Romney Bishop: Good morning, everyone and welcome to this webinar where we'll talk about the residential efficiency Scorecard and how it might be useful for councils. My name is Romney Bishop, I manage the administration of the Scorecard programme and I've also got Sophie and Lauren with me today in case we have any technical meltdowns, almost guaranteed to happen, hopefully not, and they're also going to moderate the chat for us. In the spirit of reconciliation, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. I pay my respects to their elders past and present. I extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with us today.

We are coming to you from Wurundjeri Country today. If you want to, feel free to pop in the chat the lands on which you are working from today. You might have noticed that you're all muted today, but feel free to pop questions into the chat and we will go through them at the end of the presentation. This session is being recorded so it can be shared with other council staff who can't attend today. If you do not wish to be recorded, you can sign off now and watch the recording later or refrain from putting any questions into the chat.

So, today I'm going to give you an overview of the Scorecard, what it actually is, and then we'll look at some of the data that goes into and comes out of the Scorecard. How it can be used by local governments, and we'll give you some examples of some programmes that are running at the moment and then we are going to go through all your questions and hopefully answer them to your satisfaction. Sorry, the little pop-up boxes are right in the middle of my speaking notes. So, the residential efficiency Scorecard consists of software that are accredited assessors use to gather data that they find in an existing home.

Behind the user interface sits a set of algorithms that calculate how much energy is consumed, lost or gained which ends up being displayed as a rating. Around the software is a programme designed to ensure that assessors are all using the same basic rules to enter the data that householder circumstances and goals are taken into account. And that there's a comprehensive discussion between the householder and the assessor to help them driving their rating and what they can do to improve it. So, Scorecard was developed after research found a gap in the market for high quality energy efficiency information.

There was considerable stakeholder consultation and testing which informed the programme design. And in terms of our current situation, I know everyone on this call today knows about what's going on out in the consumer land. It's in the news every day at the moment about the rising bills and cost of living increases in general. And Scorecard can help address some of these issues with householders through the assessors. So, the benefits of Scorecard, the results are repeatable because assessors have high skills and knowledge levels and there are rules around data entry.

So, for every possible scenario we have a rule. The energy sector has been crying out for a standardised tool that will allow for comparison between homes and assist with decision making in terms of upgrades and has the ability to measure greenhouse emission outcomes. One of the latest additions to the tool thanks to the ACT government is that with the tick of a box, it can exclude any recommendations about gas appliance upgrades, which can help to promote electrification. Scorecards designed for assessment of the house construction and of fixed features of a residential property, including those that you can see in this picture.

Assessors go through the home and collect data and information on site, which is used to model the energy cost of the permanent fixtures in the home. And this is represented as a star rating from one to 10, 10 stars meaning it's generating more energy than it's consuming. It rates the hot and cold weather performance, it rates the performance of key appliances and the contribution of any solar PV system. It also provides options to improve the ratings and comfort. Scorecard doesn't cover plug-in appliances, the number of occupants or user behaviour. This is because the ratings need to be replicable and consistent between similar houses.

Although assessors may enter features such as batteries, outdoor living areas or shading plants, they are not rated either because the technology is so new and we don't yet have enough data to model the impacts or they're things that can be removed or changed or things that are impossible to model such as shading from a tree. Good to acknowledge with the householder that they've got these extra features though. So, when the Scorecard was designed, there were several elements that were taken into account. So, we've already mentioned the repeatable rating so the assessment has to be accurate and it has to be supported by good data.

The star rating was decided as a headline rating. I'll take you through a bit more of the what's on the certificates later, but people understand star ratings because we have them already in NatHERS and on our appliances like air conditioners and so on. And people want to be able to compare between themselves and other homes or between houses they're looking at purchasing or renting and see what difference their upgrades make to their rating. So, the home features are fairly consistent with the new home ratings that are about to come into being as whole of home.

