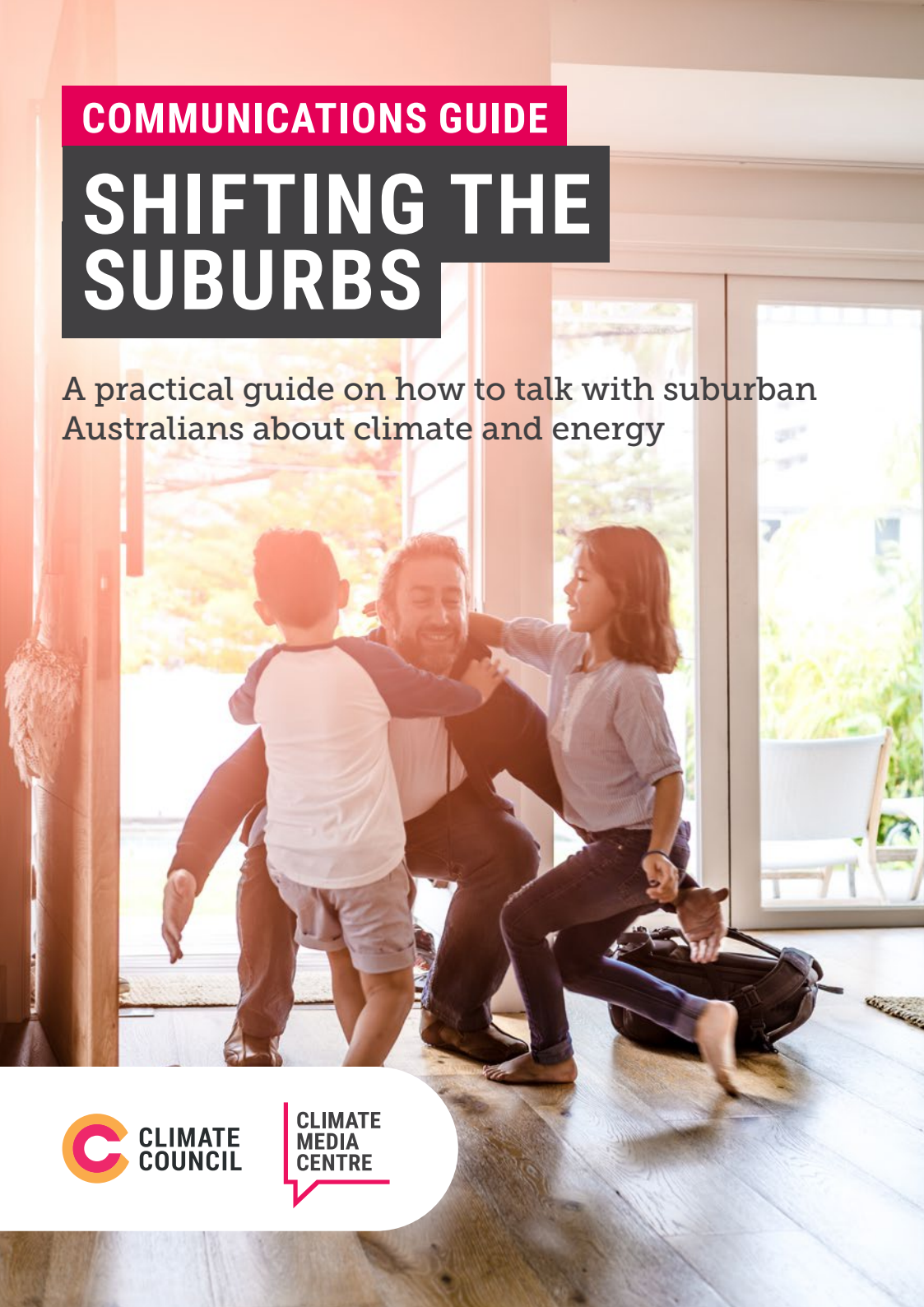




COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

SHIFTING THE SUBURBS

A practical guide on how to talk with suburban Australians about climate and energy



CLIMATE
MEDIA
CENTRE

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is for those communicating to people with skin in the game. People 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.

This guide will help you talk in ways that connect.

Authors: Kirsten Tidswell and Dinah Arndt.

