CASE STUDIES

Program Model Case Studies

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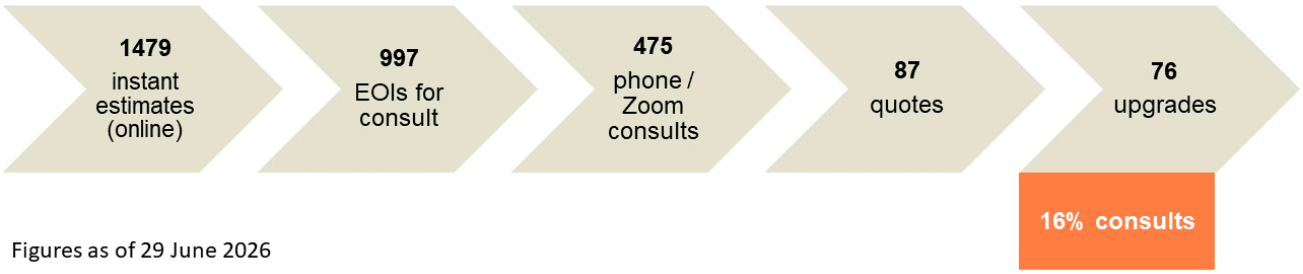
CASE STUDY

City of Parramatta Home Energy Advice Service (2024-2026)

Program model

Program type	Single council outsourcing
Program lead	City of Parramatta
Third party service provider	ZapCat Social enterprise established in 2023
Delivery model	Individualised advice and assessment
Support measures	• Home energy assessment • Individual consultation / advice • Online information • Supplier vetting (third-party)
Household recruitment	• Social media • Flyer in council rates notice • Website • Newsletters and other council communications • Other promotion by networks (e.g., local Chamber of Commerce) • Multilingual communications to accommodate diverse local population

Conversion rates



Figures as of 29 June 2026

Value proposition

Strategic goals	• Climate change mitigation • Energy and cost savings • Thermal comfort
Program objectives	• Helps households **understand** why and how to upgrade their homes • Provides **trustworthy** advice on quality products and suppliers • Makes the installation process **easier** for households
Benefits for council	• ZapCat provides a tailored solution for council. • ZapCat can dedicate sufficient time and resources to intensive household engagement that wouldn't be possible for the sustainability department. • The program tackles all housing types including apartment/strata managed properties. • The online interactive dashboard enables monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.
Benefits for third-party service provider	• Council have aligned objectives and are easy to collaborate with. • Communication via council rates notices is very effective for generating enquiries.
Community co-benefits	• Local suppliers and installers (economic / workforce development)

Households and products

Household type	Homeowners and renters
Dwelling type	Detached homes, townhouses, and apartment blocks
Geographical area	Local government area (City of Parramatta, NSW, Australia)
Products	Solar panels and batteries (incl. apartment blocks) Hot water heat pumps (incl. apartment blocks) EV chargers (incl. apartment blocks) Induction and electric cooktops Reverse cycle air conditioners Insulation and draught proofing Low-cost energy efficiency measures (targeting renters)

Investment

Program lead	• Sustainability officer (0.05 FTE / 2 hours per week, more during program set up) • Other council teams (research, social media, procurement – 2 hours per month) • 12-month subscription paid to ZapCat for provision of advice (approx. $20-30,000) • $1,000 annual marketing budget
Suppliers	• Product discounts (5% provided for pre-qualified referrals)
Household investment	• Self-funded or financed (arranged with individual suppliers) including State and Federal Government rebates/subsidies
Revenue	None

Success factors

Capabilities of the third-party service provider	ZapCat: • Takes a user-centred and behaviour-informed design approach to engagement. • Adapted to council needs and objectives, such as including insulation in the advice service. • Did early testing of communication channels and messaging to determine what was most effective (the rates notice flyer generated a spike in enquiries). • Can mobilise flexible part-time advisers to deal with peaks in enquiries, and has multiple vetted suppliers in the area to manage high demand. • Provides consistent follow up to guide households from home energy assessment to engaging with installers. • Represents an independent “source of truth” which overcomes perceived sales motives, supported by a team of professional advisors with specialist expertise.

Lessons learned

Challenges encountered and overcome	Council procurement is risk-averse when it comes to business partnerships.	→ First engaging ZapCat in 2024 required a tender exemption because they were a new enterprise with no direct competitor. In 2025, council followed the standard procurement process and ZapCat met the brief in full and were awarded.
	There are potential reputational risks for council if households have poor experiences with installers, as installers are identified by ZapCat and outside of council input.	→ Council maintained regular communications with ZapCat and undertook constant evaluation of participant experiences and feedback to monitor satisfaction and resolution of issues.
	Council communications create significant spikes in enquiries, but generally don't sustain engagement due to resource constraints.	→ ZapCat requires councils to book a slot for rates notice mailouts so they can plan to scale staffing to respond to enquiries over a 2–3-week period. ZapCat also has strong social media capabilities to promote sustained interest.
Persistent barriers	• Home energy upgrades for apartment blocks remain challenging due decision-making and resourcing hurdles (e.g., securing support from Owners Corporation members and funding commitment). • Renters face structural barriers to participate (e.g., lack of decision-making authority and landlord incentives). • Negative publicity from past national insulation programs continues to affect public perception towards insulation.	

