AusNet

Electri-fair-cation Report

GCCN

GIPPSLAND CLIMATE CHANGE NETWORK

Acknowledgements

The **Electri-fair-cation project** has been an extraordinary journey of collaboration, innovation and community engagement, demonstrating what can be achieved when industry, community organisations and households work together towards a shared goal.

Delivered between 2024 and 2026, the project focused on five residential clusters across Morwell, including Vary st, Tarwin st, Rintoull st, Papyrus st, Gay st and Churchill rd. The project also supported the electrification of the Morwell Neighbourhood House on Beattie Cres.

Our sincere thanks go to the remarkable people who made this project possible.

Special recognition must go to Project Officer **Michael Hafner**, whose dedication and commitment were instrumental in delivering the project, and to **Stephanie Sabriskas**, who led community engagement alongside **Chris Barfoot**. Their willingness to work closely with residents, navigate challenges and find practical solutions was fundamental to the project's success.

We also extend our appreciation to **Tracie Lund and Stephanie Morgan** from Morwell Neighbourhood House, whose early engagement and trusted relationships within the community helped establish the foundations for the project.

This initiative would not have been possible without the outstanding support and commitment of **AusNet**. In particular, we acknowledge **Ana Erceg, Manager Grid Evolution; Asal Ahmadlou, Future Network Engineer; and Vince Frandina, Lead Electrification Engineer**.

Their technical expertise, enthusiasm and determination to make this project work were exceptional. Just as importantly, their genuine commitment to working with the community, listening to residents and finding solutions demonstrated the value of a partnership that goes well beyond the traditional relationship between an electricity network and its customers. Their contribution was simply outstanding.

Most importantly, we thank the 46 participating Morwell households who welcomed us into their homes and placed their trust in the project.

Electrifying an existing home is not always straightforward. It can involve significant alterations, disruption and the patience to work through unexpected challenges. Our participating households demonstrated remarkable understanding, goodwill and commitment throughout this process.

You opened your doors, shared your experiences and allowed us to be part of your lives. Your contribution has been invaluable, not only in making this project a success but also in helping us understand how household electrification can be delivered more effectively and equitably across Victoria.

We are deeply grateful for your trust and generosity.

The electri-fair-cation project has been much more than a program of household upgrades. It has provided valuable practical experience, important lessons and real-world evidence to inform the wider transition to all-electric homes.

Above all, it has demonstrated that, when electrification is delivered thoughtfully, collaboratively and with households at the centre, it can create homes that are more affordable to run, warmer in winter, cooler in summer, healthier and more comfortable to live in.

We hope the experiences and findings from Morwell will help shape future electrification programs across Victoria and beyond, ensuring that communities and households share in the benefits of the energy transition.

It has been a privilege to be part of this project and to work alongside so many committed people.

Darren McCubbin
Project Coordinator
Gippsland Climate Change Network

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Executive Summary

The ElectriFAIRcation Project explored how fully funded household electrification can be delivered within a low socio-economic community, particularly among households where electrification is unlikely to be an immediate priority.

Delivered in Morwell through a partnership between AusNet and the Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN), the project provided an opportunity to better understand the practical challenges of supporting households experiencing financial and other barriers through the transition to an all-electric home.

This report summarises the key lessons from the project, including the approaches used to engage households, the different experiences of homeowners, renters and landlords, the barriers encountered during delivery, and the strategies used to address them. It also considers the role of a trusted local delivery partner in building relationships, simplifying the process for households and coordinating the range of activities required to deliver an electrification upgrade.

The project experience indicated that the barriers to household electrification are not necessarily technical or financial alone. Even where the cost of upgrades is removed, households can face barriers relating to trust, awareness, competing priorities, uncertainty about new technologies, concerns about disruption and the perceived complexity of making changes to their home.

The project highlighted the importance of combining financial assistance with effective customer engagement and facilitation. For many households, the decision to participate depended not simply on whether electrification was affordable, but whether the proposed changes were understood, trusted and considered suitable for their individual circumstances.

The experience in Morwell suggests that programs seeking to support electrification within economically vulnerable communities need to consider the entire customer journey. Trusted engagement, personalised advice, simple processes and hands-on support can be important in helping households move from initial awareness through to installation and ongoing use.

The project also highlighted the value of a local delivery organisation such as GCCN in acting as an intermediary between households, energy networks, trades and other project stakeholders. A local organisation can provide community knowledge, establish relationships, advocate for household needs and help coordinate the practical aspects of the transition.

The findings in this report are intended to inform the design and delivery of future household electrification programs, particularly programs seeking to reach households that may otherwise face greater difficulty participating in the energy transition.

Project Statistics & Key Takeaways

Number of participating households	46
Number of Renters	11
Hot water systems installed	40
Solar systems installed	33
Total payment to installers	$983,561

The project experience can be summarised through the following key takeaways:

- **Electrification is not always the customer's priority**
- **Removing cost does not remove all barriers**
- **Trust takes time to build**
- **Simplified project execution provides value to households**
- **Every household is different**
- **Homeowners, renters and landlords all have different goals**
- **The delivery partner is more than a project coordinator**
- **Local knowledge has practical value**
- **An equitable energy transition requires active facilitation**

Introduction

The transition from fossil-fuel-based household energy systems towards efficient electric technologies is an important component of Victoria's broader energy transition.

For many households, the decision to electrify involved considerations beyond the financial cost of the technology. These included whether the proposed technology would meet their needs, confidence in unfamiliar organisations and contractors, concerns about disruption, the condition of the property, existing appliance preferences and uncertainty about future circumstances.

