



better seats at better tables



briefing

#bettertogether
community energy resilience initiative



Better
Together
Collective



The Energy
Charter

about this brief

This Better Together Collective brief contains a summary of key learnings and co-developed elements to guide and underpin the development of a power-outage plan, guide, and national campaign messaging to help people stay safe and know what to do when they lose power due to extreme weather events.

We'd like to thank all of our crew members for their valued efforts and contributions to this important #BetterTogether initiative.

Please note: when we use the word **power-outage plan** in this brief, we mean a plan that specifically addresses actions that people can take to keep themselves and their households safe in the event of an extended power outage due to extreme weather events. You can read more [here](#).

how it comes together



context and approach



our brief



what's next and lessons learned

context and approach

context

The Energy Charter partnered with the Better Together Collective to design and deliver the co-development components to fit the needs and stage of the #BetterTogether Community Energy Resilience initiative. Working alongside Sue Muller (Better Together Collective Founder) and co-facilitating with Bec Jolly (Energy Charter Director of Energy Equity) over three workshops held across October and November 2024.

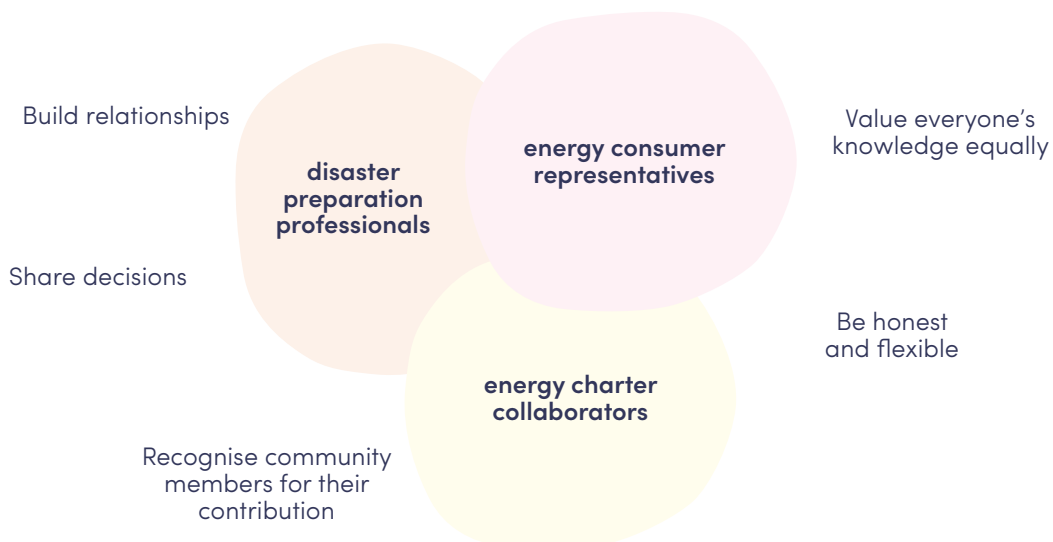
We've loved partnering with the Energy Charter to design, develop and convene a co-development process that has put energy customers and communities at the centre of developing these important power outage planning resources.

They've created an enabling environment, trusted the co-development process, and stayed curious, collaborative and open to learning throughout. The result has been a solid foundational brief and an invested and connected crew of many perspectives that will continue to guide the remaining stages of the initiative.

Sue Muller, Better Together Collective

the crew

The co-development crew (the crew) is a critical reference group made up of eight members who collectively represented our co-development voices (Fig.1).



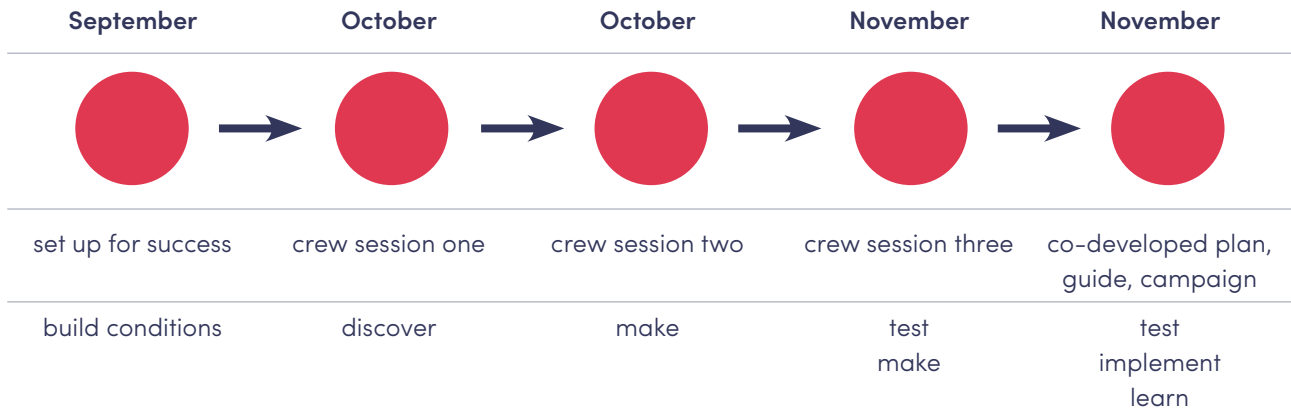
Better Together Collective Fig.1. The voices of our co-development process and the principles that underpinned our work together.