More information

Program websites	https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/environment/educational-programs/home-energy-advice-service https://app.zapcat.com.au/parramatta/
Contact	Lisa Kollaras, Sustainability Officer City of Parramatta LKollaras@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au
Reports	• Engaging Households in Electrification - Insights from ZapCat Programs (March 2026) • Providing Electrification Advice - Insights from ZapCat Programs (June 2026)

CASE STUDY

Energy Advice and Support for Everyone (EASE) Armidale (2026-27)

Program model (in development / early implementation)

Program type	Cross-sector collaboration – hard-to-reach households
Program lead	Armidale Uniting Church
Program partners	Core delivery partners: Electrify Armidale and Sustainable Living Armidale Program and referral partners: Armidale Regional Council, ZapCat, community service organisations, and Armidale Uniting Church Thread Shed Research and evaluation partner: RACE for 2030 Energy Upgrades for Australian Homes (EUAH) project
Delivery model	Combination: Direct retrofit or assisted delivery / Facilitated purchasing and market intermediation
Support measures	• Tailored energy information and household support • Community information sessions and practical workshops • Household energy conversations and initial needs assessments • Referrals to accredited home energy assessors, where appropriate • Low-cost measures, including curtains, draught stoppers and selected draught-proofing materials • Help to understand energy bills, energy retail plans, rebates, finance options, and support programs • Referrals to trusted suppliers and quote-review services • Work with local suppliers to meet NSW approved supplier requirements • Follow-up support to help households move from advice to action

Program model cont.

Household engagement and recruitment	• Referrals through community service organisations, churches, neighbourhood centres and partner networks • Engagement through organisations serving Aboriginal communities, multicultural and refugee communities, seniors and families • Community events, workshops and information sessions • Plain-language, visual, translated and culturally adapted resources • Referrals from housing providers, tenancy services and real estate agents, where appropriate • Word-of-mouth referrals through trusted local relationships

Value proposition

Strategic goals	• Energy and cost savings • Energy literacy and agency • Improved comfort, health and wellbeing
Program objectives	• Help households **understand** their energy use and options for improving their homes • Provide **trusted,** practical advice on home energy improvements • Reduce **financial and practical** barriers through low-cost measures and connections to rebates, finance, and upgrade programs
Community co-benefits	• Stronger local delivery capacity through volunteer training and cross-sector collaboration • Reusable training, communication, and evaluation resources • Stronger referral pathways between community services and energy programs
Revenue	None

Households and products

Household type	Households experiencing energy stress or barriers to improving the energy performance of their homes, including: • Low-income households and renters • Seniors • People with health, disability, or mobility needs • Aboriginal households and communities • Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) households, including refugee and migrant communities • People living in homes that are difficult or expensive to heat and cool
Dwelling type	Any (standalone homes, remote housing, public/social housing, share houses/boarding houses)
Geographical area	Local government area (Armidale Regional Council, NSW)
Upgrades and other measures	Support provided directly: • Lined or thermal curtains • Draught stoppers and selected draught-proofing materials • Energy-saving information and practical resources • Warm winter clothing where appropriate Upgrades supported through advice or referral: • Insulation • Efficient heating and cooling • Efficient hot water systems • Electrification and appliance replacement • Solar and other larger upgrades • Rebates, finance and government support programs

Investment

Program funding	• $100,500 NSW Government Inclusive Energy Outreach Grant for:
	  ○ Project coordinator (0.5 FTE)
	  ○ Volunteer support
	  ○ Household engagement
	  ○ Training
	  ○ Practical resources
	  ○ Selected low-cost measures
	• $5,000 from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), subject to confirmation of funding status

Complimentary program funding	• Up to $40,000 proposed from Armidale Regional Council for a separate but aligned ZapCat service, which supports a selected number of households with home energy estimates, advice and pathways to suppliers.
Delivery support and in-kind contributions	• Local volunteers: Up to 20 volunteers will be recruited and trained to assist with community outreach, household engagement, workshops, practical activities and referrals. • Armidale Uniting Church Thread Shed: Donated and deadstock textiles, sewing equipment and volunteer expertise will support the production of lined curtains, draught stoppers and warm winter clothing. • Energy Upgrades for Australian Homes: The EUAH research partnership will provide in-kind program co-design, workshop facilitation, implementation guidance, resource development, monitoring, evaluation and learning. • Community and referral partners: Local organisations and service providers will help reach households, adapt information for different audiences and connect participants with trusted support.
Revenue	None

