

COMMON SENSE:

HOW TO TALK ABOUT CLIMATE, COSTS AND EVERYDAY LIFE

A practical guide for community voices



CLIMATE
MEDIA
CENTRE

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is for people with skin in the game - those who have watched their power bills rise, who are worried about the costs of keeping their car on the road, or who have switched to solar and can't believe they didn't do it sooner.

Your stories matter. This guide will help you share them with confidence.

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Helping Australians Speak Out

The Climate Media Centre is a project of the Climate Council.

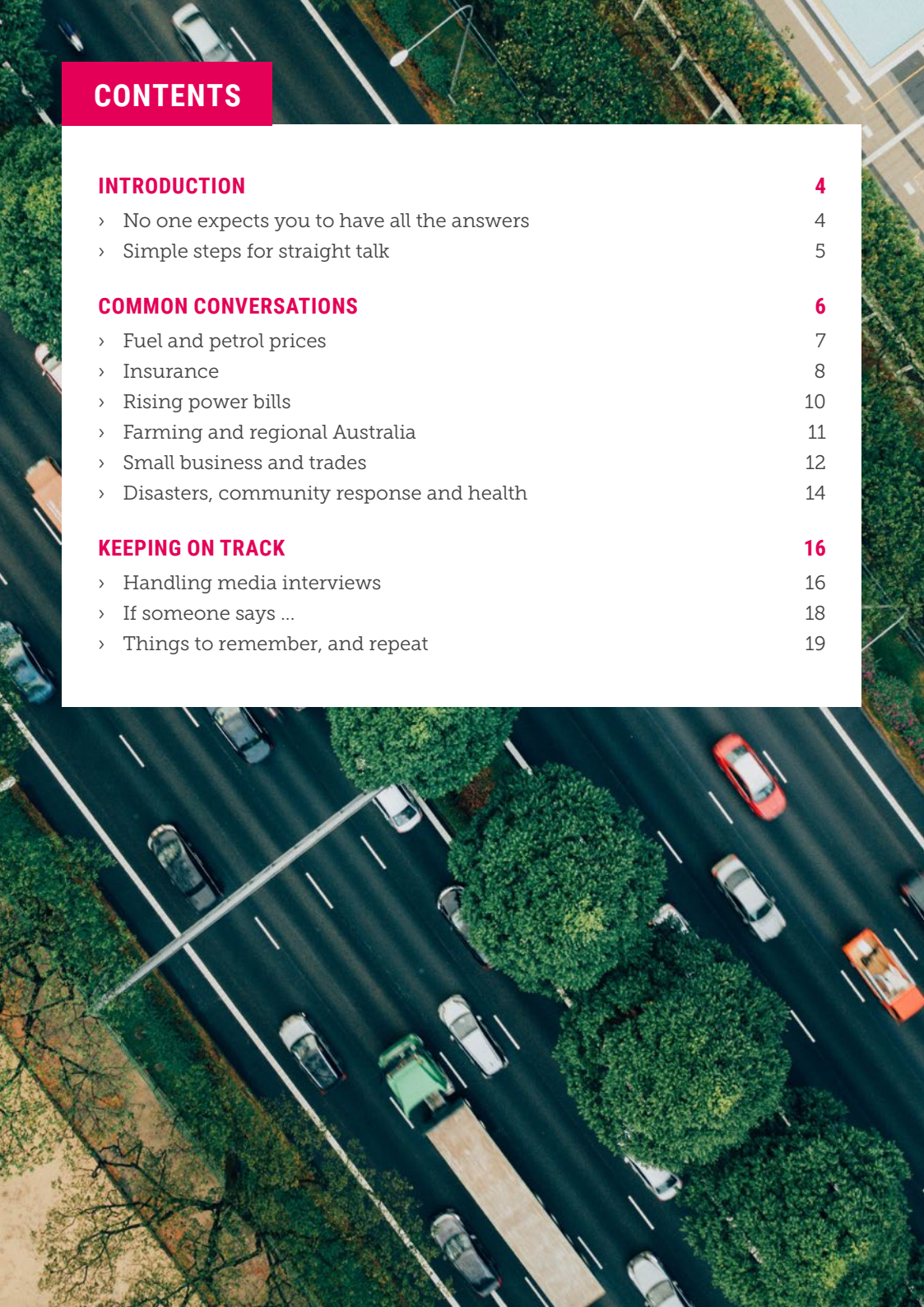
We identify, train and support credible community voices to:

- › Share their stories in the media; and
- › Advocate for practical solutions

We need to keep speaking out to get the solutions we need. If you'd like to find out more, or connect, then email info@climatemediacentre.org.au or visit www.climatecouncil.org.au/climate-media-centre

The Climate Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live, meet and work. We wish to pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and recognise the continuous connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to land, sea and sky. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership of First Nations people here and worldwide in protecting Country, and securing a safe and liveable climate for us all.

