

ESIA Media Release

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More efficient and ‘smarter’ air con needed instead of turning old clunkers down in peak heat today across Victoria

What Victorians need right now is Government support to install more energy efficient and ‘smarter’ air conditioners so they can keep them on and stay cooler on super-hot days like today and yesterday when temperatures are soaring to 41-45 degrees Celsius.

Air conditioning makes up a significant portion of increased electricity demand on hot days. There is a better solution than asking people already stressed to turn their cooling down or off between 1-8pm when they need it most. Although this option is essential now to keep the lights on.

“We are calling on the Victorian Government to introduce a demand reduction scheme as NSW announced in late 2019. Such a program would provide financial incentives for home and businesses to replace inefficient air conditioners with new ‘smarter’ models that use less energy and provide better cooling, and that can be programmed to be turned down at peak energy demand times if such intervention is needed to reduce stress on the electricity system,” said President of the Energy Savings Industry Association (ESIA), Rod Woolley.

“Importantly, the more homes and businesses that upgrade to more efficient and ‘smarter’ air conditioners, the less pressure there is on the electricity system to take drastic measures like asking people to turn them down. (Or worse still for networks to turn off power across some regions.)

“There are a whole range of other ‘smart’ appliances like batteries and pool pumps that can be mobilised rapidly in the next two to three years to drive the changes needed as our very last century energy system struggles to adapt.”

The ESIA commends the Victorian Government on its recent proposal to increase the size of its Victorian Energy Upgrades (VEU) program which provides financial incentives to households and businesses to upgrade their lighting, building weather sealing and hot water etc. The VEU has worked very effectively over the past ten years and will continue to do so until 2030 at least.

However, now is the time to provide additional very targeted support to change out inefficient appliances that increase electricity demand on extreme weather days – ‘smarter’ space heating and cooling in particular.

“Communities are crying out for tangible action on energy pressures combined with the brunt of climate change impacts felt this summer: extreme heat, catastrophic bushfires and smoke, high winds, dust- and thunderstorms, increased health risks and major interruptions to daily life.

“Industry is ready to provide the products and services. We just need a government framework that addresses the barriers to upgrades. The primary barriers are upfront installation costs and a lack of understanding of how much money can be saved while delivering significantly better appliance performance and customer comfort, and finding energy efficiency experts,” said Mr Woolley.

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More information: NSW Electricity Strategy: <https://energy.nsw.gov.au/media/1926/download>