Emerging lessons and design responses

Challenges encountered and overcome	Building shared understanding and internal support.	→ An important early task was connecting the program's climate and energy objectives with the Church's mission. Framing the work around justice, care for neighbours and care for creation helped build support and establish a clear purpose.
	Working within regional delivery constraints.	→ The partners aligned the community outreach program with complementary Council-supported services, allowing each organisation to contribute according to its role, resources and expertise.
	Engaging households experiencing energy stress.	→ Effective engagement depends on trusted local relationships, integration with existing community services, plain-language and culturally appropriate information, respect for consent and household circumstances, and practical follow-up. The program aims to minimise information and administrative burdens and support households from initial contact through to action.

More information

Background article	https://uniting.church/equitable-energy-upgrades-caring-for-people-caring-for-creation/
Contacts	Catherine Sharpe, Project Coordinator easearmidale@gmail.com Trevor Brown, Project lead tbrown3@une.edu.au

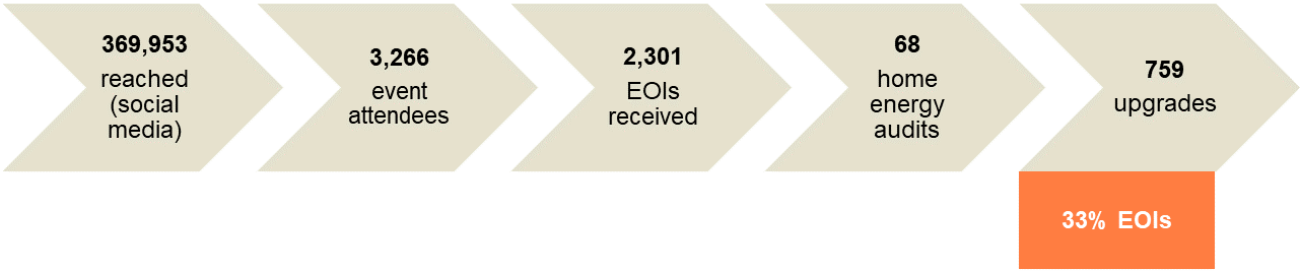
CASE STUDY

Geelong Sustainability Electric Homes Program (2023-2025)

Program model

Program type	Community organisation-led
Program lead	Geelong Sustainability Not-for-profit charity established in 2007
Delivery model	Facilitated purchasing and market intermediation
Support measures	• Home energy assessment (2024 onwards) • Product selection • Supplier vetting • Product discount
Household recruitment	• In-person and online information sessions • Promotion through other events (Sustainable House Day and community partner meetings) • Print media, social media, email, and radio marketing • Household EOI form (forwarded to suppliers for quotes) • Emergency hot water system replacement (2024 onwards)

Conversion rates



Value proposition

Strategic goals	• Climate change mitigation and adaptation • Energy and cost savings • Improved thermal comfort
Program objectives	• Help households **understand** why and how to upgrade their homes • Provide **trustworthy** advice on quality products and suppliers • Make the installation process **easier** for households • Generate community **co-benefits**
Benefits for suppliers	• Access to Geelong Sustainability's network, credibility, and trusted brand strengthens their reputation • Increases visibility for the business and awareness and understanding of products • Builds community and industry relationships
Community co-benefits	• Product donations to local not-for-profit groups (60kW of solar panels and 16 hot water heat pumps) • Local economic development (local content criteria for supplier selection)

Households and products

Household type	Primarily homeowners	
Dwelling type	Any	
Geographical area	Multiple local government areas (Greater Geelong Region, Victoria, Australia)	
Products and suppliers	Solar panels Battery systems Heating and cooling split systems Hot water heat pumps Electric vehicle chargers Draught proofing (2024-25) Induction cooktops (2024-25) Home insulation (2024-25) Home energy audits (2024-25) Electric vehicles (2025) e-bikes (2025) Bike servicing (2025)	RACV Solar (2023) Reclaim Energy (2023-25) Jeztek Plumbing (2023) Winki Energy (2024-25) Too Hot to Handle (2024-25) Enviroflex (2024-25) Ephe (2024-25) Rex Gorell (2025) Good Cycles (2025)

Investment

Program lead	• Program coordinator (0.6 FTE for 12 months) • Volunteer expertise (including in selecting suppliers and products) • Approx. $10,000 marketing costs (latest program) • Approx. $35,000 invested in coordination (latest program, supported by referral fees)
Funding partners	• $50,000 competitive council grant each year (City of Greater Geelong) • Marketing contribution from suppliers (total approx. $60,000 in 2023 and $30,000 in 2024)
Promoting partners and supporters	• Comms and marketing guidance (Rewiring Australia, RACE for 2030 Energy Upgrades for Australian Homes) • In-kind comms, hosting in-person information sessions (community organisation network)
Suppliers	• Product discounts (based on purchase volume) • Marketing contribution (see above)
Household investment	• Self-funded or financed (arranged with individual suppliers)
Revenue	• Supplier referral fees paid to Geelong Sustainability and reinvested in future programs (approx. $100-$400 per sale depending on the product; $42,000 total from the latest program)