This can create a potential energy transition equity gap: households with greater financial capacity may be better positioned to make changes to their homes, while households with fewer resources may remain reliant on older and potentially more costly energy systems.

The ElectriFAIRcation Project in Morwell provided an opportunity to explore how household electrification could be delivered within a community where financial capacity, household priorities and other circumstances may make electrification less accessible.

The project was particularly focused on households for whom electrification was unlikely to be an immediate priority. While the upfront cost of replacing gas appliances

with electric alternatives can be a significant barrier, the project experience indicated that removing this cost did not remove all of the barriers to participation.

The ElectriFAIRcation Project was established to explore how these barriers could be addressed through a fully funded model and to better understand the practical experience of electrifying homes within this cohort.

The project ultimately supported 46 households across five clusters to replace gas appliances with efficient electric alternatives, including cooking, heating and hot water systems, as well as installing new solar systems. Eligible households also received other upgrades, including insulation and draught-proofing, intended to improve the building shell, thermal comfort and the performance of heating and cooling systems.

The ElectriFAIRcation project delivered in Morwell was able to provide an opportunity to consider both the technical outcomes of household electrification and the customer experience involved in delivering these changes.

Project Objectives

AusNet's primary technical objective was to gather real-world data on the impact of neighbourhood-scale electrification on the electricity network. This included testing and analysing changes in local electricity demand, network capacity and power quality to inform future network planning.

However, the project also provided an opportunity to examine the household experience of electrification within a community where financial and other barriers may otherwise limit participation.

The primary objectives of the project included:

- **Supporting economically vulnerable households** with fully funded electrification upgrades.
- **Assessing the impact on the network** of a fully electrified neighbourhood, in order to better understand change in local electricity network capacity, power quality, and demand, and to improve future network resilience.
- **Budget for 45 - 60 homes** to be fully electrified by the end of the project.
- **Residential Efficiency Scorecard Assessments** for eligible households, including personalised reviews of gas and electricity consumption.
- **Ensure an equitable transition:** Identify the opportunities, challenges, and barriers of electrification to better understand how to practically address the energy transition equity gap.
- **Improve efficiency and reduce bills:** Help participating households lower energy bills and improve home comfort
- **Abolishment of gas meters** for each participating household, and to eliminate their gas bill.

The secondary objectives included:

- **Understanding the non-financial barriers** that prevent households from taking action.
- Testing different approaches to **household engagement**.
- **Understanding the different needs and driving forces** of homeowners, renters and landlords, and delivering appropriate solutions particular to their needs.
- Demonstrating the importance of having a **trusted local community organisation** and designated **home energy assessors** facilitate the electrification journey of each household.
- **Identifying lessons** that could inform future electrification programs targeted at this type of community across Victoria.

Engagement Strategies

A range of engagement strategies were used throughout the project. Some generated greater participation than others, but each provided useful information about how households responded to different approaches.

The experience also demonstrated that no single engagement method was sufficient on its own. The more effective approaches generally worked as part of a broader process of building awareness, providing opportunities for face-to-face discussion and establishing trust.

BBQ and Information Evening – April 2024

In collaboration with Morwell Neighbourhood House, GCCN held a free BBQ and information evening for residents within the first two selected clusters.

Doorknocking and letter drops were used beforehand to promote the event, which was scheduled between 6pm and 7pm on a weekday to provide an opportunity for people to attend outside normal working hours.

Initial doorknocking suggested that approximately five or six households might attend. On the night, however, only one eligible participant attended.

While the event did not generate the level of participation anticipated, the household that attended became an important advocate for the project within their street. Their willingness to discuss the project with neighbours helped GCCN establish relationships with additional eligible households.

This experience highlighted the value of having a trusted resident or “street champion” who can provide an independent point of reference for other households.

As a result, subsequent engagement placed greater emphasis on identifying existing relationships within each cluster and using participating households to help build confidence among their neighbours.

Doorknocking

Doorknocking was the most consistently used engagement approach throughout the project. Its main advantage was the opportunity to have a direct conversation with eligible households and provide an immediate explanation of the project. It also allowed the project team to obtain contact details and establish a pathway for a follow-up conversation and home energy assessment.

However, doorknocking also presented challenges. In this community, approaching a household at the front door could generate scepticism because unsolicited visits are commonly associated with scams, sales activity and concerns about privacy or safety.

The approach appeared to work best when supported by other forms of communication and when the initial conversation was brief and focused on establishing legitimacy rather than seeking an immediate commitment to the project.

The subsequent conversations with the project team would then explain who and what was involved in the project, why the household had been contacted, what was being offered and how the household could find out more information.

Word of Mouth

Word of mouth became an important engagement mechanism as the project progressed. One example was the existing relationship between a GCCN staff member and residents near the second cluster on Tarwin Street. These existing relationships helped establish trust and made it easier to obtain contact information of eligible participants, and to arrange initial energy assessments.

The project experience suggested that households were often more receptive when they could connect the project with someone they already knew or with a neighbour who had participated. This was particularly useful when beginning to promote the project in a new cluster where the initial perception of the project was uncertain.

Community Activations

Two additional community activations were undertaken during the project. Both involved a mobile café providing free coffee and were promoted to eligible households through letter drops beforehand.

The purpose was to create a less formal opportunity for residents to approach the project team, ask questions and have a face-to-face conversation.

These activations generated a relatively high level of interest and participation compared with some of the other engagement approaches.

