ZapCat

Knowledge Sharing

March 2026

Engaging Households in Electrification

Insights from ZapCat Programs

Contents

Summary

This report summarises what we have learned about engaging residents through our community electrification programs, based on data from 2,821 residents across Sydney and regional New South Wales. The focus of this report is on initial engagement, with advice and installation outcomes being covered in future reports.

Our data shows that scale comes from mass-market, trusted channels. Local councils are our most effective partners, with council channels such as rates notices and newsletters driving the largest volumes of engagement. Trust matters: co-branded communications significantly outperform ZapCat-only messaging.

Council communications create large spikes in demand, which require a service model that can scale quickly. We rely on instant estimates, technology-enabled advice, flexible staffing, and strong installer coordination to manage these peaks. Ongoing paid social media advertising is the only channel that provides a steady, adjustable flow of engagement and works best alongside council outreach.

Product-specific messaging performs far better than general program messaging. Most residents respond to specific upgrades that solve immediate problems, while messaging based on science or emotion attracts negative engagement and is less effective overall. Low-effort entry points are critical, with instant estimates driving the vast majority of participation.

Engagement varies significantly by location and socioeconomic status, reinforcing the need to test communications in every new context and to develop tailored approaches for lower-income and vulnerable residents.

Key Takeaways

- Continuous communication on channels that reach a mass audience is required to scale resident engagement.
- Local councils are essential partners and trusted messengers. Council communication causes large spikes in enquiries, which service delivery models must be able to accommodate.
- Product-specific messaging is more effective than general messaging.
- A low-effort call to action dramatically increases engagement.
- Most residents prefer asynchronous advice, but multiple pathways are important.
- Engagement is lower in low socioeconomic areas, which require their own tailored program stream.
- Engagement varies significantly by location, so local testing is always required.

Introduction

This report is the first in a series where we will share data from our programs. By making our data and insights available, we aim to contribute to knowledge sharing and the development of best practices in community electrification programs.

The report focuses specifically on lessons from the first step in our program, which is engaging residents (see Figure 1). Future reports will examine steps after residents are engaged, including installation rates and other measures of program impact.

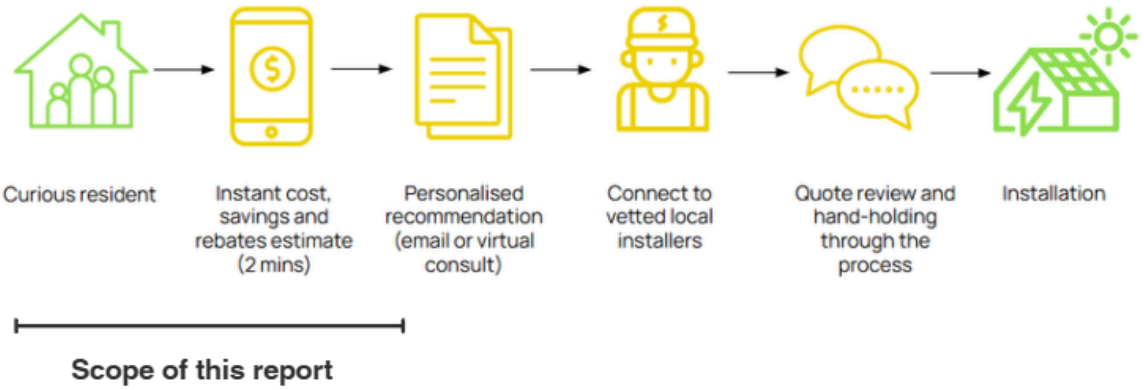
All data in this report is drawn from our community electrification programs. These programs provide end-to-end support, guiding residents, strata committees, and small businesses through the full electrification process.

We work with local councils to reach large numbers of residents through both council channels and our own social media campaigns and communications.

Curious residents start by completing one of our instant cost, savings and rebates estimates online, which takes around 2 minutes. If they want to take the next step they receive a consultation with a Clean Energy Advisor who prepares a personalised recommendation.

If the resident wants to go ahead we connect them with vetted local installers and hand-hold them through the whole quote and installation process.