Success factors

Organisational capabilities of the program lead	• Connection, knowledge of, and access to the community, including large network and reputation developed over time • Maturity as a community organisation (ability to hire staff and contractors) and experience in delivering bulk buy programs • Professional staff and volunteers with technical knowledge and marketing skills • Building on the experience and resources developed through running the program in previous years
Partnerships and funding	• Local government funding and supplier referral fees contributing to operational and marketing costs • Endorsement and comms support from local community groups, councils, and other organisations • Rigorous tender process for engaging suppliers (e.g., assessing process for customer enquiries and installation capacity) • Shared goals and priorities and good collaboration • Providing clear guidance on expectations of suppliers (e.g., communication channels and reporting)

Lessons learned

Challenges encountered and overcome	Some suppliers could not respond to the volume of enquiries in a timely way, leading to some dissatisfaction and dropouts.	→ Customer service standards were incorporated in supplier vetting process in subsequent rounds. Maintaining partnerships with local suppliers (as opposed to state-wide enterprises), those who utilised technology to streamline the inquiry process, and those not overly reliant on subcontractors was also seen to improve responsiveness. It is recommended to consider how to minimise spikes in demand which can negatively impact suppliers.
	Local in-person events are time intensive, and suppliers are typically more comfortable with Q&A than giving presentations.	→ Increased number of webinars in subsequent rounds, provided more time for Q&A with suppliers, and put less emphasis on presentations. In the latest iteration, the program was also promoted through existing community events that were not just sustainability focused (e.g., Rotary meetings) which diversified the audience.

Persistent barriers	• Household financial constraints, including a lack of finance options for multiple product purchases
	• Limited diversity among participating households (most in the 50+ age group) and few renters engaged. Older demographics can also require more time from suppliers (e.g., to help them understand how to use the technology).
	• Product-specific challenges:
	  • Induction cooktops come with an installation cost, low rebates, and sometimes cannot be retrofitted where there are stone benchtops that cannot be cut
	  • Suppliers find that it takes longer to convert interest into installation for insulation and draught proofing
	  • EVs and e-bikes had low uptake (2025) indicating less demand for support	

More information

Program website	https://electrichomes.com.au/
Contact	Lucy Allinson, Program Coordinator Geelong Sustainability program@geelongsustainability.org.au
Reports	• 2023, 2024, and 2025 Program Outcomes Reports • 2023 Participant Survey Report

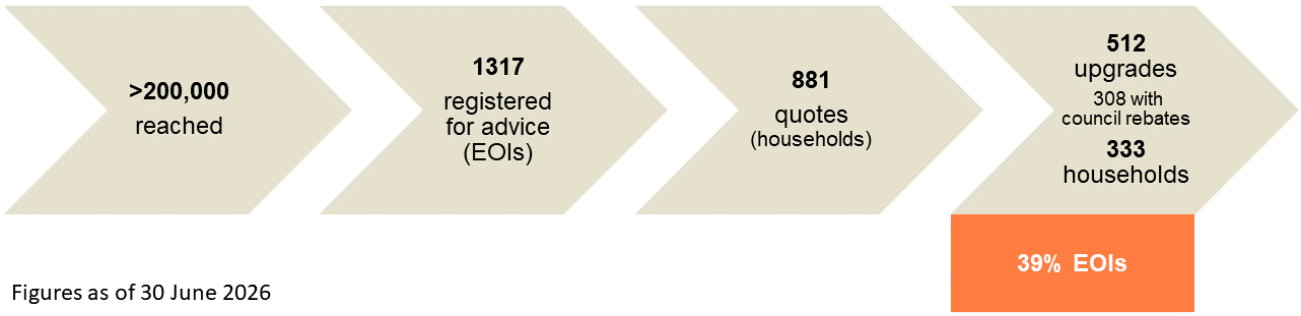
CASE STUDY

Hume Home Energy Upgrades (2024-2026)

Program model

Program type	Single council – hard-to-reach households
Program lead	Hume City Council in partnership with Yarra Energy Foundation (YEF) (not-for-profit organisation established by Yarra City Council in 2010)
Delivery model	Integrated guided upgrade pathway
Support measures	• Free home energy advice phone service • Home visits and no obligation quotes from suppliers • Product selection • Supplier vetting • Product rebates (for concession card holders) and discounts • Support accessing other government financial incentives (e.g., rebates, no interest loans, and discounts) • Interpreter services over the phone and on site
Household recruitment	• Forums, information sessions, festivals, and other community group events • Social media, council newsletters and other communication channels, and some paid ads • Council letter and flyer sent to concession rate payers • Website • Free home energy advice hotline (phone)

