

# GET OFF GAS

## INTRODUCTION

Now is the time to build a sustainable 21st Century city.

That means a Canberra with strong, resilient ecosystems, secure employment, and cheap renewable electricity for everyone.

The ACT Greens will continue to lead climate action in Australia by transforming Canberra into a net zero emission society and economy. That means replacing fossil fuel gas with clean and cheaper renewable electricity.

## WHY DO WE NEED TO GET OFF GAS?

Gas is a fossil fuel and a significant contributor to the climate crisis

**The burning of gas to heat and cool our buildings and other uses contributes approximately 22% of the [ACT's total greenhouse emissions](#).**

Furthermore, in Australia **gas is increasingly extracted by coal seam gas 'fracking'**, an activity that causes huge environmental and health impacts.

Yet at present we are not preparing for a net zero emission future, but locking in carbon pollution by continuing to allow new buildings, suburbs and facilities to be connected to fossil fuel gas infrastructure.

We need to get off gas, to support people and the planet.

The ACT Greens are committed to real climate action, by making the changes we need to create a zero emission society and economy.

**Having powered the ACT with 100% renewable electricity, we will take the next major step, and support the transition to clean, renewable electricity powered heating and cooling.**

That means ending new gas infrastructure installation, and supporting businesses, industry and the community to make the transition to a clean, renewable electricity powered city.

## OUR GETTING OFF GAS PACKAGE WILL:

1. **Establish a \$20 million fund to assist to existing homes and businesses to switch from gas to electric appliances**, including:
  - a. a community education campaign
2. Stop connecting gas to **new** stages of greenfield residential development in the ACT from 2021
3. Commence a transition project to **stop connecting fossil-fuel gas to new infill developments from 2023. The project will include:**
  - a. ensuring all new ACT Government buildings and facilities are fossil-fuel-gas free
  - b. a pilot project to develop a zero-emissions (gas free) Molonglo Commercial Centre, in partnership with expert stakeholders
  - c. sharing ACT Government expertise with industry, stakeholders and other cities
4. Roll out community-scale batteries and microgrids to support the transition to an all-electric city.
5. **Set a target of achieving a fossil-fuel-gas-free ACT by 2040**
6. Shift to world's best practice on climate-ready and environmentally sustainable buildings and planning

## 1. ESTABLISH A \$20 MILLION FUND TO ASSIST EXISTING HOMES AND BUSINESSES TO SWITCH FROM GAS TO ELECTRIC APPLIANCES

A large number of ACT homes and businesses currently utilise gas, and it is a significant task to transition them to gas-free alternatives. The Greens will support our community to make this transition fairly and reasonably, without creating disadvantage, and to be particularly mindful about potential impacts on low-income and vulnerable Canberrans.

**To assist the transition, the Greens will introduce a \$20 million program of rebates and no-interest loans to assist ACT households and businesses to transition from using gas to high-efficiency electric alternatives.**

The fund will cover household appliances such as reverse-cycle air conditioners, electric heat pumps for hot water, and electric induction for cooking. It will also cover business/industrial applications, such as industrial scale electric heat pumps.

This initiative will include **a community education component**, providing information about the economic and environmental benefits of using renewable electricity instead of fossil-fuel gas appliances. Efficient electric alternatives are likely to have lower running costs than gas counterparts, so the program will focus on removing up-front cost barriers to make efficient electric appliances the most economic choice.

Similar to the Greens "[Just Transition" energy efficiency retrofit package](#)", the program will seek to leverage additional funding from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) to support this program.

## 2. STOP CONNECTING FOSSIL-FUEL GAS TO NEW SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS FROM 2021

Recent improvements mean the ACT Government no longer requires gas to be connected to new developments; however it is still permitted, and is still largely the default.

The Greens will change the Territory Plan and relevant regulations so that gas can no longer be connected to any **new** stages of development in the ACT from 2021. This will not apply to developments that are already approved (for example, Whitlam stages 1 and 2). This allows several months after the election to make the necessary regulatory changes.

[Ginninderry stage 1 development](#) has already demonstrated that all-electric suburbs are viable, comfortable, and cost-effective. Ongoing energy costs are likely to be [significantly cheaper in an all-electric home compared to one using gas](#).

## 3. COMMENCE A TRANSITION PROJECT TO STOP CONNECTING FOSSIL-FUEL GAS TO NEW INFILL DEVELOPMENTS FROM EARLY 2023

The Greens will commence a 2 year transition project, working with industry and other relevant stakeholders, to achieve an end to gas connections to new infill developments by early 2023. These are areas that can be more challenging to develop as gas-free for various reasons, such as higher densities, or high energy use.

