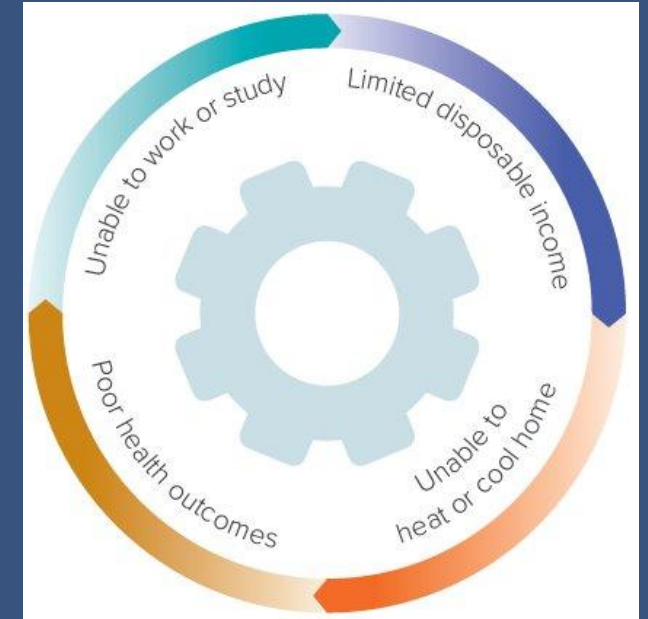




Ending the Damaging Energy-Health Hardship Nexus

The Energy/Health Hardship Nexus

- There's extensive research and data connecting health hardship to energy hardship.
- But policy makers, funders and system actors have largely failed to 'join the dots'.
- This has given rise to a vicious cycle we call the Energy/Health Hardship Nexus.



Four Provocations

1. People die from energy hardship – this is a public health issue and it will only get worse as the climate warms.
2. If energy hardship is a health issue, health professionals must be supported to be part of the solution.
3. Australia needs to catch up with other countries in developing large-scale joined-up energy/health responses – and then backup what works with long-term funding.
4. Access to affordable and clean energy should be recognised as a right.

