

Energy Consumers Australia

Talking to consumers about energy bill reduction

Small Business Energy Consumers:
Qualitative Research & Message Testing

March 2024



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About this research

- Research overview



Research overview

This report was developed for Energy Consumers Australia. It details findings from the qualitative phase – Phase 3 – of a larger research project exploring the best way to communicate with energy consumers about bill reduction and energy-saving strategies.

Phase 1 comprised a review of existing audience research, the broader communications landscape, and lessons from international energy-related campaigns.

Phase 2 involved quantitative research with Australian household and small business energy consumers, which informed an audience segmentation, available [here](#).

Phase 3 builds on these findings with qualitative research insights captured in two reports – this report on small business and a separate report on household consumers.

The Phase 3 qualitative research discussed in this report was designed to:

- 1) test hypotheses developed from the Phase 1 and 2 results;
- 2) provide a deeper understanding of the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of the identified segments;

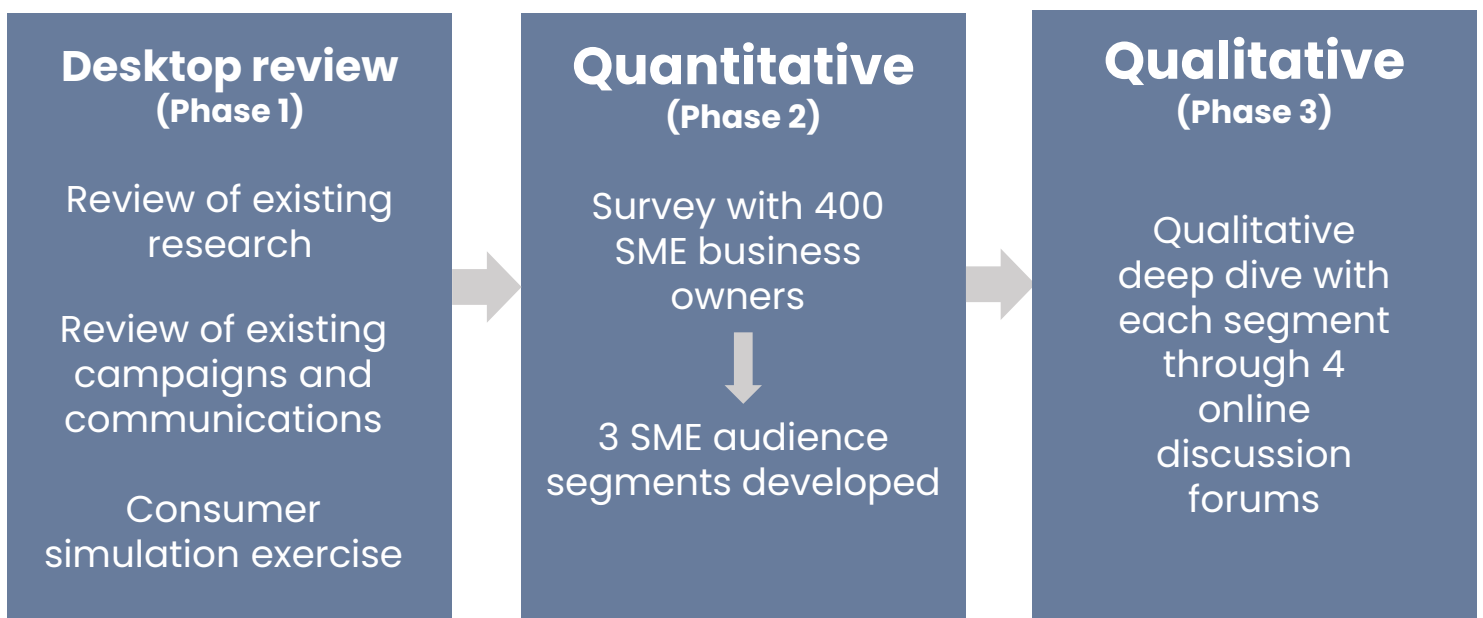
- 3) test messaging designed to drive consumer action on energy-saving practices.

The fieldwork was conducted from 8-12 December 2023, with 47 participants involved in 4 online discussion forums.

All participants were recruited through the Phase 2 survey – a national sample of energy consumers. Participants were selected for qualitative research based on their segment membership (for details, see Appendix).

Message testing approach

- Messages were tested across all segments, using identical message copy.
- Messages were displayed with diverse and inclusive images. Each segment was shown an image of a relevant small business owner.
- Participants were instructed to consider and provide feedback *only* on the content of the message and not the image.



Key insights

- Implications for strategy and messaging



Key insights: Implications for strategy & messaging

We tested seven messaging concepts (see Appendix) on energy saving with the three small business segments identified in the Phase 2 quantitative research. These insights and strategic implications are designed to refine our insights from Phases 1 and 2 and provide guidelines for messaging that will drive consumer action.

