
- Combined pensioners association
- Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic)
- Community Information & Support (other states)
- Consumer Action Law Centre
- Coptic Senior Citizens
- Council of the Ageing VIC (COTA)
- Elderly Chinese Citizens
- Energy Consumers Aust
- Financial Counsellors
- Greek Pensioners Assoc
- Greek pensioners association
- Islamic council of Aust
- Italian Pensioners Assoc
- Kildonan Uniting Care
- Migrant Information Centres
- Olive Way Uniting Church
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC)
- Service NSW
- St Vincent de Paul

We will encourage these organisations to forward the material and the relevant link throughout the organisation and to partner organisations. We believe this method of partners sharing the information is the most effective way to distribute the material. It builds on our trusted partner status and leverages the relationships our partners have with other organisations.

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## 6. Conclusion

The delivery of this project highlighted two issues to us.

The first issue was the availability of information. In many cases there was no information at a level that everyday people could understand or if there was it was not easily accessible. In particular there was very little information in other languages or in simple pictorial formats. This issue was in fact the simplest one to address. We undertook some desktop research and a gap analysis, collated materials and developed materials as needed.

The second and bigger issue we identified was the access to information. One of the most surprising findings of the project was that very few people had any knowledge of the best place to look for energy information.

People fell into two basic categories in this project, those who accessed the internet and those who didn't. People who accessed the internet had issues of trust and over supply of information. A simple internet search often led to a retailer site where the focus was on selling energy plans or highly technical sites. There was no simple trusted site that people identified as a "go-to" site.

The second cohort were people who did not interact with the internet. This included: ethnic community groups, elderly groups and digitally disadvantaged people. Hard to reach communities (the clue is in the name) often require a trusted partner in order to access them. In general, the partner is the best delivery channel. Our dissemination strategy will still use the internet to access these groups, but it is focused on their hierarchy who do access the internet and their ability to print, show or explain the information to their membership cadre. The ability to print information on demand was seen as the best way to help people.

The collected information is now available at <https://aef.com.au/resources/energy-for-everyday-people/> and is available to all people. We are now in the process of distributing the information. We have not branded the material to avoid any conflict of interest.

We believe this information will be highly beneficial to the general community and will hopefully encourage people and organisations to tailor their materials to different cohorts of people.