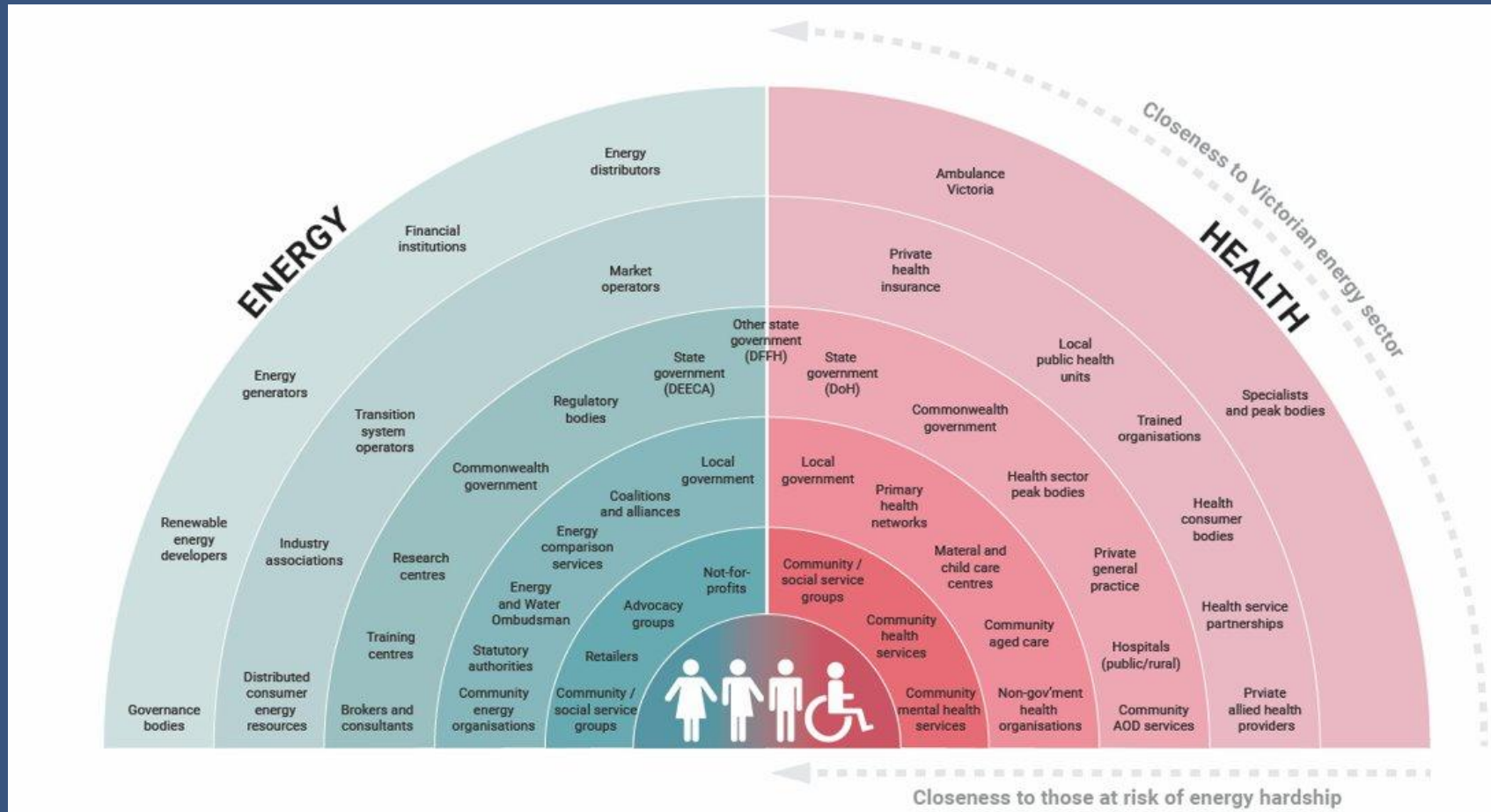
Provocation 1 – energy hardship is a public health issue – and it will only get worse as the climate warms

- VCROSS-commissioned national survey (1000 households) – October 2025:
 - 22% (more than 1-in-5) report they are **struggling** to pay or **cannot afford** to pay their energy bills
 - 27% (more than one-quarter) say they were **unable** to pay an energy bill in the past year
 - 39% have cut back on food, healthcare or medicine in past 12 months to be able to pay energy bills.
 - Almost half (47%) report they regularly ration energy use to reduce the cost of their bill.
 - Most of those facing affordability challenges are not seeking the support they need. (Main reasons: embarrassment, not knowing who to ask, not knowing what support is available.)

Provocation 2 – health professionals must be supported to be part of the solution

- Currently, even when interventions (e.g. energy concessions) are available, people most in need of support often can't or don't access them.
- VCROSS-commissioned national survey (1000 households) – October 2025:
 - 54% of those who said they'd cut back on essentials had not reached out for support on how to pay their energy bills.
 - 60% of those who said they are financially struggling/in serious financial difficulty had not reached out for support on how to pay their energy bills.
 - 65% of those who said they regularly ration their energy use had not reached out for support on how to pay their energy bills.
 - Main reasons: embarrassment, not knowing who to ask, not knowing what support is available.

Systems Mapping



Provocation 3 – Australia needs to catch up with other countries in developing large-scale joined-up approaches

- Few Australian initiatives to date – largely been limited and/or siloed, even when they've shown promising results.
- International schemes have taken a broader and systemic approach to linking the energy and health systems and had larger reach (though also beset by short-term funding)
 - New Zealand – Healthy Homes Initiative
 - UK – Warm Homes Prescriptions, Warm Front Scheme
 - Ireland – Warmth and Wellbeing Pilot

Provocation 4 – Access to affordable and clean energy should be recognised as a right

- VCOSS' project demonstrated that it's possible to bring the energy and health system closer together to break the link between energy and health hardship – but it requires sustained effort ('backbone' infrastructure) to drive it.
- Situating equitable access to energy within a human rights framework would foster the conditions for enduring systemic change.



More information:

Online resource hub:

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