Conversion rates



Figures as of 30 June 2026

Value proposition

Strategic goals	• Energy and cost savings • Improved thermal comfort • Health and wellbeing outcomes • Reduced greenhouse gas emissions • Community resilience to climate change impacts
Program objectives	• Help households **understand** why and how to upgrade their homes • Provide **trustworthy** advice on quality products and suppliers • Make upgrades more **affordable** • Make the installation process **easier** for households
Benefits for council	• Delivery of a leading sustainability program that meets community needs. • Ability to tailor and adapt the program to the needs of the Hume community. • YEF is independent, has expertise in the sector, and undertakes vetting of suppliers.
Benefits for third-party service provider	• Council has a strong local brand, communications channels, and trusted relationship with the community. • Council rebates increase uptake of home energy upgrades.
Community co-benefits	• Energy literacy

Households and products

Household type	Homeowners and rental property owners (with a focus on vulnerable households)	
Dwelling type	Open to all dwelling types (Hume mainly has freestanding homes)	
Geographical area	Local government area (Hume City Council, Victoria, Australia)	
Products and suppliers	Reverse cycle heating and cooling Heat pump hot water Rooftop solar Solar batteries Induction cooktops Ceiling, wall and underfloor insulation Draught proofing	All Electric Homes Enviroflex

Investment

Program lead	• Sustainability officer (0.6 FTE, full time in project setup phase) • $35,000 annual fee for YEF services • Approx. $150,000 for council rebates (annual) • Up to $50,000 for council promotion (annual)
Funding partners	• $130,000 funding from an international business setting up in Hume (contributing towards rebate costs over multiple years)
Promoting partners and supporters	• Collaboration with Brotherhood of St Laurence through the Climate Safe Homes program (which subsidised split system air conditioning and solar systems for 10 residents with health conditions)
Suppliers	• Product discounts
Household investment	• Residents self-fund upgrades (arranged with individual suppliers) factoring in available rebates (council and other levels of government)
Revenue	None

Success factors

Program design and Council support	• The program has been well designed to address the key barriers to participation: knowledge of how to proceed; trust in suppliers; and capital cost. • The program has a dedicated program manager across project delivery, technical solutions and effective communications. • Council has been supportive of a significant rebate budget.
Capabilities of the third-party service provider	• YEF brings specialist expertise and additional resources for household engagement.
Council communications	• The rate of registrations and installations is strongly driven by council's investment in promotion (including staff time).
Manageable number of suppliers	• Reduces complexity for households and enables conversations about multiple upgrades. In this program, one supplier covers solar and electrification, and another supplier covers insulation.

Lessons learned

Challenges encountered and overcome	The need for specialist knowledge of the home energy efficiency and electrification sector.	→ Council leveraged YEF's expertise, with YEF leading the procurement and supplier appointment process.
	Multiple parties, products, and changing government rebates makes the program complex.	→ Information on the website and access to rebates were streamlined for households. Council pays rebates directly to suppliers, upon evidence of installation, to remove the administrative burden.
	It takes time to raise the profile of a program.	→ Hume was able to build on experience with an earlier solar scheme when the program was first established. Running multi-year rather than one-off programs is recommended to build awareness and enable improvements over time.
Persistent barriers	• Few landlords have participated in the program. • Digital literacy and online access can be a barrier for some households. • The most vulnerable residents face multiple levels of disadvantage (beyond capital cost) which remains a barrier to participation.	

More information

Program website	https://humeenergyupgrades.org.au/
Contact	Household Energy Office, Hume City Council energy@hume.vic.gov.au
Reports	Results snapshot: https://www.hume.vic.gov.au/Residents/Environment/Home-Energy-Help/Hume-Home-Energy-Upgrades-results-so-far

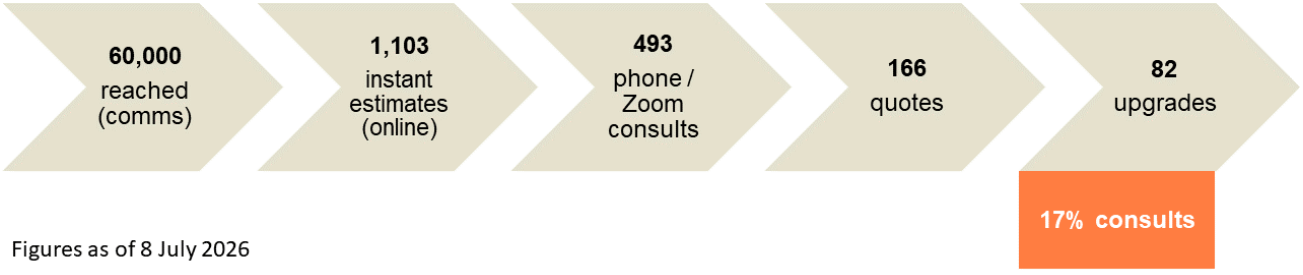
CASE STUDY

Inner West Council Free home energy upgrade advice (2025-2026)