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An aerial photograph of a multi-lane highway. Several cars are visible, including a red car, a white car, and a green car. There are large green trees along the side of the road. A street light is visible in the upper left corner.

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Image: Year 4 students are taught at the Living School in Lismore, New South Wales, which was caught up in the town's record flood of February 2022. Afterwards, the school was unable to secure flood insurance. Picture: Climate Council / Andrew Quilty.

No one expects you to have all the answers

No one is expecting you to have all the answers... but if no one is out there talking about this stuff, then we're honestly stuffed.

Most people feel ripped off.

We're paying much more than we used to, for just about everything. At the same time, corporations are raking in record profits. People deserve to know why this is happening, and what we can do about it.

You don't need all the answers to speak up.

Most of us aren't experts when it comes to climate science or energy, but we are all experts on our own life and experiences. *"I don't know how the energy market works, but I do know what solar has done for my power bill"* is an honest and trustworthy response to queries about power prices.

Your story is more powerful than any statistic.

People typically don't get passionate about percentage points, or easily recall facts and figures. We remember and share stories. Sharing your story with others is one of the most powerful things you can do.

Simple steps for straight talk

Whether you're chatting to people at the school gate, down at the pub or to a reporter, follow these steps to get your point across clearly:

Step 1

Start with a problem people can relate to

A bill. The clean up after a storm. A tough business decision. A specific example of something that's happened to you, or someone you know, builds an instant connection with your audience.

Step 2

Point out what's causing the issue

Keep it simple. Who or what is responsible for this issue you're facing? This doesn't mean explaining the whole energy market if your issue is rising power bills, but you can make it clear that big energy retailers have been ripping you off.

Step 3

Name the solution, and its benefits

Focus on tangible and relatable outcomes, like savings. So, for example, making it clear that since you started generating your electricity from the sun – and bypassing the big energy retailers – you've saved lots of money.

For example, on fuel costs:

1

"Filling up a tank of petrol has nearly doubled in cost. I drive the same distances I always did – but I'm paying way more."

2

"That's what happens when we rely on fuel that's being shipped over from places we don't control."

3

"It's a good feeling: not being forced to pay whatever price they are putting up at the petrol station."

This keeps conversations constructive and grounded.



People relate to, share and remember stories. Your experiences – and what you're seeing in your community – is a powerful tool.

COMMON CONVERSATIONS

Keep the following in mind when these topics come up:



Fuel and petrol prices



Insurance



Rising power bills



Farming and regional Australia



Small business, and trades



Disasters, community response and health



Fuel and petrol prices

SAY THIS:

"Clean energy and electric vehicles give us back control."



What's happening ...

- ➔ **Australia imports more than 90% of our refined fuel.** Whenever anything goes wrong globally – a war, or shipping disruption – we pay for it at the bowser.
- ➔ We can't drill our way out of this. **Australia has already used 90% of our oil reserves**, and what's left could only meet our needs for less than a year.
- ➔ The only thing that **genuinely protects people from higher petrol prices is not needing petrol in the first place!** Shared transport, active transport like walking and riding, and electric vehicles are the answer.

DRIVE AN EV? TRY THIS:

"Honestly, it's just a weight off my shoulders not having to worry about petrol prices anymore. I plug in at home, which costs me a fraction of what fuel used to. Knowing I'm protected against any jump in petrol prices that might come tomorrow is a huge relief."

GOT A PETROL/DIESEL CAR? TRY THIS:

"It's tough pulling into the servo right now, and being forced to pay whatever they're charging. When someone says: 'Oh, we should just drill for more oil.' That sounds logical, until you realise that 90% of Australian oil reserves have already been used up. I want a real solution: to get off this stuff for good."

Insurance

SAY THIS:

"A climate disaster anywhere means higher insurance for everyone."



What's happening ...

- ➔ Climate pollution from coal, oil and gas is making **fires and floods more frequent and ferocious**.
- ➔ As a result, **extreme weather events cost Australians three times more now than they did in the 1990s**. Those costs flow through to everyone's insurance premiums.
- ➔ Insurers are pricing in climate risk today, and it's pushing up premiums everywhere. In some places, **insurance is becoming unaffordable and out of reach**.