	Insights	Strategy and messaging implications
1	Small business owners are time-poor. They need simple, clear, and easily accessible information about measures to reduce their energy bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include clear, easy-to-action guidance on how to control energy use and reduce bills. • Make sure communications about energy savings has a clear call to action that does not require further research.
2	For small business owners to take action, energy-saving measures must have clear return on investment (ROI) and cost-saving outcome.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link any call to action to a specific and tangible ROI.
3	Small business owners have low awareness of energy audits, or believe they are only relevant to high energy-use businesses. Most small business owners express keen interest when they learn more about audits – except for those who work from home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of energy audits and include examples of benefits and costs. • ROI varies across business types. To address this, case studies are helpful – e.g. “My business is x, my energy audit found y, and I changed z. This saves my business \$x each year”.
4	Replacing LEDs is a step many have already taken – but they support calls to action to capture any businesses that have not yet done so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include LED replacement in communications as it applies to most business types. Outline the ROI from taking action.
5	Small business owners want to hear about energy-saving options from their peers – businesses like them. Many are more likely to act when messages are delivered by a fellow business owner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify business types that capture the majority of the small business community e.g. construction, professional, property, transport, agriculture, healthcare, and retail. • Feature small business owners from these sectors to build connection and credibility.

Key insights & implications for strategy cont'd

	Insights	Strategy and messaging implications
6	Energy usage of small business owners who work from home closely aligns with household consumers, suggesting they will respond well to household messaging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-from-home businesses do not need to be specifically featured in messaging targeted to business – as long as they are exposed to household messaging.
7	Renters – either working from home or a business premises – face additional barriers to action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider including guidelines and assistance for negotiating with landlords or strata.
8	Small business owners are more likely to connect with the idea of having greater 'control' over their energy costs, by actively reducing their usage, than to value 'certainty' about their energy costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Control' should be the primary messaging frame when communicating to small businesses about managing their energy use and costs.
9	<p>Environmental messaging resonates with some small businesses, but it does not increase their likelihood to take energy-saving actions.</p> <p>Messaging about energy system benefits also does not increase the likelihood of taking energy-saving actions and drives some negative reactions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on energy cost savings in the small business context, without secondary messaging about either the environment or the energy system benefits.
10	<p>The message: "for our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy" resonates well across segments.</p> <p>Including the line "one small change can make a big difference" further improves resonance and likelihood to act.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Sandwich" the call to action with messages like "quick and easy" or "one small change can make a big difference". These connect strongly with audience-drivers around a) need to see ROI b) feeling time-poor.
11	Small business owners say they would value energy-savings information from a trusted consumer organisation but are also looking for expertise from energy specialists – either consultants or technical specialists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including a 'trust mark' from a consumer organisation would be valuable in communications about energy savings, targeting small businesses. • In communicating the message, an alternative voice to 'a business like them', is an energy expert, but the advice still needs to be relevant to their business-type.

Context: Understanding small business audiences

- Key audience segment insights
- Energy use & costs
- Actions & barriers
- Trusted information sources & needs
- Awareness, uptake, and views on energy audits



Notes on this section:

Quotes are colour-coded by segment membership throughout the report. Segment percentages refer to the audience segmentation conducted in the quantitative study (size of segment).

Key small business audience segment insights

The quantitative study in Phase 2 of this research identified the following three distinct small business audience segments.

Phase 3 used qualitative deep dives with the five audience segments to identify differences and similarities in motivations, behaviours and messaging preferences.

This research found that one segment, **Doing Everything Possible (25%)**, is more closely aligned with household consumers than businesses.

While there are differences between the remaining two segments, *Can't Do Much (32%)* and *Costs Too Much (43%)*, including their motivation to act and the degree of actions already taken to reduce costs, **the connections between the two segments are strong**. This includes their concern with cost, need for strategy that makes it easy for them to act with proof of ROI, and a preference to hear about energy savings options from 'businesses like them'.

<p>Can't Do Much (32%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low motivation to act with a high level of concern about energy costs. • Believe there is little more they can do and that further changes won't make a difference. • Disheartened by perceived lack of results from actions already undertaken and continuing increases in costs. • Are proud business owners, confident in their ability to identify energy usage patterns and problems – but lack time to research and execute solutions. • Have undertaken several low-effort and low-cost options. • ROI questions on energy-saving measures are a barrier to action. • Costs passed to the customer threaten their competitiveness, while absorbing them threatens their viability. • Motivated by cost reduction messaging. Some worry about outages but this is a secondary concern after cost reduction.
<p>Costs Too Much (43%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest motivation to act, with highest level of concern about energy costs. But little time or capital to invest in complex energy-saving measures. • Require guidance and incentives. • Confident in their own abilities to analyse energy data but lack time, capital and expertise to invest in solutions. • Have undertaken more aggressive usage and cost-cutting measures (e.g. discontinuing energy intensive products or condensing office sites). • Want assurance on ROI before taking more steps. • Question how much more they can pass on to customers and what they can absorb. • Concerned rising costs (energy and otherwise) threaten their viability. • Most motivated of all segments by cost-reduction messaging
<p>Doing Everything Possible (25%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low motivation to act. • Low concern due to low consumption or combined household and business usage. • Confident in their ability to know what to do and high levels of belief they have already done everything possible. • Energy-saving and cost-reduction actions reflect those of a household. • Feel that business-focused messaging is largely irrelevant to them as a consumer. • Motivated by cost-saving messaging, but to a lesser degree than other segments. Environment is a secondary concern.

For in-depth small business audience segment profiles, please see the Appendix.