So, we look at several of the house, the features of the house and we have included hot and cold weather sub ratings. Now those ratings tell us how comfortable a house is in extremes of hot and cold weather without having any mechanical heating or cooling so it's around the thermal shell. The upgrade options that appear on the certificate are tailored depending on the information that is input into the tool. And having the assessor in the home enables a much more targeted discussion that includes the goals and aspirations of the household and considers their budget as well.

And there is a formal certificate produced at the end, which I'll show you in a minute and a star rating sticker that can be put in the meter box or somewhere like that. So, in terms of how the rating is calculated, the Scorecard considers energy sources including electricity, gas, both natural and LPG, wood, oil and solar. The annual running cost is of the fixed appliances, not the plug-in appliances as I mentioned before. And we use the average fuel cost in different jurisdictions because they do vary quite widely across the country.

So, this is the top part of the certificate and you can see there's a star rating at the top there. In each jurisdiction, the star ratings are consistent, so the same house located in Melbourne and Perth will rate differently because the climates are different. However, the star ratings all mean the same. So, for example, a three-star house is average in Melbourne and a three-star house is average in Perth but the costs to run would be different because of the different energy costs and climates.

So, this is our certificate, it's two pages, it's always two pages it never goes more than two pages. The front page includes the overall star rating and gives a visual representation as well as a numeric value. And the numeric value is used by some banks to determine eligibility for loan discounts. Also shown on that first page are the hot and cold weather ratings just below the star rating. And if the house has solar, it's just at the bottom of that front page there, you can just see three green stars with a couple of blue arrows. If the house has solar, it shows the star rating as it appears at the top of the page but also displays what the rating would be if you remove the solar.

And that is so householders can understand that having solar could be masking other areas where the house is not so efficient. If the house does not have solar, it shows what the rating would be if it had a two and a half kilowatt system on the roof. The second page displays the efficiency of the appliances, so heating, cooling, hot water, lighting and any pool or spa that's on the property. And you might notice alongside, I know it's a bit small to see on these screens but you might notice that alongside each rating is a list of upgrade options. So, these are driven by the data that's entered into Scorecard.

And below those ratings, the annual energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are displayed both with and without the impact of solar PV. This information might be particularly useful for councils who are using the Scorecard to support upgrades as these figures will make reporting on energy and greenhouse savings really easy. We can also present them rather than just on a certificate, we can pull that data out of the Scorecard tool and give it to you in a spreadsheet form. At the bottom of the page, there's a section on the left in the grey box that shows those items that are entered but have no impact on the rating.

So once again, we want to acknowledge that they're good things to have but they don't impact the star rating. And in the blue box are some generic suggestions to reduce energy costs. So, becoming a Scorecard assessor is not easy and deliberately so, early pilots of the programme found that consistent assessments in a reputable programme required assessors with high levels of skills and training. Applicants must meet entry criteria, minimum entry criteria, they've got to have some qualifications or considerable amount of experience. They need to understand home energy efficiency principles, they need to be able to recognise features such as all the weird and wonderful things that we find in older houses.

Heating, cooling, glazing insulation, they need a minimum level of computer skill. So usually, the assessor takes a tablet into the house and enters the data and they've got to take photos as well. And the most critical thing of all is a high level of communication skills because this is crucial in building trust with the householder. They also need to be able to work safely so that we don't endanger either themselves or any of the occupants of the homes. I'm not going to take you through all the details of the accreditation process today except to say that it's rigorous and we will not accredit applicants we don't feel can provide a high-quality service against our quality principles.

So, these are our quality principles and I hope you can read some of those. The principles enable us to judge an assessor's performance against a consistent measure. We actively encourage collaboration and feedback from assessors on the tool and processes for assessments. Suggestions for improvement are frequently incorporated into software changes, data entry rules and assessment processes. And when we're examining or auditing our assessors, we try and put ourselves in the householder's shoes being a customer and what information we would expect to hear from assessors and at what level it's pitched.

So, in terms of quality assurance, it was highlighted by stakeholders in the early days as essential to the ongoing credibility and success of the programme. We take a multipronged approach that starts from the initial application, so that's that minimum level of qualification or experience in order even to get the Scorecard training. We also know that one of the major barriers to upgrade is a lack of trusted suppliers. So, instead of simply banning assessors from selling products or services as has been done before, they must declare these as a conflict of interest to the householder prior to doing the assessment. And they must make it clear that they're under no obligation to purchase anything from them or any affiliated companies.

So, householders then have the choice of whether to buy from the assessor or a related business or to seek other independent quotes. Assessors are expected to represent the programme well and maintain the highest levels of integrity and professionalism. The assessor agreement, our evidence requirements, the code of conduct, privacy and consent form and a complaints policy all help to support consumers and guide assessors on how to handle most situations. And we are only at the end of an assessor hotline or a help desk that they can contact us at any time.

So, we have a fair few quality processes in place. We have a quality assurance panel and I know that there's at least one panel member on the call today. And they are experienced assessors plus department members from within the Scorecard team. So, our external panel members conduct the oral part of our exam over a team's interview. They give support to our accredited assessors and applicants in the form of coaching and mentoring and their feedback from the exams and audits that they conduct.

And internally we do a lot of testing of assessor compliance with the rules through different types of audits and we also investigate any complaints that come in. And I'm happy to say that we have had I think two in the whole time that Scorecard's been running. So, six years, that's pretty good going. All our assessors are audited in some form by the department, often more than once. And if we find things that aren't being done correctly, we go back and ask them to do things in a different way, potentially rerate a house if the errors are so significant that it has a material impact on the rating. And so, there are lots of avenues open to us.

So, we are accrediting assessors all the time, I think today we've had three new applications come in. We've been delivering in Victoria since '17, not '16, and across Australia from about the middle of 2021. We've got, as of today, 114 accredited assessors across Australia. Most of those are in capital city areas but we do have some in the regions. And one of the largest projects we've been preparing for is the introduction of the home energy rating assessment activity into the Victorian Energy Upgrades Programme.

So, VEU is Victoria's Emission Reduction scheme whereby Victorian Energy Efficiency certificates or VEECs are generated when an efficient appliance or product is installed in a home and replaces something less efficient. Those certificates are purchased by energy retailers and this funds a discount to consumers from tomorrow. Scorecard assessments will be eligible to create two VEECs in metro areas and three VEECs in regional areas to reduce the cost of an assessment by around $100 to $150.

The ACT New South Wales and South Australia all have similar schemes, so they're watching to see how it rolls out in Victoria before considering for their own schemes. You can see on there, there are a couple of banks using Scorecard as a measurement tool for offering discounted home loans and they verify the rating certificate with us before they go ahead and approve the discounted loan. So, retrofit programmes for low income and vulnerable households have successfully used Scorecard to underpin targeted upgrades that are tailored towards the individual household circumstances.

So, rather than upgrading a single type of appliance or feature, upgrades are selected based on what is needed in each home and what will create the biggest impact for the householders. There's equal focus given to energy costs and comfort and they need to consider the health needs of the householder and budget. There are some smart builders out there using Scorecard ratings to advertise their homes. Ratings can be adjusted for orientation fairly easily, so it can give a potential customer a real rating for their preferred design on their block of land before it's built.

And in terms of disclosure and minimum rental standards, nothing's in place at this point for Scorecard. However, Scorecard is in the mix for use as a disclosure tool through NatHERS in the future and could be used to achieve an overall minimum rating standard instead of prescribing individual standards for things such as heating and insulation. So, there are choices in how building owners fulfil their obligations. There are five councils currently or recently offering programmes that use Scorecard as the assessment tool.

All of them are offering fully or partly subsidised assessments and some offer rebates for upgrades as well. And usually, the upgrade has to be for energy related upgrades, has to be on the Scorecard certificate, not always. Adelaide City Council for example, is doing a very wide range of sustainability incentives, which include water and waste efficiency as well as energy. Banyule Better Score has been running for a couple of years and was fully subscribed within hours for a very short time after going live last year. So, I think they're looking at different ways of trying to make the distribution of applications fair and inclusive.