This project will involve working closely with industry and other stakeholders to address concerns and challenges, and will incorporate the following sub-projects:

## A. ENSURING ALL NEW ACT GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES ARE FOSSIL-FUEL-GAS FREE

Through ACT Greens Climate Change Minister Shane Rattenbury's leadership, the ACT Government has already demonstrated the viability of all-electric buildings with all-electric schools, an all-electric office building (Dickson) and a commitment to an all-electric hospital. This Government leadership and support will create an easier pathway for private developers to transition to gas-free developments by ensuring that:

- all new Government buildings and facilities are fossil-fuel-gas free,
- all newly leased government buildings are all-electric, and
- all retrofitting of Government infrastructure is fossil-fuel gas free.

## B. ZERO EMISSIONS TOWN CENTRE PROJECT

The Greens will initiate a pilot project to develop a zero-emissions (gas free) Molonglo Commercial Centre, in partnership with expert stakeholders. Lessons from this pilot will inform the transition, and help develop solutions to more challenging all-electric applications. More detail on this project is in the Greens' [Zero Emissions Molonglo Commercial Centre initiative](#).

## C. SHARING ACT GOVERNMENT EXPERTISE WITH INDUSTRY, STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHER CITIES

Through the above projects, the Government and partner stakeholders will develop significant expertise and solutions on zero-emission, gas-free developments.

This knowledge will be shared with industry to assist them to meet the early 2023 target of no further infill gas connections. The ACT will take on a leadership role and promote this expertise to other cities and jurisdictions. This will assist a broader transition away from fossil-fuel gas across the country, and will set the ACT as a hub for green building and design excellence.

**\$200,000** will be provided for the ACT Government to facilitate consultation, promotion, and knowledge sharing on zero-emission, gas-free buildings and development.

## 4. ROLL OUT COMMUNITY-SCALE BATTERIES AND MICROGRIDS TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO AN ALL-ELECTRIC CITY

Under the Greens' plans to address climate change, households, vehicles, and businesses will rapidly transition to using renewable electricity. While the ACT has a robust electricity grid, widespread electrification will require supporting infrastructure to ensure reliability. New all-electric suburbs and new developments such as all-electric residential towers will benefit from innovations such as large-scale battery storage, and 'microgrids'.

Microgrids allow power to be produced and used in a discrete area. Batteries and microgrids can be operated in a variety of ways, and will be unique to their particular location and application. However, they will be of benefit to electricity consumers by ensuring reliability in electricity supply, using electricity efficiently, lowering bills, generating income from the services they provide to the electricity network, and even allowing peer-to-peer trading of energy. An example might be several apartment towers that all draw their electricity from local solar panels and battery storage.

The Greens will support the rapid transition to electrification by:

- creating a dedicated team within the ACT Government to manage the expansion of community level batteries and microgrids across the ACT. This will include managing the market processes to acquire this infrastructure, which could involve a range of models, including Government, private sector and community funding (eg investing in community-owned solar and storage)
- partnering with groups such as ARENA, ANU, EVO energy, and electricity market bodies such as AEMO, to develop best practice use of batteries and microgrids in all-electric suburbs, developments, and buildings, and
- ensuring building and planning laws are modernised to facilitate the use of microgrids and batteries in ACT developments.

Under the Greens' plan, the Government will also explore possibilities for displacing fossil-fuel gas with clean hydrogen and biogas, provided those fuels are produced in a sustainable and zero emissions way.

## 5. SET A TARGET OF ACHIEVING A FOSSIL-FUEL-GAS-FREE ACT BY 2040

Under the Greens' plan, the ACT will set a target of being completely fossil-fuel-gas free by 2040.

## 6. SHIFT TO WORLD'S BEST PRACTICE ON CLIMATE-READY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS AND PLANNING

The Greens will make broader reforms to the planning and building systems to ensure a transition to best practice climate-ready and environmentally sustainable buildings and planning.

To achieve this the ACT Greens will:

- Adopt an ACT Appendix to the Building Code of Australia in 2021, which will set out improved sustainability standards that all new buildings must meet (addressing issues such as insulation, glazing, passive design, and the requirement for electric vehicle charge points)
- Drive green building innovation by requiring land release to include at least one 'showcase' green development each year, such as a 150% green plot ratio or a 'Scope 3' zero-emissions development that produces no net greenhouse emissions during construction and operation, and
- Require improved solar orientation of blocks in new developments.

Further detail is in the Greens' election initiative on [planning and green development](#).