An important difference was that residents could choose to approach the activation rather than being approached at their front door. This appeared to create a more

comfortable environment for initial engagement and allowed households to interact with the project team at their own pace.

The experience suggests that community-based engagement can be useful where the objective is to create familiarity and awareness before asking households to consider making changes to their homes.

Letter Drops and Signage

Letter drops were used as a relatively low-pressure way of increasing awareness of the project, however their effectiveness appeared to be limited. In some cases, the letter did not reach the decision maker of the property and may have been discarded as general advertising. In other cases, the letter prompted curiosity or provided enough information for a household to make contact with the project team.

The primary value of the letter drop appeared to be improving general awareness rather than direct recruitment.

Signage was also installed at some completed properties with the consent of the participating

households. This provided another way of increasing local awareness and demonstrated that other households in the neighbourhood had already participated.

Participating Households

Morwell provided a particularly relevant setting for exploring an equitable energy transition because a number of households in this community appear to be experiencing a variety of socio-economic pressures that impact their capacity to complete household electrification upgrades.

Once households understood that the project was fully funded, the more important question became whether they were comfortable with the proposed changes and whether the changes addressed a need or concern that mattered to them.

The factors identified through engagement included:

- Understanding & knowledge of household electrification technologies;
- Scepticism / Trust in organisations and contractors;
- Condition of house, including roofing, wiring, incoming mains, or the presence of asbestos;
- Energy resilience, and concerns for their situation in a power outage;
- Capacity to consider upgrades, amongst work / lifestyle / other priorities;
- Unwillingness to upgrade equipment/appliances in new or reasonable condition;
- Preference to retain gas fired equipment, in particular cooking, but in some cases central gas heating and instantaneous gas hot water.
- Concerns about disruption to the home;
- Consideration of landlord relationship and concern for an increase in rent;
- Landlord approval; and
- Uncertainty about future circumstances;

The role of the project team was therefore not simply to explain the benefits of electrification. It was to understand what was important to each household and consider whether electrification could provide a useful solution within those circumstances.

Understanding the Customer

One of the key lessons from the project was that there was no single “electrification customer”. Different household circumstances created different barriers, and the approach required to engage an owner-occupier was not necessarily appropriate for a renter or landlord.

Three broad customer groups were identified:

1. Homeowners
2. Renters
3. Landlords and property managers

These categories are useful for understanding common barriers, although individual households within each category still had different needs and priorities.

Homeowners

Homeowners generally had the greatest ability to make decisions about their property, but this did not necessarily translate into willingness to participate.

Beyond the financial incentive, decisions about household upgrades were often influenced by comfort, amenity, familiarity with existing appliances and confidence that the proposed solution would meet their needs.

Common reasons for reluctance included:

- Unfamiliarity with electric technologies;
- Uncertainty about the benefits;
- Concerns that the proposed solution would not meet their needs;
- Concerns about disruption; and
- Satisfaction with existing gas appliances

For these households, trust, quality of service and personalised advice could be as important as the financial incentive.

Project example – Tarwin Street

The owner initially declined to participate because they valued the amenity provided by their existing gas ducted heating system. In particular, they were concerned that split systems would not provide adequate heating to supporting areas such as the bathroom and laundry.

The proposed solution was subsequently adjusted to include a ducted reverse-cycle air-conditioning system, which provided a level of heating more comparable with the existing system. This change addressed the household's primary concern and was integral decision to having them participate in the project.

Lesson: Where a household has a clear reason for preferring its existing system, understanding that reason and adapting the proposed solution can be the most effective strategy

Project example – Tarwin Street

The owner initially declined participation because participation normally required disconnection of the property's gas service.

The household had a specific requirement for more than three hours of continuous hot water per day due to in-home care requirements for an elderly household member. The proposed heat pump storage system was not considered suitable for this demand.

A concession was therefore made to allow the existing continuous-flow gas hot water system to remain while the household participated in other aspects of the project.

Lesson: A fully electrified outcome may not be appropriate for every household where a particular technology requirement cannot reasonably be met.

Project example – Vary Street

The owner was interested in the project but was unwilling to replace a recently installed gas ducted heating system with reverse-cycle air conditioning.

The household valued the comfort provided by the existing system and was not convinced that the proposed electric alternative would provide an equivalent outcome.

The property was ultimately considered ineligible on this basis.

Lesson: The existence of a fully funded offer does not necessarily overcome a household's preference to retain recently installed or valued equipment.

Renters

Renters presented a different set of challenges. While tenants may directly benefit from improved heating, hot water, cooking facilities and thermal comfort, they generally do not have the authority to make permanent changes to the property.

The primary drivers identified among participating renters were generally reduced energy bills and improved comfort within the home. However, their ability to participate was also dependent on the willingness of the landlord to approve the proposed works.The project highlighted the importance of:

- Clearly defining responsibilities and decision making abilities between the tenant and landlord;
- Simplifying landlord approvals;
- Explaining the relevant benefits to both the tenant and landlord;
- Maintaining communication between all parties; and
- Providing a consistent point of contact for the household.

Project example – Rintoull Street

The tenant was initially difficult to reach through the engagement strategies undertaken and only became receptive to the project after being informed of the opportunity directly by their landlord. The landlord had initially learned about the project through an existing participant in the street, who happened to know the landlord through a local community acquaintance.

Once communication was established and an energy assessment was scheduled, it became apparent that the tenant was interested in participating but had deliberately

avoided previous doorknocking attempts by GCCN. The tenant had also been sceptical of the project signage and community activations.

