RACE for 2030

RELIABLE
AFFORDABLE
CLEAN
ENERGY

PROGRESS REPORT

Beyond poles and wires:
Building public readiness for Australia's energy transition



Progress report

Beyond poles and wires

Building public readiness for Australia's energy transition

Project Code: 0837

Copyright © RACE for 2030 Cooperative Research Centre, 2026

October 2026

Citation

Pearson, A., Lester, L., Hansen, Z,. (2026). Beyond poles and wires: Building public readiness for Australia's energy transition

Prepared for RACE for 2030.

Project team

Monash Climate Communication Hub

- Amelia Pearson
- Professor Libby Lester
- Zoe Hansen
- Matt Carew

Project partners





Acknowledgement of Country

The authors of this report would like to respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the ancestral lands throughout Australia and their connection to land, sea and community. We recognise their continuing connection to the land, waters, and culture and pay our respects to them, their cultures and to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

What is RACE for 2030?

RACE for 2030 is a 10-year cooperative research centre (CRC) with $350 million of resources to fund and support research towards a reliable, affordable, and clean energy future.

Disclaimer

The authors have used all due care and skill to ensure the material is accurate as at the date of this report. The authors do not accept any responsibility for any loss that may arise by anyone relying upon its contents.

Contents

Executive summary 01

1. Introduction 03

1.1 Information alone is not enough 03

1.2 Background to the research/project 04

1.3 Purpose of this report 05

2. Methodology 06

2.1 Quantitative data collection 07

2.2 Qualitative data collection 07

2.3 Co-design approach 08

2.4 Measurement framework and indicators 08

2.5 Ethical considerations 11

2.6 Research context and concurrent influences 11

2.6.1 Policy and financial settings 11

2.6.2 Vehicle market and charging infrastructure 11

2.6.3 Household energy and renewable technologies 12

2.6.4 Energy system change and public policy 12

2.6.5 Household costs and energy salience 12

2.7 Limitations 12

3. Findings 13

3.1. Climate and energy topics were infrequently covered on participating commercial radio stations 13

3.2 Participating radio stations broadcast climate and energy content more frequently and consistently 15

3.3. The co-design process increased presenter confidence and improved content quality 16

3.3.1 Early delivery challenges 16

3.3.2 Topic selection and alignment of interests 18

3.3.3 Refinement through feedback and structured formats 23

3.3.4 The role of co-design in delivery quality and presenter confidence 25

3.4. Audience climate and energy knowledge demonstrably improved 26

3.4.1 Baseline knowledge, confidence and support for renewables 26

3.4.2 Knowledge accuracy and miscalibration 28

3.4.3 Reported and measured learning outcomes 29

3.5. Media personnel and audiences consistently expressed support for program continuation 30

4. Conclusion 33

Appendix 35

Executive summary

Ernest Hemingway described change as happening "gradually, then suddenly". It is a fitting description of what has occurred on Australian roads this year. After years of comparatively slow electric vehicle (EV) uptake, sales of EVs and hybrids have climbed sharply[1] since the Iran-US-Israel war earlier in 2026 pushed fuel security and household energy costs to the top of the news agenda.

A sudden shift in behaviour like this rarely comes from nowhere. It tends to follow a longer, quieter period in which an idea moves from unfamiliar to ordinary – discussed on the radio, explained on the news, normalised in everyday conversation. The Monash Climate Communication Hub's (the Hub) work formed part of this broader communication environment. The project tested how trusted Australian media could make climate and energy information more routine, accessible and relevant, and whether this was associated with changes in media practice and audience learning. The 2026 fuel crisis provides an excellent example of why this communication capability matters. When circumstances change quickly, audiences need trusted sources that can help them interpret new information. Building that familiarity and capability before a crisis occurs means journalists and other trusted messengers are better placed to help audiences make sense of rapidly changing circumstances and the public is better equipped to respond.

Between October 2024 and April 2026, the Hub delivered an integrated program of research, communication and engagement examining how media partnerships, co-designed outputs and rapid expert engagement could strengthen public understanding of EVs and the broader energy transition. This work brought together Australian broadcasters, journalists, researchers, industry and diverse public audiences.

The primary component of this work – Tuning into the Renewables Rollout (Tuning In) – was delivered in partnership with Southern Cross Austereo (SCA), Australia's largest commercial radio network. Despite its broad reach and established role in Australians' daily media consumption, commercial radio has received relatively little research attention overall, let alone as a platform for climate and energy communication and social change. As such, the project evaluated commercial breakfast radio as a setting for climate and energy communication, recognising its potential to reach audiences who may not actively seek such information but who view radio presenters as familiar and trusted messengers. The research combined bespoke content development with baseline and post-program surveys of more than 1200 respondents, three rounds of audience focus groups, interviews with presenters and producers, broadcast content analysis and an iterative co-design process.

Baseline content analysis showed energy topics were largely absent from participating commercial radio breakfast programs, not due to opposition but because of uncertainty about fit, tone and presenter confidence. In contrast, survey and focus group data showed audiences expressed strong interest in practical, solutions-focused climate and energy content, particularly if it could be framed around their everyday lives and local community. This mismatch offered a clear opportunity for content development. Guided by ongoing audience feedback and close collaboration with presenters and producers, participating stations progressed from occasional climate and energy coverage to a regular weekly segment anchored by a recurring expert-led fact-check.

[1] Australian Automobile Association. (n.d.). *Electric vehicle index*. www.aaa.asn.au/research-data/electric-vehicle/

In summary, five key findings have emerged from the project to date:

1. **Climate and energy topics were infrequently covered on participating commercial radio stations**
2. **Participating radio stations broadcast climate and energy content more frequently and consistently**
3. **The co-design process increased presenter confidence and improved content quality**
4. **Audience climate and energy knowledge improved, with gains in message-specific knowledge following exposure to program content**
5. **Media personnel and audiences consistently expressed support for program continuation**

The research demonstrates the value of sustained investment in communication capability alongside technological and policy development. It shows that when trusted messengers are engaged as partners – not simply as channels for one-off messages – audiences have the potential to build the knowledge and confidence to act when circumstances demand it. This report sets out that evidence and its implications for future investment in the communication platforms and formats that support Australia's energy transition.



1. Introduction

Australia's energy transition requires a communication transition. The way Australia generates, stores and uses electricity is changing, and households are playing a more active role in the energy system. Choices that were once straightforward – buying a car, replacing a hot water system, even investing in solar panels – now involve a growing range of technologies, incentives and information sources. Increasingly, households are required to know and weigh up how technology fits within a rapidly changing energy system alongside cost and performance.

For most people, these decisions are made outside formal education or technical settings. Information arrives through everyday conversations, mainstream and social media, workplaces and local communities – all environments that shape what people encounter, which issues feel relevant and whose expertise they trust. This requires a communication transition, based on a deep understanding of how humans communicate and to what impact.

1.1 Information alone is not enough

Public discussion of climate and energy issues often focuses on improving access to information or correcting misinformation. Both remain important. But research suggests these factors alone do not explain why many climate and energy topics still struggle to become part of everyday conversation. Attention is turning instead to the communication environments through which information is shared and interpreted – editorial practices, production routines, presenter confidence, audience expectations, and the relationships between researchers, media organisations and communities, as well as the broader political, economic and cultural contexts in which information is flowing.

This reflects a broader shift in how climate communication is understood. Long-standing models that treat communication as a straight line or 'injection' model – a message produced by an expert, broadcast, then received by an audience – are increasingly difficult to sustain in a fast-changing media environment (Wetts et al. 2025). What determines whether a topic gets discussed is often less about the message itself than whether the surrounding environment allows it a place at all: whether it fits a program's tone, whether presenters feel equipped to raise it, whether an audience expects to hear it there. Technically accurate climate content can still struggle to find airtime if these conditions aren't met, even when they are making news. From this perspective, effective communication depends as much on where, how and by whom information is communicated as on the information itself.

This thinking underpins the Hub's approach to building public readiness for Australia's energy transition through close collaboration with media organisations and the audiences they serve. Readiness is more than awareness of individual technologies. It is the confidence to engage with new ideas, weigh up competing information and make decisions that suit individual circumstances. That confidence develops gradually through repeated exposure to relevant, practical and credible information. Achieving this requires communication to be integrated throughout the research process and embedded within trusted media environments, rather than treated as an activity undertaken once the research is complete.

1.2 Background to the research/project

Mainstream media play a central role in shaping public understanding of climate and energy issues and creating opportunities for public discussion. Different media environments perform distinct functions.

Around 12.8 million[2] Australians tune in to commercial radio every week. It reaches metropolitan and regional communities, accompanies established daily routines, and gives presenters regular opportunities to discuss issues that affect local communities. This makes commercial radio particularly well placed to reach people who may not actively seek climate and energy information, embedding it within familiar programming delivered by trusted voices.

The Hub's Tuning In program examined whether this medium could support public understanding of EVs, renewable energy and the broader energy transition. Delivered over 18 months in partnership with Southern Cross Austereo (SCA) – which reaches more than 9 million Australians[3] across its network of regional and metropolitan commercial stations – the project combined communication delivery with embedded research and evaluation to understand if and how climate and energy content could be integrated into breakfast radio programming.

The success of this model, as described below, has provided a foundation for adapting the approach for community radio broadcasting. With more than 450 stations[4] broadcasting across Australia, community radio provides an opportunity to engage diverse audiences through locally trusted voices and place-based programming. Like commercial radio, it offers a familiar and highly social communication environment in which climate and energy information can become part of everyday conversation.

In 2026, the Hub established two community radio partnerships. A dedicated evaluation is now underway to examine how this communication model operates within the community broadcasting sector. The research includes a national survey of community radio listeners alongside collaborative work with presenters to understand how locally relevant climate and energy content can be developed, delivered and embedded within community radio programming. As this research is currently in progress, findings will be discussed in a later report.



[2] Commercial Radio & Audio. (2026, June 11). *Strength in numbers: Commercial radio's 12.8 million weekly listeners.* cra.au/en/media-releases/s3-2026

[3] Southern Cross Austereo. (2026). *SCA's combined networks widen the gap between competitors – Dominating the 'audience that matters'.* www.sca.com.au/media-releases/scas-combined-networks-widen-the-gap-between-competitors-dominating-the-audience-that-matters/

[4] Community Broadcasting Association of Australia. (n.d.). *Our sector*. www.cbaa.org.au/community-broadcasting/our-sector

1.3 Purpose of this report

This report examines the emerging findings from the Hub's Tuning In work with commercial radio. It aims to provide practical insight and guidance on collaborative climate and energy communication approaches for researchers, media professionals and other communication practitioners.

The research and associated evaluation adopted a contribution-oriented framework rather than attribution-oriented one. This approach recognises that changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour occur within a media environment shaped by multiple concurrent influences, making it difficult to isolate the effects of any single program. The repeated cross-sectional design does not allow background population trends to be statistically separated from program effects, particularly when interpreting changes in broad attitudes or self-reported behaviours. The evaluation therefore drew on multiple forms of evidence, including content analysis, repeated surveys, qualitative interviews, focus groups and message-specific pre/post testing. Considered together, these sources provide evidence that the program contributed to changes in knowledge, confidence and behaviour, while situating these changes within the broader media and social context in which the program operated.

