



# How to talk about Passive House – a checklist

Consistent effective messages by experts and advocates – that is, you! – build knowledge and change people’s thinking.

Please use this checklist to advocate for Passive House by communicating its proven benefits using accurate and compelling story-telling.

## STEP 1 Remember the Passive House Story key points

1. All people in New Zealand deserve to live, work, play and learn in buildings that contribute to their wellbeing.
2. Good buildings help us to live great lives.
3. We all thrive when people across all communities can live, work, and learn in buildings that we know contribute to our wellbeing.
4. We want Passive Houses across all communities, especially public buildings, to increase people’s wellbeing.

## STEP 2 Identify Your Audience

SUPPORTERS	PERSUADABLES	OPPONENTS
Our most important communication channel Our messages must appeal to them Help us build support	Most people Don't think much about it / no strong views Persuaded (or dissuaded) depending on how we frame the message	Very unlikely to change their mind May respond negatively and loudly to a message that makes your case well
Encourage the Supporters to Persuade the Persuadables		Let's not waste our time

## STEP 3

### Structure of Communications: Vision and Values → Barriers → Solutions

**Clear and identified values.**



Research tells us that values such as self-direction, universalism and benevolence are helpful to advancing issues with social and environmental improvement at their heart, such as Passive House.  
Community / Interconnection / Helpfulness / Creativity / Innovation / Fairness / Interdependence

**A positive and concrete vision featuring values aligned with your identified audience.  
Refer to positive vision at least twice as often as problems.**



People across the industry care about building communities throughout Aotearoa where everyone is thriving and healthy in the places they live, play, learn and work.

**Name agents, structures and systems that are the barriers.  
Describe behaviour rather than labelling people.**



While people who made our legislation put people’s wellbeing at the heart of new buildings, the rules and guidelines for buildings are out of date. New houses don’t keep people warm or healthy enough. People in the industry are not building to a standard that we know will ensure buildings are warm, dry, comfortable and efficient to heat.

**Identify concrete solutions incorporating the values  
Talk about acting together not individual choice.  
Not focus on individual families, but people, advocates and systems.**



Innovative leaders in our industry can come together with people in policy and update our approach to building. They can build homes, workplaces, hospitals that really ensure people across all communities in Aotearoa flourish. Learning new techniques, and showing support for the use of the Passive House standard is an important part to solving the puzzle of housing quality in New Zealand.

## STEP 4

### Language

- Language should deepen understanding and align with our values.
- Use human, conversational language and wrap data and facts in the human story.
- Use positive explanatory chains: cause → effect → solution.
- People filter all new facts through their values, beliefs, feelings and mental shortcuts – storytelling and metaphors can be an effective way of getting through the filter.

- Think about the stories your metaphor is telling:
  - Passive House as an upstream solution to prevent downstream problems
  - Passive House as part of solving New Zealand's housing quality puzzle
  - Passive House as pathway to zero carbon
  - A cosy cocoon for families

REPLACE	EMBRACE
Passive House Standard	→ Buildings we can guarantee will keep people who live in them warm and comfortable, and help them thrive.
Energy Efficient Buildings	→ Buildings that are warm dry, comfortable and take very little to heat / Buildings that use a lot less power to keep warm
Thermal performance / Housing performance / Modelled performance	→ How does the building heat up, and stay warm, dry and comfortable? / Does the building stay warm and comfortable and last the way we say it is going to?
Building standards	→ The warmth, dryness, comfort and lifetime of a building
Housing market	→ Homes, schools, workplaces
Buyers / Sellers / Landlords / Renters / Investors / Customers	→ People who live / People who work / People who design / People who build our homes, workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods
Investing in / Spending on / Cost	→ Improving / Growing / Valuing
Good for -Economy / GDP / Bottom Line	→ Good for-Society / People / The Environment
Cost-effectiveness	→ A means to a better life.
Affordable housing	→ Homes that people can be warm, dry, and comfortable in.
Government or industry failed to do x	→ People in government or industry should do x instead of y
The government (when being critical)	→ People in government, politicians

The industry (when being critical)	→ People who fund/design/build/ sell buildings
Policy	→ People who make policy, politicians
Fuel poverty	→ Homes that have minimal heating needs & relieve stress related to unaffordable heating.
Poor people	→ People in communities with the least, people paid the least.
Low standard houses	→ People who have to live in unhealthy buildings, buildings that make people sick and increase stress.
Me	→ We

## STEP 5 Check for common errors that surface unhelpful thinking

No Passive Language for Passive House	→ People Do Things
Avoid Mythbusting and Negating	→ Tell your story, don't just rubbish theirs - this just repeats and reinforces the opposition's message and makes it more memorable to the audience
Accentuate the Positive, Eliminate the Negative	→ In the same way that people respond to helpful values, they tend to bunker down when we make them scared or fearful for themselves, or others
Sell the Cake, Don't List the Ingredients	→ Tell people about the outcome they will experience
People and Planet, not Dollars and Cents	→ 1) it reduces meaningful human experiences and outcomes to a dollar value, and 2) reframes the question away from whether it is worthwhile, towards whether it is the right cost.

## STEP 6 Test Your Communications

Test with your Persuadable Audience. Take note of what works and what feels genuine for you, and use it again, build on this for next time!