How small businesses are adapting to higher energy prices

The majority of participants are concerned about their business' energy use, with the greatest concern among *Can't Do Much* (primarily high-usage small businesses) and *Costs Too Much* segments.

Small businesses are weighing up passing on energy costs to customers or absorbing these into their bottom line – leaving some **questioning the long-term viability of their business.**

Work-from-home small businesses have usage indistinguishable from households.

These owners manage their energy like a household and are better able to control their costs when working from home. However, some note that heating and cooling costs add substantially to their household bill.

All segments are actively engaged with energy use reduction strategies, with changes prompted by increasing costs. For some, these are necessary to protect business profitability. For others, particularly those working from home, these are “sensible” changes and a continuation of actions taken in their home.

Some have made significant investments, such as replacing equipment, installing solar panels, or (for a few) batteries. A small number have taken business-specific actions like reducing the products and services they offer.

Few have tried to negotiate an improved rate with their supplier, while others found competitor providers were more costly. **Comparing rates and deals takes time they do not have, highlighting the need for information that is easy to access.**

That it is largely out of our control. That even with measures to reduce energy use our usage bills keep going up. At some point it will start making us uncompetitive or we will have to finding big savings in other areas. Man, 40-44, SA, Can't Do Much

There is not much we can do about it. We cannot stop using the computers, servers and other equipment as those are essential for our business. We just have to pay the energy bills. Man, 45-49, NSW, Can't Do Much

I'm concerned when I see it keep going up every quarter even when our energy usage hasn't changed much. We are a very lean company so any increase in cost hits us hard. Man, 40-44, SA, Can't Do Much

What will help small business owners make changes?

Small business owners believe they have implemented all small and sensible changes, with further upgrades requiring large investments of capital and time.

While most express an interest in installing solar and/or a battery, or replacing equipment, they want to understand the return on investment.

Rebates and incentives for large energy-saving investments could help small businesses invest in further energy saving measures.

Small businesses are time poor – the time needed to calculate ROI and undertake research is a key barrier that must be addressed in communications and resources.

Guidelines and assistance for negotiating with landlords or strata are also needed.

To make further plans to reduce energy costs, small business owners need data relevant to them.

This includes time-of-use data, peak and off-peak times and rates, and information about the biggest energy cost drivers in their business.

Industry-specific messages that present relevant solutions to decrease energy consumption will be well received.

Government rebates? Or tax breaks/instant write-off for equipment that helps reduce energy use? Guidelines? What sort of approval is required for certain changes? Man, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

I would need to gather and analyse our energy usage patterns by reviewing utility bills and identifying peak usage times. Determine the budget available for energy-saving initiatives and prioritise projects based on the potential for cost reduction and return on investment. Man, 35-39, VIC, Can't Do Much

I would need validation on how long it would take to see the incentives once we altered business usage. Woman, 50-54, NSW, Costs Too Much

I suppose what is feasible, the cost and payback periods. What subsidies might be available... Man, 60-64, NSW, Costs Too Much

Where are small business owners seeking advice?

Small business owners feel confident in their ability to make what they see as common-sense changes to lower their energy use and costs.

Many believe that specialised advice for their situation or industry does not exist or would be prohibitively expensive.

Those that have sought advice about energy savings mostly do so informally, through other business owners, friends and colleagues.

General internet searches and government websites are also used.

Providers that supply small businesses with equipment are also a source of advice, while those seeking more technical information (most commonly in industries such as manufacturing) access this from equipment specification sheets and industry bodies.

I thought that seeking professional help would be expensive and not sure how effective they would be. Also, lack of awareness and time constraints are a few main reasons of not reaching out for advice. Man, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

I received [information] from colleagues who also run small businesses. So just informal advice really. Man, 40-44, SA, Can't Do Much

Seems like most energy and costs saving initiatives would be common sense rather than need to pay an expert. Woman, 50-54, QLD, Costs Too Much

Solar Victoria, got multiple quotes from solar vendors, looked at both government and commercial websites. Man, 50-54, VIC, Costs Too Much

I haven't received advice as such, but rather completed my own research. It is fairly easy to try to be most sustainable and find appropriate info online where needed. Woman, 65-69, NSW, Doing Everything Possible

Trusted information sources

A large proportion of small business owners say they would rely on **consumer-focused organisations** for information about energy savings. These organisations are viewed as independent with a focus on consumer interests.

An equally large proportion of small business consumers say they would rely on **specialist energy consultants and technical specialists** because they offer up-to-date expertise and tailored advice.

For a small minority who choose **government** as the most reliable information source, the main reason is a perception that government is trustworthy and unbiased.

Most do not trust **energy retailers**, but a small minority think retailers have the greatest access to individual data.

Industry bodies are least likely to be relied on due to perceived bias and lack of expertise.

Small business owners say they would not rely on an **accountant or bookkeeper** as energy-consumption is not their area of expertise.

Differences in prompted vs unprompted responses suggest that top-of-mind **knowledge of services is low**.

[Consumer-focused organisation] A good balance of easy-to-access and publication on these platforms I feel tend to be more neutral than others i.e.: platforms receiving commission from particular energy retailers. Man, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

[An energy specialist] One word. Specialist. Man, 45-49, NSW, Can't Do Much

[Industry or professional body] I would be guided by their knowledge and expertise. Man, 65-69, VIC, Can't Do Much

[Technical specialist] Would have a better understanding of the power requirements. Man, 45-49, WA, Costs Too Much

What do small businesses know about energy audits?