Program model

Program type	Single council outsourcing
Program lead	Inner West Council
Third party service provider	ZapCat Social enterprise established in 2023
Delivery model	Individualised advice and assessment
Support measures	• Free virtual home energy assessment • One-on-one consultation / advice • Online information • Supplier vetting
Household recruitment	• Social media (ZapCat and Council) • Flyer in council rates notice • Council digital newsletters, website, customer service stalls (face to face) • Recorded video with a Councillor

Conversion rates



Figures as of 8 July 2026

Value proposition

Strategic goals	• Climate change mitigation • Renewable energy transition • Energy and cost savings • Thermal comfort
Program objectives	• Helps households **understand** why and how to upgrade their homes • Provides **trustworthy** advice on quality products and suppliers
Benefits for council	• ZapCat provides an “off the shelf” solution for council. • The online interactive dashboard enables monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.
Benefits for third-party service provider	• Council has aligned objectives and is easy to collaborate with. • Communication via council rates notices is very effective for generating enquiries. • No sales commissions are paid as council funds the service, guaranteeing the independence of the advice.

Households and products

Household type	Homeowners, owner-occupiers and renters
Dwelling type	Detached homes, townhouses, and apartment blocks
Geographical area	Local government areas (Inner West Council, NSW, Australia)
Products	Solar panels and batteries Hot water heat pumps EV chargers Induction and electric cooktops Reverse cycle air conditioners Insulation and draught proofing Low-cost energy efficiency measures (targeting renters)

Investment

Program lead	• Sustainability staff:
	  ○ Program design stage: 0.4 FTE
	  ○ Post-launch: 0.2 FTE
	• Other input from ICT and legal teams
	• 12-month subscription paid to ZapCat for provision of advice (approx. $45,000)
	• $50 gift card incentive for participant survey ($150 total budget)

Suppliers	• Installer discounts averaging $428 per installation (3-5% of project value) totalling $14,000
Household investment	• Self-funded or financed (arranged with individual suppliers)
Revenue	None

Success factors

Capabilities of the third-party service provider	ZapCat: • Demonstrated program effectiveness with evidence from their first local government partnership (City of Parramatta). • Takes a user-centred and behaviour-informed design approach to engagement, including considerations for community diversity (e.g., having a team member who speaks Mandarin). • Can mobilise flexible part-time advisers to deal with peaks in enquiries, and has multiple vetted suppliers in the area to manage high demand. • Represents an independent “source of truth” which overcomes perceived sales motives, supported by a team of professional advisors with specialist expertise.
An affluent, highly engaged, environmentally motivated community	Inner West residents were ready to take up energy efficiency and solar upgrades, particularly due to rising energy costs. Program outcomes demonstrate households’ willingness to act on independent information provided. 45% of residents who completed an instant estimate booked a consultation; 34% of residents who had a consult progressed to quotes or installer engagement; 17% of residents who had a consult booked installations; and 63% of booked installations were with vetted installers.

Lessons learned

Challenges encountered and overcome	Data and privacy concerns due to the collection and storage of personal information by a third party.	→ ZapCat have ICT expertise and relevant policies and worked with council to address their needs, including completing a detailed cybersecurity questionnaire.
	The Federal battery rebate was announced shortly after the program was launched. The rebate was a motivating factor for many participants, but this corresponded with high demand for installers and ZapCat received some complaints about responsiveness.	→ ZapCat undertook constant evaluation of participant experiences and feedback to monitor satisfaction and resolution of issues.
	There were unexpectedly high levels of interest in the program. No further promotion was required following the Council rates notices, and the service was exhausted.	→ A waitlist was setup by ZapCat for those who could not access the service. Where future service provision is not confirmed, it is recommended that alternative strategies are used to manage community demand and expectations, e.g., early advice about limited duration and availability, or more focused service delivery to prioritise participants.
	Few renters have engaged with the upgrade program so far.	→ ZapCat developed a personalised energy efficiency action plan to support renter action. 42% of participants in the energy efficiency stream were renters and 3% lived in shared, social, or community housing. 58% either had a vulnerability factor (e.g., low-income, sole parent or carer status, disability, senior age), were renting, or both.
	Complexity of the built environment in Inner West, including older and heritage buildings. Technical and property constraints affected 27% of cases, compared with an average of 7.5% across all ZapCat programs.	→ Premium installers were better equipped to service the homes with constraints, providing detailed designs and feasibility assessments.