Figure 1: Program steps and report scope



Sample

Our program engages a diverse range of participant personas, aiming to reach all types except Sceptics (see Figure 2). This report draws on 2,821 residents who engaged with our community electrification programs between February 2024 and November 2025, completing 3,466 instant estimates and receiving 1,269 personalised recommendations via email or virtual consultation. Most data comes from programs run with local councils across Sydney, with additional insights from pilot programs in Sydney and regional NSW.

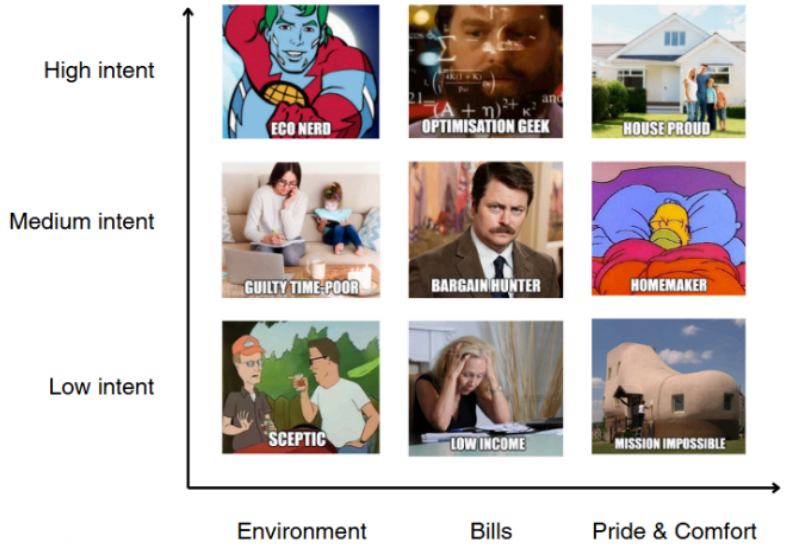
The dataset covers diverse suburbs, building types, and sociodemographic profiles, including freestanding houses and apartments. All data is aggregated; no results are specific to individual LGAs. The report focuses on electrification upgrades—solar panels, batteries, hot water heat pumps, induction cooking, EV charging, and reverse-cycle air conditioning. While the program has recently expanded to insulation, draught proofing, and broader energy efficiency measures, there is currently insufficient data to include these.

Limitations

The data in this report is drawn exclusively from ZapCat programs, primarily conducted in the Sydney area, with a small amount of data from regional NSW. As such, the lessons presented may not be directly applicable to other programs or to programs operating in different locations or contexts.

This report is not a formal research study; it presents applied, field-based data and insights. We plan to update this report as additional data becomes available from programs in other locations and contexts.

Figure 2: Resident personas



Channels

Lesson 1: Scaling a program requires channels that reach a mass audience.

We tested a range of channels to engage residents, with indicative results shown in Table 1. The most effective channel was a flyer included in the council rates notice, followed by an ongoing paid social media advertising and council email newsletters, highlighting the importance of channels that reach a mass audience.

The instant estimate rate for most communications ranged between 0.5% and 2%,with 35% to 50% of these residents continuing on to engage with an advisor for a recommendation.

Other channels, such as council social media posts, community events, and promotion by local sustainability groups, only engaged a small number of residents, even though the proportion of residents receiving recommendations was relatively high.

Despite significant effort, we were not able to engage non-sustainability community groups (e.g., churches, local associations) in promoting the program. The primary issue seemed to be that the objectives of the program did not align closely enough with the core missions of these organisations.

Overall, we found that engaging a meaningful number of residents (hundreds per program) requires mass communication channels. In some locations only one channel was required once, while in others we needed to run ongoing communications across multiple channels for the duration of the program.

Results varied significantly by location, as discussed in a later section. However, with ballpark conversion rates now established, it is possible to plan a communication strategy with estimated numbers of instant estimates and personalised recommendations from each channel, improving the likelihood of meeting engagement targets.

Over time, we have found that communications in some locations have led to an ongoing stream of word-of-mouth enquiries. However, this is not the case in all locations, and in many cases consistent proactive communication is required to maintain ongoing engagement.