Among participants, both knowledge and uptake of energy audits is low. Many do not know where to begin to investigate this option.

Participants see **energy audits as only relevant to those with high energy use.** Smaller business owners and those working from home question what an audit could tell them that they don't already know.

Most small business owners are confident they have actioned cost and usage savings feasible for their business and **don't see the need for professional advice.**

Only a few small business owners claim to have undertaken an energy audit. **Those in the Can't Do Much segment (high energy use specifically) are more likely to have undertaken an audit.**

I didn't know there was such thing. But I kind of guess should be some specialist come over and do an audit to check/track energy usage? Man, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

It's not something I thought could be done with [my] type of business. Woman, 55-59, NSW, Can't Do Much

I was interested to know what measures can be taken to reduce my [energy] usage overall since I do work from home quite often and with the cost of living it is important for me to reduce costs where I can. Woman, 50-54, VIC, Costs Too Much

Sounds like it would be costly. Woman, 50-54, VIC, Doing Everything Possible

It would be interesting to see if I could save money and if the savings were significant enough to justify any additional outlay. Woman, 55-59, VIC, Doing Everything Possible

How to encourage small businesses to undertake energy audits

After engaging in discussion about energy audits, most participants express an interest in undertaking an energy audit in the future (except the *Doing Everything Possible* segment).

This highlights the importance of information sharing with small business owners.

However, **deep-rooted concerns about return on investment remain in relation to energy audits.**

To mitigate concerns, basic awareness must be supported by detailed explanations of what an energy audit can cost, its purpose, and how this will return value back into a business.

I haven't had time to look into it properly and I'm also concerned about what it would cost. I'm also sceptical about whether an audit would reveal any useful information above and beyond what I could gather myself. Man, 40-44, SA, Can't Do Much

I just realised that there are energy audit through this discussion board and also saw others benefit from it. Man, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

I wouldn't know who to approach to conduct this and hadn't thought about doing it previously. Woman, 50-54, NSW, Can't Do Much

It would be interesting to see if I could save money and if the savings were significant enough to justify any additional outlay. Woman, 55-59, VIC, Doing Everything Possible

Message framing and priorities

We tested audience priorities around energy-reduction decisions and benefits, including:

- Control versus certainty
- Environment versus costs
- Environment versus outages



Energy reduction priorities

We asked research participants **which of the following pairs of statements best described them and why**, to better understand their **priorities around reducing energy use**, and to identify **'what matters most'** when it comes to messaging about the benefits of use reduction. **Control and cost-saving are the number one priorities for small business owners across all segments.**

Control vs Certainty

Statement 1: For me it's about taking control by doing the simple things that can reduce our energy bills



Small business owners are far more likely to value control over their energy costs by actively reducing their usage as opposed to certainty about their bills.

Statement 2: For me it's about certainty – I want to better understand what's driving my energy costs and have fewer surprises about energy bills

Almost all small business owners across all segments prioritise taking control of their energy costs by doing simple things to reduce their bills.

Environment vs Costs

Statement 1: For me it's about reducing my impact on the environment

Statement 2: For me it's about reducing my bills



Almost all small business owners prioritise reducing their business costs over reducing their impact on the environment.

This includes every participant in the *Can't Do Much* and *Costs Too Much* segments. Around one quarter of those in the *Doing Everything Possible* segment prioritise reducing their impact on the environment.

Environment vs Outages

Statement 1: For me it's about reducing my impact on the environment

Statement 2: For me it's about using less energy to reduce the likelihood of outages