So, opportunities for councils to be involved in Scorecard or use Scorecard in some way. The simple one is awareness raising activities and that might be as simple as putting something on your website or in your newsletters running information sessions. We've got plenty of assessors who are prepared to come and present at an information session if you're interested in doing that. Also, we've got some great little social media videos and things like that that you can use freely and we've got our own Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube accounts so they can be shared without too much effort.

There's opportunities to run some funded projects for low income households where you might fund the assessment and or upgrades. We find through previous experience that where people have had to pay even a small amount of money to have the assessment completed, that they're more likely to go on and undertake some of the upgrades that are recommended. And you could run funded or unfunded projects that for those families that can afford to assess and upgrade themselves, Scorecard would be a great support tool for environmental upgrade finance.

So, I know that that's stalled in terms of residential contracts but there is still work going on behind the scenes and maybe piloted with a council fairly shortly. You can have projects that have an energy and greenhouse gas focus such as Energy Savvy Upgrades, climate adaptation and resilience focus, which was again, Energy Savvy Upgrades or more of a health focus which was Healthy Homes. Now, Healthy Homes, there is an evaluation report that's available publicly through Sustainability Victoria and the Energy Savvy Upgrades report is just awaiting approval from the minister for public release. So, we are hoping that will be available very soon.

In terms of using Scorecard for data reporting, as I mentioned earlier, we can download all the assessment data out of the Scorecard tool so we can give you, if you're doing upgrade projects, we can give you before and after upgrade ratings so that you can tell what savings have been achieved. You can use it to monitor the resilience of buildings in hot and cold weather so that you are able to correlate that sometimes with health outcomes as well, along with some data loggers and health reporting. And it might be something as simple as getting an idea for what your building stock is like, what type of construction materials they are, what the ratings are, what appliances are in there so that you can target any programmes.

The Resilient Building Council is an organisation that's got a lot of people involved all around Australia. And they are currently working on assessment modules for bushfire, flood and storm, cyclones, as well as energy efficiency. So, we've been talking to them for a while and it's a bit early to predict how it's all going to land in the end yet. But we may end up with a single modular tool that can be used to cover all applicable natural hazards or some link between the modules so that data only needs to be entered once. The Scorecard tool, I've talked you through the data, we can share all the information out of the backend of the tool.

We have a project code field where if you have a particular project, you ask the assessors to enter that tag at the code into that field. And then we can download that data and give it to you so we don't have to do too much work separating your info from other areas. We have templates for privacy and consent forms, as well as a data sharing MOU that assists us in sharing that data and information with you. So, if you have a project in mind, get in touch with us as early as you can in the design phase so that we can let you know what's possible from our end and what we need to have in place to extract the data for you.

We also have logos, videos and other image files that we can share with you for promotional purposes. If you're after assessors in your council area and you're wanting to promote local businesses and help residents improve their homes, you can simply promote Scorecard as a business opportunity via your economic development newsletters or sustainability newsletters or through your social media channels. The more assessors we have around Australia, the faster the market will build. There are big players in the finance arena waiting for assessors to become more commonplace, particularly in regional areas.

And we're also looking for people from more diverse backgrounds. So, with different language skills, cultural skills, women because frequently it is the female householder who requests a Scorecard and they often prefer another woman to come into the house, not always, but sometimes. And that is it from us, we'll throw to questions in a sec, and I can see quite a lot have come in already. If you have any questions that we don't get through today, you can see our Scorecard @delwp.vic.gov.au, email address there. You can send us an email or [our website](http://www.homescorecard.gov.au) is on there and feel free to go on there.

It explains in more detail the accreditation process, the quality assurance process, how you can use Scorecard in different ways and so on. So, I'm going to throw to Lauren and Sophie now and can start firing questions away.

