



To: The Hon Chris Bowen, Federal Minister for Climate Change & Energy

Cc: The Hon Jenny McAllister, Federal Assistant Minister for Climate Change & Energy
&The Hon Mark Butler, Federal Minister for Health & Aged Care
&The Hon Jim Chalmers, Federal Treasurer
&The Hon Julie Collins, Federal Minister for Housing
& The Hon Amanda Rishworth, Federal Minister for Families and Social Services

Dear Minister Bowen,

As healthcare workers and community members, we request that the Australian government protect people in social housing from the increasing health impacts of climate change by ensuring that their homes are kept at safe temperatures through building retrofits and affordable, renewable-powered air conditioning.

Heat-related illnesses kill thousands of Australians every year¹ and roughly one-third of these deaths can be attributed to climate change^{2,3}. Heatwaves increase the risk of dehydration, kidney failure, heart attacks and strokes. Older people, children, people with pre-existing health conditions and people unable to afford air conditioning are most vulnerable.

Currently, many social housing dwellings are poor quality and prone to temperature extremes^{4,6}. A 2023 survey of people on low incomes by the Australian Council of Social Services found that **94.5%** avoided using air conditioning because it is too expensive⁷. Solar panels can significantly reduce air conditioning costs, and while 30% of Australian homes now have rooftop solar, rooftop solar coverage on social housing in New South Wales, for example, is only 7%⁸.

Energy efficiency retrofits and renewable-powered air conditioning will not only protect people from extreme temperatures and drive down costs of living; they will also mitigate climate change and its health impacts in the long term by reducing dependence on polluting fossil fuel-based electricity.

We therefore request that as part of the next federal budget you commit funding to:

- 1. Roll out rooftop solar on at least 30% of Australian social housing, to be completed by the end of 2026**
- 2. Ensure access to affordable renewable electricity for social housing where rooftop solar is impractical, e.g. via power purchasing agreements and/or battery storage**
- 3. Install reverse cycle air conditioning and implement other energy efficient retrofits to achieve safe temperatures in all social housing**

Your sincerely,

Philip Swain LFEHA
EHA National President

Our Environment, Our Health, Our Future

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