The tenant explained that, as a stay-at-home mother, she felt particularly vulnerable to scams and was uncertain about whether she had the authority to make changes to the property. These concerns had contributed to her decision not to engage with the project initially.

Once the tenant had received confirmation from the landlord that they were willing to participate, she became very receptive to the project and was happy to work with GCCN to develop an electrification solution for the home.

Lesson: Tenants may feel they have limited authority to participate in significant home improvement works. Considerable effort may therefore be required to reach tenants, establish that the offer is legitimate, explain their role in the process and demonstrate how they may benefit from the proposed upgrades

Landlords

Landlords represented another distinct customer group. Unlike owner-occupiers, landlords may not directly experience the household benefits of improved comfort or reduced energy consumption. However, the project found that landlords could be interested in the potential benefits to their asset, particularly where equipment and household upgrades were fully subsidised.

Landlords represented another distinct customer group. Unlike owner-occupiers, landlords may not directly experience the household benefits of improved comfort or reduced energy consumption, but typically valued the financial impact on the improved value of their asset and in providing fully subsidised equipment and household upgrades. Their decision-making is typically influenced by:

- Upfront cost;
- Property value;
- Maintenance requirements;
- Appliance replacement;
- Compliance;
- Tenant satisfaction; and
- The perceived risk associated with making changes to the property.

The engagement approach therefore needed to recognise that the benefits of electrification may need to be explained differently to a landlord than to the tenant who will use the equipment.

The project team also recognised a potential concern that improvements to the property could be perceived as justification for increasing rent. While rental pricing itself remained outside the control of the project, a contractual clause was included in landlord agreements to provide that the funded upgrades could not be used as a reason to increase the rent.

Project example – Papyrus Street

The tenant at this property was initially difficult to reach for similar reasons to the example at Papyrus Street. GCCN was able to establish contact only after making particular efforts through the managing real estate agency.

In this case, the real estate agency itself presented a significant engagement barrier. Several attempts were made by phone and email to encourage the agency to contact the landlord and communicate the opportunity.

It was ultimately necessary for the GCCN CEO to attend the agency's office in person to explain the project, establish its legitimacy and highlight the potential benefits of simply presenting the opportunity to the landlord.

Once the landlord was appropriately informed, they were happy to discuss the project with the tenant. The tenant was then also willing to participate, allowing GCCN to proceed with the energy assessment and subsequent proposal.

Lesson: Real estate agents can act as an important screening point for the properties they manage, particularly where they are responsible for protecting landlords from potential scams or inappropriate offers. Establishing the legitimacy of the project with the agency may therefore be an important first step before the opportunity can reach the landlord and tenant.

Project example – Papyrus Street

The landlord of this property happened to be present at the first mobile coffee van activation, where they learned about the potential benefits of participating in the project, and fortunately, this landlord also owned four other properties within the same cluster. This made the initial engagement relatively straightforward and provided an opportunity to discuss the project across multiple properties.

The more significant challenges emerged during the assessment and installation phases, when latent property issues were identified and additional supporting works were requested beyond the initial project scope.

This particular property had a roof that was unsuitable for mounting solar panels, and the landlord was requested to undertake a roof upgrade to take advantage of the proposed solar installation. With assistance from the project team, the landlord was able to understand the implications and value of proceeding with the roof upgrade and accepted this as a condition of the project agreement.

The property also had two functioning split systems and an existing gas ducted heating system that was no longer operational. The proposed solution included two additional split systems to supplement the existing equipment, which was accepted by both the tenant and landlord as a suitable heating solution.

The tenant also had specific concerns regarding indoor air quality and reported using a breathing apparatus to manage her asthma. She was particularly positive about the

replacement of the gas cooktop with an induction cooktop. Following installation, she reported that she had experienced an improvement in her breathing.

This feedback represents the tenant's reported experience rather than a measured health outcome, but it demonstrated that the benefits of an electrification project can extend beyond energy use and appliance replacement and may be particularly meaningful where a household has specific health or comfort considerations.

Lesson: Landlords and tenants can require different value propositions even when participating in the same project. Understanding the priorities of each stakeholder and providing appropriately tailored solutions can assist in bringing both parties into the project.

The Electrification Journey – Simplified Execution

A key finding from the project was that electrification should be viewed as a journey rather than simply an installation.

From the household's perspective, the process can broadly be represented as:

Awareness → Engagement → Assessment → Contract Proposal → Decision → Installation → Support

Each stage before the decision to sign the contract provided an opportunity for a household to disengage.

The project deliberately allowed the engagement and assessment stages to remain obligation-free. This gave households time to understand the project, develop confidence in the project team and consider whether the proposed changes were appropriate for their circumstances before making a commitment.