Sophie Maxwell: Thanks so much, Romney. These are the faces behind all the comments, absolutely loving all the chat that's happening. So, we've got a couple of excellent questions lined up for you Romney. I'm going to jump straight in, so the building code of Australia is about to step up to a minimum seven stars for new homes. Is there a relationship between Scorecard stars and BCA stars?

Romney Bishop: Kind of, at the moment Scorecard is endorsed as the only in-home tool available through NatHERS and we are working on being able to correlate the rating scales for the whole of home tool, which is about to, well that will be live soon. Because the current seven-star NatHERS rating is only applicable to the building shell and has a whole lot of assumptions behind the energy use of heating and cooling. So, that rating is purely the megajoules of energy used over a year, whereas our rating is a cost rating. So, they do relate and they are approximately similar but they are different.

Sophie Maxwell: Super, next question we've got here. Wondering how the Scorecard applies to apartments and apartment buildings, especially given they're often shared services such as common hot water systems.

Romney Bishop: Yup, so Scorecard can be used in apartments that do not share heating and cooling. If they share hot water, it can be used but just not heating and cooling and that's because it's the largest energy load and there's no way of working out how to apportion that to individual apartments.

Sophie Maxwell: Brilliant, thank you Romney. Next up we have an interesting question. I'll be keen to hear your response Romney. What is the average annual earning of an assessor?

Romney Bishop: Totally up to them. So, it could be in the six-figure region if they're at it all the time. So, assessments can cost the consumer anywhere from about, I would say $300 to $500 depending on the size and complexity of the home. And also, whether the assessor is offering any complimentary services such as blower door testing or thermal imaging or developing a more comprehensive report that includes other aspects of the home as well. So, if you work out, fairly loosely worked out that an assessor can quite easily, if they're generating enough business, quite easily make a six-figure salary in a year.

And there's not a huge market at the moment for Scorecard assessments because they're not mandatory. But the market is building all the time and more and more governments are using it to do different kinds of project, so word is getting around

Sophie Maxwell: It sure is, and just adding to that, so while we accredit Scorecard assessors, they are independent businesses. Like any small business, it's really dependent on chasing those leads, finding your customers, showing your value. So, for example, it tends to be that our assessors that really get out there and show the community what they do, they tend to be more busy. We've seen a beautiful story of a Scorecard assessor where her husband has actually come and joined the business as a Scorecard assessor so that they can meet the needs of how busy the business is. So, like any small business, what you put in is what you get out.

And we've got another question here. Did you say some councils create their own assessors too, may be needed in regional areas where the business case for someone to be trained isn't well established or attractive yet?

Romney Bishop: Yup, that's totally possible. If councils desire to be able to deliver assessments for householders, then we would fully support that. There's no restriction apart from the qualifications and skill level, there's no restriction on who can become a Scorecard assessor. It's a good idea.

Sophie Maxwell: Yeah, absolutely. And like Romney mentioned in the presentation, we're really here to help and support when it comes to attracting and helping assessors go through the accreditation process as well. So, our next question is, where or when is the Scorecard likely to become a mandatory requirement? Anywhere like ACT which I understand you need it to sell or rent a property, is that correct?

Romney Bishop: Currently in the ACT, if you are renting a property out, you need to have a rating. They are piloting Scorecard at the moment for several projects, so they may well be an early adopter of mandatory disclosure using Scorecard. The other thing that is at a whole of government level across Australia, there are teams working on the pathway towards mandatory disclosure. And they're moving 2012, sorry 2012, that that's already been and gone, 2025 as the timeframe for that. I know there's been some delays because there's been a few changes at the federal level with the NatHERS administrator but hopefully it's all on track. There's a lot of goodwill in the room working towards that.

Sophie Maxwell: There certainly is. We've just come back from the National Energy Efficiency Conference in Sydney last week where Scorecard presented and was part of a panel. And it was really exciting to see that goodwill in the room that Romney was referring to. So, another great question, Manveya would like to know, is there any advantage to becoming a Scorecard assessor for a current NatHERS accredited assessor?