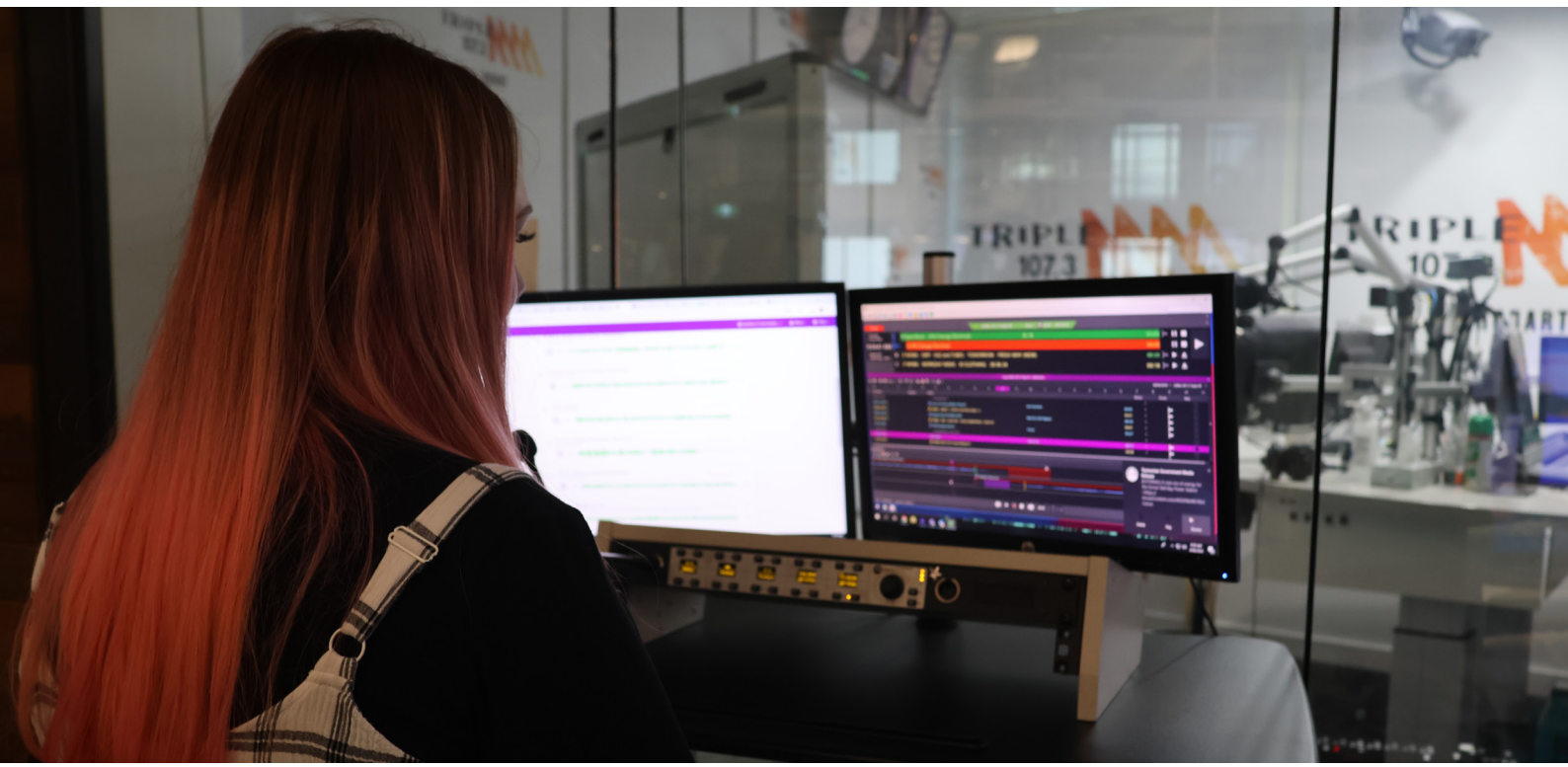


2. Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to assess the development, delivery and reception of climate and energy content through commercial radio. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to understand audience engagement, presenter practice and the effectiveness of commercial radio as a platform for climate communication. Evaluation activities were embedded across the 18-month project to establish baseline conditions, support learning during delivery and assessment of outcomes.

Data collection and evaluation were aligned with three project phases:

- **Phase 1, set-up and baseline (3 months):**
  Establish partnerships, select stations and assess initial audience knowledge, attitudes and media habits. Data was collected through a baseline community survey, radio listener focus groups, interviews with content directors, producers and presenters, and analysis of existing climate-related broadcasts.
- **Phase 2, trial and refinement (6 months):**
  Deliver initial content, gather feedback from listeners and radio personnel and adjust content and delivery. Listener focus groups were reconvened and radio personnel interviews were conducted to assess and compare responses to content framing, tone, relevance and delivery.
- **Phase 3, delivery and post-assessment (9 months):**
  Deliver refined content and measure changes in audience knowledge, confidence and engagement, as well as presenter practice. Data was collected through a second community survey to enable pre- and post-comparison, final listener focus groups and interviews with radio personnel.



2.1 Quantitative data collection

Surveys measured demographic characteristics, radio habits, knowledge, attitudes and engagement with climate and energy topics. Surveys were only completed by participants over the age of 18 and distributed exclusively within Victoria and Tasmania, in alignment with the locations of the partner stations (HIT 100.9 and Triple M 107.3).

Participants in the baseline survey (n = 596) were recruited via a commercial survey panel provider. A post-program survey (n = 614) exposed listeners to a selection of broadcasts (on solar, EVs and critical minerals) and assessed changes in knowledge, attitudes and engagement following exposure. Participants in the post-program survey were recruited via the same commercial survey panel provider.

The baseline and post-program surveys were run as repeated cross-section samples (rather than with the same individuals). As such, comparisons between the first and second survey data reflect differences at a population scale rather than an individual level. As with any repeated cross-sectional design, it is challenging to isolate changes associated with the program from broader shifts occurring in the population over the same period, given the multiple, complex sources of information to which people are constantly exposed. Moreover, survey responses need to be interpreted within the limitations of survey design and panel reach. Findings are interpreted accordingly and as one component of the broader contribution analysis.

These broad population survey findings were complemented by a questionnaire with focus group participants (n = 21) to capture their experience and self-reported learning.

2.2 Qualitative data collection

Qualitative approaches were used to explore how climate and energy content was perceived, interpreted and delivered, providing depth and context that surveys alone could not capture.

Focus groups were conducted in Hobart, Bendigo and Mildura across each project phase, with 21 participants taking part in three two-hour sessions. Participants were recruited via multiple channels including on-air advertisements broadcast on partner stations, a targeted letter drop in Bendigo and the Hub's online networks. A token of appreciation was provided to participants who completed all three sessions. Mildura participants were initially interviewed individually online due to scheduling constraints. Phase One focus groups explored existing climate and energy knowledge, engagement with commercial radio and content preferences, while the following two sessions gathered feedback on broadcast segments.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven SCA staff including presenters, producers and a content director. The initial interviews assessed confidence, experience and editorial processes, while two subsequent interviews focused on feedback, the co-design approach and content delivery processes. Comparison exercises embedded within focus groups and interviews examined alignment between intended messages and audience reception.

Initial qualitative analysis involved inductive thematic coding[5] to identify key patterns and insights for content design, with subsequent feedback synthesised in real time to support ongoing refinement. Additional input was gathered through monthly creative sessions with producers and content directors, supporting co-design and timely adjustments.

[5] Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 22, 1–12.* https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789

2.3 Co-design approach

This project was deliberately structured to support continuing collaboration between the research team and radio personnel, with co-design embedded as both a delivery mechanism and an evaluative tool.

Feedback from presenters, producers and the content director was collected through semi-structured interviews, weekly delivery check-ins and monthly creative sessions. Listener feedback from surveys and focus groups was also shared with the radio team. Together, these inputs informed timely refinements to research briefs, topic selection, scheduling, production processes and on-air delivery, while strengthening presenter confidence and capability in delivering climate and energy content as part of regular programming.

2.4 Measurement framework and indicators

This project centres around the following theory of change (Figure 1).

The theory of change is informed by the project's position within RACE for 2030's CRC's *RACE for EVs* stream which identifies public understanding and effective media communication as part of the wider pathway towards EV adoption and Australia's transition to net zero. The project focuses on a proximal pathway in which trusted media partnerships:

- **strengthen broadcasters' capacity to provide regular, practical and credible information;**
- **increase audience exposure to relevant information; and**
- **support learning, confidence and informed participation in a changing energy system.**



Progress was assessed using complementary indicators aligned with the project's theory of change. These were designed to capture changes in content presence, delivery quality, editorial decision-making and audience learning:

- **Quantity and frequency:**
  Volume and frequency of climate and energy content broadcast. Content analysis and delivery logs were used to track the number of segments aired and how often topics were discussed relative to baseline levels.
- **Quality of content:**
  Audience and presenter perceptions of tone, confidence, conversational flow, and informativeness. Measures of content standards were informed by audience focus groups, survey responses and discussions with presenters and producers. Tracking content quality also enabled observation of changes in presenter confidence over time and possible associated effects on audience engagement.
- **Topic alignment:**
  Comparison between topics identified as important by audiences and presenters and those selected for broadcast. Data was drawn from interviews, focus groups and content tracking logs.
- **Audience knowledge and attitudes:**
  Self-reported understanding, interest and engagement with climate and energy topics. Data was primarily recorded through the baseline and end-of-program surveys and supported by focus groups and interviews.

Indicators were measured at differing intervals with some monitored continuously to inform content and delivery, while others were aggregated to assess change over time relative to baseline conditions.



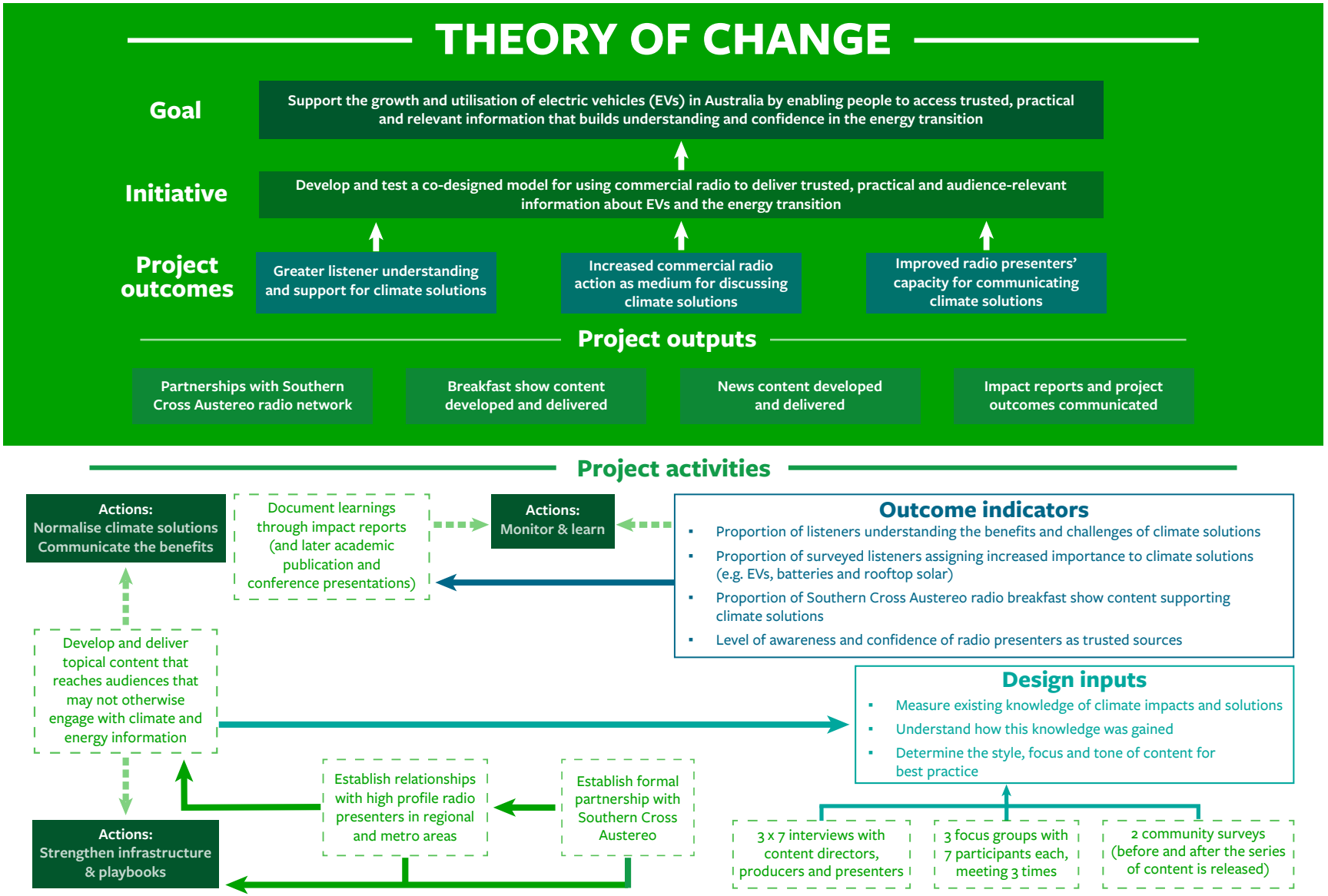


Figure 1. Program theory of change

2.5 Ethical considerations

The project followed Monash University ethical requirements and received Human Research Ethics Committee approval (ID numbers: 43508, 44490, 46780, 48672). Participation was voluntary for all aspects of this research, with informed consent obtained prior to any involvement. Data from surveys, focus groups and interviews was de-identified, securely stored and reported in aggregate.