Table 1: Indicative engagement rates from different channels

Channel	Description	Typical audience reached*	Instant estimate rate Communication received → instant estimate	Instant estimates	Recommendation rate Instant estimate → personalised recommendation	Personalised recommendations
Flyer in the rates notice	A flyer is inserted into the electronic and printed rates notice to all residents.	6,000 - 40,000	1-2%	60 - 800	35 - 50%	20 - 400
Ongoing ZapCat social media advertising	Continuous paid social media advertising campaign.	9,000 - 30,000	0.5-1%	45 - 300	35 - 50%	16- 150
Council general email newsletter	Feature article in the council's general email newsletter.	5,000 - 20,000	0.5-0.7%	25 - 140	35 - 50%	9 - 70
Council sustainability email newsletter	Feature article in the council's sustainability email newsletter.	1,000 - 4,000	1-2%	10 - 80	50 - 70%	5 - 56
Letterboxing	Delivering printed flyers to resident letterboxes.	1,000 - 5,000	1-2%	10 - 100	25 - 30%	3 - 30
Community event	Stall at an all day community fair or event.	500 - 1000	1-2%	5 - 20	50 - 70%	3 - 14
Promotion via local sustainability groups	Local sustainability group posting in their chat or putting it in their email newsletter	20 - 100	1-10%	2 - 10	50 - 70%	1 - 7
Council social media post boosted	Post on the council's social media with a paid budget.	1000 - 3000	0.5-1%	5 - 30	25 - 30%	1 - 9
Council social media post organic	Post on the council's social media channels.	200 - 400	1-2%	2 - 8	50 - 70%	1 - 6

* These audience sizes are ballpark examples from actual communications. Audience sizes vary significantly by LGA based on population size and council communication channels. For social media channels this is the audience likely to see the post, rather than the total number of followers.

Lesson 2: Local councils are well placed to engage residents, and their communications can cause large spikes in enquiries.

Using communication channels that already have established trust with residents can significantly increase engagement, and local councils are particularly well placed for this. Two of the most effective channels in our programs were council-led initiatives: the rates notice and the council email newsletter.

Ongoing social media campaigns run by ZapCat performed 8 to 13 times better when a local council logo was included.

This underscores the value of partnering with trusted institutions and leveraging their credibility to enhance program reach and impact.

Council communication channels can reach a large number of residents simultaneously, which often results in sudden spikes in enquiries. To manage this effectively, programs need a service delivery model that can scale rapidly in response to these fluctuations while maintaining quality.

Through managing multiple spikes we have developed processes and systems to handle the waves of enquiries, including:

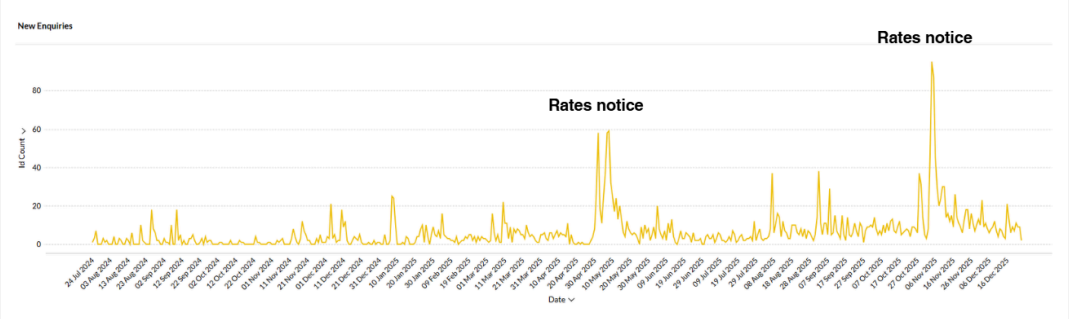
- **Self-service options:** Instant estimates allow residents to access the information they most commonly seek, such as costs, savings, and rebates.
- **Technology-enabled efficiency**: Advisors use digital tools to streamline processes and reduce bottlenecks.
- **Flexible staffing:** Teams can be adjusted up or down as needed while maintaining high-quality advice.
- **Auditing and quality control:** Both human oversight and AI monitoring ensure accuracy and consistency in recommendations.
- **Expectation management:** Systems are in place to monitor engagement and communicate realistic timelines to residents.

