



NORTHERN  
ALLIANCE FOR  
GREENHOUSE  
ACTION

## NAGA CASE STUDY

### Hume City Council: Hume Heatwave Help

#### What is the Hume Heatwave Help program?

In 2014 Hume City Council received a grant from the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership (VASP) for the Hume Heatwave Help for Home Care Clients project. Through the Hume Heatwave Help project Council has provided home retrofits for over one hundred residents receiving Hume Home Care services, with those identified as most vulnerable to heatwaves offered the free service.

The aim of program is to reduce health impacts to Home Care Clients vulnerable to heatwaves by providing simple home retrofits including draught sealing, external blinds and provision of fans. The knowledge and capacity of Direct Care Workers to provide useful and relevant heatwave and home sustainability information to clients also is enhanced through tailored training.

The program received the Port Phillip Regional Director's Award 2014 for Climate Resilience. Its success has led to program being funded by council for a second round through Home Care Services and has evolved to partner with Archicentre conducting the audits and retrofits by Property Maintenance staff.



**Photo:** Hume Council's Community Energy Efficiency Officer, Dean Kline, with a program participant

#### Why did you do it? What prompted it?

Due to the impacts of climate change, heatwaves are becoming more frequent and more extreme in Melbourne and across Victoria. People with certain medical conditions, on low incomes, from diverse cultural backgrounds and the elderly are all at higher risk of health impacts from heatwaves than the general population. The age and condition of homes and whether they are insulated, draught proof, shaded by trees, have good window coverings and shading and with cooling options such as air conditioning or fans can make a big difference to the comfort and health outcomes of people during a heatwave.



Research has indicated that a simple home retrofit can reduce severe heat related health risks in Melbourne's low income households by 25% ("Pathways to Climate Adapted and Healthy Low Income Housing" project, CSIRO.).

#### **How does it align to existing policy?**

The risks associated with heatwaves for vulnerable members of the community were identified as a priority area for action in the [Hume Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2013-2017](#). This program relates specifically to the risk "Vulnerable Communities – private building stock not appropriate in heat waves / extreme weather."

#### **What have been the outcomes?**

A pre-project survey was undertaken with 96 respondents. Preliminary findings indicate: 42% of respondents felt the temperature was the same or warmer inside their home as outside in a heatwave; 26% were uncomfortable and 26% were very uncomfortable in heatwaves; 52% don't sleep comfortably and while 80% had installed air-conditioning 45% indicated that they had at times turned this off despite feeling hot to save money and 28% indicated they had turned off a ceiling or portable fan despite feeling hot to save money.

104 assessments were carried out via in home visits and free heatwave packs were provided (heatwave information, water bottle, thermometer, hand held battery operated fan)

102 retrofits have been completed including: installation of external Coolaroo blinds for east, north and west facing windows; provision of good quality desk and pedestal fans; under door and door frame draught sealing; compact fluorescent light globes where required and Draught Stoppas over kitchen and ceiling fans where safe to do so.

Six training sessions for around 135 Direct Care Workers were also held.

#### **Financing and budget issues**

The original funding for the project was provided by the State Government through the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership. The program evolved to include free Archicentre audits and the retrofits are now funded through Councils Home Care budget.

#### **How was it implemented and by who?**

The project is now being delivered through the property services team of council. Originally the program ran through a collaboration of Hume's Aged Services and Public Health and Sustainable Environment Departments. Kildonan Uniting Care was also a project partner for the development and delivery of training for Direct Care Workers.

Through the VASP funded round of the project, a project control group of key staff from Aged Services and Public Health and the Sustainable Environment Department's and a representative from the Department

of Environment and Primary Industries oversaw the project and a broader reference group with DEPI, Council and Kildonan representation provided input at key stages. Sustainability Victoria also made an in-kind contribution of retrofit materials.

In the first round of the program, just over 100 Home Care Clients have been provided with free retrofits; 73 clients identified on a list of clients most vulnerable to heatwaves were offered access to the program first; and this was then extended to Home Care Clients over 87 years of age and living alone. Insulation installation has also now commenced. Home Care will continue to run the program next year and additional blinds and Draught Dodgers have been purchased via Community Energy Efficiency Program funding.

## Lessons

A number of lessons have come from the Hume Heatwave Help program including:

- Which retrofit items/products are practical for client audience e.g. Draught Dodger door frame seal selected because it seals draughts while avoiding door sticking issues; under door rubber seals avoided in preference for brushes or articulated seals; solid base fans (as opposed to feet) to reduce tripping risks etc.
- Ceiling fans were researched but not used in the end due to risk

issues around potential for homes with unsafe wiring and potential risks/ obligations for Council if this was found to be the case.

- Use of agency staff to conduct retrofit installs was cost effective and staff engaged were very suitable and competent; time involved in in-house project management, planning, booking appointments, client liaison was significant however.
- Cost of energy bills impacts on usage of both air conditioning and electric fans in the client group.
- Not many people (Home Care Clients or professionals) know about the Medical Cooling Concession available for concession card holders who have certain medical conditions that affect the body's ability to regulate temperature.
- Some clients didn't have heating – due to cost of having an existing gas system serviced.
- A small number of clients had complaints or follow up issues that were more related to their situation/ health (e.g. dementia) rather than the quality of the retrofit. These have been accommodated wherever possible.

## Contact for further information

**Michelle Bennett**

Hume City Council

e: [MichelleBen@hume.vic.gov.au](mailto:MichelleBen@hume.vic.gov.au)