One of the report authors, Amelia Pearson, was also the on-air expert whose segments were included in the evaluation. To minimise any potential conflict of interest, Pearson was not present during the Phase 3 focus groups in which participants assessed the segments in which she appeared. The transcription, coding, analysis and interpretation of the focus group data was also conducted independently by the other report authors.

2.6 Research context and concurrent influences

This research was conducted within a rapidly changing EV and energy landscape. These external developments are important to the interpretation of audience attitudes and behaviours because they may have influenced participants independently to the program. Key developments that may have shaped the broader information environment during the research period are outlined below.

Together, they illustrate why shifts in broad attitudes or reported behaviour cannot be attributed to the radio intervention alone and why the project's contribution-oriented approach is appropriate. The intervention documented in this report was one thread woven alongside changing policies, markets, infrastructure, prices, social norms and media reporting.

2.6.1 Policy and financial settings

The Australian Government's New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES) came into effect on 1 January 2025[6], with its first reporting period beginning that July, creating incentives for manufacturers to supply more fuel-efficient, low- and zero-emissions vehicles. At the same time, the fringe benefits tax exemption for new plug-in hybrid vehicles was withdrawn from 1 April 2025[7], reshaping the financial calculus around PHEVs. These changes altered the incentive environment for vehicle purchasing throughout the project period.

2.6.2 Vehicle market and charging infrastructure

Vehicle choice continued to widen, with more than 100 new battery electric vehicle models now available to Australian consumers[8]. Battery electric vehicles accounted for 8.7% of all new light vehicle sales in 2025, an increase of 1% on the previous year[9]. As EVs became a more familiar sight on Australian roads, their growing visibility may itself have helped normalise the

[6] National Vehicle Emissions Standards Regulator. (n.d.). *Big things are happening*. Australian Government. www.nvesregulator.gov.au/news-events/latest-news/big-things-are-happening

[7] Australian Taxation Office. (n.d.). *FBT on plug-in hybrid electric vehicles*. www.ato.gov.au/businesses-and-organisations/hiring-and-paying-your-workers/fringe-benefits-tax/types-of-fringe-benefits/fbt-on-cars-other-vehicles-parking-and-tolls/fbt-on-plug-in-hybrid-electric-vehicles

[8] The Driven. (n.d.). *Compare EVs*. thedriven.io/compare-evs/

[9] Australian Automobile Association. (n.d.). *Electric vehicle index*. www.aaa.asn.au/research-data/electric-vehicle/

technology and build public awareness. Charging infrastructure also continued to expand, with ARENA announcing $21 million in new investment in December 2025 to support projects including public charging in rural and regional NSW[10]. Together, this growing choice, visibility and access to charging may have helped reduce some of the perceived barriers to EV ownership, independent of any media exposure.

2.6.3 Household energy and renewable technologies

Household energy technologies also became more visible and more practically relevant over this period. From 1 July 2025, the Cheaper Home Batteries Program offered around a 30% discount on eligible small-scale battery systems[11]. Australia also passed four million rooftop solar installations during 2024[12], with rooftop solar now generating over 10% of the country's electricity[13].

2.6.4 Energy system change and public policy

At a system level, the Capacity Investment Scheme's first major tender in December 2024[14], backed 19 renewable projects representing 6.4 GW of generation[15]. By July 2025, the scheme's target had been lifted from 32 GW to 40 GW[16]. These developments likely fed into a broader public conversation about renewable energy, storage, reliability, investment and energy security.

2.6.5 Household costs and energy salience

Cost pressures kept these issues close to home. The Energy Bill Relief Fund provided up to $300 to eligible households in 2024-25, with a further $150 in the second half of 2025[17]. Cost-of-living pressures, electricity bills, fuel prices and household savings all gave energy technologies and transport a strong practical foothold in everyday conversation.

2.7 Limitations

This pilot was designed to support the development of a framework for commercial radio research and content delivery. While the project captured perspectives across multiple locations and audience types, findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative of all commercial radio audiences.

---

[10] Australian Renewable Energy Agency. (2025, December 10). *ARENA invests $21 million to accelerate Australia's electric vehicle transition*. arena.gov.au/news/arena-invests-21-million-to-accelerate-australias-electric-vehicle-transition/

[11] DCCEEW. (2025, May 20). *Discounted batteries for households through the Cheaper Home Batteries Program*. Australian Government. www.energy.gov.au/news/discounted-batteries-households-through-cheaper-home-batteries-program

[12] Clean Energy Regulator. (n.d.). *Small-scale installation postcode data*. Australian Government. cer.gov.au/markets/reports-and-data/small-scale-installation-postcode-data

[13] DCCEEW. (2025, June 20). *Australian Energy Statistics, Table O: Electricity generation by fuel type 2023-24 and 2024*. Australian Government. www.energy.gov.au/publications/australian-energy-statistics-table-o-electricity-generation-fuel-type-2023-24-and-2024

[14] DCCEEW. (2026). *Capacity Investment Scheme*. Australian Government. www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/renewable/capacity-investment-scheme

[15] Australian Energy Market Operator Services. (2024, May 31). *CIS Tender 1 – NEM Generation*. asl.org.au/tenders/cis-tender-1-generation-nem

[16] DCCEEW. (2026). *Capacity Investment Scheme: Transcript*. Australian Government. www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/renewable/capacity-investment-scheme#transcript

[17] DCCEEW. (n.d.). *Energy Bill Relief Fund*. Australian Government. https://www.energy.gov.au/energy-bill-relief-fund

3. Findings

In summary, five key findings have emerged from the project to date:

1. **Climate and energy topics were infrequently covered on participating commercial radio stations**
2. **Participating radio stations broadcast climate and energy content more frequently and consistently**
3. **The co-design process increased presenter confidence and improved content quality**
4. **Audience climate and energy knowledge improved, with gains in message-specific knowledge following exposure to program content**
5. **Media personnel and audiences consistently expressed support for program continuation**

Each of these are discussed in turn below.

3.1 Climate and energy topics were infrequently covered on participating commercial radio stations

Content analysis of two two-week periods in 2024 indicated climate and energy topics were infrequently covered across partner stations. On HIT 100.9, no climate or energy-related guest segments were identified, and of the 103 regular segments recorded only three discussed climate and energy. Similar patterns were observed on Triple M 107.3 – climate and energy content appeared sporadically across segment types, but at a slightly higher frequency. Three of the 52 guest segments focussed on climate and energy topics and eight of the 102 regular segments included discussion about climate and energy. Broadly, these topics were predominantly framed around weather, seasonal conditions or isolated news events. Full baseline counts by station and segment type are presented in Figure 2.

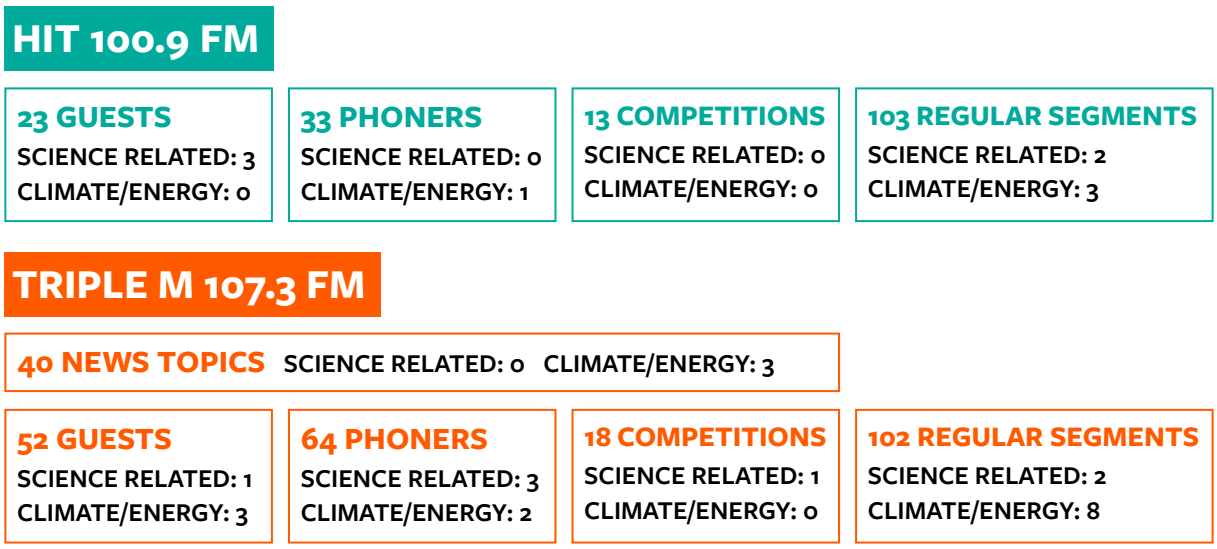


Figure 2. Baseline climate and energy content frequency by segment type and station. Climate and energy content includes segments related to renewable energy, EVs and climate impacts. Note that Triple M 107.3 has a news segment at the beginning of every hour, so they have an additional segment type listed.

Initial interviews with presenters and producers aligned with these findings. Climate and energy content was typically described as appearing only occasionally, most often in response to extreme weather events or major news stories rather than as a regular feature of programming.

> *"...it feels like a couple of times a month that we're talking about environmental things."*

> *"If something has come out of the news or something that's an event that is happening ... we have to talk about how it is affecting the listener."*

> *"...if you had an entire pie, I'd reckon it's a little slice of maybe about 8% of that pie."*

Radio personnel described these topics as sitting outside their usual editorial focus, which prioritised entertainment, sport, pop culture and local stories.

> *"I get and acknowledge that it's real and true and important but, [expletive], I mean, what's to be done, you know, in breakfast radio about it?"*

> *"...the most important topics are always the ones so far down the list."*

Uncertainty about personal expertise and concerns about integrating complex issues into light-hearted formats were also frequently cited.

> *"...anything hard news we don't really touch on, because the news does it, but usually it's just light hearted entertainment."*

> *"I will touch on stuff like that, that I'll read and be, like, interested in, but it's not something that really translates to the breakfast show."*

> *"If someone else does it, if there's an expert, it makes us sound better and more intelligent, and we can ask dumb questions to them."*

Baseline community survey results reinforced this picture. Although approximately two-thirds of respondents (66%) reported listening to radio at least weekly, radio ranked fourth as a source of climate and energy information, behind online news, social media and television.

Baseline content analysis, presenter interviews and audience survey results therefore point to a shared starting condition: climate and energy content was largely absent from commercial radio programming, not because it was contested or rejected, but because it was perceived as peripheral to format norms. This relative neutrality created a clear opportunity for the introduction of constructive, solutions-focused climate and energy content within a trusted and widely consumed medium.



3.2 Participating radio stations broadcast climate and energy content more frequently and consistently

Content tracking logs showed a sustained increase in the frequency and regularity of climate and energy content across partner commercial radio stations following the commencement of the program. During the delivery period, stations averaged approximately one climate- or energy-focused segment per week, representing a marked shift towards routine inclusion in radio programming.

This increase in frequency was accompanied by a change in how climate and energy topics were positioned on air. Rather than being tied primarily to breaking news or extreme events, content was increasingly embedded within everyday broadcast conversations. Segments focused on practical, locally relevant decisions related to energy use, costs and technologies, supporting a shift towards knowledge-building content.

In Phase Three focus groups, 15 of the 21 participants (71%) reported that one climate or energy segment per week felt "about right", while the remaining participants indicated that content could be aired more frequently. Nearly all participants (20 of 21, 95%) agreed or strongly agreed that climate and energy information should be a regular feature of commercial radio broadcasts. These responses indicate strong support among listeners for regular content integration.

Participants emphasised the importance of consistency and conversational delivery, noting that regular inclusion helped position climate and energy topics as part of everyday life rather than as polarising or political issues. This suggests that frequency and normalisation played an important role in supporting accessibility and relevance for listeners.

> *"I think maybe if there's more conversation in everyday broadcasts...in having those conversations, you start to normalise it."*

> *"I would like to hear conversations that are not political, that share information about what we all need no matter what party you go for, that they can find some common ground for the future, for climate change, for making good decisions."*

> *"... moving climate issues out of the motivated reasoning, politics, space, into every day, that for me would be the best thing that could happen."*



Final interviews with radio personnel echoed these findings. Most presenters and producers expressed support for maintaining regular climate and energy segments and recognised the importance of using their platform to provide audiences with credible, accessible information.

> *"I think it's important to have these conversations, and they're all relevant too"*

> *"we'll keep on doing it ...because when we were doing it by ourselves, we weren't really experts on it"*

> *"I think if you go back six months ago, compared to now, of what the [presenters] are aware of and what they're willing to do, because there was a little bit of resistance at the start, about like, 'Oh, do you want us to be just talking about all about the environment?' and whatever else. No, it's about talking about stuff that affects our audience every day of the week, and affects you as a homeowner or as whatever else. But I think they get that now. They can see it."*

> *"[if they were to do it on their own] it would sound left of field because it's just not the sound of our show. But having it as a segment around misinformation […], that absolutely works."*

These findings suggest that increased frequency and normalisation of climate and energy content was both acceptable to audiences and operationally viable for commercial radio.

3.3 The co-design process increased presenter confidence and improved content quality

3.3.1 Early delivery challenges

Initial delivery of climate and energy content revealed a gap between the quality of information provided to presenters and its translation to air. While presenters received concise, evidence-based research briefs, early broadcasts often drew only partially on this material.

> *"...when it's like a big page, they just sort of freak out. They're like, 'Oh, I have to get my head around this'."*

> *"when it's not in their natural wheelhouse, like their natural voice, that's where it's difficult to do it in an authentic way [...] they don't connect to it."*

Interviews and feedback sessions indicated that presenters' baseline climate and energy literacy was relatively limited, contributing to uncertainty about how to communicate unfamiliar or technically complex topics in a way that felt authentic and engaging.

> *"...they [presenters] may not feel authentic. An expert might be able to sort of provide that, but then it's still got to be something that they'd be interested in chatting about. That's, you know, interesting enough for our listeners."*

> *"I like the idea. I think it works. I just think it's hard sometimes for us, like, it's not easy. And so therefore, it takes a bit of extra work from the announcers to work out a way to talk about something that may not necessarily have come up normally."*

This uncertainty affected early delivery quality. Focus group participants frequently noted that segments sounded disjointed, overly scripted or lacking a clear takeaway. When participants were asked to identify the key message in the brief and then in the corresponding broadcast, there was limited alignment in the message notes (Figure 3).

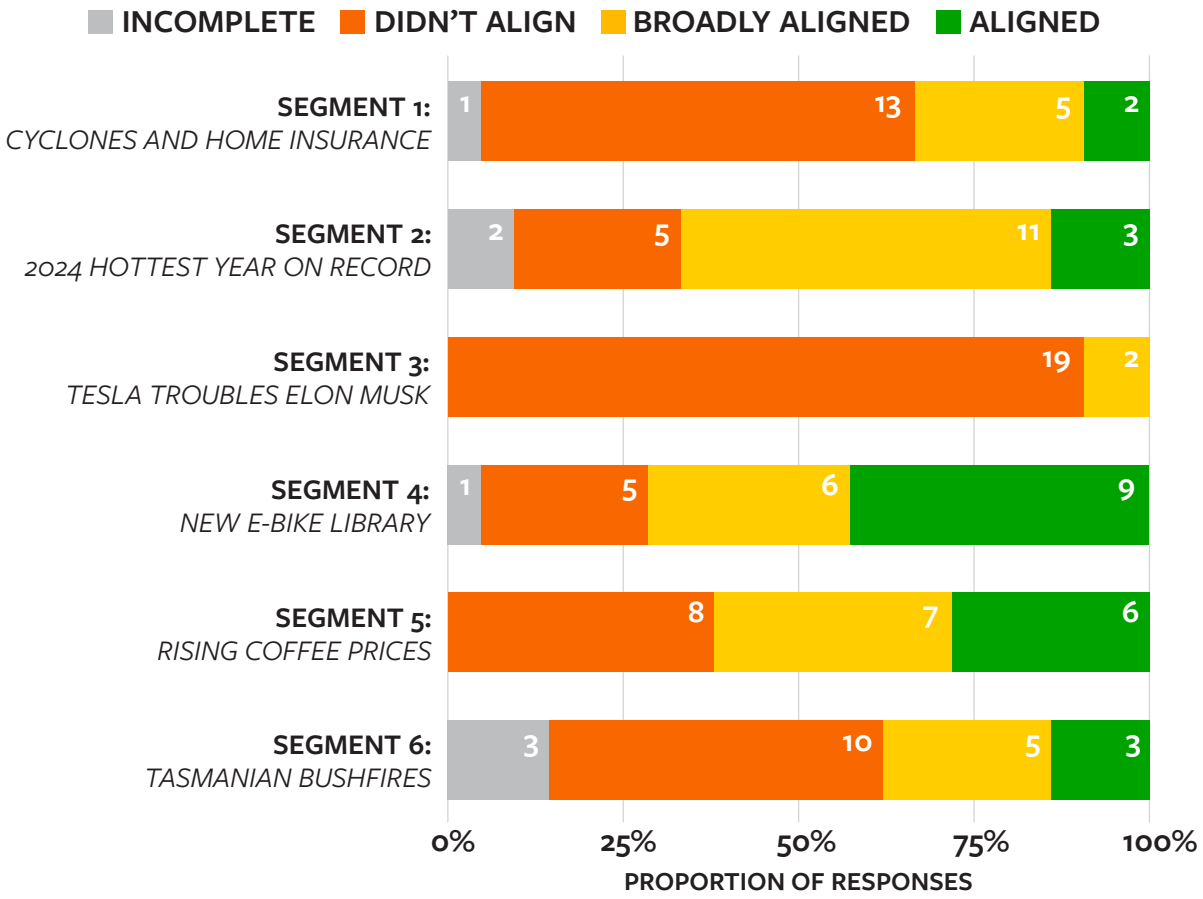
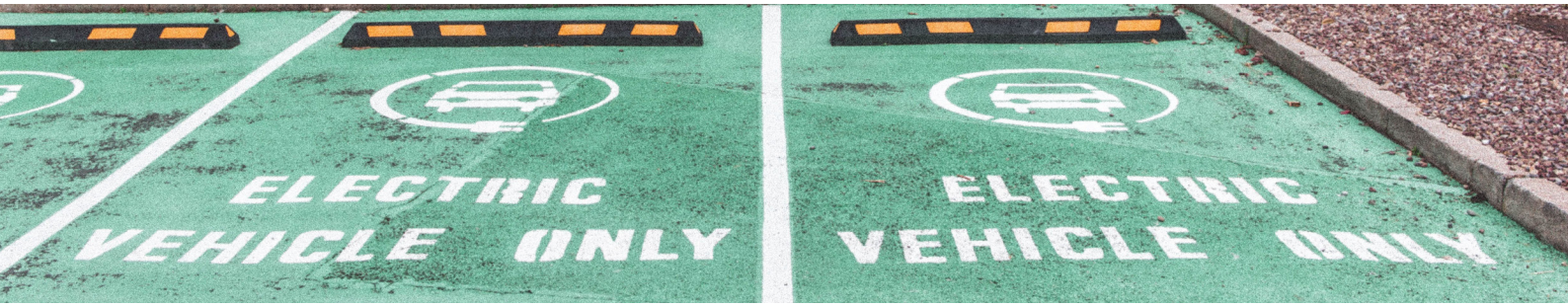


Figure 3. Phase Two focus group; alignment of the key messages identified in the brief compared to the message identified in the broadcast.

Many observed stronger clarity and framing in the written material than in the on-air discussion, suggesting that the primary challenge lay in translation rather than content design.

> *"I think it was right on the money, the way you presented everything [in the brief] with all the facts"*

These findings demonstrated that improving on-air quality required delivery-focused support and confidence-building mechanisms alongside content development.



3.3.2 Topic selection and alignment of interests

While baseline analysis showed that climate and energy content was infrequently covered, interviews with presenters and producers helped explain why these topics were rarely prioritised in day-to-day programming decisions.

Presenter framing of topic suitability

Radio personnel consistently described commercial radio as an entertainment-first medium, where editorial decisions were guided by tone, relatability and emotional payoff. Shows were framed as deliberately light, conversational spaces, anchored in topics presenters would naturally discuss in their own daily lives.

Presenter buy-in emerged as a critical gatekeeping mechanism. Presenters emphasised that enthusiasm and personal connection were essential to effective delivery, with authenticity framed as central to maintaining audience engagement. As a result, topics that did not resonate with presenters' own interests were less likely to progress from pitch to broadcast, even when proposed by producers.

> *"If it sparks our interest, we'll do it."*
>
> *"A lot of our content is just stuff that we would be talking about in our everyday life."*
>
> *"There's been stories that I've pitched but they haven't been picked up because [presenters] don't feel a passionate connection to any of them."*

Prescribed audience personas further shaped these assumptions. Radio personnel described listeners using shorthand such as a "37-year-old mum", "truck drivers", or "everyday tradies", with content tailored accordingly. Within this framing, climate change was often characterised as a background concern that audiences 'kind of care about', but one that struggled to compete with more immediate or familiar topics.

> *"We are guided by our audience."*
>
> *"Joe from bloody [place name withheld]... she's worried about Tim Tams being six bucks."*
>
> *"Everyone's struggling with cost of living... I do not have time to be worried about this other stuff."*
>
> *"People are worried about what's happening tomorrow, not what's happening in 15 years' time."*

These perspectives help explain why climate and energy topics were deprioritised prior to the project. Importantly, this was not driven by opposition to the subject matter, but by entrenched assumptions about audience receptivity, emotional tone and format compatibility. These assumptions formed a critical backdrop against which subsequent shifts in topic framing and selection need to be understood.

Audience-identified interests and misalignment challenges

In contrast to presenter assumptions, baseline survey results and focus groups indicated strong audience interest in climate and energy topics when framed around everyday relevance and practical decision-making.

Baseline community survey responses showed that audiences were most interested in information related to environmental impacts, health and the broader societal benefits of climate solutions and the energy transition (Figure 4). Topics framed around community projects and employment opportunities attracted comparatively lower interest.

