

## Research Results from Kildonan's Energy Efficiency Program

### Description of the Program

Kildonan's Energy Efficiency Program is part of a suite of services aimed at assisting householders with financial difficulties and energy consumption. Specifically, it aims to lower utility bills, energy use and increase comfort and wellbeing through recommendations from a visiting Energy Worker. These households are referred by energy companies due to difficulties in paying bills.

The program has a focus on behaviour and lifestyle changes. Consistent with all Kildonan programs, it is based on an empowerment model and aims to support participants with the knowledge and resources to have optimal control over their own lives.

### Preliminary Analysis of Latest Energy Savings Data

Analysis was made of a small sample of participating households in relation to impacts of the program on electricity consumption and costs. A larger sample is currently being analysed and results for this will be available in a forthcoming report.

A sample of 32 program participants (July 2009-April 2010) was randomly chosen by Origin Energy staff. Electricity cost and consumption was calculated for each household over four bills before the energy efficiency visit and four bills after for comparison. (Bills immediately after the visit were excluded as the service could not have had an effect on consumption at that point). Savings in both consumption and cost were then calculated for each household, based on the 'before' and 'after' figures. Thereafter descriptive statistics were calculated, using the savings figures for the sample as a whole.

Preliminary analysis of the latest available data indicates that the Kildonan Energy Efficiency Program is successful in providing substantial energy and financial savings for households. This is consistent with previous research on the effectiveness of the Program (Borrell and Lane, 2009, *Kildonan UnitingCare Energy Audit Program Evaluation...*)

### Energy Savings

For the year following the energy efficiency visit, the average household saving for electricity alone was 1,542 kWh. This figure does not include savings in water or other forms of energy. Neither does it provide an indication of enhanced health and well-being relating to household comfort – excepted as an indication of reduced financial stress.

This figure indicates a meaningful saving. To put it in perspective, in 2003 the average metropolitan household consumed 6,265 kWh of electricity, slightly lower than the state average of 6,398 kWh. Thus 1,542 kWh is just under a quarter of the average household electricity consumption for Victoria in 2003 (Australian Institute of Urban Studies, Retrieved 18 December 2008 from: <http://aius.org.au>).

## Financial Savings

The mean saving of 1,542 kWh translates into a saving of \$339 (1542kWh X \$0.22) in the first year following the visit (assuming that the average tariff rate in Victoria is \$0.22 kWh).

The average bill reduction for participating households was \$53.50, however this does not reflect the true saving (above) due to substantial cost increases for domestic electricity in the study period. In other words, due to price rises most bills would have increased if not for the Energy Efficiency Program.

As evidence of these increases, according to a recent study the average energy costs for households have typically increased by more than \$300 over the past two years.<sup>1</sup>

## Analysis of Participant Feedback

A client evaluation questionnaire is left with each household to complete at the conclusion of the home energy visit. The questionnaire asks clients to rate their satisfaction on twelve questions dealing with their interactions with both Kildonan UnitingCare and Origin Energy. Clients are requested to return the completed questionnaire in a pre-paid envelope that is provided. (This information will be supplemented with follow up interviews).

A total of 54 client evaluation forms were returned between July 2009 and January 2010 relating to Origin customers only. This represents an approximate return rate of 26 per cent of Origin clients for the study period.

## Participant Views and Experiences

Responses included the following:

- 98% indicated that the information provided during the home energy visit was useful, with 89% indicating it was 'extremely useful'.
- 94% indicated that the information provided improved their understanding of energy.
- 85% of respondents felt that the home energy visit would assist them to reduce their energy consumption.
- 81% of respondents felt that the information provided helped them reduce their concerns about paying their bills.
- 78% of respondents thought that the visit improved the comfort of their home.
- 94% of respondents reported that Origin call centre staff were either extremely or very respectful in their dealings with them.
- 84% of respondents found the call centre staff at Origin to be extremely or very helpful.
- 91% of respondents felt that the home energy visit had made them extremely or very confident<sup>1</sup> with contacting Origin in the future.

### Quotes from Program Participants

'The guy that came to see me could not have explained anything better, to me he was extremely helpful... He made me feel like a customer not just a number.' *Morwell*

'Absolutely fabulous and invaluable. I now understand my bills, my energy usage and where I can save.' *Lilydale*

'The auditor was a friendly and well mannered gentleman. He explained everything to me in a manner I could easily understand.' *Kyabram*

'The auditor was extremely friendly and informative. He went out of his way to find ways to help me save energy and money. I was totally impressed and very grateful.' *Rye*

<sup>1</sup> Mauseth Johnston, M., 2010, *Victorian Energy Prices; July 2008 – July 2010*. Melbourne: St Vincent de Paul Society, Victoria.