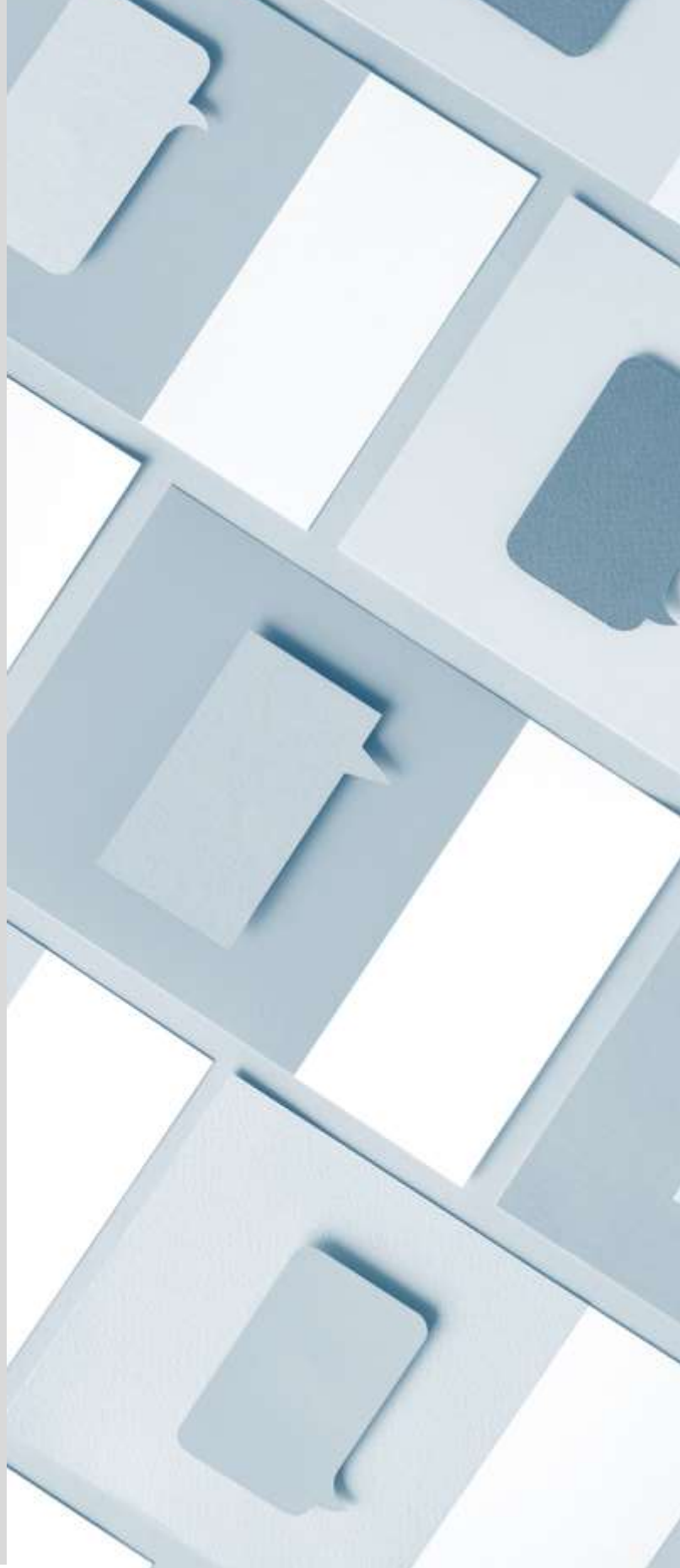


Small business owners prioritise reducing the likelihood of outages over environmental impact.

While some prioritise the impact on the environment, most small business owners – both overall and within each segment – are more concerned about reducing the likelihood of outages.

Message testing

- Mocked-up adverts were used to test message appeal across audience segments.
- Concept 1 was tested to understand the baseline appeal of the message.
- Concepts 2 to 7 were tested to understand if changes to the original message content and tone of voice shifted the message's resonance.
- Messengers for all concepts are small business owners – except Concept 5, where we tested a generic image.
- Participants were specifically asked to only consider and comment on the message content, and not the imagery.
- See the Appendix for the full list of concept mock-ups tested with each audience segment.



Concept 1



The first concept received a positive reaction from small business owners.

Most participants feel the message would help businesses like theirs, except the *Doing Everything Possible* segment, who are least likely to view the message as helpful.

In the other segments, participants like that the message is clear and easy to understand and includes a simple but significant step to reduce energy costs.

Many **have already taken action on LEDs** (some referring to it as “old news”). But those who have seen savings from this action want to encourage other businesses to do the same.

Many express surprise at how much energy is consumed by lighting.

Simple effective messaging about a simple effective change business can make to save on energy. Man, 50-54, VIC, Costs Too Much

Interesting - would like to know more, although I have LED already. Man, 35-39, NSW, Costs Too Much

This is something we all should try to do. It is a simple and affordable measure to take on to help with cost effectiveness. Woman, 65-69, NSW, Doing Everything Possible

Positive Responses

- The “10-25%” figure is surprising for participants, reinforcing that this is an important action to take.
- The action itself appeals because it is simple, low-effort and low-cost with noticeable savings.
- The overall message concept is simple and easily understood.

It sounds good, I think I've heard similar stats before. I wouldn't have guessed that up to 25% of my bill would go towards lighting. Man, 40-44, SA, Can't Do Much

It's a good message and gives ideas of where a business could make a change. Woman, 55-59, NSW, Can't Do Much

This message is clear and easy to understand. Woman, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

Sounds like a simple way to help save on energy. Woman, 65-69, NSW, Doing Everything Possible

Neutral/Negative Responses

- For some, swapping to LEDs is a common-sense step and they question why it requires advertising.
- Small business owners who work from home question the savings this action would deliver for them.
- A small number question the ROI of LEDs, and therefore the value in investing in replacement.

The message is nice and clear in particular "quick and easy". But the message [is] not for me, because I already knew it...However, I believe it would benefit other businesses. Man, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

I guess people would ask what is the cost to replace...maybe if you did an average payback period. Man, 60-64, NSW, Costs Too Much

Boring, I feel like this is very old news and government/business have been talking about energy efficient lighting for a decades. Woman, 45-49, NSW, Costs Too Much

Concept 2



Resonance: When adjusting Concept 1 to include the line “one small change can make a big difference” half of all small business owners say it increases the concept’s resonance. It resonates with the majority of *Can’t Do Much* and *Costs Too Much* segments.

Likelihood to take action: Half of all small business owners say this would make them more likely to act. The other half say that it made no difference. Only one feels less likely to take action.