our approach

The crew worked together in uncomplicated, relational ways to produce a brief to guide the development of effective and accessible messaging and resources to help people stay safe and know what to do when they lose power due to extreme weather events.

crew milestones

We co-developed the key elements of this final brief over three online sessions with broader consultation and additional feedback incorporated at key stages.



Better Together Collective. Fig.2. Life Support Customers Initiative Crew timeline and milestones

I learnt a lot and I felt our views were being heard.
Crew member

I appreciated the humanness of this - I feel hopeful and energised.
Crew member

our brief

This Brief contains barriers and enablers to be considered and addressed, and three essential areas of importance to guide and underpin the materials.

1. preparedness

2. core guiding elements

3. what matters most (in a plan)

common barriers and enablers

The crew identified specific mindsets and elements that help or hinder people considering what they can do for themselves in the event of a power outage, and to plan ahead for one. These should be taken into consideration when developing the materials.

what can get in the way (barriers to shift)

low priority

- people have busy lives and lots of other things to think about
- putting off preparedness planning due to a sense of overwhelm

assumptions and misinformation

- people can presume that they don't have a role to play
- they may mistakenly believe that all responsibility lies with energy companies, and other services to help out
- diminished trust in governments and industry players exacerbated by cost of living crisis
- lack of available and accessible information and education/literacy specifically on individual household power-outage planning
- lots of competing and conflicting messaging to cut through
- people may not have experienced an extended outage before, so it doesn't feel real or urgent to prepare and have a plan.

lack of accessibility to materials

- when language, format and availability isn't accessible and inclusive
- when what people want and need is (incorrectly) assumed
- when there are costs involved that are prohibitive
- when materials don't consider the specific needs of people in rural and regional areas

social isolation

- some people are less connected in communities, more at risk of experiencing vulnerability and more likely to miss out

what helps (enablers to consider)

- offering materials that are person-centred, accessible and inclusive
- uncomplicated messaging and memorable cues
- asking people what they need rather than assuming
- considering (and minimising) any cost of living implications
- when people understand the benefit and value of being prepared and having a power-outage plan
- being able to personalise and localise - everyone's situation is different, and what is available to them in their communities also differs
- power-outage plans that are specific to the nature of the extreme weather event

three areas of importance

The crew identified, focused, then built on three crucial areas of importance to ground the materials, which we've stepped out in more detail below.

preparedness	core guiding elements	what matters most (in a plan)
opportunities to increase the likelihood that people are aware of the need to make a plan and take action to be prepared. Informed by pathways to preparedness and a my community constellation	nine priority guiding principles to be consistently considered in the making of plan, guide and campaign messaging	three starter ticks and six action domains to include in a person centred plan (I can plan) and campaign that can deliver uncomplicated, memorable cues and clear, consistent accurate information

1. preparedness

We're hearing across our Customer & Community Councils that many Australians remain unprepared in extreme weather events when the power goes out. Although there's lots of information about being prepared in storms, fires, floods etc. the information isn't based specifically on the needs of people's individual homes, it's also not focussed on managing power outages, can be incorrect and planning tools are too complicated and overwhelming for people to complete. This initiative aims to create a population tool that all Australians can easily turn to to help them prepare for power outages as extreme weather events increase due to climate change.'

Bec Jolly, Director Energy Equity, the Energy Charter

Our priority for this brief is a population tool to help shift the dial across the steps/continuum (shown in Fig. 5). Starting with (or building on) awareness, moving firmly into the blue preparedness zones and as preparedness awareness and maturity grows, into the green action.

Building pathways to preparedness



Better Together Collective. Fig 5. Life Support Customers - stages on pathways to preparedness

What a guide means in the concept and context of this initiative has evolved across both the crew and sensemaking sessions. Rather than creating a fixed linear 'how to' resource, we recommend developing intuitive thinking prompts to guide people to preparedness across a continuum of three identified phases.