Reviewers and contributors: Simon Welsh of RedBridge Group, Amanda McKenzie of Climate Council, Dr Rebecca Huntley of 89 Degrees East, Nicole Krause of Sunrise Project Australia and Daniel Hurst of Global Strategic Communications Council.

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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TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS

1

Cost gets you a foot in the door – control is what holds attention

→ See p. 11

With cost of living top of mind for most people, start with what's hurting their wallets. However, it's speaking to their desire for control that will cut through.

2

Name the villain: profiteering corporations and big polluters

→ See p. 14

Suburban people are sick of being ripped off, and most already believe corporations are profiteering at their expense. Naming this explicitly will cut through.

3

Put the bill where it belongs

→ See pp. 16-17

It's unfair that coal, oil and gas corporations pocket the profits from their polluting products while the public pays for the damages. Name what's unfair, and the solution.

4

It's plain common sense

→ See p. 13

Homegrown solar, wind and storage are our best option on price, pollution and energy security. This is common sense for most people across the political divide.

5

Real people, plain language

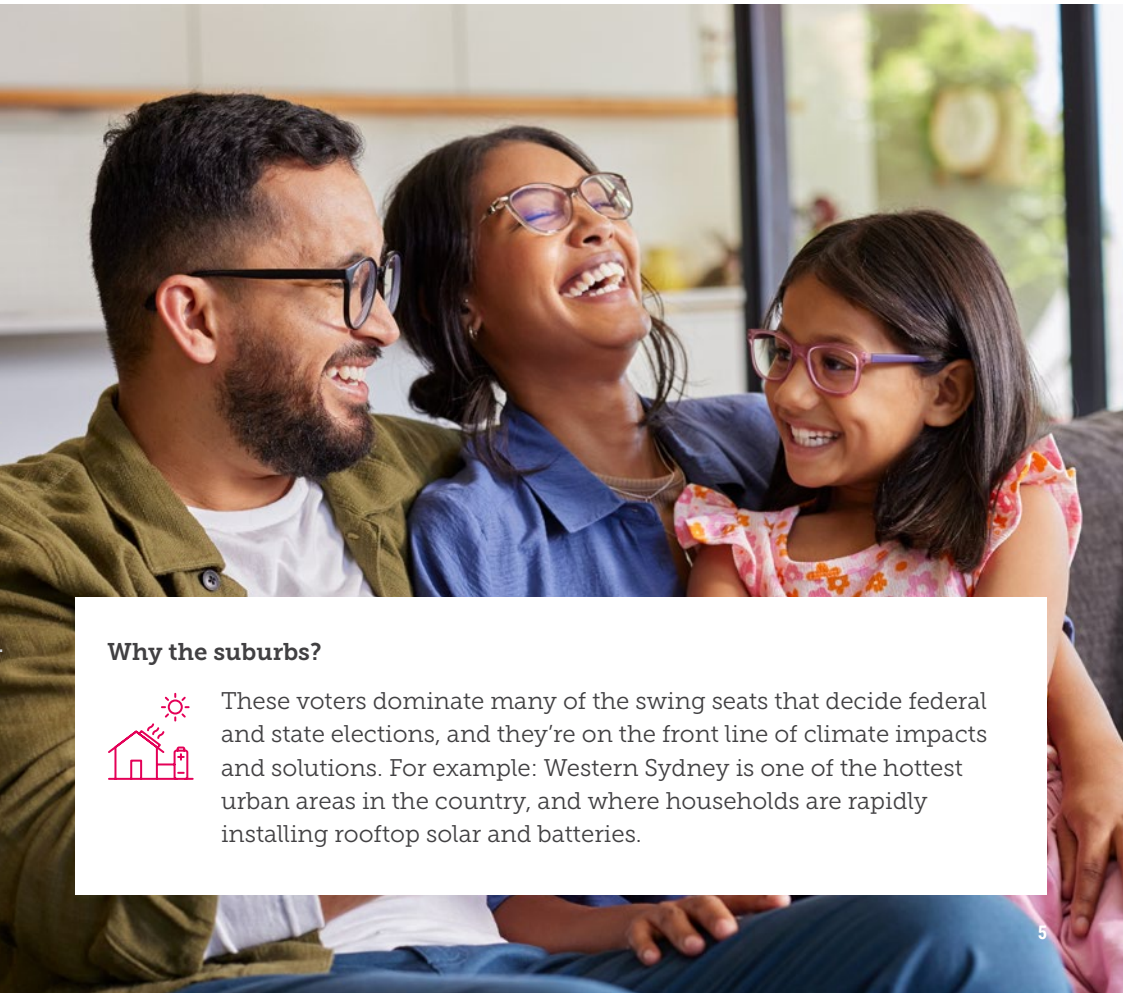
→ See p. 7

Messages tend to land best from voices people already trust – neighbours, farmers, local doctors and community leaders. Always lead with values, stories and everyday language; avoid jargon and technicalities.