More information

Program website	https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/sustainability-home/free-home-energy-upgrade-advice https://app.zapcat.com.au/innerwest/
Contact	Sonya Williams, Renewable Energy Innovation Officer Inner West Council sonya.williams@innerwest.nsw.gov.au
Reports	• Engaging Households in Electrification - Insights from ZapCat Programs (March 2026) • Providing Electrification Advice - Insights from ZapCat Programs (June 2026)

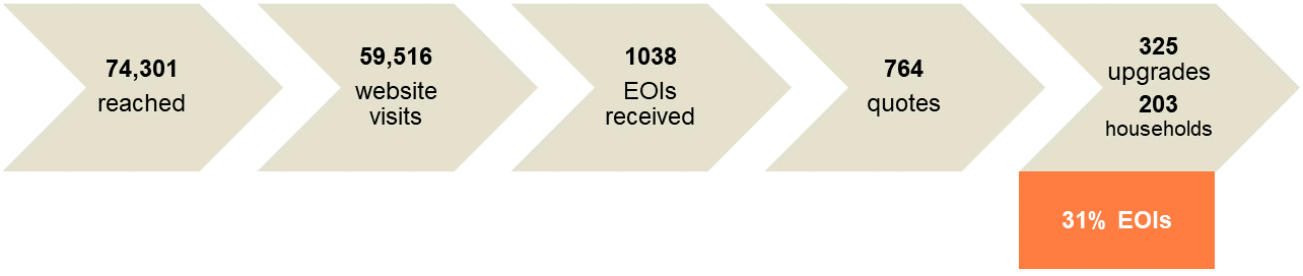
CASE STUDY

Solar Neighbourhoods (2025)

Program model

Program type	Council-led partnership
Program lead	City of Newcastle in collaboration with the Lake Macquarie City Council and Maitland City Council
Delivery model	Facilitated purchasing and market intermediation
Support measures	• Product selection • Supplier vetting • Product discount • Finance options
Household recruitment	• Dedicated website with transparent (starting) pricing • Flyer with rates notice • Media and communications (TV, local news, newspapers, blogs, magazines, social media, bus and cinema advertising) • 1 in-person event in each LGA, plus a local sustainability festival and a webinar

Conversion rates



Value proposition

Strategic goals	• Climate change mitigation • Energy and cost savings • Resilience (blackout protection) • Circular resource management (old system recycling) • Value for money
Program objectives	• Provides **trustworthy** advice on quality products and suppliers • Makes upgrades more **affordable** • Makes the installation process **easier** for households • Generates community **co-benefits**
Benefits to suppliers	• Council partnership builds credibility and brand awareness • Access to warm sales leads / motivated buyers, reduced marketing costs, and diversified sales approach • Approx. 5 x higher conversion rate (27%) compared to industry standard (6%) from quote to purchase
Community co-benefits	• Local installers (economic / workforce development) • Old solar panel and inverter recycling at no extra cost

Households and products

Household type	Primarily homeowners	
Dwelling type	Unspecified	
Geographical area	Multiple local government areas (Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, and Maitland, NSW, Australia)	
Products and suppliers	1KOMMA5°	Small, medium and large packages: • Solar-only • Battery-only (with backup protection and VPP ready) • Solar and battery (with backup protection and VPP ready) Add-ons: • Standard EV charger • Solar smart EV charger • Additional backup for 5 x circuits (blackout protection)

Investment

Program leads	• Lead council program coordinator (approx. 0.5 FTE for 1 year covering program establishment and launch, less for other council coordinators)
	• Brand and marketing:
	  ○ $60,000 investment by Newcastle for creative marketing agency and paid advertising
	  ○ Less than $10,000 overall investment by other councils for marketing
	• Procurement and contract staff time (tender process)
	• Comms officer time (copy writing)
	• No payment made to delivery partner 1KOMMA5° by councils

Funding and finance partners	• NSW Government: $7,500 Sustainability Advantage funding (for early independent technical advice by Ironbark Sustainability) • 1KOMMA5° partnership with Plenti to offer upgrade loans and Buy Now Pay Later payment options at point of sale (including CEFC-backed loans)
Supplier	• Product discounts ($1,250) corresponding with BAU supplier marketing cost
Household investment	• Self-funded, financed, or combination (arranged via 1KOMMA5° and its finance partner Plenti)
Research partners (RACE for 2030)	• Provided behaviour science advice • Independent program evaluation
Revenue	None