In our testing, ongoing paid social media advertising was the only channel that provided a continuous and adjustable stream of resident engagement. These campaigns can be scaled up or down and targeted to specific audiences, locations, and types of upgrades, making them an effective complement to mass council communications. However, they were not equally effective in all locations.

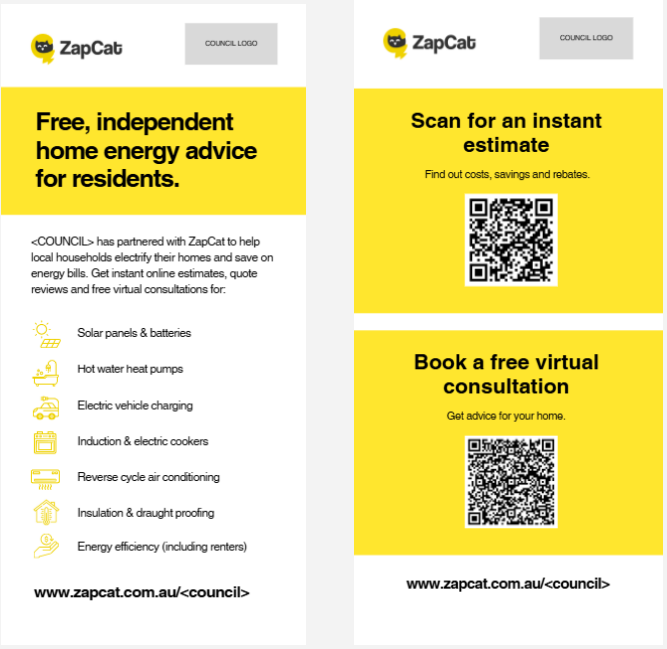
Example: Flyer in the Rates Notice

Including a flyer in the rates notice has proven to be the most effective way to engage a large number of residents in most locations. However, this method can generate significant spikes in demand, requiring careful advance planning and scaling of service delivery to maintain quality.

Examples of spikes in volume caused by flyers in the rates notice



Example flyer design for the rates notice



Messaging

Lesson 3: Product specific messages reach the widest audience. Avoid persuasive messaging.

Through our programs we have tested three different types of messaging, with very different results shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Messaging type

Messaging type	Description	Example	Most common personas engaged	Percentage of engaged residents*
General program message	Promotes the overall program with general terms such as "home energy advice" or "electrification"	*"Free, independent home energy advice for residents"* *"Book a free virtual energy efficiency consultation"*	Eco Nerds Optimisation Geeks	16%
Product specific message	Promotes advice for specific product types with simple non-emotional language.	*"Free, independent home solar advice"* *"Want to know how much it would cost to switch to induction cooking?"*	Guilty Time Poor Bargain Hunter House Proud Homemaker Mission Impossible	76%
Persuasive message	Uses statistics, emotional messaging or social proof to persuade.	*"Energy efficient homes in Sydney sell for 23% more than non-energy efficient homes."* *"Avoid bill shock. Join thousands of others who have cut their energy bills with solar."*	Sceptics	8%

* The percentage of residents that entered the program through clicking on a message of that type in the social media campaign.

76% of residents engaged through the social media campaign entered the program via product specific messaging, compared with only 16% from general program messaging and 8% from persuasive messaging.

The largest number of residents, and particularly the more mainstream personas, engaged most effectively with product-specific messaging. In contrast, general program messaging tended to engage the already motivated and knowledgeable personas, which represent a smaller segment of the population.

This difference likely occurs because motivated personas, such as Eco Nerds and Optimisation Geeks, are more familiar with terms like "home electrification" and "energy efficiency" and are more likely to view electrification as a multi-year process involving the replacement of multiple appliances.

Our advisors have found that most other personas do not understand these terms and are not thinking of electrification as a process. Instead, they are primarily interested in specific upgrades that address a particular problem, such as installing solar to reduce bills or switching from gas heating to air conditioning to improve indoor air quality.

Persuasive messages that use science-based facts, emotional appeals or social proof to persuade people often attracted climate science deniers who trolled the comments. While some residents did engage with the program through this type of messaging, the effort required to moderate and respond to negative comments from skeptics, and the potential reputational damage to councils, outweighed the benefits. This type of messaging is more effective later in the process, after a resident has already engaged.

