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Gas remains the energy of choice for nearly half of New Zealand homes

Most residential gas consumers would only replace their existing gas appliances such as water heaters, cooktops or space heaters if they break down, according to a report from the Energy Efficiency Conservation Authority (EECA).

GasNZ chief executive Jeffrey Clarke says it's good to see EECA studying consumer attitudes to energy consuming appliances, and it's useful for consumers to have information like this, as well as Consumer NZ's recent home heating costs report, allowing them to make informed choices.

"EECA's study confirms what we know – that just under half of New Zealand households use gas, and most often they use it for both hot water and cooking.

"We know that people especially love their gas hot water – it's instant and won't run out, and they like its small size and reliability.

"EECA's study confirms that most people – 82 percent – would only consider changing their current gas hot water when a system needs replacing, as the up-front cost of replacement is a barrier to change."

Although purchase cost and running costs are still the key factors influencing households' choice of replacement appliances, Clarke expects that people will also begin to think more about their household's net greenhouse gas emissions.

He says residential gas use currently accounts for a tiny proportion of New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions - about one-half of one percent.

Options for renewable gas for domestic use are already being developed, meaning greenhouse gas emissions from residential gas use are likely to drop over time as New Zealand energy providers make renewable gas available to consumers, he says.

"For example, later this year, Ecogas and Firstgas plan to begin blending 100 percent renewable gas made from organic waste into New Zealand's gas network." [<https://www.ecogas.co.nz/renewable-gas-injection>.]

Other countries are already converting a significant proportion of their gas supply over to renewable gas – Denmark is at 32 percent and has a target of making this 100 percent of demand by 2030.

Producing renewable gas by processing the organic waste that would otherwise go to New Zealand landfills has the double benefit of reducing the methane emissions that would otherwise escape from refuse sites, Clarke says.

"And we know that many landfills and other existing biogas sources are now looking at whether it makes more sense to capture that gas to sell as renewable gas."

GasNZ is working with New Zealand business, and will work with the government, to accelerate and enable markets for renewable gas in New Zealand. Once this happens, businesses and households who want to buy certified zero carbon gas should be able to do so, just as they can for electricity, Clarke says.

A diversity of choice of energy sources, including both natural gas and LPG, is valued by many households, Clarke says. And the benefits of this have come into their own at times of natural disasters.

“For many in the East Coast after Cyclone Gabrielle, with long-term power outages, for many weeks, LPG was the only energy source households had for cooking and water heating.

“This shows the wisdom of not relying on just one energy source.

“And with production of renewable LPG ramping up internationally, over time this is also likely to be an option for New Zealand’s existing LPG-fuelled appliances and could be highly valued by consumers, particularly in remote areas where electricity supply is not always reliable.”

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