Success factors

Strategic mandate	• Support of councillors and council management for action on community emissions reduction, including net zero targets
Program leadership	• City of Newcastle's contribution as lead, including staff capacity and early research on household barriers and technical advice, enabled the other councils to participate • The development of the program benefited from a clear vision for program principles (based on barriers to uptake and behaviour change interventions to reduce barriers) and outcomes
Program governance	• A governance model (including roles, responsibilities, decision-making process) was established in the beginning and documented via Terms of Reference. Partners had an open and collaborative approach to problem-solving
Council qualities	• Committed staff with technical knowledge • Existing communications, engagement, and education platforms and activities that could be leveraged to promote the program
Supplier qualities	• Shared purpose, willingness to collaborate, and mutual respect and trust • Established company with size and capacity to dedicate time to a bespoke program alongside its core business, and to scale sales and installations • Commitment to quality customer service and after-care

Lessons learned

Challenges encountered and overcome	Councils are limited in how they can engage a business due to liability and risk concerns, taking into account community attitudes and perceptions.	→ The program was structured so that the supplier was appointed as a service provider. Council is not party to the upgrade contract, nor is it responsible for addressing complaints or warranty claims, but plays a role in promoting the program to the community.
	Council approval takes time and involves multiple teams. The tender process took longer than anticipated (10 months), which delayed the program launch. The Federal Government battery rebate also generated a surge in demand. This resulted in installers increasing their prices and having reduced availability which delayed installations.	→ Engaging with industry before going to tender is important to establish understanding and expectations. Program partners were flexible and allowed time for problem-solving. The supplier honoured the agreed pricing despite unforeseen installation price increases. The next iteration of the program is planned to open earlier in the year and finish before the end of year rush. It is recommended to agree on how to manage and communicate installation delays with households.
	Uptake volume was uncertain for the first iteration of the program.	→ The supplier established a scalable sales and installation approach. This involved phone sales and arranging site visits as needed, and onboarding additional installers. Based on uptake, the supplier plans to have dedicated staff for the next iteration of the program and more installers.
	New home upgrade services (Bunnings and Aldi) launched in Newcastle around the same time as the program was launched.	→ The program still exceeded expectations for uptake.
	There was minimal uptake by landlords.	→ A behaviour science-informed campaign is planned to target landlords in the 2026 program.

More information

Program website	https://solarneighbourhoods.com.au/
Contact	Lexi Crouch, Climate Change & Sustainability Program Lead, City of Newcastle sustainability@ncc.nsw.gov.au
Reports	Impact Snapshot 2025

CASE STUDY

Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) Community Energy Project (2026)

Program model (at tender)

Program type	Regional council organisation-managed
Program lead	Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) Membership organisation established in 1973
Participating councils	Blacktown City Council Blue Mountains City Council City of Parramatta Cumberland City Council Hawkesbury City Council
Delivery model	Facilitated purchasing and market intermediation
Support measures	• Product selection • Supplier vetting • Product discounts • Finance options (including an accessible option, such as 0% interest payment plan or Buy now Pay Later offer)
Household recruitment	• Website • Digital marketing • In person events in council areas

Value proposition

Strategic goals	• Energy and cost savings • Reduced greenhouse gas emissions • Climate resilience (related to energy security and urban heat) • Regional collaboration • Community participation in the energy transition including access to renewable energy
Program objectives	• Helps households **understand** why and how to upgrade their homes • Provides **trustworthy advice** on quality products and suppliers • Makes upgrades more **affordable** • Generates community **co-benefits**
Community co-benefits	• Local workforce development through renewable energy installation and services
Revenue	• VPP income to households • VPP commission to councils (one-off payment)
Benefits to councils	• Regional collaboration reduces procurement and resource burden on individual councils, improves efficiency, and reduces duplication • A coordinated regional approach enables councils to deliver broader community benefits, share knowledge, and support consistent access to trusted energy solutions across Western Sydney

Households and products

Household type	Homeowners (initial focus)
Dwelling type	Standalone homes (initial focus)
Geographical area	Multiple local government areas (Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Parramatta, Cumberland, Hawkesbury, NSW)
Products	Solar panels Battery systems Virtual Power Plant (VPP) Home Energy Management Systems Smart energy meters

Lessons learned

Challenges encountered and overcome	Councillors and council staff had many questions about the proposal. Questions included product accreditation and compatibility, products not included, modern slavery, upfront costs, implementation. This was challenging as there were limited examples of similar programs to refer to.	→ Consultation with councils refined the proposal, and details were clarified prior to the Request for Tender (RFT). WSROC arranged presentations to council executives and councillors, one on one meetings, and reports to explain the proposal and answer questions. These included case studies from other councils and a briefing by a CEO from a council who implemented a similar program (City of Mitcham), which resonated with council executives. This engagement secured internal buy-in and helped give councils confidence to participate.
	Coordination of multiple councils is challenging, and some require more time for approvals.	→ WSROC have been flexible with the timeline for program setup. The contracting phase is expected to take two months.

More information

Program website	Western Sydney Energy Program: https://wsroc.com.au/projects/project-western-sydney-energy-program
Contact	Judith Bruinsma Project Coordinator, WSROC judith@wsroc.com.au