Increases Likelihood to Act

It makes it sound easy like I could just do a quick & easy thing & I can reduce my electricity bill. Man, 40-44, SA, Can't Do Much

People can handle a small change if it will make a visible difference. They are too busy to invest in massive change programs generally. Man, 50-54, VIC, Costs Too Much

Decreases Likelihood to Act

Still doesn't 'jump out' and appeal to me. Woman, 50-54, QLD, Costs Too Much

Too small only me and I use only one light. Woman, 70+, QLD, Doing Everything Possible

Lighting is not a huge cost to my business. Woman, 55-59, VIC, Doing Everything Possible

Makes No Difference

I have already switched over to energy saving led lights. Woman, 50-54, VIC, Costs Too Much

The previous version is good enough. I don't feel it is necessary to add the underlined sentence in to make the message longer. Woman, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

Concept 3



Resonance: For more than half of small business owners, adjusting Concept 1 to include the line “and reducing our impact on the environment” makes no difference to how the message resonates with them. For two-in-five, it resonates more strongly with that inclusion.

Likelihood to take action: While resonance increased for some, the inclusion of environmental messaging divided small business participants. For a small proportion, it increased their likelihood to act, but for others it demotivated them. Overall, cost was the main driver.

Increases Likelihood to Act

Knowing that I am doing my small part in environmental management. Man, 65-69, VIC, Can't Do Much

Here we have the whole package, saving money plus saving the environment. Woman, 60-65, VIC, Can't Do Much

Decreases Likelihood to Act

Appeals to impact on our environment are politically charged, whilst impacts to business hip pocket are more effective to motivate people. Man, 50-54, VIC, Costs Too Much

The "environment" won't be affected by a few light globes. Heavy diesel in shipping, aviation gas, lithium and cobalt mining, oil leaks in Nigeria and an ineffective approach to recycling has an effect the environment. Making the end user feel guilty for environmental change is not fair. Man, 45-49, ACT, Doing Everything Possible

Makes No Difference

To be honest that isn't a big motivator for me right now. I get that it is important to protect the environment but doing this via energy reduction just isn't a big priority for my business right now. Man, 40-44, SA, Can't Do Much

Great - the environment is winning from a choice you're making, but ultimately, it's about cost savings. If additional the environment is being helped, double win. Man, 35-39, NSW, Costs Too Much

Concept 4



Resonance: Adjusting Concept 1 to include the line "and taking pressure off the energy system" makes no difference to its resonance for most, with a quarter saying it makes the concept resonate more.

Likelihood to take action: This change divided the group and does not increase most participants' likelihood to act. A small minority were more motivated to act after seeing this message, but many also felt the energy system was not a problem for them to solve.

Increases Likelihood to Act

Less pressure might mean better rates. Man, 50-54, NSW, Can't Do Much

The last thing I want is a black out or cut to energy - business would have to stop. Woman, 55-59, NSW, Can't Do Much

None of us wants to have blackouts in the future. Man, 60-64, WA, Doing Everything Possible

Decreases Likelihood to Act

It's not as an impactful statement as the others. Woman, 50-54, NSW, Can't Do Much

It is not our responsibility for the power infrastructure. Man, 65-69, NSW, Can't Do Much

That is the energy system's problem - not mine to fix. Man, 50-54, VIC, Costs Too Much

Makes No Difference

I do like the message, but wonder about my lone impact... Woman, 45-49, NSW, Can't Do Much

To be honest I think people would be indifferent to this message because what is in it for them. Man, 60-64, NSW, Costs Too Much

Concept 5



Resonance: Adjusting the voice of Concept 1, makes no difference to how much the concept resonated with most participants. However, some participants prefer a message from another business owner.

Likelihood to take action: Most feel the 'voice' makes no difference to their likelihood to act, but, overall, prefer the message coming from business owners like them.

Increases Likelihood to Act

It speaks directly to me.. it outlines business, it outlines savings & it tells me how much of a big difference it can make. Woman, 50-54, NSW, Costs Too Much

I like the wording better than in the previous ads. It's a simple but strong message. Woman, 65-69, NSW, Doing Everything Possible

Decreases Likelihood to Act

It makes it seem like it's coming from a call centre operator rather than a small business owner like on the previous ad. It would make me trust the advice a bit less but ultimately wouldn't make much difference. Man, 40-44, SA, Can't Do Much

'We' speaks better than 'you'. Man, 40-44, WA, Can't Do Much

Makes No Difference

I prefer the effect of business people talking to business people but in the end the message is the same. Woman, 60-65, VIC, Can't Do Much

I was looking at the information not who it was coming from. Woman, 55-59, VIC, Doing Everything Possible

Concept 6



Resonance: Changing the action to focus on getting an energy audit from an expert makes the concept more likely to resonate with most, while for a third it makes no difference.

Likelihood to take action: More than half feel this change makes them more likely to act, while a third say it makes no difference. For some, it raised the question of expense and whether they would see an ROI.

Increases Likelihood to Act

The person saved thousands of dollars and who doesn't want that. Woman, 35-39, NSW, Can't Do Much

It lets you know there [are] experts in the field that will let you know where you can save or go for better power outcomes. Man, 65-69, NSW, Can't Do Much

Decreases Likelihood to Act

I think this is trying to force an issue, looks a little bit forceful to me. Pressure way does not work with us. Man, 55-59, VIC, Costs Too Much

A consultant will have a charge and my business is too small to have extra expenses. Woman, 70+, QLD, Doing Everything Possible

Makes No Difference

I would consider if I had a huge business but would question cost saving and the cost of the consultant in a small business premises. Woman, 45-49, NSW, Costs Too Much

I know this is available but what the message doesn't include the fact that this isn't for free. Man, 60-64, WA, Doing Everything Possible

Concept 7



Resonance: Adjusting the concept to include an action on heating and cooling increases the concept's resonance for most participants. For a third it makes no difference.