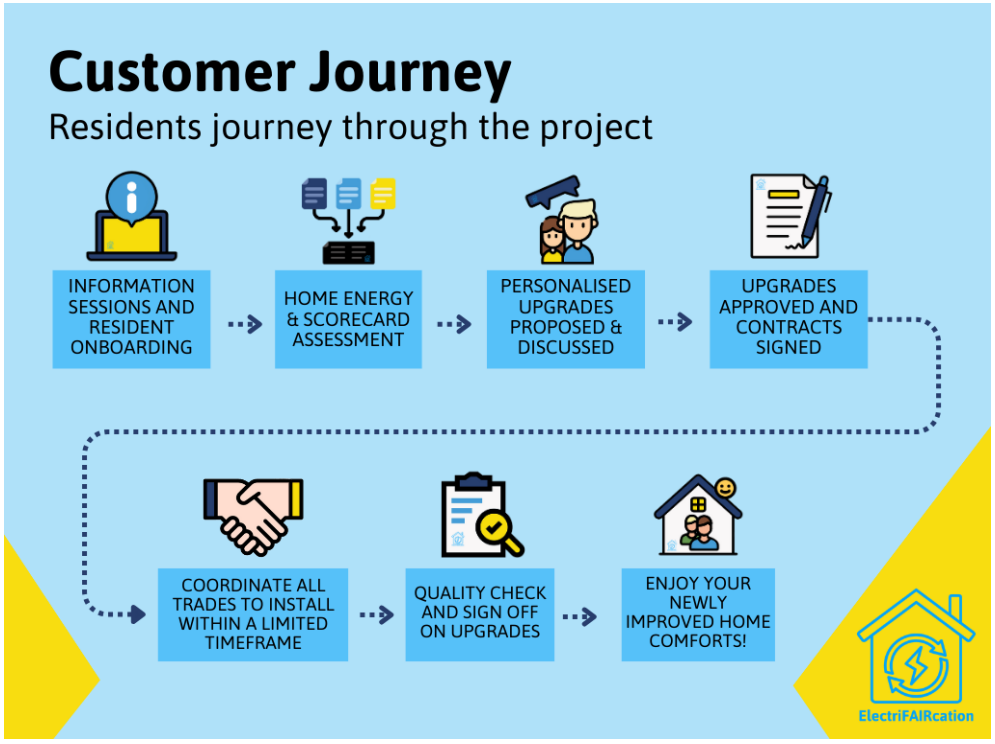
By the time a contract proposal was presented, the proposed works had been informed by the household's circumstances, the condition of the property and the outcomes of the energy assessment. This also provided an opportunity to address concerns, refine the proposed works and explain the contractual arrangements before the household committed to participating.

Supporting households through this entire journey was found to provide significant value. From the customer's perspective, GCCN's role reduced the mental and administrative load associated with coordinating multiple organisations and trades. It also provided a consistent point of contact, oversight of installation quality and a clear contractual framework for the works.

GCCN acted as the single point of coordination throughout the customer journey and sought to make the process as straightforward as possible for participating households.

- **Project awareness & Community engagement;**
- **Landlord & real estate engagement;**
- **Energy assessments;**
- **Incoming electrical assessments;**
- **Tailored electrification & building shell solutions;**
- **Competitive trade quotations;**
- **Contracts;**
- **Rebate applications;**
- **Installation schedule & coordination of trades;**
- **Invoicing;**
- **Quality Assurance and issue resolution;**
- **Coordination of ancillary and make-good works; and**
- **Gas disconnection process.**

This project highlights not only the need for a household electrification delivery team to consider the entire customer journey, but the value that participants place on the guidance received in each step of the journey. The easier the process is for the household, the less likely administrative complexity is to become a barrier to participation.



Building Trust

Trust emerged as an integral component of successful engagement.

For households experiencing financial or social vulnerability, there can be good reason to be cautious about unfamiliar organisations, offers or contractors. There may also be a greater perceived risk associated with allowing people into the home, making changes to the property or signing up to a project that has been considered by a good portion of participants as ‘too good to be true’. That is why the project team set out to

ensure that trust could be incrementally earned at every opportunity possible throughout the course of the customer journey.

GCCN found that trust could be further developed through the following methods:

- **Face-to-face conversations;**
- **Professional approach from the project team;**
- **Deliberate and targeted engagement strategies;**
- **Not-for-profit nature of delivery partners GCCN & Morwell Neighbourhood House;**
- **Street 'champions' who could advocate the project;**
- **Using examples of other participating households;**
- **Clear and honest explanations by the project team;**
- **A willingness to work with the households to achieve their goals;**
- **A single, consistent point of contact throughout the customer journey;**
- **Avoiding overly technical language; and**
- **Allowing households time to consider the proposal and to review the offer.**

For households with less financial security, trust can take longer to build, and there is more at stake if something was to go wrong.

Time spent building relationships should not necessarily be viewed as inefficiency and when considering delivery of electrification in an economically vulnerable community, it should be seen as an essential part of the delivery model.

Tailored solutions

The ElectriFAIRcation Project demonstrated the value of conducting personalised home energy assessments and developing proposed solutions for individual households.

The project team recognised that there is no single electrification pathway that will suit every property. Developing a solution specifically for each household also appeared to contribute to customer confidence, as it demonstrated that the proposed works were based on the household's circumstances rather than simply applying a standard package.

The project experience highlighted that households in this community differ in:

- Existing equipment and appliances;
- Electrical infrastructure;
- Energy demand;
- Building age and condition;
- Tenure & number of occupants;
- Heating requirements;
- Financial circumstances;
- Health and care requirements;
- Future plans.

The scorecard assessment offered more than a technical energy assessment and analysis of energy consumption. It also created an opportunity to understand the household's priorities and identify an electrification pathway that was appropriate for that particular property.

This approach was particularly important where households had existing appliances that they were reluctant to replace or where property conditions limited the available options.

Consideration of the latent conditions unique to each household also enabled the project team to deliver a solution that was both within the allocated budget, whilst meeting the needs of each household

The Importance of Funding

A fully funded solution was integral to the participation levels achieved. By removing the upfront cost, participation in the project allowed households to consider a fully electrified solution including various building efficiency improvements that they may otherwise have been unable to afford.