Based on program data to date, our conclusions on effective messaging are:

- It is necessary to use general messaging to announce the start of the program, but the announcement should clearly identify the specific products the program supports.
- The communication plan should include a series of ongoing product-specific messages to reach the widest possible audience.
- Persuasive messaging should be avoided in mass communications, as it tends to attract climate skeptics who engage negatively. It is more effective later in the process, after residents have already engaged.

Example: Persuasive messaging and negative engagement

A persuasive message on the impact of gas cooking on health (left) received the largest number of negative comments across all campaigns. By comparison, a product-specific message for induction (right) resulted in three times more instant estimates, with no negative comments.

Examples of negative comments on the left post:

"Bunch of nonsense. What fumes are emitted from the gas cook top, can someone please explain. And how severe it is compared to people cooking their food over barbecue. Stop finding solutions to the problems that don't exist."

"This is some propaganda"

"Council have banned all new gas connections to homes - rubbish news"

Lesson 4: Community engagement works best when all groups are included.

Program engagement data shows that even when a program is targeted at a single building type (e.g. only apartments) or upgrade type (e.g. only solar), enquiries often come from residents in other building and upgrade types. Even programs aimed only at residents receive some enquiries from small businesses or community groups (e.g. churches or clubs).

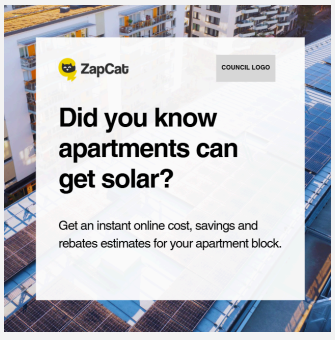
Instant estimates, in particular, are highly shareable and are frequently passed on to friends and family. Mass communication through council channels generally cannot be targeted to specific groups, meaning messages reach all audiences. In addition, electrification is an interconnected process - conversations about one upgrade type often lead to people considering other upgrades.

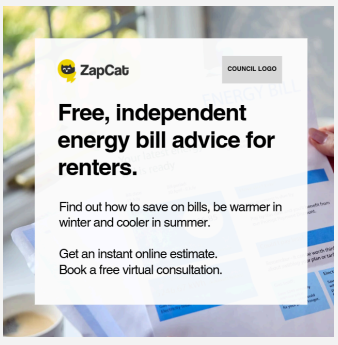
Research has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of place-based energy transitions[1]. Our experience mirrors this, as we have found that the most effective programs include all building and upgrade types, maximising engagement. Inclusive programs also make it easier to rapidly respond to changing circumstances (see examples below).

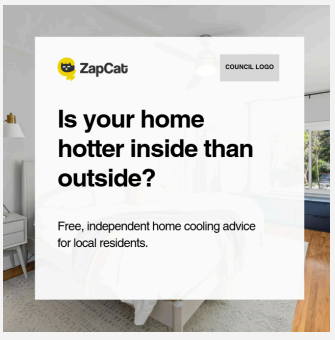
[1] Insights to accelerate place-based at scale renewable energy landscapes. Applied Energy, 377(Part C), 124559. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apenergy.2024.124559

Example: Adapting to changing circumstances

The posts below show how an all-inclusive program enables new communications to be quickly created in response to changing circumstances—such as a solar for apartments grant, a council resolution supporting renters, and a heatwave—without changing the underlying program or processes.







Call to Action

Lesson 5: A low commitment call to action increases engagement.

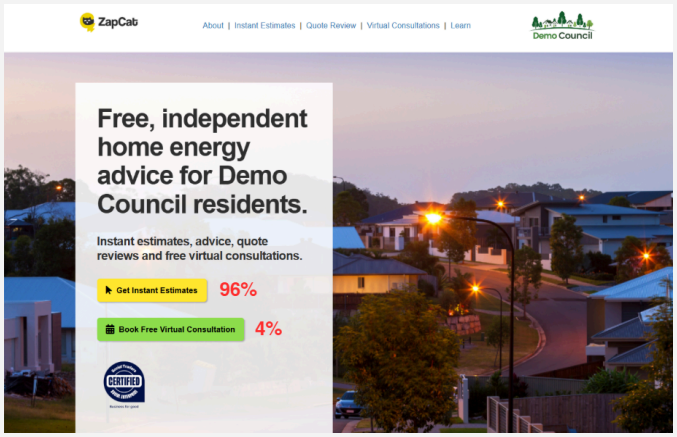
Having a clear, low-commitment call to action significantly increases resident engagement. Program data consistently shows that residents are more likely to take the first step when the required effort is minimal.