Romney Bishop: Certainly, you can offer assessments to everybody then. So, in terms of doing the desktop NatHERS assessments, they're very complex and the Scorecard was designed to simplify that. So, it's mainly used on existing homes and there is a requirement for the assessor to gather evidence as they go through the house. They need to take photos and upload them into that assessment so that when we do audits, we can check that what they've entered is what they're actually seeing in the property. So, if you are a current NatHERS assessor, then it's just another string to your bow. You can do both desktop assessments and in-home assessments.

Sophie Maxwell: Yeah, fantastic and it just makes sense, doesn't it? If you're able to do both new builds and established homes then you've covered pretty much everyone.

Romney Bishop: Yeah, and if mandatory disclosure does become a reality, the number of houses needing to be rated for sale or lease will be massive compared to the new home builds. It's a big market, potentially.

Sophie Maxwell: Massive, here's an interesting one. Does the lower cost of gas compared to electricity serve as an incentive for people to opt for gas powered appliances over electrical ones in Scorecard?

Romney Bishop: It can. So, what appears on the certificate is upgrade options but the value of having an assessor in the house is that they can talk them through those options and potentially steer them away from gas upgrades. We've also got the electrification toggle, so in the ACT for example, they do not want any gas appliances being recommended for upgrades. So, the assessor just ticks a little box and then none of the gas upgrades appear on the certificate. So, it does bias it, but the way that gas prices are going at the moment won't be long before they overtake electricity potentially.

Sophie Maxwell: Well, indeed and certainly once we're looking at solar options within the home, then it's quite a different ballgame as well. So, next question, is there any data on what percentage of people go on to install upgrades after having a Scorecard?

Romney Bishop: Yes, we do survey customers from time to time, that's via telephone. So, we get a lot of good intelligence from that, they're completely anonymous but one of the questions we ask them is, have you performed any upgrade since you had your assessment? And about 68% to 70% usually have done something and another reasonably high percentage are planning on doing further upgrades. And usually, they're just trying to save money or get some preliminary work done before they do something else. It's very encouraging.

Sophie Maxwell: It certainly is, another interesting one. Could an assessor lower their assessment cost if or when a client takes up improvement options in their property? I see retired builders or electricians potentially becoming good assessors if they are committed to the cause of educating and improving home performance.

Romney Bishop: Yup, we've got quite a few builders, electricians and so on who have become accredited assessors. So, there's a huge range of different skills in our assessor pool and certainly some of them would have a business model that they would expect to generate more business from doing a Scorecard assessment. And that's completely fine as long as they declare that conflict of interest at the beginning. And so, that would potentially enable them to do a lower cost assessment and it's the same with VEU. Potentially some VEU companies will want to be using the Scorecard assessment to generate leads for other products. So, we are watching that very closely as it goes live. Sorry, got a bit of a break.

Sophie Maxwell: No problem. Yes, it's going to be really exciting to see the VEU activity go live, we're looking forward to that. So, we've got another question, has there been any interest in using the tool to advocate for minimum rental standards?

Romney Bishop: Yes, Victoria is one of the jurisdictions that's leading that work, so we sit quite close to that team. And we have been talking about the potential to use Scorecard for property owners to comply with minimum rental standards. At the moment, they're doing a slow introduction of basic requirements such as heating and insulation, I think so. But the potential is there to use an overall rating system to meet a goal rather than prescribing a two-star heater or a 3.5 insulation.

Sophie Maxwell: Absolutely. So, I'm going to jump in and answer one. So, we've got Gavin asking or suggesting, it would be great to get some short engaging videos and case studies for clients who have been assessed to improve their home behaviours and ongoing bills. I totally agree, Gavin that's why the team's been working really hard for quite some time on our social media content on our website. So, I really encourage you to do a bit of a deep dive into Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and homescorecard.gov.au. We also have some exciting content coming in the next month or so prompted by ACT and their request for all electric options.