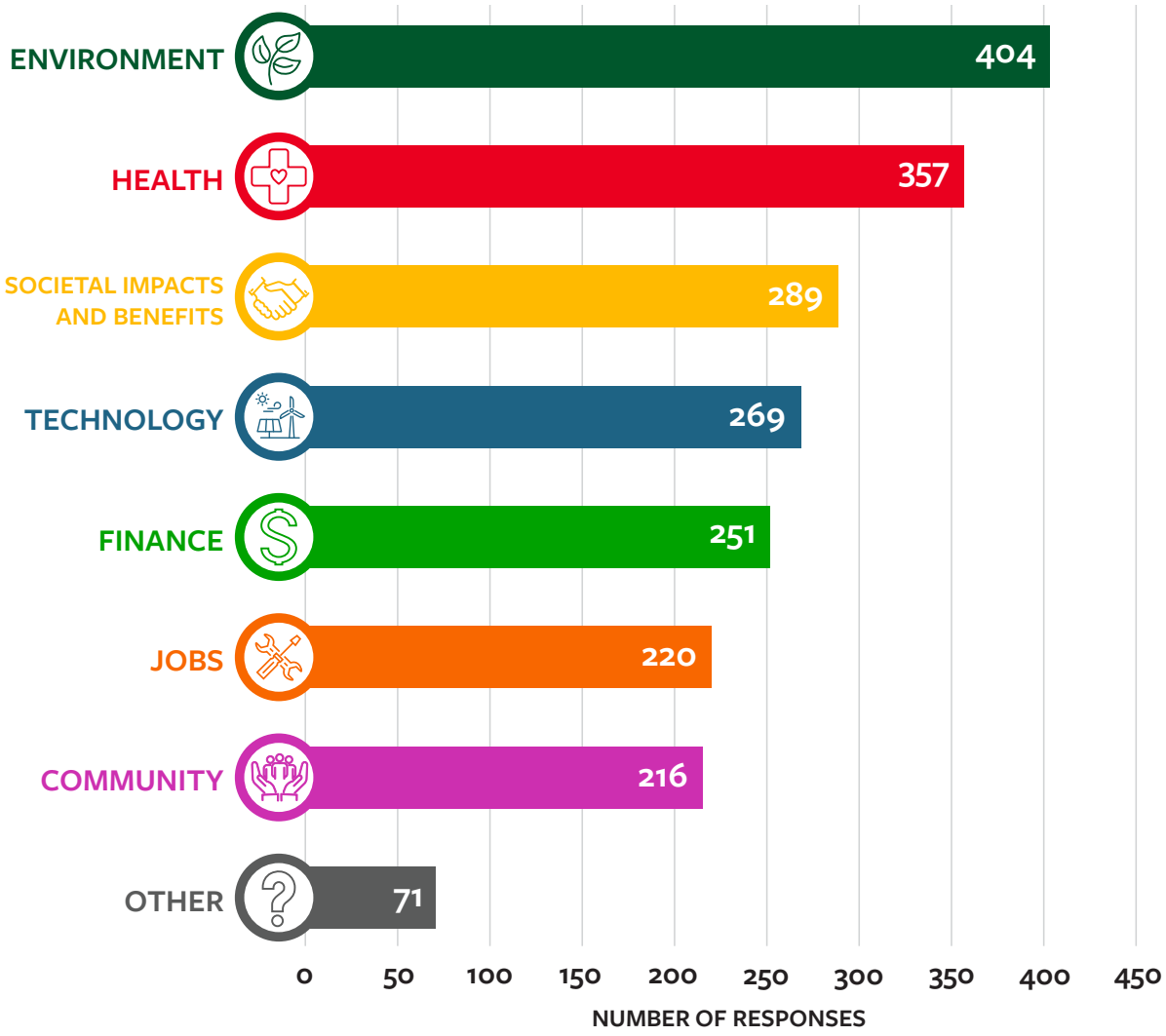


Figure 4. Topics of interest identified in the baseline survey (n=596)



Initial focus groups reinforced this pattern. Participants consistently expressed a desire for climate and energy content that was accessible, practical and directly connected to daily life – including EVs, renewables and household energy use.

> *"They have a sports section, they have a general news section. They don't have a science section."*

Participants also highlighted confusion and misinformation as key barriers to understanding, and explicitly supported myth-busting approaches that could clarify common claims and point to credible sources.

> *"I'd like to talk a lot about misinformation."*

Importantly, participants emphasised that information should be simplified without being superficial, suggesting that disengagement stemmed more from delivery style than topic relevance.

> *"Simplifying content, making it more accessible... go back to the basics."*

> *"How can our homes become more user friendly on our energy and save more?"*



Refining topic selection through co-design

To address this misalignment, Phase Two and Three introduced structured exercises comparing presenter and audience preferences for potential broadcast topics (Appendix A.1). While some overlap existed, the headlines audiences ranked highest were often those presenters ranked lowest (Table 1).

Table 1. Phase Two focus group participant and radio staff headline rankings (top three and bottom three of interest)

	FOCUS GROUPS	SCA STAFF
Top 3 aired	1. 2024 was Australia's second hottest year on record 2. Your House Might Be Making Hot Days Worse 3. Tesla owners turn against Musk: 'I'm embarrassed driving this car around'	1. First 'reverse vending machine' installed for Tasmanian container recycling scheme 2. Leonardo DiCaprio criticises Australian government for approving a mine expansion 3. Tesla owners turn against Musk: 'I'm embarrassed driving this car around'
Bottom 3 aired	1. Flat white coffee price likely to skyrocket, no matter where you live 2. Leonardo DiCaprio criticises Australian government for approving a mine expansion 3. Tesla owners turn against Musk: 'I'm embarrassed driving this car around'	1. Global Recycling Day 2. Tasmania tackles tougher fire seasons 3. Your House Might Be Making Hot Days Worse
Top 3 unaired	1. Renewables the cheapest path to lower Aussie energy bills - new report finds 2. Power Struggle: Nuclear Ambitions Meet Renewable Realities 3. Rising waters, falling coverage: Australia's future insurance challenges	1. How the climate is changing the taste of beer 2. Hobart City Mission says nearly 650K of clothing items saved from trash 3. Australia's 'healthiest' place to live is Tasmania
Bottom 3 unaired	1. US beauty queen and 'new face of nuclear energy' campaigns to sway public opinion in Australia 2. No sweat – hot tips for a cool summer 3. The Surprising Climate Perks of a Jungle-Like Garden	1. Power Struggle: Nuclear Ambitions Meet Renewable Realities 2. EV owners turn to their batteries on wheels to power homes amid Alfred blackouts 3. No sweat – hot tips for a cool summer

In response, the research team worked with radio partners to develop a refined list of climate and energy topics for a recurring myth-busting segment, designed to balance audience interest with on-air practicality (Appendix A.2). The list included ten renewable energy topics, nine EV topics and four broader climate and energy themes.

This list was tested with audiences and presenters in Phase 3, with both groups ranking their top and bottom three topics of interest from the new list (Table 2).

Table 2. Phase Three focus group participant and radio staff headline rankings (top and bottom three of interest)

	FOCUS GROUPS	SCA STAFF
Top 3 1 = of most interest	1. Solar and wind: What happens when they wear out? 2. Hydrogen: the next big thing or a waste of time? 3. The cost question: • If the government builds more renewables, will my power bill really go down? • How much does solar on my roof actually cost? • Are batteries worth it – or are feed-in tariffs so low now it's pointless?	1. Wind farms: are they dangerous? 2. The cost of running an EV versus a petrol car 3. Solar and wind: What happens when they wear out?
Bottom 3 1 = of least interest	1. AI and driverless cars 2. Wind farms: Are they dangerous? 3. Tie between: • The 'what if scenarios' • Scientists don't even agree on climate change • Renewables means cutting down forests	1. EVs don't just mean Teslas anymore 2. Bikes and e-bikes: Cheap, but are they safe? 3. Tie between: • Hydrogen: The next big thing or a waste of time? • Scientists don't even agree on climate change (myths)

Focus group participants gravitated most strongly toward renewable energy topics. In several cases, lower-ranked topics were described as familiar rather than uninteresting.

EV topics followed a more selective pattern. While EVs had been identified as an area of interest in earlier phases, no EV topic ranked in the top three selections in Phase Three. However, the EV cost comparison topic ranked fifth overall, indicating continued but more targeted engagement. Several participants noted that prior EV or hybrid ownership influenced perceptions of novelty.

In contrast, radio personnel selected a much more diverse array of topics across renewables, electric transport and those more broadly on climate and energy.

Despite limited overlap in specific topic rankings, overall engagement was higher, with participants reporting that it was more difficult to select favourites or least favourites.

> *"This is much harder to find the top three...a lot more interesting." – Focus group participant*

Sharing these findings with radio teams helped challenge assumptions about audience interest and reduced presenter hesitancy around substantive climate and energy content.

> *"I think... we've got a clearer view on what people want to hear... just because it's not something they're frothing for doesn't mean the audience doesn't have interest in it."*

> *"[I've learned] not to be so dismissive of stuff that doesn't seem pop culture... that could have interesting or learning opportunities for listeners."*

3.3.3 Refinement through feedback and structured formats

Audience focus groups played a central role in identifying the characteristics of effective on-air delivery. Participants consistently emphasised clarity, conversational tone and relevance over novelty or gimmicks. Feedback from Phase Two indicated that segments often drifted off topic, fell short in terms of tone, clarity and flow, or sounded like presenters were reading from prepared material rather than engaging in natural conversation. In several cases, listeners reported finishing a segment unsure of the key message.

> *"I'd forgotten what we'd actually started off talking about."*

> *"You listen to the whole radio and I was like I don't even know what you're talking about. And then you read the brief. You're like, wow, this brief is fantastic. I would have loved to have just heard exactly what was on the brief.*

> *"They're just the most easily digestible pieces. I feel like you're not giving enough credit to people who are listening. They would be interested in these points if they heard them"*

In response, both audiences and radio personnel proposed the introduction of a defined, recurring myth-busting or fact-check segment featuring an expert voice.

> *"So maybe putting it into a recurring segment. That way people can be like, 'oh, this is about the climate and out of this I'm gonna get something from an expert...I recognise this.'" – Focus group participant*

> *"It would be good to do some myth-busting." – Focus group participant*

This format was designed to provide clearer structure, reduce message drift and set audience expectations. The Hub's Amelia Pearson was introduced as a recurring guest expert under the persona 'Miss Information', addressing common misconceptions related to EVs, renewables and climate change.

For presenters, the expert-led format increased confidence and reduced anxiety about accuracy, and it was consistently described as a "turning point" in delivery quality. The presence of an expert allowed hosts to act as proxies for their audience, asking practical questions while ensuring credible explanations.

> *"It's good having someone here that already knows the answer... so there was no opportunity for that message to get lost, really." – Presenter*

> *"Yeah, having an expert, you know, presenting the information and the presenters, the radio presenters, asking the questions, works much better." – Focus group participant*

> *"The most valuable thing has been making the transition to Amelia as an expert guest... It's a lot more professional than just us as radio hosts. Having an expert guest has been the standout." – Presenter*

> *"I think there's a lot of trust with us now... as soon as we say who we're talking to [Monash Uni]." – Presenter*

For listeners, the inclusion of a different voice improved attention, clarity and perceived trustworthiness. Phase Three focus groups described these segments as more informative, focused and engaging than earlier broadcasts.

> *"You just kind of click a little bit... that different voice made you go, 'Oh, hang on. Let me listen.'"*

> *"Yep, you felt like you were getting relevant information, not just two people chatting."*

> *"I felt I was engaged with the whole conversation. It didn't go off into a little tangent, they kept bringing back. I felt the hosts and the expert worked well, short and sharp. It made the message clearer."*

> *"Really well pitched... it fits in really nicely with what they would normally present."*



Comprehension of key messages also improved markedly (Figure 5).

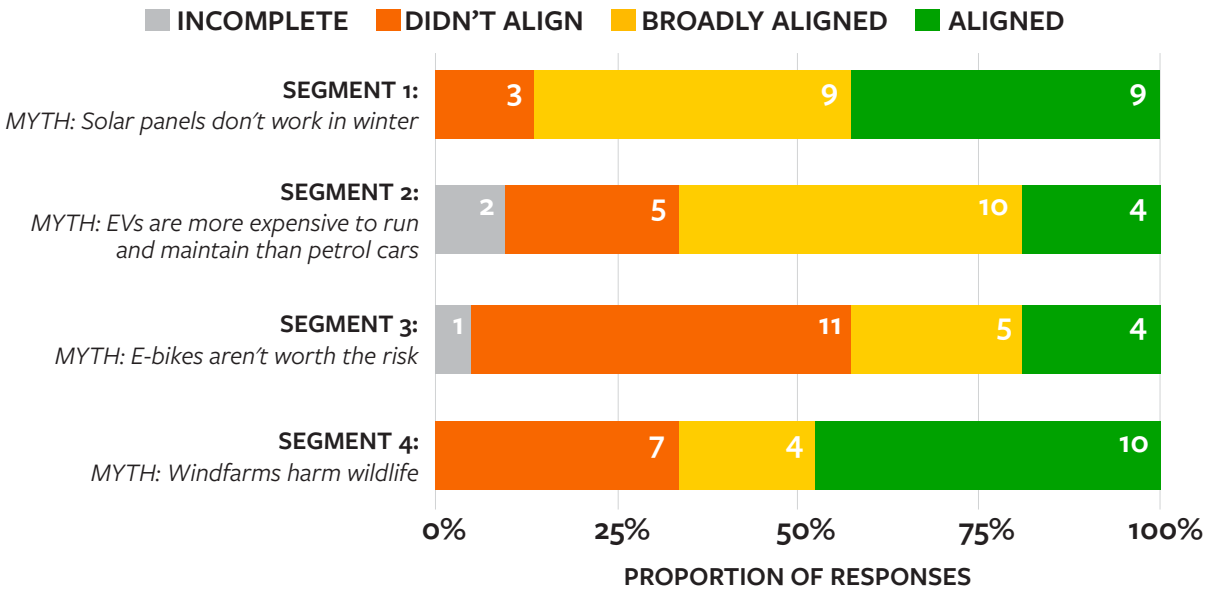


Figure 5. Phase Three focus group; alignment of the key message identified in the brief compared to the message identified in the broadcast.