IF YOU LIVE IN A HIGH-RISK AREA, TRY THIS:

"It's punishing. My insurance premium has more than [doubled/tripled] in [time period]. I haven't made a claim. Nothing has changed except the climate pollution that's making [extreme weather type] worse and the insurers know this. The only thing that can curb these escalating costs is cutting the pollution that's making weather more extreme."

ANYONE ELSE:

"We're all being punished, because a climate disaster anywhere means higher insurance everywhere. Even if our home has never flooded, we're still paying more because of what happened in Lismore, or on the Gold Coast. We're all sharing the cost of a problem that is being driven by climate pollution from coal, oil and gas."

IF YOU'RE PUSHING FOR CLIMATE-PROOF COMMUNITIES:

"We can't wait for help, because we're living through worsening disasters today. But just because we know [fires or floods] are getting worse because of climate pollution, doesn't mean we leave people to fend for themselves. Helping families, and communities to climate proof their homes and infrastructure means less damage and destruction later."

Image: Andrew Gissing of the Victorian State Emergency Services launches the Victorian FloodSafe program in 2012. Picture: Supplied.



Rising power bills

SAY THIS:

"Renewable energy is the only thing that's pushing power prices down."



What's happening ...

- ➔ Half of our power still comes from **expensive fossil fuels like gas and ageing coal power stations**, which break down and cause price spikes.
- ➔ Gas – which only makes up 5% of our electricity bill – sets the price up to 90% of the time. **Any spike in gas prices means our power bills jump up.**
- ➔ Experts found renewable energy like **solar panels lowered the average household bill by up to \$417 in 2024**; collectively saving Australians about \$3.8 billion.

IF YOU HAVE SOLAR OR A BATTERY, TRY THIS:

"Honestly, I feel a bit embarrassed when people bring up rising power bills because since we got [solar/solar and a battery] our bills have reduced by [X amount]. I wish we'd done it earlier, and I wish that more people could access the same savings."

LOCKED OUT OF SOLAR? TRY THIS:

"It's not right that people are being forced to choose between heating and eating. Every morning, the sun rises and those who can already tap into that are sitting pretty. For the rest of us - our power bills are being set by expensive gas. The fix is more solar, more wind, more batteries so gas doesn't get to set the price anymore."

Farming and regional Australia

SAY THIS:

"Farmers lose sleep over the weather. Now, the sun comes up and that's money in the bank and some peace of mind for them."



What's happening ...

- ➔ **Climate pollution threatens farming.** By worsening floods and fires, and altering rain patterns, pollution from coal, oil and gas makes farming more risky and expensive.
- ➔ By leasing land to solar, wind or battery operations **farmers get a steady, and reliable income.**
- ➔ By hosting their own, they **insulate themselves against rising costs.**

IF YOU'RE A FARMER:

"We put [solar or solar and a battery] on the [sheds] and it's the best insurance policy we've ever had. Our power bills have gone down [by X], and when the grid goes down we keep going. That's good farm management."

OR

"I [or my family] have been farming in this region for [X years]. We used to see [floods or droughts] every [decade]. We've had [X number] in the past [X] years. That's the high cost of climate pollution."

IF YOU LIVE REGIONALLY:

"Most people around here want to see more renewable energy and storage because it's the only thing pushing down power prices. But it also needs to be done well. Communities that are hosting deserve to share in the benefits."

Small business and trades

SAY THIS:

"No one knows what's around the corner, but with [solar/batteries/electrification] I'm back in control of my expenses."



What's happening ...

- ➔ **Climate pollution is already a material, financial risk** to many sectors of the economy and is pushing up the costs of doing business everywhere.
- ➔ Given our abundant wind and solar resources, and critical minerals, there are **lots of economic opportunities for Australia** as the world switches to clean energy.
- ➔ **32,000 more electricians will be needed in Australia** to work with renewable energy over the next seven years.

IF YOU'RE IN THE SOLAR/BATTERY INDUSTRY, TRY THIS:

"People are falling over themselves to save with solar and batteries. We're flat out. There's just so much demand."

IF YOUR BUSINESS IS BENEFITING, TRY THIS:

"I'm getting the same job done, but cheaper. My running costs are now a fraction of what I was paying [in diesel] after I switched to [an electric work van]. Plus, I can charge up tools on site."