However, the project also demonstrated an important distinction: Whilst funding effectively removed the cost barrier to electrification, it did not necessarily create the willingness to participate.

Even when upgrades were fully funded, some households remained hesitant and required assurance that their other concerns, goals and future plans had been considered. In some cases, alternative solutions were required before a household was comfortable proceeding.

Some eligible households also declined participation because they preferred to retain gas-fired equipment. This suggests that while cost is an important barrier to household electrification, it is not the only barrier.

The experience reinforces the importance of combining financial assistance with effective customer engagement, personalised advice and practical facilitation.

Challenges Encountered

The project encountered a range of challenges that are relevant to the design of future household electrification programs.

Household Engagement

Not every household was immediately receptive to the concept of electrification, and the reluctance appeared to stem from a general perception that *“You don’t get something for nothing”.* Some residents required multiple conversations before they were comfortable discussing the project and considering an electrification solution for their household

Lesson: Program timelines need to allow for relationship building and different customer decision-making speeds. Program budgets should also allow for appropriate community activations and engagement activities that can help establish awareness and legitimacy.

Existing Property Conditions

Older homes can present technical challenges that are not apparent until a detailed assessment is undertaken.

These can include:

- Insufficient electrical infrastructure;
- Non-compliant switchboards and/or wiring;
- Non-compliant metering box installations
- Suitability of roof to mount solar panels;
- Benchtop or cabinetry spatial allowances for freestanding or in-bench induction cooktops;
- Access requirements and clearances for mounting equipment;
- Building condition;
- Presence of asbestos; and
- Existing equipment and appliance configuration.

It is worth elaborating on a few of the above existing conditions to further explain the challenges faced;

With some older homes there were existing non-compliant electrical configurations that led to larger overhead fees to rectify in order to have the property eligible for electrification upgrades. One example was a legacy metering arrangement on a subdivided property that required a full replacement to bring up to recent installation standards, and another example was a house with old black cabling that required full rewiring to for a compliant electrical installation.

There were also cases where the existing gas appliances were bespoke units of non-typical dimensions. This required additional benchtop/cabinetry works to be completed, and in some cases an individually selected induction cooktop was sourced to ensure it would fit into the allocated benchtop.

Lesson: Budgets should allow for reasonable contingency costs, and delivery models need sufficient flexibility to respond to unexpected property conditions.

Coordination

A household electrification project can involve multiple trades, suppliers and activities. Coordinating these activities while maintaining a positive customer experience can be challenging, particularly where one activity depends on another being completed first.

Lesson: Strong project coordination is particularly important to ensure minimal downtime of household amenities, and where households have limited capacity to manage the process themselves.

Landlord and Tenancy Issues

Rental properties introduced an additional layer of communication and decision-making, with Landlords and real estate agents particularly difficult to reach, and often required a carefully considered approach in order to begin conversations.

Delays can occur where approval is required from multiple parties, particularly when the tenant, landlord, property manager and project team have different information or priorities.

Lesson: Communications with Landlords & Real estate agencies should be designed separately rather than expecting the offer in of itself is enough to catch their attention.

Managing Expectations

Households can have established preferences based on their experience with existing technologies. Concerns about heating performance, hot water availability, cooking reliability or performance, power outages or the operation of unfamiliar equipment can influence willingness to participate.

Lesson: Sufficient and compelling evidence of the appropriate application of any new technologies proposed should be discussed with the resident. Equipment selection needs to consider the household's actual use of the existing equipment rather than relying only on a standard replacement package.

Make-good & Post-Installation works

Whilst the allowance for make-good works was typically identified prior to the commencement of works, for example from the removal of old gas fired equipment, there were some instances where unforeseen make-good works were required. Often these were covered within the trade contract agreement if a trade was indeed liable for any damage in the course of installation, however in some cases there were other make good items identified post-installation that inflated the final costs for those particular properties. In some cases the home-owner identified the item that was not adequately excluded within the customer contract, or the item in question only became apparent after the installation was completed.

As part of the completion of each participating household, we offered to cover the cost of the gas meter abolishment. However, as this involved the direct effort of the resident to contact their gas retailer in order to complete this process, in many cases this step was either forgotten or avoided by the resident, or the retailers process for gas abolishment proved too much of a barrier.

Lesson: Ensure the customer contract is clear in its inclusions and exclusions, particularly around any potential make-good items such as replastering, painting, duct removal, vent removal, benchtop or cabinetry works, and floorboard or carpet replacement. Ensure the resident is property informed of the steps required of them to abolish their gas meter, and follow up regularly to remind them of this important step after the electrification works are completed.

Local Delivery Partner

One of the key lessons from ElectriFAIRcation was within the role of GCCN as a local delivery partner.

The value of a delivery partner extends beyond the physical delivery of the project, and can include well considered community engagement methods, suitable local customer support, local knowledge, advocacy, and coordination.

A local organisation has an understanding of the community in which the program is being delivered, and can provide better insight into:

- Local community networks;
- Appropriate communication methods;
- Local concerns;
- Appropriate local trades; and
- Ways of reaching households that may not engage with more traditional programs.

This local knowledge can also help the project team understand the context behind a household's decisions rather than viewing non-participation simply as a refusal of the offer.

A trusted local organisation can act as a bridge between households and larger institutions. For residents, a locally delivered project can feel less like a direct interaction with a large energy organisation and more like an opportunity being facilitated by someone who understands the local community.

The project experience suggested that this distinction can be important, particularly during the initial engagement stage.

