



Efficient Homes

HOUSING POLICY DEEP DIVE 2023

The poor energy performance of South Australian homes leads to high energy costs and low thermal comfort.

In a cost of living crisis, the poor energy performance of South Australian housing exacerbates energy and housing affordability issues.



Why are we focusing on energy performance and electrification in South Australian houses?

- **Lack of access to healthy housing and measures to improve household energy performance can drive inequality and cause more households to slip into energy poverty.**
- Modest investments in energy efficiency improvements can lead to significant savings on energy bills, and other benefits for households.
- Governments have committed to emissions reductions and a net-zero carbon future. This cannot be achieved without significant and rapid household electrification and retrofitting.

Key considerations in our work on energy performance and electrification

- 8 million homes were built before energy efficiency standards were introduced
- Investing rapidly in significant energy performance retrofits and household electrification is a highly effective way to relieve pressure on the cost of living, on the electricity grid, and on the environment.
- People are dying and getting sick because they can't afford to keep their homes at a livable temperature, or because their homes can't maintain a livable temperature.
- Poor household energy performance forces people to waste energy just to make their homes livable. **Living in a healthy home shouldn't break the bank.**
- Failing to prioritise low-income households increases the likelihood that they are left behind in the energy transition.
- This is an area where the cost of living crisis and the climate crisis intersect very visibly. This presents unique opportunities to collaborate, but also to have significant positive impacts.



Benefits of improving energy performance

Gas supply charge

You'll save money on every gas appliance you replace with an efficient electric one and there are additional savings by disconnecting from the gas network completely. Gas abolishment may be as simple as closing your account but it may also require the complete removal of the gas metre and piping from the gas main. Speak to your retailer to understand more.

Available upgrades:

✓ Remove gas supply charge **Save \$215**

Insulating walls

Insulation works like a blanket to keep households at a more comfortable temperature. It is also useful in hot conditions to keep warmth from coming into the house. The walls of some houses are suitable for 'blow in' insulation that doesn't require the removal of plaster.

Available upgrades:

✓ Insulate walls **Save \$310**

Heating

In colder climates you can achieve the biggest savings by changing the way you heat your home. If you have a reverse cycle air conditioner simply change the setting from cool to heat. Heat pumps, the technology behind reverse recycle air conditioners are one of the most efficient appliances ever made, generating up to 400% more energy than they use. Using a heat pump to heat your home is the cheapest option and most people already have them installed!

Available upgrades:

✓ Reverse cycle air-con **Save \$271**

Secondary glazing

A secondary layer of glazing on an existing window, or within an existing window frame can have a similar impact to double glazing at a significantly reduced price.

Available upgrades:

✓ Glaze all windows **Save \$142**

Draught sealing

Reducing the amount of hot or cold air that moves in and out of your home can make a big difference in how much energy is needed to keep it at a comfortable temperature. In colder climates, it's one of the most effective cost saving measures.

Available upgrades:

✓ Seal doors and windows **Save \$270**

Stovetop and oven

Induction cooking allows high power and very rapid increases in temperature to be achieved. Changes in heat settings are also instantaneous. In contrast, cooking with gas releases harmful chemicals and represents a similar danger for children to living with an indoor smoker.

Available upgrades:

✓ Induction stove & oven **Save \$15**

Hot water

Inefficient hot water systems can drive up your energy bills and there are savings to be made by switching from gas to a heat pump hot water system. While we haven't included it here, in sunny places you may also want to consider a solar hot water system.

Available upgrades:

✓ Electric heat pump **Save \$448**

Reducing subfloor ventilation

Applies to houses with a suspended timber floor where a lack of access means underfloor insulation is not an option. Heat losses through a suspended floor are greatest when there are high levels of ventilation under the floor. This might be due to large gaps in the walls enclosing (or surrounding) the sub-floor space, or no sub-floor walls at all.

Available upgrades:

✓ Blocking subfloor vents **Save \$83**

With these changes, you could save **\$2,106** a year and **26,514 kg** of greenhouse gas emissions over 10 years.



The Cost of Inefficient Housing

- Research from SACOSS and Renew:
 - SA households are paying more than they need to when heating (and cooling) their homes
 - Switching from gas to electric heating can save households at least \$500*, while undertaking further energy efficiency upgrades such as installing ceiling insulation, blinds, and draught proofing can leave households over \$1000* better off each year. When thermal efficiency improvements are combined with a switch to reverse cycle air conditioning, households can see significant energy bill reductions even with the addition of summer cooling that may have been unavailable to them previously.
 - Up front costs can be a significant barrier, however where government rebates are available the upgrades/retrofits pay for themselves more quickly
- Research from Better Renting: estimating the cost of inefficient rental housing in SA
 - There are an estimated 145,000 rental households (out of a total 190,000 rental households) that would benefit from minimum energy efficiency standards
 - The average inefficient household is missing out on \$2800 of benefits per year. The least efficient households (about 42,000 of them) are missing out by about \$4500 per year.
 - **Renters are missing out on about \$410 million a year in SA**

SACOSS' work on energy performance and electrification

Key issues:

- Poor energy performance of rental properties
- Poor energy performance of existing housing stock
- Introducing mandatory disclosure and minimum standards
- Electrification and a just energy transition
- Mass, rapid energy performance retrofits
- Prioritising low income households

What we're working on:

- Residential Tenancies Act review
- National collaborations
- Research on costs of inefficient heating and cooling in Adelaide
- Fact sheets and lobbying
- Eyes on the budget: energy relief package energy efficiency measures (federal), concessions (state)

What can we do?

Joint Statement for Organisations:



<https://tinyurl.com/252jd3w5>

email your logo to

malwina@sacoss.org.au

JOINT STATEMENT A CALL FOR FAIR RENTAL LAWS

- 1** Abolish no cause evictions
- 2** Limit rent increases (to CPI)
- 3** Introduce minimum energy efficiency standards
- 4** Ensure landlords cannot unreasonably refuse a pet



Make Renting Fair Email Campaign:



<https://tinyurl.com/5n7ev22y>

Social media assets available:

<https://tinyurl.com/mbr72csh>

Community Sector Blueprint:



<https://tinyurl.com/3tudjvnz>