Likelihood to take action: The majority of participants say it makes them more likely to act, while for a third it makes no difference. Only one participant feels less likely to act.

Increases Likelihood to Act

Love this one!! By just a degree you can save thousands - awesome!! Woman, 45-49, NSW, Can't Do Much

It's a simple action that's easy to do and costs nothing. Woman, 50-54, VIC, Doing Everything Possible

Decreases Likelihood to Act

We don't have electrical heating or cooling at home, so it doesn't resonate or apply to us. Woman, 65-69, NSW, Doing Everything Possible

Makes No Difference

When you only have a small bill, it won't make thousands of dollars difference. And I'm unable to adjust my settings on the office aircon. They're pre-set. Woman, 50-54, QLD, Costs Too Much

I'm already aware that heating and cooling are huge energy wasting devices & I was already aware of the adjustment settings. Woman, 50-54, NSW, Costs Too Much

Appendix

- Message concepts by segment
- In-depth small business audience segment profiles
- Discussion boards overview



Message concepts by audience segment

	Can't Do Much	Costs Too Much	Doing Everything Possible
Concept 1	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money.</p>
Concept 2	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>
Concept 3	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money and reducing our impact on the environment.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money and reducing our impact on the environment.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money and reducing our impact on the environment.</p>
Concept 4	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money and taking pressure off the energy system.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money and taking pressure off the energy system.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of small business energy bills.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs made a big difference to our bottom line - saving us money and taking pressure off the energy system.</p>
Concept 5	<p>For many businesses, cutting energy costs can be quick and easy.</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of your business's energy bill.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs can make a big difference to your bottom line - saving you money.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>	<p>For many businesses, cutting energy costs can be quick and easy.</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of your business's energy bill.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs can make a big difference to your bottom line - saving you money.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>	<p>For many businesses, cutting energy costs can be quick and easy.</p> <p>Lighting can make up 10-25% of your business's energy bill.</p> <p>Simply replacing old globes with LEDs can make a big difference to your bottom line - saving you money.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>
Concept 6	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Getting an energy audit from an expert consultant allowed us to see where our energy costs were coming from, and how to reduce them.</p> <p>It was simple to do and it saved us thousands of dollars a year.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Getting an energy audit from an expert consultant allowed us to see where our energy costs were coming from, and how to reduce them.</p> <p>It was simple to do and it saved us thousands of dollars a year.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Getting an energy audit from an expert consultant allowed us to see where our energy costs were coming from, and how to reduce them.</p> <p>It was simple to do and it saved us thousands of dollars a year.</p> <p>One small change can make a big difference.</p>
Concept 7	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Heating and cooling can contribute up to 50% of small business energy use.</p> <p>Adjusting your heating and cooling settings by just a degree could save your business thousands of dollars.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Heating and cooling can contribute up to 50% of small business energy use.</p> <p>Adjusting your heating and cooling settings by just a degree could save your business thousands of dollars.</p>	<p>"For our business, cutting energy costs was quick and easy."</p> <p>Heating and cooling can contribute up to 50% of small business energy use.</p> <p>Adjusting your heating and cooling settings by just a degree could save your business thousands of dollars.</p>

1. Can't do much (32%)

Characteristics

- High level of concern about energy costs.
- Believe that business type or circumstances (i.e. energy intensive equipment) prevent them from reducing their energy usage and costs further.
- A mix of higher energy use small businesses with their own premises and lower-use businesses with small offices or work from home arrangements.

Each bill I open seems to be higher than the last, despite what I have done to reduce my usage. I have to decide whether to just absorb the increasing costs or pass them on to my customers. I'll either end up unprofitable, or uncompetitive as customers will just go elsewhere.

Further changes seem really expensive and complicated. I'm worried I'll invest in the wrong thing, and it won't deliver value for my business. That said, I think I'm a pretty savvy and self-reliant business owner and I understand my business better than anyone - I don't really need any outside help identifying the problems with my energy usage, but I'm so short on time I never get around to investigating the solutions.

Motivation	Ability	Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low motivation to act. • Believes there is little more they can do and that further changes won't make a difference. Disheartened by lack of results from actions taken so far. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proudly know their business well (are generally across energy usage patterns) and are confident in their ability to identify problems - but are too time poor to instigate changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most are left with the difficult and expensive-to-execute actions or upgrades.
Energy Use & Costs	Actions & Barriers	Information Needs & Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel costs are largely unavoidable. • See energy costs rising rapidly and have deep concern about how high they will go. • Disillusioned with taking <i>further</i> actions and feel helpless to counter further increasing costs. • Costs must be absorbed by the business or passed on to the customer, testing both profitability and competitiveness. • The impact of rising energy costs on high usage businesses is immense, with some questioning if their business will survive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel they have taken all simple and common-sense steps already. • Question the ROI on further interventions. • Confident in their own abilities to manage energy use but lack time to investigate further. • Tend not to seek advice due to strong belief that professional advice is expensive and won't deliver anything more than they can do for themselves. • Time, cost and ROI concerns are key barriers to invest in further upgrades. • For some, renting rather than owning their building limits what they can do. • With lack of capital a key barrier to action, there is high demand for information and guidance on rebates and incentives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe they need to review their energy data before taking further action. Confident in undertaking this themselves - lack of time is a barrier. • Require guidance on "what to do next", ROI on options, incentives available and "where to start". • Most comfortable using general sources of information e.g. government websites. Some businesses consult industry publications. • Low knowledge and uptake of energy audits. Some interest (particularly those with higher usage) but significant questions about ROI. • Exposure to the concept of an energy audit in this study resulted in several wanting to investigate this option.