WHY THIS GUIDE?

This guide is for communicators talking about climate and energy with suburban audiences.

This guide primarily draws on 2026 research by RedBridge Group for the Climate Council: a survey of 2009 voters across the middle and outer suburbs of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, plus focus groups, against a backdrop of war in Iran, fuel price spikes and shifting politics. This guide explains what resonates, and who these voters want to hear it from.



Why the suburbs?



These voters dominate many of the swing seats that decide federal and state elections, and they're on the front line of climate impacts and solutions. For example: Western Sydney is one of the hottest urban areas in the country, and where households are rapidly installing rooftop solar and batteries.

Audience snapshot

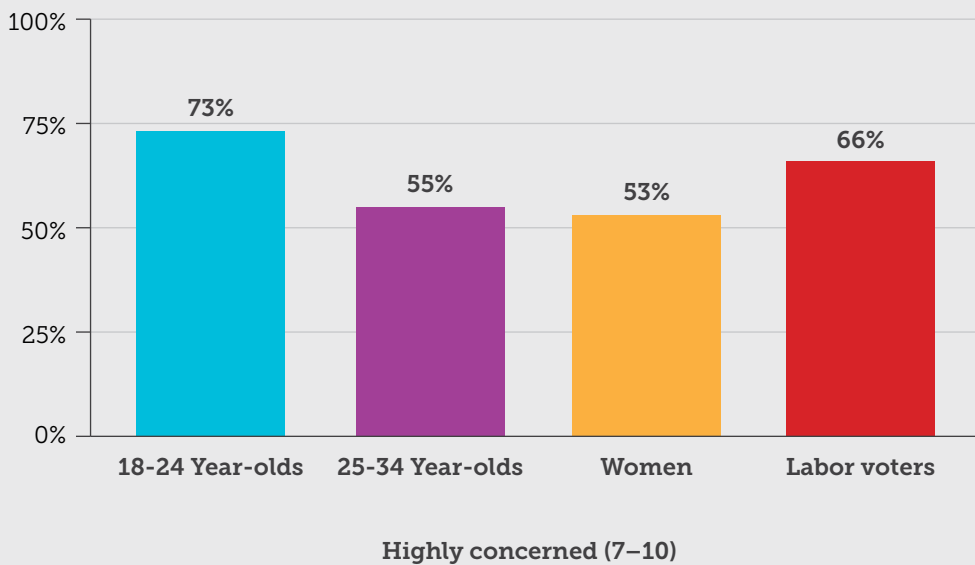
At an aggregate level, they are more likely than their inner-city counterparts to:

- › Be experiencing greater economic pressure, with higher rates of mortgage stress;
- › Work in casual roles and in service/care industries;
- › Have a mix of education including tertiary and vocational training; and
- › Be parents with children in school or child care.

Climate concern is strong in the suburbs

Most suburban Australians (75%) have moderate to high climate concern (5–10 on a 10-point scale); and 49% are highly concerned (7–10). This jumps up when you point to rises in insurance, or food prices.

Who is the most concerned?



Where are they at?

There's incredible cultural and linguistic diversity across Australia's suburbs. Before deciding what to say, it helps to understand where people's heads are at right now.



Cost of living dominates

Climate and energy questions are heard through that lens, so even people who care about climate may not respond to climate-led messaging. That's not scepticism - it's bandwidth.



They're tired of the noise

Constant political argument about climate and energy, from activists, media and industry alike, has left many people fatigued and confused.



They seek balance

Messaging perceived as one-sided or extreme is dismissed; measured views are far more trusted. The key is connecting climate to what matters most: their bills, their kids' future, and the sense that powerful corporations are getting away with something at their expense.