Using guiding prompts in this way will complement and strengthen a power-outage plan. Meeting people where they're at, regardless of their current situation and state of readiness and moving towards preparedness thinking and acting over time and in the context of their household.

We expect that most people will adopt a preparedness-thinking mindset, marking an important shift for those who've done little thinking or planning. At first, we anticipate that some will take action, especially those directly affected by a power outage or moved by a related story or content they've experienced. However, over time, and as climate change heightens the risk of power outages for all Australian households, we understand that taking action will become more widespread.

In cases where people already have a plan in place, we hope that they take the opportunity to revise and strengthen it, making sure it's up to date for their household and circumstances.

preparedness in action: Creating an asset with prompting questions (in alignment with the guiding principles and action domains) that can serve as personalised and relevant stepping stones to guide people and communities from preparedness awareness to taking action, and population change over time.

community helpers (as part of planning)

While energy businesses have significant roles to play, they are limited to and focus on getting the power restored across the grid. What is most important in preparedness planning are the personalised assessments of safety. This includes the role of those who are close by who are often best placed to help during extended power outages due to extreme weather events.

An important part of planning is considering in advance who the community helpers might be in your social network or community context.

We're mindful that not everyone has extensive community and social network connections. We created a community helper constellation of potential connection and assistance options that could be explored and considered as part of a personalised planning (Fig. 4).

Thinking about how everyone's needs/most important thing is different - not everyone will have the same priorities. e.g. families with kids, elderly people, singles or people with pets etc.
Crew member



Better Together Collective. Fig. 4. Life Support Customers potential community helpers constellation

the constellation in action: use the fields in the constellation and considerations above to underpin a tool, template, or checklist that would enable a person to create a personalised community helper constellation that would be relevant and of value in their own circumstances or context.

2. core guiding principles

Are the nine priority principles that need to be consistently considered in the making of the plan, user guide and national campaign messaging (the materials). They sit under the umbrella of the two that the crew identified as being of the utmost priority from a lived experience perspective.

help people feel prepared		put people and communities at the centre
Materials must...		
put people at the centre	leave no one behind	focus on what matters most
created and tested through a person-centred lens	accessible, inclusive with a range of choices and cost-free ways to access content	increasing awareness, preparedness-thinking and acting
help people and communities feel prepared	use succinct, memorable cues	consider transparency + trust
feeling confident and more prepared in personal household and local contexts. We want their first thought to be, "I've got this. I know what to do."	materials and messaging centred around simple memorable cues, words, and concepts (e.g. stop, drop, roll; and slip, slop, slap) that can lead to increased population behaviour change over time.	approaches consistently open, clear, seeking to connect and build community trust. Mindful of data and privacy concerns
find their community helpers	share stories people relate to	keep building on what's strong
Prompt people to think of helpers in their local context, especially those most at risk of isolation	use storytelling that's relatable, and friendly using an active voice. Position preparedness as a strength, rather than using fear. Focus on what people already have available to them. Celebrate those that already have plans	Continue to be curious and collaborative. Keep listening to what's already working; regularly review and update materials in line with the latest information and resources

Table 1 - Community Energy Resilience Summarised Core Guiding Principles

core guiding principles in action: We want those developing the materials to do so with care and consideration to each of the co-developed principles so that we have consistently inclusive and accessible materials that can meet the needs of life support customers.

3. what matters most

This means what would need to be included in a personalised power-outage plan that could help people feel more prepared and able to help themselves and others.

Whether making a new plan or improving one, it must be relevant and adaptable to individual needs, circumstances, and location.

We've distilled what matters most into **three starter ticks** (prompts) and **six action domains** to be addressed in a personalised plan (**I can plan**). A set of prompting question areas is included for each domain to add depth and direction.

Step One. Three starter ticks ✓✓✓

General well-being ticks for energy customers to start out with when power is lost. Identified by the crew as of greatest importance to ensure immediate personal safety and to 'steady the ship' before moving onto the more personalised domains with confidence and purpose.



Stay inside and stay safe, sit down and take a minute - if you're safe and no one is hurt then you can afford to take 15 minutes or more to think through what you're going to do.
Crew member

Step Two. I can plan

Six action domains for a person to think about after they have addressed their **three starter ticks**. So that they can feel prepared with a plan that is relevant and helpful to them as an individual when the need arises. It's deliberately adaptable and flexible in line with strong customer appetite for personalisation and linking into relevant community social and organisational networks.

feel confident and prepared	reach those I care for	feel confident and prepared
check my basic supplies	get ongoing reliable information in	find my community helpers and back up people

Fig 3. Community Energy Resilience Power- Six Action Domains to include in an **I can plan**

I have a plan, time to put it into place.
Crew member

I can...

