

Community Energy Efficiency Program UnitingCare Community and Blue Care, Australia

GGHH Agenda Goals

- Leadership
- Energy

Community health service goal

- To increase the energy efficiency of different types of community buildings
- To encourage adoption of improved energy management practices within Uniting Care Community, Blue Care and the broader community
- To reduce energy consumption costs thereby allowing increased support to clients

Progress Achieved

- Total energy saving across all sites is 37%
- Energy consumption savings of 124,069 kWh, equivalent to 100 tonnes CO₂
- \$99,000AUD/\$73,000USD in savings achieved in 2015 for UCC and BC
- The combined payback of all initiatives is 6.4 years with a Return on Investment for all initiatives of 16%
- Average energy efficiency improvement (MJ/m²) of 39% per site
- Average cost saving per site retrofitted is USD \$2,740 (AUD \$3,700AUD) per year, with 13 sites producing savings greater than this.
- Improved energy efficiency practice practices and behaviour change amongst staff and volunteers
- Increased knowledge and understanding of energy management practices across the organisation

The Issue

In its inaugural Statement to the Nation in 1977 the Uniting Church recognised its commitment to the protection of the environment and the wise use of energy as requiring attention. UnitingCare Community (UCC) and Blue Care (BC) have a strong commitment to sustainability and more specifically, to energy efficiency.

From a GHG emissions and environmental impact perspective, energy remains the most significant sustainability challenge facing UCC and BC. Stationary energy comprises over 50% of the organisation's carbon footprint. It is also the most significant financial consideration. Money spent on operating costs reduces the amount of funding available for providing important community services.

The Federal Government's Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP) provided a funding catalyst to enable both not-for-profit organisations, to allocate highly prized capital funding towards energy efficiency and retrofit works that would not have otherwise been able to be funded.

Sustainability Strategy Implemented

Energy efficiency activities strategy:

- Energy audits identified energy saving opportunities. Energy efficiency activities were subsequently completed in 27 sites.

Project demonstration and communication activities:

- Energy efficiency workshops for staff and volunteers (covering electricity pricing, understanding energy bills, calculating energy costs, energy management basics, energy saving opportunities at home and work, and what we have achieved so far);
- Marketing and communications were distributed across UCC and BC's state-wide network including a Project Launch at a regional site;

Implementation process

Energy Efficiency Activities

An external energy management firm was contracted to manage the implementation of the energy efficiency upgrades. The 27 installation sites were spread across Queensland and focused on low socio economic areas. The types of sites ranged from residential housing, offices, retail charity shops and community respite centres.

17 different contractors were used for installation of energy efficiency solutions due to the wide geographical spread of sites. Activities included:

- General electrical (lighting upgrades, lighting controls, de-lamping)
- HVAC (split system air-conditioning upgrades, ceiling fans, ceiling insulation)
- Management controls (remote metering, chilled water timers, general appliance timers, time delay switches, zip boiler timers)
- Water Systems (heat pump hot water system upgrades, efficient shower heads, pool pump timer)

Project demonstration and Communication Activities

We used **multiple channels of communications** to achieve awareness at every level of the organisation and across all sites.

Workshops on improving energy efficiency in the home and workplace were delivered primarily for staff and volunteers from across UCC and BC. Attendance by UCC's financial counsellors was a key strategy in engaging with the wider community. These counsellors received targeted education on energy efficiency, which could then be transferred to clients.

Materials developed included:

- Visual collateral – posters, switch decals, pull up banners, shelf wobblers
- Merchandise – keep cups and magnet writing pads
- Internal communications – staff newsletters, blogs, fortnightly organisational updates, memos, Intranet pages and announcements, learning and communications portal
- Presentations - staff inductions, workshops, morning tea celebrations, national conferences, Bundaberg launch
- External communications – media releases, website pages, *Sparky* video

Sparky the energy-saving icon was created as an identifying mascot to theme all communication resources, including an animated information video for internal stakeholders, a suite of posters and 'switch off' stickers for all UCC and BC services. The strong visual cue he presented created more conversations between staff, volunteers and clients about the CEEP project.

Sustainability Champions in UCC and BC were educated on energy efficiency. They then disseminated the key learnings throughout their local services and to encourage organisational-wide energy saving behaviour.

Tracking Progress

Fortnightly meetings provided an overview of the project progress and an opportunity to measure success. Electricity bills provided insight into the cost savings and reduced consumption achieved. Smart metering also provided visibility for the potential success of the project.

Challenges and lessons learned

- Delivery delays for high value lighting caused implementation delays; provided experience and information that will allow more accurate scheduling for future projects.
- Difficulties in managing a network of remotely located contractors: without a strong site presence, contractor schedule management was difficult, particularly given the piecemeal nature and low value of the contracts.
- Determining accurate project savings in a cost effective manner was problematic, with the planned metering solution proving to be suboptimal.
- Energy audits are not rigorous enough to produce detailed specifications of work. Cost estimates attributed to energy efficiency work therefore needed to allow for specific issues that can only be discovered during implementation. i.e retrofitting in older premises did provide some structural difficulties which were unseen during the audit process, this increased the budget due to changes in installations.
- Budget constraints made it difficult to monitor and coordinate site based activities remotely, and future projects might consider building a network of site-based champions that would allow for smoother implementation.

Next Steps

The results of the CEEP provide both organisations with pilot projects across a range of technologies, which demonstrate the reduced costs and improved amenity that energy efficiency technologies can provide. These learnings will be shared widely in both organisations as a means to encourage the uptake of energy efficiency as part of new developments and other building upgrade projects.

The project learnings highlight the importance for both organisations to continue to focus on, and invest in, improving the energy efficiency of our operations. It is now clear that this challenge should be viewed as an issue of core operational and financial importance, as well as one of environmental and social responsibility. Building on the significant savings and outcomes achieved, ongoing resourcing will ensure energy efficiency is reinvested into the organisation.



Demographic information

Uniting Care Community is the community services arm of Uniting Care Queensland. With 2,400 plus staff and more than 6,000 volunteers, we serve Queenslanders of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to live valued, safe and productive lives. We have a large geographical reach across Queensland with over 280 services state-wide, with a range of services focusing on children, young people, adults and seniors. These include disability support services; children, young people and families services; counselling and wellbeing services; and Lifeline services.

Links

<https://uccommunity.org.au/community-energy-efficiency-program>

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