So, we've been creating some consumer facing animated videos plus beautiful case studies, case study videos, which will also include in our fact sheet offering of people who've gone through that process supported by their Scorecard assessor to then take their home all electric. So, heaps of options out there, I think we've reached something like 30 individual videos and counting, so please take some time to go through. If you do find some gaps in there, please contact the team because we're always looking for new content ideas. I know local governments with their social media presence will know how finding that weekly content can be a task.

So, please feel free to reshare our posts as well. Let us help you out with that one and we'd be so happy to see you sharing our content as well. Got another great question for you now, Romney. Yeah, actually we've got two people having the same thought at the same time. So, how long does the rating remain current or valid? Does it have an expiry date?

Romney Bishop: Yeah, no, there's no expiry date. What would need to be done is that a house would have to be rerated if it undergoes any significant renovations or upgrades to appliances and so on and then it would no longer be valid. But you would assume that somebody would want to get a second rating done if they've installed upgrades because their rating will be better.

Sophie Maxwell: Absolutely. And that's something to note as well for any property investors, rental providers, is that the Scorecard certificate is not based on occupant behaviour. Therefore, you can use it from one tenant to the next, obviously as long as no major changes are made to fixed appliances. So, it can be a really great way that rental providers can advertise their property. Oh, another great question from Manveya. Do assessors need to retrain after some time or obtain CPD points?

Romney Bishop: At the moment, they're not required to get any CPD points at the moment. But we do offer regular updates and they're free to come to some in-home tutorial sessions that we run. Usually, we get new assessors doing those tutorials or sometimes if we are not happy with the standard of work from a particular assessor, we might recommend they join that as well. Under NatHERS now there is a requirement for all NatHERS assessors to gain a minimum number of CPD points each year. And I am pretty sure that they're going to want that to happen for in-home assessors as well.

And there is some crossover between the two in terms of the information that you need to know about construction materials and appliances and so on. And also, things like running a business and marketing and all that sort of thing. So, I fully expect that they will be required to undertake CPD once we're accredited under NatHERS. And the other thing is we've regularly sent out helpful materials and professional development templates for people to use. We've also run what we call the NAG, so our National Assessor Group who have come together to help generate more business for the whole assessor pool to increase the awareness of Scorecard out in the public and a few other little projects.

Sophie Maxwell: Absolutely, and just add to that and say we have very rigorous auditing and QA processes as you heard in Romney's presentation, and that certainly picks up any issues that might be happening. And then we provide a huge range of supportive resources at no cost to the assessor so that they can bring themselves up to speed. We've got an interesting question here, are you working with any NFP community housing providers as a sector to improve the properties that they manage? I can say that we have been in conversation with better renting recently but I'll pass that over to Romney.

Romney Bishop: Yeah, we don't have any projects on the go at the moment but we have in the past worked with a couple of community housing providers where we have had funded projects, Energy Savvy Upgrades was one. And I think Healthy Homes probably also worked in social housing and sometimes it's tricky for the housing providers because if they upgrade one house, they feel that they have to upgrade all of them. And they don't have funding for that but others are quite happy to just get volunteer households to participate and they will update them, upgrade their houses with as much as they can, so yeah.

Sophie Maxwell: I've got a couple of interesting questions coming through. Is there a position or preference that the client or even the family living there are present during the assessment? Or do assessors prefer to do the assessment quicker without talking to client or crowd of occupants who may ask lots of questions?

Romney Bishop: No, it's a requirement of the programme that the householder be present in the house. So, there's a lot of information that the assessor imparts to the householder before they start collecting the data and they have to go through the certificate with them. An assessment is not complete without those bookends if you like, because explaining to the householder what's going on is the critical part of the assessment. Hope that answered the question.

Sophie Maxwell: Yeah, I think it's a really good question because-

Romney Bishop: From a risk, yeah, from a risk point of view, I wouldn't want to be in someone's house without them present. It doesn't mean that they follow you through the house, usually they will just stay in the living area of the house and let you go about your business and then come back together at the end.