The delivery partner can also provide a single connection between all of the stakeholders across the project. This can reduce the coordination burden on the household and provide a central point for identifying and resolving issues.

For households that may have limited time, confidence or capacity to coordinate multiple organisations, this role can be particularly valuable.

Project Officer / Home Energy Assessor

The Project Officer and home energy assessment role provided an important link between the technical requirements of the project and the circumstances of individual households.

The assessment process provided an opportunity to understand the existing home, review energy consumption and discuss household priorities before a proposed technology package was developed.

It also provided an opportunity to identify issues early and establish a more informed basis for discussions with households and project stakeholders.

The Project Officer role extended beyond the initial assessment and included ongoing communication with households, coordination with trades and other project stakeholders, consideration of alternative solutions and assistance in resolving issues as they arose.

This role provided continuity throughout the customer journey and helped ensure that the technical solution remained connected to the household's needs and the broader requirements of the project.

The Role of Installers and Trade Contractors

The quality of the installation experience was an important component of the ElectriFAIRcation Project. While GCCN coordinated the overall customer journey, the installers and trade contractors were responsible for delivering the physical upgrades safely, professionally and with minimal disruption to residents. Their performance influenced not only the technical quality of the upgrades, but also household confidence in the project and their experience of transitioning to an all-electric home.

Trade Selection and Procurement

The project required a reliable network of installers capable of delivering a range of upgrades across multiple properties, and the proper selection of these trades was considered before entering into trade agreement contracts.

Preference was given to reputable installers with a local presence, appropriate qualifications and the capacity to support the project at its scale. Suppliers were assessed against GCCN stipulated minimum requirements including equipment efficiency ratings, product warranties, legitimate rebate application processes, availability of ongoing servicing, and the reliability of their supply chains. Consideration was also given to the responsible disposal or recycling of decommissioned equipment and the ethical credentials of products and suppliers, including modern slavery risks in supply chains.

Formal service agreements and property-specific scopes of work helped establish expectations before work commenced. These documented the required equipment

specifications, minimum performance and warranty requirements, pricing, and the scope of installation works. The agreements also established expectations around compliance, insurance, workmanship and the conduct of contractors while working in residents' homes.

Rather than relying on a single installer for all work, multiple contractors of the same trades were engaged to share the workload. This provided additional delivery capacity and reduced reliance on individual businesses to complete the full program. However, it also introduced additional coordination requirements.

Coordination Between Trades

Successful delivery depended on installers cooperating with GCCN, the Project Officer and other contractors working at each property. For example, electrical work could depend on the final equipment selection and electrical load requirements, while installation of an induction cooktop could require coordination with a cabinetmaker. Solar installation could also depend on the condition and suitability of the roof, and other building works being completed first.

Contractors were expected to respond promptly to requests for quotations, confirm proposed installation dates, communicate potential delays and cooperate with other trades to ensure the works could be completed efficiently. Scheduling also needed to consider residents' availability and minimise disruption to their daily lives.

The trade agreements reinforced these expectations by requiring suppliers to cooperate with third parties, provide advance notice to facilitate access, minimise unnecessary noise and disturbance, and promptly notify GCCN of actual or potential delays. Contractors were also responsible for protecting residents and their property, and for rectifying damage caused during their work.

Installation Quality, Resident Education and Follow-up

Residents needed to understand how to operate their new systems correctly and confidently, particularly where they were unfamiliar with technologies such as heat pump hot water systems, reverse-cycle air conditioners and induction cooking.

Installers were expected to explain the operation of installed equipment before leaving the property, including practical information on controls and appropriate use. This handover was important to help residents make effective use of their upgrades and avoid unnecessary uncertainty about unfamiliar equipment. Installers were also expected to remain available to assist with troubleshooting after installation, with GCCN helping residents raise and coordinate any issues that arose.

This ongoing support was particularly helpful for households that might otherwise have limited confidence in managing unfamiliar technology or navigating manufacturer and installer support arrangements. A technically successful installation does not necessarily translate into a positive household outcome if residents are left unsure how to use the equipment or who to contact when something goes wrong.

The service agreements also provided a basis for maintaining installation standards. They required appropriately qualified personnel, compliance with relevant laws and standards, suitable insurance, and work performed with due care and skill. Requirements around sealing penetrations, safe removal of redundant equipment, and disposal or recycling of relevant materials also helped ensure that installations considered the wider condition and performance of the home.

Challenges in Trade Delivery

Despite the procurement arrangements and agreed responsibilities, coordinating trades presented some practical challenges. Most contractors were operating their own businesses and were not dedicated exclusively to ElectriFAIRcation. As a result, securing firm installation dates could take longer than initially discussed or agreed, particularly when contractors were balancing the project with other commercial work.

The use of multiple contractors also created some competition and friction between businesses. For example, some installers were not always comfortable coordinating with their competition that was working within the same project. This could complicate scheduling and required GCCN to maintain oversight of the overall work program, clarify responsibilities and manage communication between contractors.

These issues highlighted that any delays with one contractor could affect subsequent works, prolong disruption for residents and place additional pressure on the Project Officer to reorganise schedules and maintain communication with households.

The project highlighted the importance of treating trade procurement and coordination as a core part of the delivery model, rather than assuming that contractors can simply be engaged as needed once households have agreed to participate.