3.3.4 The role of co-design in delivery quality and presenter confidence

The co-design process functioned as both a delivery and capacity-building mechanism. Regular creative sessions, structured feedback loops and iterative refinement ensured that evaluation insights were embedded into practice rather than applied retrospectively. Comparing intended key messages in briefs with those conveyed on air enabled targeted refinements to framing, prioritisation and conversational flow.

Over time, presenters reported increased confidence and ease in discussing climate and energy topics. This confidence was built further through the sharing of audience feedback, which confirmed listener interest and reduced early hesitation about audience reception.

> *"I feel confident doing them, because it's good when you can do it with someone that you know is also confident."*

> *"If you want more intricate detail, or someone that can have all the answers, this is a far superior way to do it than just a casual chat."*

Production processes were also refined, including the use of pre-recorded segments that retained a live, conversational style while providing a safety net for accuracy.

> *"Now we've found the system... when I hit the stop record button, I go, I don't need to edit that."*

> *"The reason we pre-record is... that's the safety net."*

Collectively, these changes resulted in clearer, more focused and more confident on-air delivery, demonstrating the value of co-design in improving both quality and presenter capability.

3.4 Audience climate and energy knowledge improved

3.4.1 Baseline knowledge, confidence and support for renewables

Phase One findings showed varying levels of climate and energy knowledge among audiences. While awareness of climate change as an issue was high, understanding of specific solutions, including EVs, renewable energy technologies and energy systems, was often limited or fragmented.

Baseline survey results indicated that most respondents felt somewhat informed (31.0%) or slightly informed (28.9%) about climate change, with only a small minority (10.7%) reporting they felt well or very well informed. A further 11.7% indicated that they were not informed at all (Figure 6).

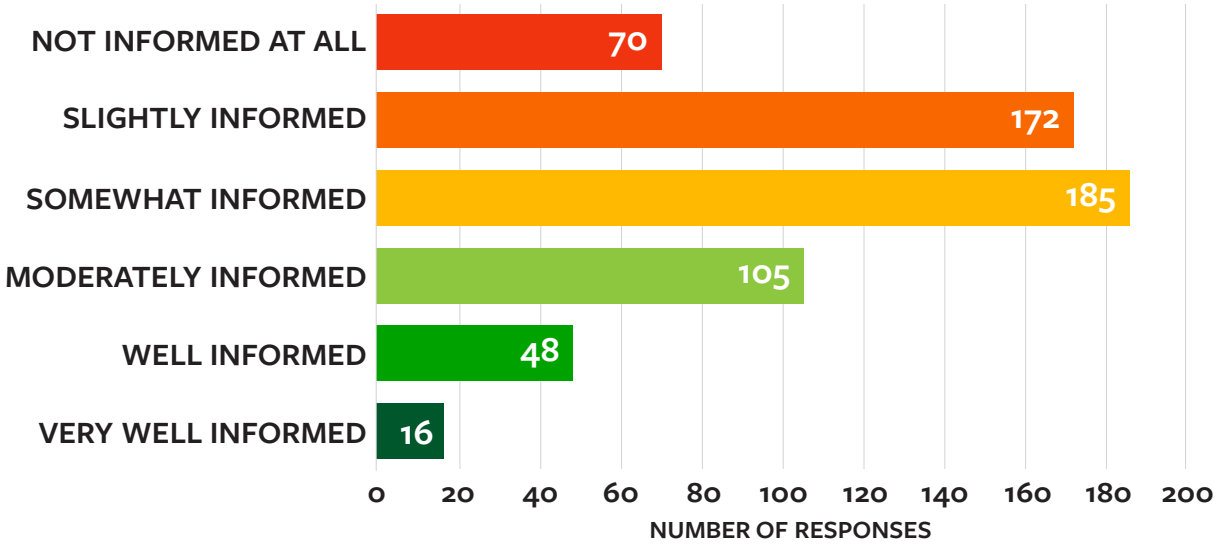


Figure 6. Baseline survey participants' perceived level of knowledge about **climate topics** (n=596)

Self-reported knowledge of energy topics followed a similar distribution. The most common responses were slightly informed (31.2%) and somewhat informed (26.7%), with only 7.4% of respondents reporting that they felt well or very well informed. Nearly one in seven respondents (13.9%) reported no knowledge at all (Figure 7).

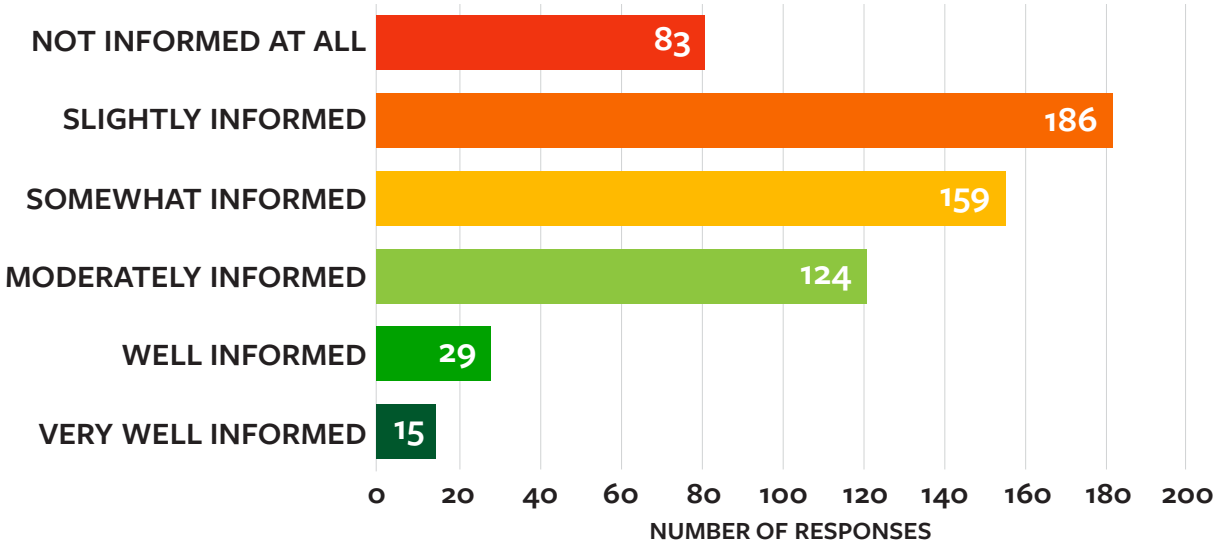


Figure 7. Baseline survey participants' perceived level of knowledge about **energy topics** (n=596)

Focus group discussions provided context for these findings. Participants frequently described their knowledge as piecemeal or shaped by conflicting media sources, contributing to uncertainty and low confidence.

> *"It's good having someone here that already knows the answer... so there was no "I think my biggest problem is that so many different people say so many different things."*

> *"You've got like, three or four different news sources, and they've all got... different stories and different agendas... maybe we've got too much information."*

> *"Forget climate change, people don't even understand environment."*

A small number of participants demonstrated higher confidence, typically linked to personal experience such as owning an EV or working in the energy sector, and occasionally assumed an informal 'expert' role within discussions. These moments highlighted disparities in knowledge within groups, rather than widespread literacy.

> *"Because I have these conversations with my wife, I go 'everyone knows that'. And she said, 'No, only you do.'"*

Despite low confidence in their own knowledge, baseline survey respondents expressed strong support for established renewable energy sources (Figure 8). Solar, wind and hydro were consistently ranked as the most important energy sources for addressing climate change. Support for hydro was particularly strong, likely reflecting the high proportion of Tasmanian respondents. In contrast, newer or less familiar technologies such as hydrogen, biofuels and nuclear attracted largely neutral responses. This pattern was consistent across both survey waves and aligns with focus group findings. It suggests that while people often provide in-principle support towards renewables, they also feel uncertainty about how different technologies work or fit into the broader energy system.

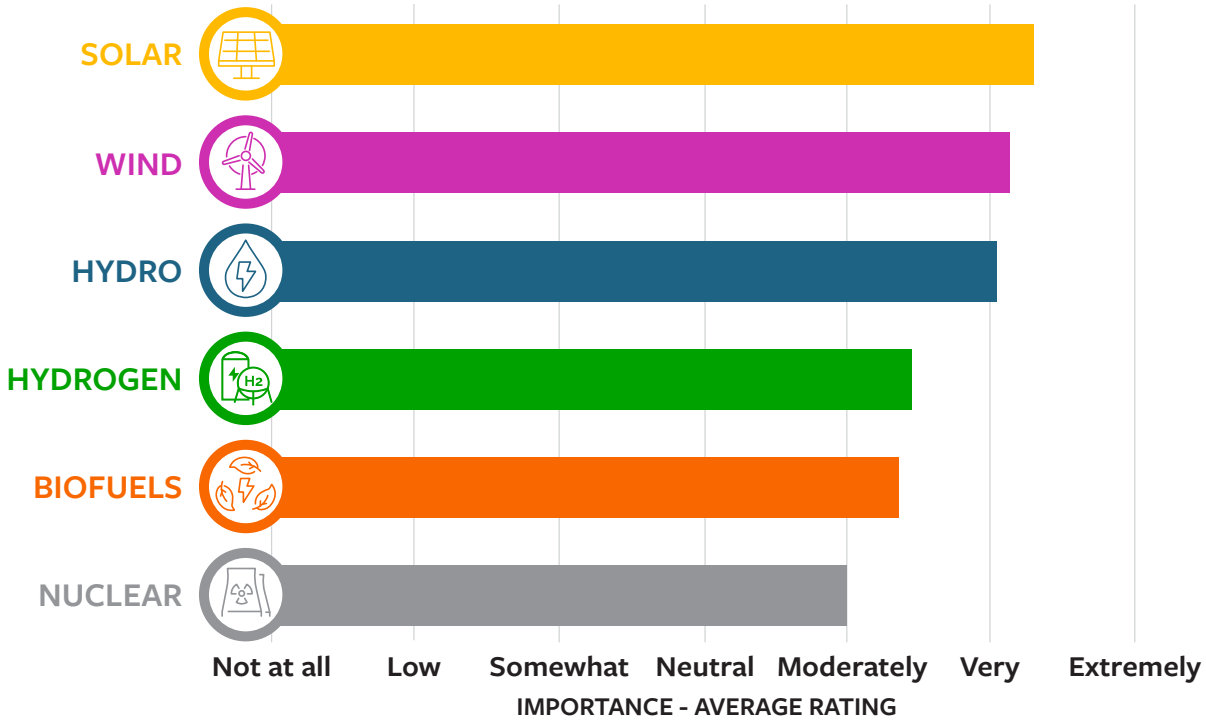


Figure 8. Weighted average importance of different energy sources for addressing climate change in Australia (n=596). Weighting was established by converting the seven qualitative options ('*not at all*' to '*extremely*') into numbers.

3.4.2 Knowledge accuracy and miscalibration

End-of-program survey responses further highlighted a misalignment between self-reported confidence and objective understanding across topics.

For renewable energy, 40.6% of respondents reported knowing a small amount, 40.2% a moderate amount and only 10.1% a high amount. For EVs, 45.9% reported knowing a small amount and 35.0% a moderate amount. Knowledge of critical minerals was lowest, with 31.6% reporting no knowledge and only 6.5% reporting high knowledge (Figure 9).