Sophie Maxwell: Absolutely. And that conversation is just crucial to, like Romney was saying, building trust and then leading to upgrades being applied, so really important to have that conversation. Moen is interested to know if there are no assessors in our area, is there a free simplified assessment that may be used by the public? I know that isn't the idea of Scorecard but it could be a good starting point for some homes.

Romney Bishop: No, sure some households would be able to do a reasonable assessment but there's no rating tool out there. Because the early pilots and testing of Scorecard revealed that people without sufficient skills and knowledge came up with different ratings to those who had sufficient skills and knowledge, who as a group were all fairly consistent. So, that's what really drove the full accreditation process and the minimum qualifications to enter. Scorecard assessments can be done remotely with the right householder, so the householder would need to have some kind of smart device and be able to move through the house safely.

And to show the assessor online features of the house, take photos to send to the assessor but then the assessor can do the data entry and put the report together for them and still have that conversation online.

Sophie Maxwell: Eva's got a great question. Would you be willing to partner with local councils to provide Scorecard assessments for vulnerable residents who can't afford these assessments?

Romney Bishop: We don't currently have any funding to run projects like that, but from 2018 to 2022, part of my role was to manage the Energy Savvy Upgrades project where we had a lot of council involvement actually and some of those partners are on the call today. So, some councils did provide additional funding to what was being provided through our part of the project to help increase the level of upgrades for their residents. So, there's always opportunities down the track. Don't be shy in coming forward if you've got a proposal and we can say yes or no.

Sophie Maxwell: Absolutely right. And that's something that we really want all the participants on this call to take away with you today is that we really are here to help and support. We've gained a lot of knowledge of best practise over the years of running, not just the Scorecard programme but a bunch of projects using Scorecard across Australia. And we'd be so happy to share that information with you so please don't be shy, feel free to be in touch. Oh, interesting one from Arifa. Does the Scorecard rating depend on the market price of electricity or gas?

Romney Bishop: Yes, so each jurisdiction's average energy costs sit in the back end of the Scorecard tool. So, the calculation it's really more relevant where you have a mix of fuels that are providing energy. So, if you are rating a house that's got a wood heater for example, the cost is going to be different to using a reverse cycle air conditioner, even if it's totally inefficient, the cost will be different because of the cost, fuel cost. Hope that answered the question.

Sophie Maxwell: Super, we might wrap up in a minute or two, so please feel free to pop your very last questions in the chat or of course send us an email afterwards. Just a final question on the remote assessments, how would that cost be covered?

Romney Bishop: So, usually the householder pays for the assessment. It's a business for assessors just like being an architect or a plumber or whatever. So, it's up to the householder to contact the assessor of their choice. And usually, the assessor will give them a quote to do the assessment either in person or remotely. Some will travel as well, so if they get a few assessments grouped in an area, they'll just go and knock them out in a day or two. Yeah, so the prices will vary and the costs are born by the householder usually unless they're involved in a government type of project.

Sophie Maxwell: Fantastic, thanks so much, Romney.

Romney Bishop: Just to answer that, there's no cost for people to become accredited in Scorecard at this point. We are totally funded by all the Australian governments at the moment. And so, all the training, once they've got their prerequisite qualifications, all the training on Scorecard is free.

Sophie Maxwell: Excellent, final question to squeeze in there. Aaron, thanks so much for bringing that up, I'll hand over to you, Romney.

Romney Bishop: Yeah, thank you everybody for attending today. And really don't forget to talk to us early and pop any questions you have to us via the Scorecard @delwp.vic.gov.au email address and hopefully we talk to you around the traps. And if anybody's in WA around Perth, I will be there from Thursday to Tuesday next week. So, if you need a meeting getting quick, see you.

Sophie Maxwell: Absolutely, we'll also be sending out an email to you all with the slide deck and just a really, really short survey, I promise it's really, really short. We would love to hear your thoughts on today's presentation and also if you've got any follow up questions at all. Thanks so much for taking the time to join us today.