

Sustainability rebates for residents and businesses

COUNCIL NAME

Randwick City Council

WEB ADDRESSrandwick.nsw.gov.au**SIZE**

37 square kilometers

POPULATION

156,000

Overview

Randwick's Sustainability Rebates incentivise residents and businesses to implement energy and water saving initiatives. Ten specific energy and water saving rebates are available including rooftop solar, battery storage, rainwater tanks, insulation, LED changeovers, efficient swimming pool pumps and more. As of June 2021, a total of 263 rebates have been provided. The rebates have leveraged \$1.5m of community investment and resulted in 1,300 kW of rooftop solar, 170 kWh of battery storage, 22,000 L in rainwater storage, 29 homes insulated, 600 lights upgraded and much more.

Background

Randwick City Council's 2020 Environment Strategy makes Council accountable for a range of ambitious environmental programs and targets, including a target of net zero emissions for Council operations by 2030 and a 60% emissions reduction target for the LGA by 2030 (based on a 2018 baseline). The strategic approaches which facilitate the Sustainability Rebates program include:

- increase rooftop solar installations on households and businesses by 20 percent by 2022; and,
- implement energy saving programs across households and businesses to reduce greenhouse emissions by 20 percent by 2025.

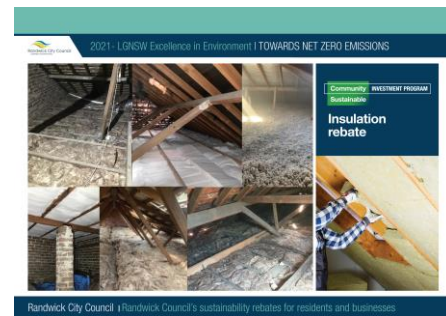
The key issue which Sustainability Rebates seeks to address is to bridge the gap between 'interest' and 'implementation'. Whilst a large portion of the Randwick community would like to improve their sustainability performance, there remains a significant knowledge and cost barrier to implementing many environmental initiatives. By providing a very targeted set of rebates and detailed eligibility criterion, Council provides the community with a clear and comprehensive list of which products reduce energy and water use, as well as a financial incentive to do so.

The rebates program was designed using Council's understanding of key gaps in the community's transition to a low carbon community. For example, the majority of environmental initiatives, such as solar and rainwater tanks, are largely being implemented in detached and semi-detached dwellings. However, approximately 70% of Randwick's residents live in apartments which face significantly more financial and organisational barriers. To counter these additional barriers faced by apartment dwellers, Council's Sustainability Rebates provides a higher rebate amount. For example, apartments can receive up to \$2,000 towards the upfront cost of rooftop solar whilst houses can receive up to \$500.

Implementation

Following Council's approval of the rebates program and budget, many stages of research and testing were undertaken over the course of six months to ensure the program ran smoothly and effectively. The initial stage of the program development scoped out the terms and conditions for the rebates. Specific criteria were included for each of the 10 rebates to encourage best practice behaviour in the community, for example 'new pool pumps must have a minimum 7 Energy Star Rating' to be eligible for the pool pump rebate. To accurately measure the impact of the Sustainability Rebates program, the energy, water and emissions savings were calculated for each sustainable product. These were then verified by an external environmental consultant to add confidence and credibility to the results.

Council created two online forms; one for the applicant to request a rebate and one for Council staff to submit based on an applicant's submission. In doing so, Council created a consistent and auditable method of assessing and approving each rebate. The program was launched in November 2020 and was initially just promoted via Council's newsletter. Soon after the program's launch, multiple installers reached out to Council to understand the program so they could promote themselves to residents and customers. These installers have since included promotional material in local print and social media, as well as on their websites. In doing so, Council's Sustainability Rebates has been quickly shared throughout the community with minimal communications input from Council.



Outcomes

As of 30 June 2021, 263 rebates have been provided to the community, costing Council approximately \$150,000. An additional \$1.5 million of investment has been leveraged from the community for energy and water saving initiatives. The rebates have resulted in 6 energy assessments, 5 hot water systems, 29 insulation installations, 606 LEDs upgraded across 27 properties, 13 rainwater tanks, 157 rooftop solar and 16 battery installations, and more. Rooftop solar has been of key interest to the community, with a total of 1,300 kW of solar being installed.

The impact of the Sustainability Rebates is estimated at savings of 1,600 megawatt-hours of electricity, 1,400 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, 800 kilolitres of water, and \$250,000 in electricity bills each year. Surveyed recipients found that 100% would recommend the program to other residents and over 75% of residents have stated that the rebate had a 'high' or 'very high' impact on their decision to move ahead with their particular energy or water saving purchase or installation.

Key Learnings

In delivering the Sustainability Rebates program, Council has learnt that clarity and financial assistance can be key drivers of environmental initiatives in the community. In order to manage budgets into the future, Council plans to adjust rebate amounts for each product to encourage those sustainable products which are known to have a significant environmental benefit but have had low uptake. The next steps for the program is to include rebates for NABERS ratings in apartments and electric vehicle chargers in August 2021.

Contact

Name: Peter Maganov
Position: Manager, Sustainability
Phone: 02 9093 6222
Email: peter.maganov@randwick.nsw.gov.au

This project was the 2021 winner of the Towards Net Zero Emissions Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.