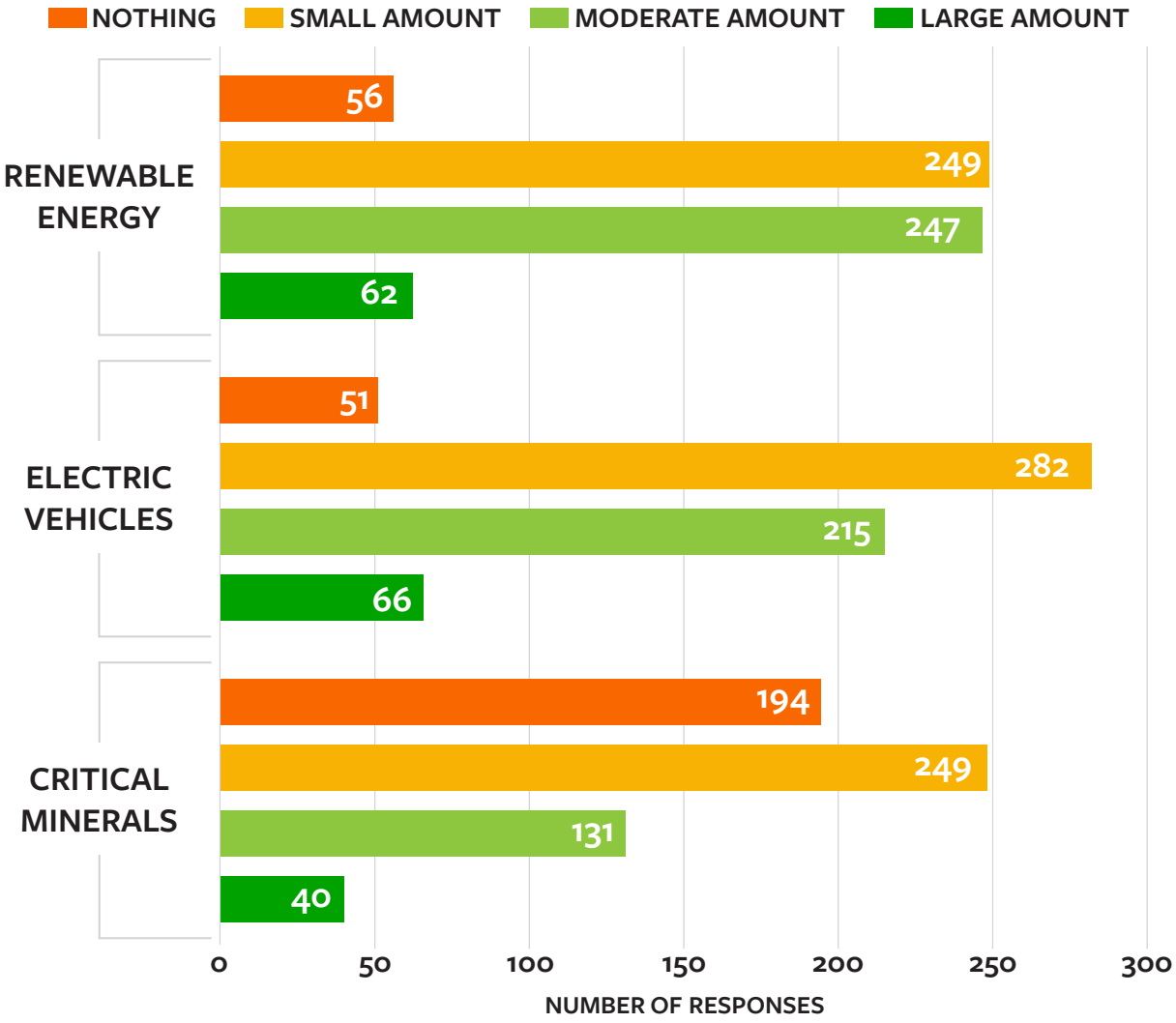


Figure 9. Self-reported knowledge of renewable energy, EV and critical mineral topics in the end-of-program community survey (n = 614 per topic)



Notably, across all three topics more than half of the participants who rated themselves as highly knowledgeable selected at least one incorrect answer about the benefits of these climate and energy solutions (Table 3). This suggests that confidence should not be assumed to reflect accurate understanding and reinforces the value of accessible information delivered through trusted media channels.

Table 3. Proportion of highly knowledgeable respondents who selected at least one incorrect benefit of the relevant climate solution

TOPIC	RESPONDENTS WHO SELECTED KNOWING A 'LARGE AMOUNT' (N)	SELECTED ≥1 INCORRECT BENEFIT	PROPORTION
Renewable energy	62	35	56.5%
Electric vehicles	66	36	54.5%
Critical minerals	40	24	60.0%

3.4.3 Reported and measured learning outcomes

Final focus groups indicated that exposure to the program supported perceived learning and confidence. Among the 21 Phase Three focus group participants, 15 (71%) agreed or somewhat agreed that listening to the segments made them feel more informed about climate impacts, and 14 (67%) reported feeling more informed about climate solutions. Similarly, 15 participants (71%) reported increased confidence discussing climate and energy topics with friends, family or colleagues. Three participants selected neutral or disagreed, noting that they already felt well informed prior to listening.

> *"I now have greater knowledge of the issues and misinformation that's out there."*

> *"My understanding of EVs has increased... especially around costs and myths."*

Participants also reported greater awareness of renewable energy developments, EVs and supporting infrastructure as a result of engagement with the program.

These qualitative findings were substantiated through the end-of-program community survey, which assessed knowledge immediately before and after exposure to selected broadcast segments across three topic areas: solar energy, EVs and critical minerals. Across all tested clips, 87.5% of respondents reported learning something (Figure 10).

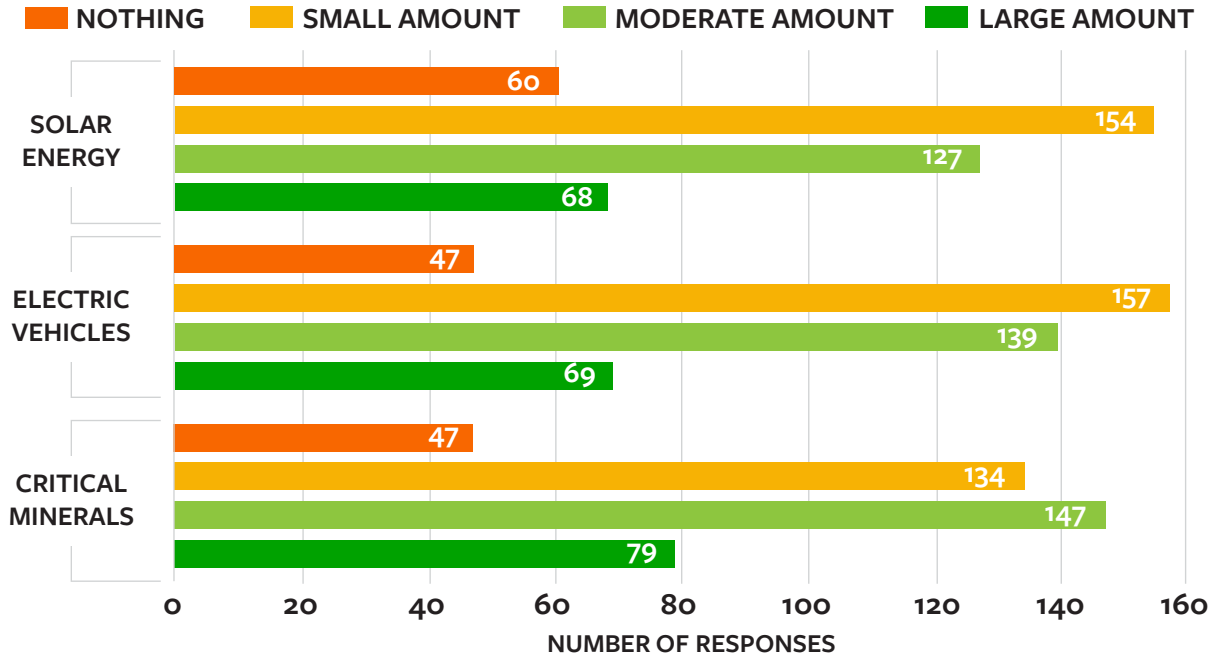


Figure 10. Self-reported learning from the end-of-program survey about solar (n = 409), EV (n = 412) and critical mineral (n = 407) topics after listening to broadcast segments from this program.

Exposure was associated with statistically significant increases in the number of true benefits correctly identified for all three technologies, with no corresponding increase in endorsement of false claims. On average, respondents identified an additional 0.37 correct benefits for EVs, 0.24 for rooftop solar and 0.56 for critical minerals following exposure. These gains closely reflected the content of the radio segments. Benefits that were explicitly discussed showed significant improvements, whereas claims that were not presented showed no significant change. For example, agreement with the EV statement "They can be charged using rooftop solar", which was not discussed in the provided segment, remained unchanged despite relatively low baseline agreement (mean = 0.46). This pattern suggests that observed changes were driven by exposure to specific claims rather than a generalised increase in agreement or acquiescence.

The only exception to this pattern was seen in response to the critical minerals statement "They're used to build renewable energy technology like solar, wind and batteries". Responses showed a significant increase in agreement with the claim after listening to the segment despite relatively high pre-exposure consensus (mean = 0.593).This suggests that some claims may function as reinforcing or anchoring concepts even when they are not entirely novel.

Importantly, respondents with the lowest self-reported baseline knowledge were most likely to report learning at least a small amount, indicating that the content was accessible to audiences with lower climate and energy literacy. At the same time, respondents who initially reported high knowledge also reported learning gains, suggesting that the segments added value even for more informed listeners.

3.5 Media personnel and audiences consistently expressed support for program continuation

Phase One focus groups and presenter interviews revealed varied confidence about the feasibility of delivering climate and energy content within commercial radio formats. While radio was widely recognised as trusted and accessible, both presenters and audiences initially questioned whether such topics could be integrated without disrupting entertainment-focused programming or presenter authenticity.

End-of-program survey results (n = 614) indicated that these concerns were not reflected in audience trust. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (74.3%) reported at least some trust in commercial radio as a source of climate and energy information, with no significant variation by age.

Importantly, Phase Three focus groups (n = 21) indicated that perceptions of audience and brand risk were neutral to positive (Figure 11). Most participants believed that broadcasting climate and energy content would have neutral or positive effects on audience support and station reputation. Seventeen participants (81%) agreed that such content would not reduce audience support, while 12 (57%) believed it would actively strengthen it. No participants indicated that covering climate and energy topics would harm the station's brand, and 15 (71%) agreed it would strengthen it, suggesting that concerns about reputational risk are not shared by audiences.

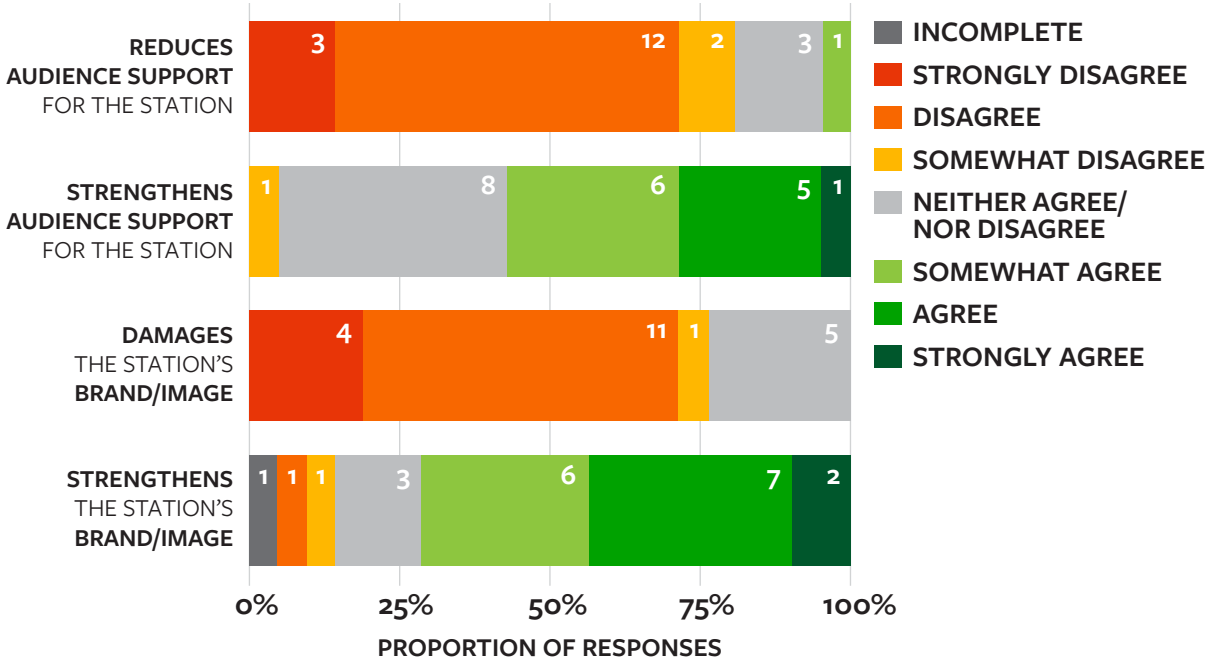


Figure 11. Phase Three focus group perceptions of audience and brand risk from climate and energy broadcasting

Evidence from final focus groups indicate strong support for the program and growing confidence in its capacity to influence community perceptions and behaviours. Among focus group participants, 19 of 21 (90%) agreed that the content broadcast through the program had the potential to influence how people in their communities think about climate and energy solutions. Participants rated their program experience an average of 8.95/10, noting that they

felt meaningfully included in the program's development and that this collaborative approach should be extended to other presenters and stations.