2. Costs too much (43%)

Characteristics

- Highest level of concern about rising energy costs.
- Likely to believe that reducing energy usage requires too much time or capital for little perceived benefit.
- Preference for prioritising other business issues (viewed as more important than energy consumption).
- Employ more staff than other segments.
- Operate a range of businesses from e-commerce to manufacturing.

Energy is one of my top operating expenses and the rising costs are making me question the survival of my business. I can't absorb much more and passing the costs on to customers is only going to push my customers elsewhere. On top of the basics like replacing my lights, I've also stopped manufacturing some of my more energy intensive products.

Every investment I make in my business must deliver value back in, and the ROI on some of these energy saving measures just don't seem worth it. If there are free services, or rebates and incentives I can access I'd love to hear about it.

Motivation	Ability	Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High concern about costs but little time or capital to invest in more expensive or complex actions. • Require guidance and potentially incentives to motivate them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident in their own abilities to analyse energy data and make changes but lack time, capital and expertise to invest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less likely to have undertaken basic upgrades. High energy costs mean this segment has significant opportunity to make savings.
Energy Use & Costs	Actions & Barriers	Information Needs & Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising energy costs are felt sharply, deep concerns about how high the rates might go, and whether their business can survive. • Question what they can pass on to customers and what they can absorb without losing their business. • Feel there is little more they can do to reduce their energy usage that will deliver a ROI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have often aggressively implemented energy usage reduction measures. • Have an interest in energy audits but questions about ROI are a barrier. • Concerns about ROI and lack of time lead to action inertia. • Renting rather than owning their building is a further barrier. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time poor, but believe they need to review all their energy-use data before undertaking further actions. • Information about rebates, incentives, or grants is needed. • More likely to use industry sources and rely on market comparison websites. • Report high levels of knowledge about energy audits, but low uptake.

3. Doing everything possible (25%)

Characteristics

- Lower levels of concern about energy costs.
- More alike to a household consumer than other small businesses.
- More likely to operate from home and not employ staff.
- More likely to operate a services business (i.e. professional services).
- Low energy usage, most often combined with a household bill.

Though I'm mindful of my energy use and I care about reducing my environmental impact, my business is my laptop and a few lights – I barely consume any power.

Things like energy audits just don't apply to me and I'm more focused on getting the business work done day to day. What value would there be in paying someone to come and tell me to turn my lights off when I finish work for the day?

I am interested in reducing my overall household expenses by upgrading appliances and using my washing machine while my solar panels are working, but overall, I'm not that stressed about my energy bills. I have noticed them rising, but they are manageable for now and I don't feel like there's much more I can do.

Motivation	Ability	Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low motivation to act due to low energy consumption and lack of separation between household and business usage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident in their own ability to know what to do, but high levels of belief that they have done everything possible already. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More inclined to focus on household savings due to low business usage.
Energy Use & Costs	Actions & Barriers	Information Needs & Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparably lower energy use. • Low levels of energy-usage concerns due to lack of separation between household and business use. • See energy reduction efforts as prudent but not critical to the survival of their business. • Aware household energy costs are rising and do what they can to keep them down around the home. • Feel they are doing everything feasible to reduce their energy usage due to the small size of their business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost is the primary concern, but also proudly energy conscious with some concern for the environment. • Actions reflect an average household trying to reduce their energy usage –e.g. turning off lights and appliances, being cautious with heating and cooling. • Utilise off-peak rates by running dishwashers and other appliances while working from home. • Feel confident in their own abilities to reduce their energy usage. • Renting is a barrier to taking larger scale actions (such as solar). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not interested in reviewing data or investigating savings. • Focus on what they can do in their household (such as replacing whitegoods). • Primarily use general sources of information such as government or energy provider websites. • Do not believe they require further information on business energy usage but may benefit from information household saving measures or upgrades. • Low familiarity with energy audits and low level of interest due to business size and perceived lack of value. • Energy audits viewed as an “interesting exercise” but unlikely to deliver any real value.

Discussion board overview

Segment Name/Cluster	N Boards	Demographics by Board	
Can't Do Much	2	Board 1 Business operates in premises out of home (i.e. not based in home) Employ staff Low/medium energy use business	Board 2 Business operates in premises out of home (i.e. not based in home) Employ staff High energy use business
Costs Too Much	1	Board 3 Business operates in premises out of home (i.e. not based in home) Employ staff	
Doing Everything Possible	1	Board 4 Work from home No staff	

Any questions about this report?

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