

Co-designing energy efficiency for tenants improves climate and health

Tenants do not have the same capacity to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, this impacts their health and wellbeing, finances and the climate.

Improving the energy efficiency of housing and having access to affordable renewable energy systems can reduce carbon emissions, address the impacts of climate change on our mental and physical health by making homes warmer in winter and cooler in summer. It can also increase financial savings as homeowners and renters don't have to pay so much to heat and cool their homes.

Tenants do not have the same agency in and capacity to improve the energy efficiency of their homes nor have they equitable access to affordable renewable energy systems as these often depend on landlords. Their rental homes are also generally poorer quality and thus they are more prone to the impacts of climate change on their health.

The Mount Alexander Shire West End Resilience Network (WER) had delivered four energy efficiency workshops for homeowners but were keen to engage with tenants. Loddon Malle Public Health Unit staff facilitated a local collaboration to develop a pilot workshop with tenants.

The content of a pilot workshop and workshop communications were co-designed by the WER team and the local tenants' rights working group linked to the Mount Alexander Shire My Home Network, the latter keeping the language plain and bringing their expertise of living in poorer quality housing, including speaking on this at the workshop. The lived-experience group were able to identify priority needs to be addressed at the workshop and understood how to navigate systems of assistance for tenants.

The workshop was attended by 21 people and while the numbers seemed low it allowed a more collective

conversation on climate change and health, energy efficiency and literacy and tenants' rights. 87.5% of attendees found the workshop of practical assistance to them. "It would be great to get this information out to renters in the broader community. I walked away with energy saving tools. I felt inspired"

The next steps are to:

- expand reach of this messaging by delivering similar workshops, sharing information in different and more anonymous ways (eg stalls, markets, Salvation Army and through trusted interface organisation with tenants) and development of an audio-visual resource
- build on the local climate change and housing work raising community awareness of the housing crisis, low rental affordability and breaking down that stigma. This stigma impacts attendance at events for tenants.
- link aspects of housing energy efficiency to tenants' rights which requires a dedicated session.

Recommendations

1. Co-design energy efficiency/literacy workshops or programmes with local tenants, this was invaluable to understand the barriers and enablers for this group. Including appropriately supported lived experience speakers, their input was invaluable and most appreciated by the attendees.
2. Continue this integrated approach across climate change and health, energy efficiency and literacy and tenants rights.
3. Raise awareness of the State Government's recommendations on minimum energy efficiency standards for rentals