IF CLIMATE RISKS ARE HURTING YOUR BUSINESS, TRY THIS:

"Honestly, unpredictability is the killer – power's up, heatwaves hit, then supply chain chaos. It all hits the bottom line. The businesses I see holding up best are the ones who've taken control where they can: with solar on the roof or electric vehicles. That reduces business costs and risks."

Image: Home energy consultant Seb Crangle inspects some solar panels. Picture: Supplied.



Disasters, community response and health

SAY THIS:

"It's not fair that we're mopping up the mess of another [flood or fire] caused by climate pollution when coal and gas corporations make record profits and pay next to no tax."



What's happening ...

- ➔ Australians are experiencing more frequent and intense swings between extremes – from **heatwaves and bushfires to floods and cyclones**. This pattern (climate whiplash), is a clear signal of a climate system being destabilised by pollution from coal, oil and gas.
- ➔ **Communities that are well prepared recover faster.** This doesn't stop when the floodwaters recede, or the fires are put out. Recovery can take months or even years.
- ➔ As a country, Australia spends **billions responding to disasters instead of preparing for them.**

IF YOU'RE SPEAKING AFTER A DISASTER:

"I'm cleaning up the mess of another [flood or fire] while coal and gas corporations make record profits and pay little to no tax. It's not right, and it has to change."



Images: Top left, farmer, scientist and storyteller Annika Molesworth. Picture: Supplied. Top right, former President of the Fire Brigade Employees' Union and professional firefighter Darin Sullivan. Picture: Supplied. Bottom left, former coal worker and renewable energy advocate Tony Wolfe. Picture: Climate Council. Bottom right, dive and snorkel guide on the Great Barrier Reef Tanya Murphy. Picture: Supplied.

Handling media interviews

If you're speaking to a journalist or on camera, this structure will help keep you on track:

1 Start with your experience

For example: A bill, a storm, or a business decision.

"My insurance premium jumped after the floods..."

2 Explain what's happening

For example: What changed? What caused it?

"That's happening in many places because climate-fuelled disasters are becoming more frequent..."

3 Connect to the bigger picture

For example: Energy prices, disasters, or climate risks.

"Insurance is getting more expensive because disasters are becoming more costly..."

4 Point to practical solutions

For example: What is helping people respond?

"The more we reduce risks and plan ahead the more we can stabilise these costs."



Image: Climate Media Centre's Emily Watkins runs a practice interview with a trainee. Picture: Climate Council.

If someone says ...

Some things people have heard are just plain wrong. When they've got their wires crossed, here's how to respond:

Myth: ***"Renewables are making power bills more expensive"***

Try this: *"Renewable energy is the only thing pushing down power prices, while gas and coal push it up."*

Myth: ***"We should build nuclear instead"***

Try this: *"Our coal power stations are closing and nuclear won't be ready until the 2040s. We can't afford to wait and allow the lights to go out when we can be building more renewable energy and storage right now."*

Myth: ***"Wind and solar farms are wrecking agricultural land"***

Try this: *"I've seen sheep happily grazing under solar panels and wind turbines. Most farmers I speak to are interested in a secondary income that helps them weather the bad years."*

Myth: ***"What happens when the sun doesn't shine / wind doesn't blow"***

Try this: *"One word: batteries. Installations of home batteries more than doubled last year. There's more than 400,000 households using solar power day and night now."*

Myth: ***"Transmission lines are being forced on farmers"***

Try this: *"Poles and wires deliver the power we need, just like roads connect towns. We need them. So let's make sure farmers get a fair go and get on with building them."*

Myth: ***"Australia is only one percent of emissions"***

Try this: *"Regardless of what anyone else does, clean energy makes sense for Australia: it's the lowest cost option, it never runs out, and we're in control of it."*

The bottom line

The costs of climate change are showing up in lots of everyday ways, including our:



Insurance premiums



Power prices



Business costs



Disaster recovery costs



Things to remember, and repeat

If you can only get one point across, in any conversation, come back to one of these:

"A disaster anywhere means higher insurance everywhere."

"The faster we build clean energy, the more we'll be protected against global supply shortages and price spikes."

"Renewable energy is already helping lower power bills."

"It's unfair that communities are paying the price for climate-fuelled disasters while coal and gas corporations are raking in record profits."

"Many Australians are already saving money with solar, electric homes and EVs."



Sharing your story, and helping people understand these connections is one of the most valuable things you can do.

The Climate Council is a fearless champion of the climate solutions that Australia needs. People power got us started and we are proudly community-funded and independent.

CLIMATE COUNCIL

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