

Case study: Building Futures Program

COUNCIL NAME

Waverley Council

WEB ADDRESS

waverley.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

9 square kilometres

POPULATION

66,812

Overview

The Waverley Council Building Futures program targets strata buildings with dedicated advice and support to deliver reductions in energy use, greenhouse emissions and water use and improve waste management. Waverley's Sustainability and Resilience Team works directly with selected building managers and owners to identify and implement cost-effective environmental solutions. The aim is to empower this traditionally hard-to-access sector to reduce common area energy use and emissions and move toward Council's ambitious net zero emissions target by 2050.

Background

Waverley Council has strong community carbon emissions targets (70% by 2030, net zero by 2050) under the Environmental Action Plan, and is committed to drive energy efficiency improvements through the Community Strategic Plan (2018-2029). The strata residential sector accounts for one-third of emissions in the Waverley LGA, with over 80% of residents living in multi-unit dwellings. This is likely to increase further as population grows.

This innovative program has been developed specifically to drive down strata carbon by influencing and addressing well-known barriers to efficient energy use in key 'under-performing' strata properties; such as lack of knowledge, incentives and time, governance/decision-making, and financial barriers. It was also designed to empower and educate strata stakeholders on sustainability governance and technology upgrades with capacity building and networking opportunities for building managers, strata managers and strata owners. It also enabled testing of program elements (NABERS rating, expert assessment and support, matched funding) to refine for future roll-out.

The Building Futures program is Council's first foray into facilitating improved emissions reductions in this complex sector. The focus is on the commercial, retail and shopping precinct of Bondi Junction as it represents over one-third of total emissions and water use in the LGA. Identified as one of the key strategic centres in the Eastern City District plan of the Greater Sydney Commission, Bondi Junction also houses the LGA's biggest strata buildings with some buildings comprising 200+ units.

The pilot program of 10 selected buildings (34-223 lots) represents 17% of total greenhouse gas emissions of Bondi Junction. The main target for reduction was common energy use which can represent up to 60% of the total building's energy use depending on building size.

Implementation

Council's Sustainability team led the evidence-based design and delivery of the program. In the scoping phase the team undertook extensive stakeholder mapping to identify and understand the key players in industry, government as well as decision-makers and influencers within the strata community. They also undertook desktop research of similar support programs here and overseas, and knowledge-sharing with other councils including City of Sydney and Willoughby. Representatives from Sydney Water, Green Strata Strata Community Australia (NSW), Smart Blocks, State government, Facilities' Managers Association as well as senior council staff and energy efficiency experts, were consulted during the design phase.

The program focused on making it simple for strata stakeholders to identify, decide on and implement efficiency upgrades and reduce carbon emissions. For a budget of \$150,000 over a 12-month period, the unique support roadmap not only provided initial expert energy assessments, business case support and costed recommendations, but also crucially ensured matched funding, knowledge-sharing opportunities and recognition elements.

Targeted communication channels were used to recruit building participants including Mayoral letters, emails, door-knocking, online media and partner networks.

Throughout the year Council offered free capacity-building and networking opportunities to strata stakeholders. Expert speakers covered strata sustainability governance and the eight building management training modules topics including energy bills, solar power, HVAC equipment, lighting, pumps and pools.

Outcomes

Over the 12-month period the program has reduced on average 20% of common area energy usage across the 10 buildings and 594 tonnes CO2 emissions annually, helping deliver on community climate change targets.

The response to the program overall has been extremely positive indicated by the following survey findings:

- 85% of respondents rating their program experience as excellent and 55% said it exceeded expectations
- the majority agreed the shared goal of 20% energy use reduction was extremely useful in driving participation, and that projects would not have been considered in the short term without the program's support
- the most useful program elements were council staff advice, energy audits and implementation support including matched funding.

The buildings were among the first that received new NABERS ratings for environmental performance (launched June 2018). Feedback and learnings were provided to this national program on the effectiveness of the tool to help influence the overall apartment industry.

Key Learnings

Even with newer strata buildings there is significant potential for cost-effective energy-savings and carbon emissions reductions in common property. Council advice and financial incentives have been important enablers for the upgrades to be implemented within a 12-month time-frame, which is tight in the context of strata decision-making. Lessons learnt about strata governance arrangements and the new NABERS tool will help make improvements for future program rollouts.



Following this pilot round's success Council has secured a budget to roll out the program to other strata buildings beyond Bondi Junction to deliver further carbon emissions and efficiency improvements across the LGA. Round 2 was launched in May 2019 with 10 selected strata buildings from different suburbs across the LGA. Energy assessments are already underway.

Resources will be allocated to provide financial assistance to two pilot program participants to support identified solar power projects, as well as to follow-up on NABERS ratings to check the building performance since implementing the upgrades. The aim is to facilitate other solar projects in Round 2 and further deliver on Council net zero emission targets.

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This project was the 2019 winner of the Towards Net Zero Emissions Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards