

# GAS FREE, HEALTHY HOMES

**To: The Hon. Penny Sharpe MP, NSW Minister for Climate Change, Energy and Environment**

cc: The Hon. Chris Minns, MP, Premier of NSW

the Hon. Ryan Park, MP, NSW Minister for Health

the Hon. Paul Scully, MP, NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

the Hon. Rose Jackson, MP, NSW Minister for Housing, Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health

Dear Minister Sharpe,

The burning of gas in homes is harming people in NSW and is contributing to catastrophic climate change. As health and community service workers, students and organisations, we urgently request that your government replace household gas with renewable-powered electricity.

Domestic gas use poses a range of direct and indirect risks to health, which many of us are witnessing in the communities we serve:

- Indoor pollution from gas appliances causes and exacerbates asthma and other illnesses and can even cause death (1).
- Pollution from gas stoves has been estimated to account for 12% of the childhood asthma burden in Australia (2).
- A child living in a house with a gas stove faces roughly a 30% increased risk of asthma (3). This is comparable to a child living with household cigarette smoke (4,5).
- Carbon monoxide poisoning from gas appliances is a well-recognised and preventable cause of hospital attendances and deaths (6,7) including a near-fatal incident involving three residents of Western Sydney in September 2022 (8).
- Gas flames release benzene, which can cause cancer and therefore should be kept at the lowest level possible indoors (9).

The burning of gas is contributing to dangerous climate change. Climate change is a health emergency that has become all too apparent to NSW residents in recent years due to devastating bushfires, floods and heatwaves, all of which can have significant and potentially life-threatening health impacts (10).

There is no feasible pathway to a carbon-neutral gas network (11), so to reach NSW's net zero targets, the gas network will have to be shut down by 2050 at the latest. Healthier and more economical electric alternatives for all current domestic uses of gas exist, with a plausible pathway to net zero carbon emissions for the electricity grid. The NSW Government should prioritise the health, climate and economic benefits of an accelerated decommissioning of the reticulated gas distribution network.

By way of precedent, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, and multiple international jurisdictions are already phasing out gas connections to new homes (12, 13).

At the household level, the energy bill savings derived from upgrading to heat pump-based heating and induction stoves surpass the initial upgrade costs within a few years (14). This initial cost, however, can be a barrier to low-income households, so to assure energy equity, targeted assistance is important (15).

People residing in either public or private rental housing are generally unable to choose whether or not to use indoor gas and therefore need assistance to avoid being left behind with high bills and health impacts as others transition away from gas.

Furthermore, households who continue using gas during the transition can decrease exposure to toxins by optimising ventilation, which should be a focus of community education campaigns.

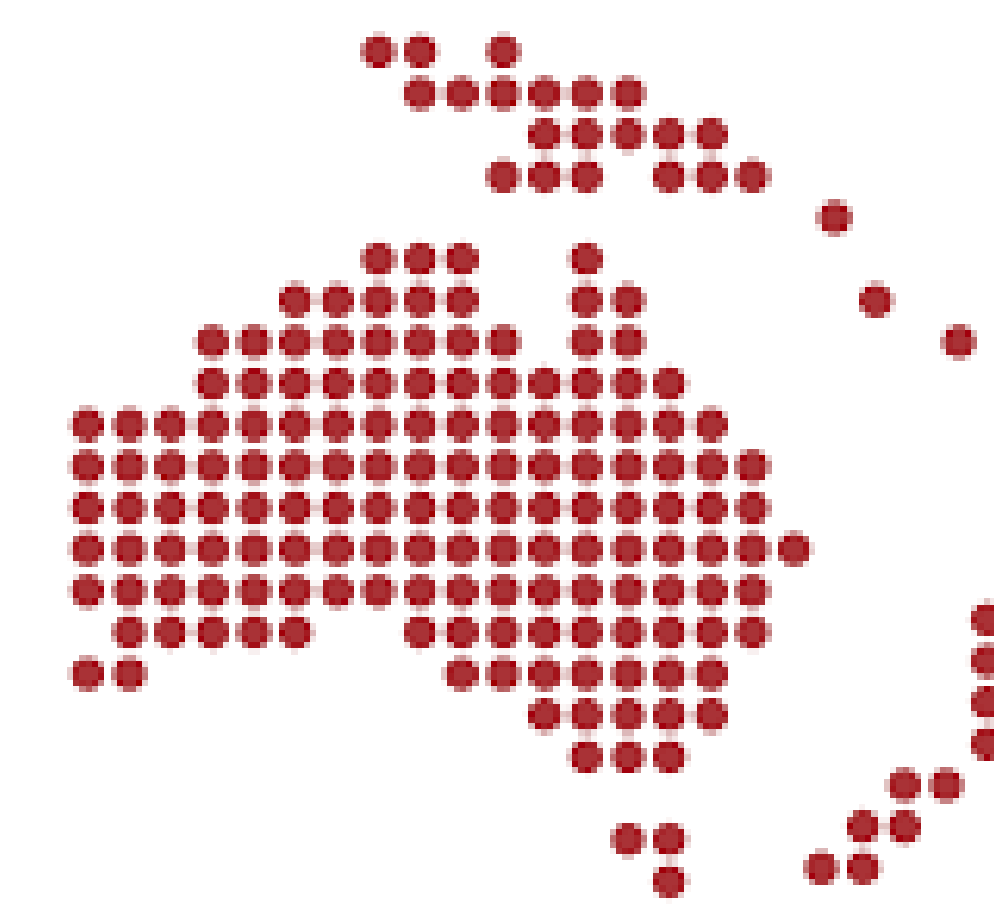
**We, therefore, request that the NSW Government publicly commit to the following:**

1. No new gas connections to NSW homes by 2025.
2. Means-tested financial assistance for NSW residents to replace gas appliances with electric alternatives, taking advantage of the 2023 Federal budget Household Energy Upgrades Fund (e.g. direct subsidies, rebates and/or no-interest loans).
3. Abolition of gas disconnection fees by the end of 2025.
4. A requirement for landlords to undertake safety checks on all gas appliances every 2 years and replace gas appliances that fail after 2025 with energy-efficient electric alternatives.
5. Ending the sale of gas appliances in NSW by the end of 2030
6. Undertaking public health education on minimising exposure to toxic air pollution in homes still using gas.
7. A commitment to replacing gas with electricity in all public and government buildings, including all public housing and public hospitals, by 2035 at the latest.
8. In the interim until all public housing is electrified, establishing a pathway for people living with asthma or other lung conditions in public housing to have gas appliances replaced with electrical alternatives as a priority at the recommendation of their GP, paediatrician or respiratory specialist.



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We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this further. Sincerely,





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