I can feel confident and prepared

because

I've taken time to think things through and I've got the basics covered. I've got strategies for staying calm and controlling what I can.

I'll think about

- What will help me feel assured that I've thought things through and prepared myself in advance
- Is there a previous plan that I can build on
- What are my coping strategies in stressful times

example prompt questions/topics

I'll be prepared by knowing

What's in my control and what is not
Do I know what time the power went off and what was turned on at the time?
Do I know what calms me in stressful times?
Do I have contact details for local community helpers including relevant health and mental health lines in case I need them?

I can reach those that I care for

because

I can let them know that I'm ok, and find out if they're ok too

I'll think about

- How I'll get in touch with those people
- Who I can count on to help with communications out of area if need be

example prompt questions/topics

I'll be prepared by knowing

Who can help me make a plan?
How will they know I've lost power?
How will they know what the plan is?
How will I contact my loved ones? (including family, kids, pets) and my community helpers (social connections and services that can support or assist)?
Have we had a practice run?
Who will check in on me if the usual lines of communication (eg phone) go down?
What helps keep my children calm and content
Who is the leader/decision maker in my family and what is my role?
What will I do if my phone isn't working or I don't have coverage?

I can find and maintain my energy essentials

because

I have the most important communications and outage tools prepared and ready to go

I'll think about

- What energy essentials will I need to have ready at short notice. Including my
 - phone
 - charger
 - generator (or other plan)
 - light source (eg. torch)

example prompt questions/topics

I'll be prepared by knowing

What energy essentials will I need to have ready (and working) at short notice?
Practical prompting questions to consider in regards to finding a light source
accessing backup power
getting out of a property
Including electric doors, gates or garage
Where is the torch?
Where is my phone? How much battery does it have?
Having a vehicle or transport to go somewhere else
Knowing what to take or have with me? e.g. key documents - ID, medical info, wallet, cash home safety and security in the event of needing to leave
What is my generator plan? (can I buy, borrow or something else)
Do I know where to find it?
Do I know how to use it?
Do I have enough fuel to run it?
How will I recharge my phone and devices?

I can check my basic supplies

because

I have enough food, shelter, water, medicine to last for the outage

I'll think about

- What basics I'll need to have on hand to get by, including
- food
- water
- shelter
- medicine

example prompt questions/topics

I'll be prepared by knowing

- Do I have enough food and clean water?
- How long do I have before my food goes off?
- Where can I safely shelter?
- Do I have enough medicine supply?
- How can I stay warm or cool?
- Do I have enough pet food?
- Do I have enough food for my family/children?

I can get ongoing reliable information in

because

I can stay up to date with what's happening

I'll think about

- How I'll get ongoing timely updates for my area from reliable sources
- Who are those reliable sources of information?

example prompt questions/topics

I'll be prepared by knowing

- What are the most reliable sources of information in my local area?
- Do I have a radio and batteries?
- Who is my backup buddy from out of the area who could pass on important information?

I can find my community helpers and back up people

because

I can get (or give) help or support in my community

I'll think about

- Locating my prepared list of community support people and organisations (community helpers)

example prompt questions/topics

I'll be prepared by knowing

- Where is my list of community helpers?
- Are my neighbours ok?
- How do I contact others to see if they're ok?
- Are there people I should check in on? (eg my elderly neighbour or family who live locally)
- If my phone isn't working, who from out of the area could check or find out for me?

what matters most in action: Use the domains for action to underpin the development of an **I can plan** template. Write content in action based person-first terms, and position making a plan as a strength and opportunity.

what's next and lessons learned

This final brief has been delivered to our creative partners who will use it to underpin and guide draft materials to be tested and refined with key people and partners including people with relevant lived experience, disaster preparedness professionals and subject matter experts who work in the energy sector.

We'd like to thank

- The Energy Charter - leaders and true collaborators that walk their talk
- Energy industry leads - leading their industry and showing commitment and respect for the communities they serve
- The Community Outcomes Group - for adding depth to this brief with your additional insights and perspectives
- The Lived Experience Panel members for putting the voices of energy customers at the forefront and who will now guide the testing and finalising of the materials

A special thank you and note of recognition to the lived experience members of the co-development crew. We appreciate the strength and relentless commitment it takes to choose to share experiences of navigating the energy sector in order to advocate for and influence change, as well as better outcomes for others. Thank you for all that you contributed and brought to each session to shape this final brief.

You can stay up to date with progress of the [#BetterTogether Community Energy Resilience Initiative](#) [here](#).

For any questions regarding this report, please contact Bec Jolly- Director Energy Equity bec.jolly@theenergycharter.com.au

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