Future programs should consider:

- **Allowing sufficient lead time:** Contractor availability and competing workloads can affect installation schedules, even where quotes and initial dates have been agreed.
- **Establishing clear expectations upfront:** Written scopes, performance requirements, communication expectations and responsibilities for defects or damage provide a consistent basis for managing suppliers.
- **Maintaining coordination through a central contact:** A dedicated coordinator can manage dependencies between trades, resolve scheduling conflicts and keep residents informed without requiring them to manage contractors themselves.
- **Building in flexibility and contingency:** Alternative suppliers and realistic scheduling allowances can help manage delays, latent property conditions and changes to installation sequencing.
- **Planning for resident handover post installation support:** Equipment education, troubleshooting and clear pathways for raising issues should be considered part of the service, not an optional extra after installation.

Overall, the experience demonstrated that reliable installers are essential to successful electrification, but their contribution depends on more than technical competence. Product quality, ethical procurement, coordination, resident communication and ongoing support all influence whether an upgrade is delivered effectively and whether households feel confident using the systems installed in their homes.

Project Committee Group (PCG)

A Project Committee Group (PCG) was established at the beginning of the ElectriFAIRcation Project and provided ongoing feedback throughout the project.

The PCG provided a forum for reviewing project progress, discussing emerging issues and obtaining perspectives from organisations with experience in residential electrification and related areas. The key functions of the PCG included:

- **Strategic oversight:** Providing guidance on project direction and ensuring that activities remained aligned with the project brief and intended outcomes.
- **Stakeholder feedback:** Providing a forum to discuss project processes and engagement strategies and obtain feedback from other organisations working in or familiar with the residential electrification space.
- **Transparency and information sharing:** Sharing project successes, challenges and emerging lessons with stakeholders who may be involved in similar programs.
- **Risk and issue management:** Providing additional perspectives on emerging risks and assisting with the consideration and resolution of issues throughout the project.

The PCG met monthly and provided a useful forum for the project team to test approaches, discuss challenges and obtain perspectives beyond those available within the day-to-day delivery team.

Recommendations for Future Programs

Based on the experience of ElectriFAIRcation, future programs seeking to support household electrification within economically vulnerable communities should consider the following principles.

Fund the Facilitation

Program funding should allow for customer engagement, assessment, coordination and post-installation support in addition to the physical technology. The customer facilitation component should be treated as part of the intervention rather than as an administrative overhead.

Use Trusted Local Organisations

Where possible, programs should engage organisations that already have relationships within the target community. The value of these organisations is not limited to recruitment. They can provide local knowledge, build trust, advocate for households and help coordinate delivery.

Design Around the Customer Journey

Programs should recognise that awareness, engagement, assessment, decision-making, installation and post-installation support are all part of the customer experience. Program performance should therefore consider more than the final number of installations.

Keep the Process Simple

The amount of paperwork, decision-making and coordination required from households should be minimised. Where multiple organisations are involved, the program should provide a clear point of contact that can coordinate information and responsibilities.

Focus on Trust

Program timelines should allow sufficient time for the delivery partner to gain the trust of the households, and for each household to properly understand the offer and make an informed decision.

Tailored Solutions

Technology packages should have sufficient flexibility to respond to individual household and property circumstances. A standardised approach can simplify procurement and delivery, but excessive standardisation may create barriers where a proposed solution does not meet the needs of a particular household. This approach will also develop trust and improve the customers' perception of the project being in their best interest.

Considerations for Renters and Landlords

The split incentive between the person who occupies the property and the person who controls the property requires a different engagement pathway. Landlord approval, property management arrangements and tenant communication should be considered during program design rather than addressed only after a household has expressed interest.

Measure More Than Installations

Program evaluation should consider a broader range of outcomes, including:

- **Participation rates;**
- **Customer experience;**
- **Changes in energy use;**
- **Household comfort;**
- **Confidence using new technologies;**
- **Ongoing appliance use;**
- **Barriers encountered;**
- **Reasons for non-participation; and**
- **Lessons for future delivery.**

Where possible, these measures should be considered alongside the technical and network goals and outcomes of the program.

Conclusion

The ElectriFAIRcation Project provided an opportunity to examine household electrification from both a technical and customer perspective, with a particular focus on households that may otherwise experience greater barriers to participating in the energy transition.

The project demonstrated that fully funded technology can remove a significant financial barrier, but it does not remove all of the reasons a household may choose not to participate.

For many households, the decision was influenced by trust, familiarity with existing technologies, property conditions, household priorities, concerns about disruption and confidence that the proposed solution would meet their needs.

The experience in Morwell therefore suggests that effective electrification programs need to meet households where they are, rather than expecting households to navigate the transition themselves. This means investing into a trusted local delivery partner to manage the engagement process, providing personalised advice, simplifying the customer journey and allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to individual circumstances.

The role of GCCN as a local delivery partner provided a practical connection between households and the broader project. By providing a consistent point of contact, understanding local circumstances and helping coordinate the transition, the delivery partner could help turn a technically available opportunity into a practical and achievable option for individual households.

For future programs, a central lesson from ElectriFAIRcation is that the upfront cost of electrification equipment is only one component of the transition. The household's circumstances and priorities, the relationships established through the engagement

process, and the way in which the project is coordinated and delivered can all influence whether a household is able and willing to make the change.

The project experience suggests that reducing the energy transition equity gap requires more than making electrification technology available. It requires a delivery model that actively supports households through the transition, particularly where financial circumstances, housing conditions, trust, knowledge or competing priorities make it more difficult for them to act independently.

In this context, the combination of appropriate funding, trusted local engagement, personalised solutions and simplified project delivery provides a practical model for supporting households that may otherwise face greater barriers to participating in the energy transition.

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