Messengers matter

Suburban Australians are deeply sceptical of messaging from vested interests or those viewed as politically motivated, whatever the message. Consider who your audience trusts most.

Note for communicators



Our research included a focus group with culturally and linguistically diverse participants, but wasn't designed to break results down by cultural or linguistic background. So the advice is general in nature. For tailored advice, contact experts like [Asians for Climate Solutions](#) or [Sapna South Asian Climate Solidarity](#).

Suburban families are under financial pressure, and many blame corporate profiteering

Suburban Australians are under financial strain across the board.



82%

Four in five suburban Australians say cost of living is putting them and their household under pressure — one in three, a great deal.



73%

of suburban voters think big energy companies are using global crises as an excuse to increase profits at the expense of everyday Australians.

So who's to blame for rising costs? Voters name many things, including inflation, global conflict and taxes. But when you dig deeper you'll find corporate "greed" or profiteering is what most people believe is the underlying cause across party lines, including One Nation voters.



**"I don't know
how much longer
we can hold on."**

– Outer suburban woman, focus group

Energy insecurity is compounding the stress

The fuel crisis of 2026 has added to the financial stress and insecurity many suburban Australians were already feeling.



83%

agree that Australia's reliance on imported fuel means our costs of living are driven up by international conflicts we cannot control. That's not energy security. That's vulnerability.



58%

agree that using our own sun and wind power is the most effective way to protect Australia from future global energy shocks.

Suburban Australians want more options, not fewer. Framing clean energy as expansion rather than replacement lands better: more sources, more control, less exposure to global price shocks.

Energy security is common ground: voters of every party rate secure, stable-priced energy as very important.

"Fuel: it's the biggest factor, right? It's impacting grocery prices, basically everything, travel. You don't know when it's going to stop."

– Outer suburban man, focus group



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Start with cost. Land on control.



Connect on climate costs that matter – like food and bills

Point to costs that are hurting people's wallets right now – like insurance, groceries and disaster relief:

- › Australians are paying the second-highest disaster costs in the world, after the US. (Source: ICA 2025)
- › Families in fire-prone regions are paying twice what they were five years ago to insure their homes. (Source: Climate Council & ELCA 2025)
- › Floods in 2022 emptied Lismore's supermarket shelves for months and caused a national lettuce shortage; in 2023, floods hit banana, mango and avocado crops. (Source: SBS/UTS, 2026; SBS)
- › Flooding in 2022 contributed to a 16.2% rise in fruit and vegetable prices, against a pre-COVID decade average of 2.5%. (Source: Treasury)

Climate-fuelled disasters are already showing up as cost-of-living pressures.



85%

agree climate disasters are pushing up insurance costs



83%

think they are pushing up food costs

TRY SAYING:

"Every time there's a flood or a fire, food prices and insurance go up. That's climate costs showing up at the checkout and on your bills."

"More than four million households have cut their power bills with solar on their roof."

"More than 600,000 families have taken back control of their power by adding a battery which lowers bills and pollution."

Renewable energy and electrification are diversifying our options

Suburban voters don't want Australia to put all its energy eggs in one basket.

In a fuel crisis, a useful way to position solar, wind and storage is as diversifying or expanding our options. They add more energy and reduce our exposure to foreign oil. Lead with energy made and controlled here that no foreign conflict can cut off.

TRY SAYING:

"Homegrown sun and wind diversify our energy supply and help Australians take back control from prices that global markets set."

"Expanding access to low-cost solar, wind and storage will allow more Australians to cut their power bills and take back control from profiteering corporations."

"If we power our cars with energy that doesn't need to be imported, we're less reliant on imports and it costs us less."



Examples of social media content that focus on costs.

Wind and sun are a homegrown, common-sense option

Suburban Australians are pragmatists and common-sense framing is effective in driving support for solar, wind and storage.

TRY SAYING:

"Australia is one of the sunniest and windiest countries on earth. It just makes sense to tap into our natural resources and power our country with homegrown wind and solar energy."

"Let's power up with our own sun and wind — energy that no war can disrupt, and no corporation can price-gouge."

"We have some of the best renewable energy resources on earth. Powering our country with Aussie sun and wind is common sense."

"The fuel crisis and the climate crisis have the same cause — expensive, polluting coal, oil and gas. The fastest way to fix both is the same: clean energy made in Australia, for Australians."



