

Case study – Compass Housing Services



Energy efficiency starts at home

Training is helping tenants of Australia’s largest regional housing provider save energy and money. Staff at Compass Housing Services have undertaken a specialised training program to help tenants increase energy efficiency in their homes. For tenants who are already feeling the cost of rising energy prices, small changes can add up to big savings.

Lyndall Robertshaw, Executive Manager Business, Organisational and Environmental Development at Compass Housing Services, said an energy efficiency training program tailored for the community housing and property management sector was the only option. The company partnered with TAFE NSW to develop the training program with funding from the Office of Environment and Heritage’s Energy Efficiency Training Program.

‘We searched for a training program that would enable our staff to help our tenants increase resource efficiency but couldn’t find a suitable program. This was a great opportunity to have this training created,’ Mrs Robertshaw said.

Compass Housing Services provide secure and affordable housing to low income households and disadvantaged members of the community. Based in New South Wales, the company has more than 3300 properties under their management. The company is committed to minimising the environmental impact of their business whilst helping tenants reduce energy bills.

Staff from Compass Housing Services participated in the training, which included hands-on assessments of houses to identify how and when electricity was used and opportunities for upgrading

In brief

Staff at Compass Housing Services have completed a specialised training program to help tenants increase energy efficiency in their homes. The training program was developed by Compass Housing Services in partnership with TAFE NSW and the NSW Government’s Energy Efficiency Training Program.

The training successfully led to energy savings because it:

- was tailored for the community housing and property management sector
- highlighted how tenants could save energy without reducing their standard of living, such as upgrading to more energy efficient appliances
- gave staff the skills to assess energy use in homes and pass on ideas and tips for increasing energy efficiency
- encouraged staff to include a section on saving energy in the regular tenant newsletter
- explained the importance of changing behaviour to use electricity more wisely.



- ▶ equipment, or making other changes around the home, to save energy. After the training, the company conducted extensive home visits to discuss energy efficiency with their tenants.

Since participating in the training program, Peter Perry, Technical Officer Assets and Maintenance, Compass Housing Services, felt better equipped to give tenants advice on improving energy efficiency.

'Although many of our tenants are already very energy conscious due to cost of living pressures, the training helped identify other simple things they could do without reducing their standard of living,' Mr Perry said.

'We handed out energy efficient globes and door snakes to stop drafts and discussed power usage with tenants. We suggested ways to reduce energy use like reducing hot water service temperatures and zoning rooms to heat or cool part of a room instead of the whole house.'

Since the training, tenants have used a combination of changes to improve energy efficiency. Some tenants have installed shade awnings and ceiling fans, while others have chosen more energy efficient models when appliances needed replacing. Some tenants have even implemented a reward system to encourage their children to adopt more energy efficient behaviour. For one tenant, a combination of energy efficient lighting and other simple changes, has reduced energy use from 14 to 8 kilowatt hours per day.

Laura Balcombe, Compliance and Sustainability Project Officer, Compass Housing Services, also participated in the training and said that staff now have a better understanding of what can affect an electricity bill.

'The training taught us about the price of energy at different times of the day and we've been able to pass that on to our tenants,' Miss Balcombe said.

'Doing things a little differently can save a lot of money. For example, if you must use a clothes dryer, use it off-peak, late at night or very early in the morning, instead of during the day when energy costs more.'

The company produces a bi-monthly newsletter for tenants which now includes a very popular section on ways to save energy. Compass Housing Services is also planning to develop brochures that outline how much money can be saved by investing in energy efficient appliances.

'Often energy efficient appliances are more expensive to buy but we're hoping we can demonstrate to tenants how much they could save in the long run,' Miss Balcombe said.

Your next step

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