

Case study – St Andrews Village



Driving energy efficiencies in aged care

In a climate of economic uncertainty and tight funding, St Andrews aged care facility in Ballina is always looking for ways to minimise expenses to provide top quality care, according to Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Pip Carter. The facility's recent energy audit enabled them to do just that.

When St Andrews added a 41 bed, high-care wing to its aged care facility in 2007, the centre's electricity bill doubled. The Board of Directors set up a committee to investigate sustainability issues, including energy costs, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility program when they became aware of Energy Saver from the Office of Environment and Heritage.

The program, which provides subsidised energy audits by independent specialists, aims to help businesses measure and better understand their energy use in order to cut power bills and reduce carbon pollution.

CEO Pip Carter says the audit provided timely advice about changes the not-for-profit centre could make to conserve energy and reduce its carbon footprint.

'The audit was very professional and provided clear and succinct recommendations,' says Carter. 'By implementing the key recommendations, we've already cut our energy consumption by around 10 per cent and reduced our carbon emissions by around 75 tonnes per annum.'

'While most of our initiatives are designed to yield future benefits that help to ensure the centre's long-term sustainability, our energy conservation efforts have generated considerable interest in our local

In brief

St Andrews in Ballina is one of the many NSW organisations that are realising the benefits of being energy-wise.

Following a subsidised audit, the not-for-profit aged care facility implemented 12 energy-saving initiatives that ranged from replacing inefficient light fittings to installing 10 kilowatt photovoltaic solar panels that feed into the local electricity grid.

The Board's energy and environmental leadership inspired a conservation movement in the broader St Andrews community to install additional solar power.

Results

- Power consumption reduced by 10 per cent a year.
- Annual reduction in carbon pollution of about 75 tonnes.
- Return on investment in five years.



- community. As a result, the majority of residents in our independent living units, which were not part of the audit, decided to fund their own solar power installations.'

St Andrews is a mid-sized aged care facility built in 1983 and added onto in stages from 2004 to 2007. The building covers 8000 square metres and includes 117 beds located in six brick-veneer buildings. St Andrews also has 60 independent living units located nearby that have been continuously upgraded since 2001.

Director of Care Peter Chittick, who managed the energy project, says St Andrews implemented 12 recommendations from the audit at a total cost of nearly \$140,000 and an overall pay-back period of five years.

These ranged from installing 10 kilowatts of photovoltaic solar panels that are connected to the electricity grid and generate revenue, to relatively simple things like replacing inefficient light fittings. Other initiatives included the installation of power factor correction equipment, adding a diffuser to an existing skylight, supplementing the LPG hot water system with solar power and tinting windows.

'Some things were relatively easy to do, while others were more challenging,' says Chittick. 'The really disappointing thing is that some of the remedial works that the audit identified for our newest building were too expensive to do now as it would mean disposing of new equipment, but could have been incorporated in the initial design at minimal cost.'

While the energy audit was relatively inexpensive – St Andrews contributed just over \$3000 towards the cost of \$10,977 – advice to other aged care facilities contemplating a similar project is to get buy-in from the top.

'To generate significant long-term savings you often need to invest in new equipment, which can be quite costly,' says Chittick. 'To get your initiatives across the line, pitch the benefits to the Board from a business point of view, in terms of cost savings and pay-back periods for any new equipment.'

According to Chittick, this experience has fundamentally changed how the St Andrews management team looks at energy expenditure. 'Whereas previously we might only have considered the up-front cost of buying an air-conditioning unit, now we also look at the energy ratings and future running costs,' says Chittick. 'Given annual running costs might be 25 per cent of the initial outlay for the unit, that's an important consideration.'

Your next step

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