

Information for Participants

Switching to Clean Energy: What Households Need



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Introduction

We are researchers from the University of Melbourne and the community organisation Brotherhood of St Laurence, studying people's willingness and ability to shift away from gas towards electric appliances in the home.

We are inviting you to participate in our research project by completing a survey and/or discussing gas and electric appliances use in your household to understand what you may want and need in the shift.

Your answers will help us write a report about prioritising where money should be spent, whether it be on the gas network or to help people buy electric appliances.

This research aims to ensure your voice is heard.

This document provides information to help you decide if you would like to participate. **Please read it carefully** and feel free to ask us questions at any time.

Participating in this research is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. You can stop at any time.

You will receive a **supermarket voucher** as a thank you for participating in this research.

What is this research about?

Gas is widely used for heating, cooking and hot water in Victoria. You may have gas appliances in your home, such as stovetops and heaters.

Governments across the world are considering when and how to **move away from gas** to alternative fuel sources, including in Victoria ([Victoria's Gas Substitution Roadmap](#)). Planning is still underway, which provides a great opportunity to include the experiences of a broad range of Victorians in the discussion – especially those who may find a shift like this challenging.

This project is led by researchers from the University of Melbourne, in partnership with staff from the Brotherhood of St Laurence (which is also funding this research). We are part of a larger team in **The Life Course Centre** doing research to try to create real change for people experiencing disadvantage in Australia. You can find out more about us at [here](#).

We are keen to understand what you think about this move away from gas and how it might affect you and your community, how you are managing the cost of energy, and what kinds of help you may need if you have to shift away from gas.

What will I be asked to do?

1. You are invited to complete an **online survey**, which will include questions about members of your household, your financial situation, your current energy use (i.e. for heating, cooking and hot water), and the home you live in. This should take about **15-20 minutes**.
2. Some people may also be invited to join a **small group or one-on-one discussions** (in person or online). If you agree to participate, you will be asked to share your thoughts and experiences in more detail. Group discussions will take approximately **one hour**, with one-on-one discussions expected to be shorter, and will be audio-recorded to make sure all information is documented accurately. Discussions may take place in a public space or within a private residence.
3. For those who join a small group or one-on-one discussion, you will be invited to share a copy of your most recent **gas and/or electricity bill(s)** with the research team. This will provide further information on your energy expenses, how these have changed, and what types of support measures might help you. Providing a copy of your energy bills is optional, and you can still participate in the project if you choose not to share your bills.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. **You are able to withdraw at any time**, without giving a reason. You may stop during a survey or discussion and ask that your information is not used. You should not feel any obligation to take part. This is independent University research and, all information that you provide will be kept confidential and will not be passed onto any other organisations, community groups or research teams you may be directly or indirectly involved with.

What are the possible benefits?

We aim for this project to provide strong evidence and recommendations to guide **support measures to help households affected by the shift away from gas**. This may include programs by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and policies of the Victorian Government. Our research may also help to guide decisions about **gas pricing**.

You will receive a **\$30 voucher** in appreciation for your time to complete the survey. If you are invited and agree to participate in a discussion group, you will receive an additional voucher, and will be reimbursed for your travel costs.

What are the possible risks?

You might find it inconvenient to complete the survey or join discussions, or might feel frustrated or upset to talk about financial pressures and other difficulties.

Psychological or financial counselling

If participating in this project raises any wellbeing or mental health concerns, support is available 24/7 from **Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636** or **Lifeline on 13 11 14**. If you have concerns about debt or your financial situation, you can speak with a free financial counsellor by calling the **National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007**.

Energy specific support

For general energy-related information and resources, including advice on how to lower your bills, you can try the **Victorian Energy Compare [website](#)**. If you are having trouble paying your energy bills, you should first contact your energy retailer and ask for assistance. If they haven't helped you, you can contact the **Energy and Water Ombudsman on 1800 500 509** or via the [website](#).

Will I hear about the results of this project?

Your ideas and opinions will be used to write a report which we share with the Brotherhood of St Laurence. You will receive a **summary of research findings via email**. Our report will also be available on the websites of the [Brotherhood of St Laurence](#) and the [Life Course Centre](#).

What will happen to information about me?

All information you provide will be kept **confidential**. Your name will not be used in any reports or discussions about this project, and will be kept separately from the information you share with us. Information will be stored securely by the University for five years after the project finishes. It will be used only by members of this research team, and will not be shared with other organisations or individuals. If you are to take part in a group discussion, you will be identifiable amongst the other participants.

You may request a copy of your responses from the survey or focus groups by contacting: Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran – sangeetha.chandra@unimelb.edu.au or 0418 329 689

Who is funding this project?

This project is funded by the **Brotherhood of St Laurence**, which has a long-standing commitment to protecting and supporting low-income households through the energy transition (see: [Affordable, clean energy](#) for more information). Researchers conducting this project are also supported by government funding through the **Australian Research Council**.

Where can I get further information?

If you have any specific questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran – sangeetha.chandra@unimelb.edu.au) or 0418 329 689.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

If you have any concerns you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, you can contact the **Research Integrity Administrator** in the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Melbourne, by email (research-integrity@unimelb.edu.au) or phone (8344 1814). All complaints will be treated confidentially. Please provide these details:

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Ethics ID number:	24478