> *"I feel like my input has helped. What I'm hearing now feels relevant."*

> *"Feedback was taken. I felt very heard."*

Early indicators of behavioural shifts were also recorded. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously given the range of confounding factors that may have influenced participants over the broader research period. Thirteen participants (62%) agreed or somewhat agreed that they felt more motivated to take climate-related action after engaging with the program. More than half (11 of 21; 52%) reported having looked into EV or household energy incentives, such as solar rebates or home batteries, since participating. Of the 10 participants who reported not doing so, three indicated this was because they already had the relevant technology installed, and a further two cited renting as a limiting factor. These findings indicate that the program may have supported motivation and information-seeking for some participants.

Final interviews with radio staff reflected similarly strong support, expressing a belief in the capacity of radio to support social change and emphasising the influence of daily, familiar contact with listeners.

> *"There is so much change that is possible with the power of a microphone and the immediacy of radio."*

> *"It's a privilege to have the microphone... that's why I get annoyed when people just waste it."*

> *"If it's like their mate saying, 'look guys, this is important', then people will listen."*

Presenters and producers reported increased confidence in engaging with climate and energy topics, motivated evidence of audience interest and a desire to provide accurate, trustworthy information to their communities.

> *"It's not just our role, but our obligation to help communicate these things...I know that we have an obligation to the next generation of people to look after this place."*

> *"It's really important to get it right, because people are listening."*

In concluding interviews, radio staff rated their experience with the program highly (9.3/10) and consistently recommended expansion to additional stations. The co-design approach was repeatedly identified as central to success, supporting delivery quality, presenter confidence and audience alignment.

> *"Everyone's winning – the station, the researchers and the listener."*

> *"It's given us much more than I thought we'd get at the start."*

These findings support a convergence between presenter and audience perspectives over the course of the program.

4. Conclusion

This research set out to test whether commercial breakfast radio – a trusted but under-examined communication environment – could meaningfully contribute to public understanding of climate and energy issues. The findings indicate that it can. As a pilot, the Hub's Tuning In project provides initial evidence that commercial radio can play a constructive role in supporting Australia's energy transition. While it is not a substitute for specialist journalism or long-form reporting, it offers a complementary communication pathway capable of reaching audiences who may not actively seek climate and energy information. The evaluation has established a practical, evidence-informed model that can be refined and scaled, providing a foundation for broader implementation across Australia's commercial broadcasting sector. The model requires a funded partner to provide regular, evidence-based briefs and access to an appropriate expert, alongside sustained time and commitment from participating stations. When climate and energy content was developed collaboratively with broadcasters, framed around everyday decisions and delivered consistently through familiar presenters, it was associated with improvements in audience understanding without disrupting program tone or undermining audience trust. These gains cannot be attributed solely to the program, but the consistency of the pattern across survey, focus group and content analysis data supports program content as a meaningful contributor.

Several findings underpin this conclusion. Firstly, audience demand centred on practical information that could help people make sense of everyday decisions about energy, transport and household technologies. Secondly, co-design with presenters and producers proved critical. Ongoing collaboration enabled content to be adapted to audience interests, station formats and presenter confidence, improving both communication quality and broadcaster engagement over time. Finally, repeated exposure through routine programming was associated with gains in listener knowledge while reducing concern that climate and energy content would pose a risk to audience relationships or station brands. Both audiences and radio personnel expressed strong support for continued and expanded coverage.

Findings also demonstrate that low climate literacy should not be interpreted as low audience interest. Listeners were receptive to substantive information when it was relevant to their lives, communicated in accessible language and delivered by trusted local voices. This suggests that the barriers to climate and energy communication within commercial radio are less about audience resistance than about creating formats and production practices that enable these conversations to become part of routine programming.



Perhaps the most significant outcome, however, extends beyond individual learning. Prior to this research, climate and energy topics typically appeared only in response to extreme weather or breaking news. Through the introduction of regular weekly segments, these issues became an expected and recurring part of everyday programming. This represents an important shift from treating climate communication as an occasional intervention towards embedding it within the normal rhythms of commercial media. Rather than seeking to persuade audiences through isolated messages, the project demonstrates the value of making climate and energy issues a familiar and ordinary part of public conversation.

In the next phase of this research, content production and analysis will continue with partner stations, alongside expansion to new stations across Australia. This will provide an opportunity to examine how rapidly evolving issues, including the significant increase in EV uptake in 2026, shape audience attitudes and communication needs. The model will also be extended to community radio to explore how it can be adapted to different broadcasting contexts. Across this work, research and practice will continue to inform one another, ensuring both remain responsive to the evolving needs of audiences and broadcasters.



Appendix

A. 1. List of headlines tested

Covered on air:

Starting Christmas shopping? Think green as plastic presents fuel climate change

Tesla owners turn against Musk: 'I'm embarrassed driving this car around'

2024 was Australia's second hottest year on record

Heat becomes the ultimate tennis opponent

Flat white coffee price likely to skyrocket, no matter where you live

That's ruff: Tasmanian heatwave prompts RSPCA warning

Sure, Valentine's Day is a day of love, but who says sustainability can't be sexy too?

Tasmania tackles tougher fire seasons

Your House Might Be Making Hot Days Worse

World Wildlife Day

Try before you buy: New Hobart e-bike library to let residents borrow electric bikes

First 'reverse vending machine' installed for Tasmanian container recycling scheme

Struggling families who ditch their home and contents insurance would lose three-quarters of their wealth if their home was destroyed

Leonardo DiCaprio criticises Australian government for approving a mine expansion

TasWater warns of record low water reserves as dry conditions persist

Global Recycling Day

Rejected:

The Surprising Climate Perks of a Jungle-Like Garden

Power Struggle: Nuclear Ambitions Meet Renewable Realities

Women strongly opposed to nuclear power, just one in three men willing to live near a plant

Can EV batteries handle long-term airport parking this festive season?

No sweat – hot tips for a cool summer

Wine yields and solar panels

Rising waters, falling coverage: Australia's future insurance challenges

Prominent Australians call for climate laws to protect future generations

One in 10 homes could become uninsurable by 2035

US beauty queen and 'new face of nuclear energy' campaigns to sway public opinion in Australia

Hobart records Tasmania's hottest day of the year

Little Penguins Declining in Bicheno

How the climate is changing the taste of beer

Australia's 'healthiest' place to live is Tasmania

Wild weather whiplash

Over 50% of Australia's homes were built before fire standards came in

E-scooters could be here to stay in Hobart as council eyes e-bike rollout

Tasmanian government amps up support for the switch to EVs, with over $800,000 up for grabs for small and large businesses

Hobart City Mission says nearly 650K of clothing items saved from trash

Australia's second-hottest summer in 2024-25 'not possible without climate change', scientist says

Tasmania swelters through early autumn heatwave after record heat in February

'More frequent, intense': PM puts climate front and centre for election

The damage from Tropical Cyclone Alfred runs deeper than the physical impacts

EV owners turn to their batteries on wheels to power homes amid Alfred blackouts

Spinning Stories: The Wind Farm Misinformation Machine at Work

Renewables the cheapest path to lower Aussie energy bills - new report finds

A. 2. Misinformation topic list to inform segment development

Renewables:

Wind farms: Are they dangerous?

- Are wind turbines killing whales?
- Could they spark bushfires?
- Did someone really die fixing one?
- Do they kill heaps of birds?
- Do they make people sick?
- Are they too noisy to live near?
- Do they actually take more energy to build than they produce?

Solar and wind: What happens when they wear out?

- What do we do with old solar panels and wind turbines?
- Can you actually recycle them or is it just landfill?
- Do solar panels contain toxic materials?
- Do wind turbines just get dumped in paddocks when they break?

Green power versus nuclear

Nuclear came up a lot – especially with an election coming. People are asking:

- Is nuclear cleaner?
- Is it cheaper?
- Why don't we just build reactors?
- Is nuclear better than solar and wind?
- Does it still release emissions?
- Can you safely get rid of nuclear waste – or is it forever?
- Is it even legal to build nuclear in Australia?

The cost question

"Renewables are cheaper" was a top headline in Hobart, but listeners still want to know:

- How much does solar on my roof actually cost?
- Do you only save money if you're home during the day?
- If the government builds more renewables, will my power bill really go down?
- Are batteries worth it – or are feed-in tariffs so low now it's pointless?

Hydrogen: The next big thing or a waste of time?

- What even is green hydrogen?
- Why are people talking about it?
- Is it really clean – or does it just waste renewable energy?
- Is it safe?
- Will it explode near my house?

The 'what if' scenarios

- What happens when the sun isn't shining or the wind isn't blowing?
- Is it true that solar panels don't work in smoke or cloud?
- Why are we pushing water up a hill (pumped hydro)?
- What happens if it's not windy for days?
- Can batteries back it up?

Do rural towns make the power while cities get the benefits?

- Why are all the big renewable projects in the bush – just to power the cities?
- Do regional communities get anything in return?
- Will power be less reliable in rural areas after the energy transition?

What happens to Aussie jobs if everything is imported from overseas?

- Are renewables all made in China?
- Will switching to green energy mean losing Aussie jobs?
- Is mining for lithium just as bad as digging for coal?

Who owns the grid?

- Is Australia's energy infrastructure run by the government or private companies?
- Why doesn't the government just build the renewables?
- Can energy companies charge whatever they want?

Small changes versus big stuff

- Does me getting solar or switching to an EV actually make a difference?

EVs and e-bikes:

Are EV batteries catching fire all the time?

- There's a belief that EVs are constantly going up in flames. Is it true?
- Are they more dangerous than petrol cars?

EV chargers: Too hard basket?

- Are there enough chargers? Do all EVs fit the same plugs?
- How do you even find a charger – do you need an app?
- Can you just use a regular power point?

The cost of running an EV versus a petrol car

- One week in an EV – what's it really cost compared to petrol?
- And what about maintenance? Do you have to go to special mechanics?

Bikes and e-bikes: Cheap, but are they safe?

- People are talking about kids doing 50km/h on e-bikes. Is that legal?
- Are e-bikes even regulated?

EVs don't just mean Teslas anymore

- Can I get an EV ute yet?
- What's the deal with BYD and other cheaper brands?
- Is it just a Tesla thing, or is the game changing?

Are EVs actually green?

- Some reckon the mining for EV batteries is just as bad as coal. What's the real story?
- Can EV batteries be recycled – or are they landfill too?

What about hybrids?

- Should I go full EV or stick with a hybrid for now?

AI and driverless cars

- Are robots about to take over the roads? How close are we, really?

Petrol tax and road costs

- If everyone switches to EVs, who's paying for the roads?

Other myths/misconceptions:

"Scientists don't even agree on climate change"

- One listener reckoned 30% of scientists are climate deniers.
- The real number? More like half a percent.

"Renewables mean cutting down forests"

- Is that happening? Sometimes, but not always. It's a hot-button issue.

"Some industries will always need coal"

- Is that true? Can everything actually run on green energy?

Big data, AI and power use

- Are datacentres and AI bots chewing up all the electricity?
- What is a classic AI request 'worth'?

END

RACE for 2030

RELIABLE
AFFORDABLE
CLEAN
ENERGY

info@racefor2030.com.au

UTS
L10 10/235 Jones St Ultimo,
NSW 2007 Australia

ABN 46 640 317 559

Australian Government
Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Cooperative Research Centres Program