People are sick of being ripped off

Suburban Australians face rising costs and are fed up with corporate profiteering.

Focus on coal, oil and gas corporations as the biggest and most profitable polluters, getting a free ride while Australians pick up the tab for the climate damage.



64%

agree the government should not be spending billions in taxpayer-funded subsidies to fossil fuel companies.



85%

agree it's unfair that Australia exports the vast majority of its gas while Australian households and businesses pay high prices.

TRY SAYING:

"Coal, oil and gas corporations are taking our resources, polluting our climate and pocketing the returns — leaving Australians to pay now and into the future."

"Coal, oil and gas corporations are pocketing billions in taxpayer-funded subsidies and dodging the rules designed to hold them accountable."

"Locking in expensive oil and gas makes no sense when solar, wind and storage can deliver lower-cost, more reliable energy now."



Example of a media headline highlighting cost impacts hitting Australians.

Source: Climate Council [@theclimatecouncil], 1 May 2026 - Featured article: Morton, Adam, & Stock, Petra. (1 May, 2026). 'Australians will pay more if Albanese fast-tracks fossil fuel projects, former oil and gas leaders warn', The Guardian.

Clean energy should work for everyone

Millions of Australians who want to lower bills and pollution can't access the solutions, because they rent or live in an apartment.

When talking about solar, batteries and electrification, acknowledge that access is unequal — and that fixing it is part of the solution. When we explained community energy programs, 57% of voters supported them, across party lines.



TRY SAYING:

"More than four million households have solar on their roof — but if you're renting or living in an apartment, you're locked out. That's not fair, and it's something government can fix."

"Community batteries and solar-sharing programs mean renters and apartment dwellers can access the benefits of clean energy too — and cut their bills at the same time."

"The families who need the most protection from rising energy costs are often the ones least able to access solar and batteries. Closing that gap is one of the most practical things government can do right now."

Note for communicators

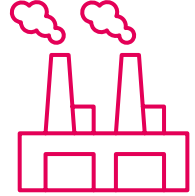


The equity angle is particularly powerful with younger suburban audiences, renters and anyone living in higher-density housing. It reframes clean energy from a homeowner benefit to a community right.



Lean into fairness

The contrast between everyday Australians tightening their belts and coal, oil and gas corporations getting a free ride resonates strongly across suburban audiences.



TRY SAYING:

"Australian families are doing their bit to cut climate pollution while big polluters aren't doing their fair share."

"While everyday Australians tighten their belts, coal, oil and gas corporations are raking in record profits and pocketing billions in taxpayer-funded subsidies."

"While big polluters pocket billions in taxpayer-funded subsidies and dodge the rules designed to hold them accountable, ordinary Australians are left footing the bill for the climate damage."



Government should be stepping in on our behalf

Frame the government's role as part of the solution: stepping in to regulate corporate profiteering and protect the community.

Suburban Australians want to see government acting in their interests, not in the interests of corporations, profit margins or economic growth at any cost.

TRY SAYING:

"The government needs to close the loopholes in our national industrial pollution law and make Australia's biggest and most profitable polluters clean up their act."

"It's time for the government to put the bill where it belongs: make big polluters pay for the damage they cause, not families."

"If we ended the billions in subsidies to coal, oil and gas corporations we could be spending that money on helping families."





WORDS TO EMBRACE & AVOID

Embrace 	Avoid or explain 	Why?
Adding or expanding solar, wind and storage.	Replacing fossil fuels with renewables.	Replacement triggers anxiety about energy insecurity. Expanding our options = more security.
Climate pollution.	Emissions or greenhouse gases.	Climate pollution is shorthand for pollution from coal, oil and gas. People understand it's bad, human-caused and solvable. Emissions is technical.
More floods, worse fires, extreme heat. Unaffordable insurance, higher food prices.	Climate targets or impacts.	Be specific about how climate change is affecting people right now, with relatable, recent examples.
Coal, oil and gas (even better: polluting coal, oil and gas)	Fossil fuels.	Many suburban Australians don't know what fossil fuels are, or why they're bad.

If asked about nuclear...

Try:

That's a fair question. Nuclear takes 15+ years and costs more than solar and wind we can build now.

We need solutions that work in the timeframe we have.

Then:

Engaging thoughtfully is more persuasive than outright rejection, or labelling those who raise it, as wrong.

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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