Upgrade types with an instant estimate available have 9x more residents receiving advice than those without one. When new instant estimates are released, engagement on that topic increases sharply. For example, the introduction of an apartment solar instant estimate resulted in four times more residents engaging in the following month compared to the month prior.

Small changes to language also influenced behaviour. For example, replacing the call to action "Request a Quote" with "Continue" at the end of the instant estimate increased the proportion of residents progressing to the next step by 30%, reinforcing the importance of low-pressure, low-commitment wording.

Example: Landing page call to action

On the program landing page residents are offered a choice between completing an instant estimate or booking a free virtual consultation. 96% chose to complete an instant estimate as their first action.



Lesson 6: Most residents prefer to receive advice via email, but multiple channels are essential.

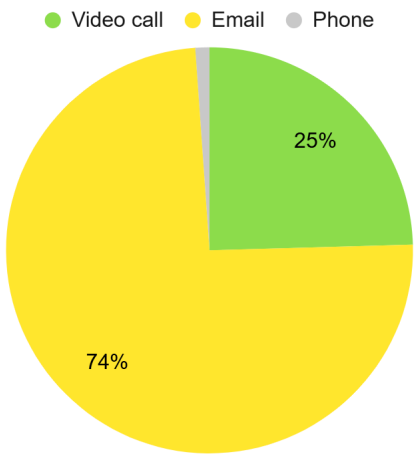
In our programs, residents can receive a consultation and personalised recommendation from a Clean Energy Advisor through three pathways: booking a video call, completing an online form followed by an email-based consultation, or calling a phone number to request a callback from an advisor.

74% of residents choose to engage via email, reflecting a strong preference for flexible, low-commitment interactions that can be completed in their own time. In addition, some residents from non-English speaking backgrounds use translation software or ask a family member to translate emails. This makes it easier for them to engage compared with a video chat or phone call.

Anecdotally, the 25% of residents who opt for video consultations are more likely to be Eco Nerds, Optimisation Geeks or retirees who have more time available, while those engaging via email tend to represent less-motivated or more mainstream personas. This reinforces the importance of offering multiple advice pathways to meet different needs and preferences.

Although only 1% of residents engaged via phone, this channel remains essential for seniors and other residents who face challenges engaging digitally.

Figure 1: Channel used for consultation with advisor



Regional Variation

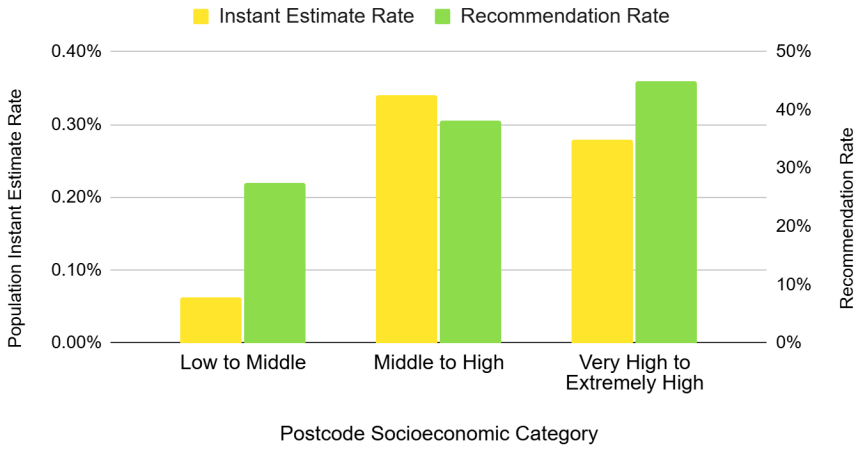
Lesson 7: Engagement rates vary significantly by location, and are related to socioeconomic status.

We observed substantial variation in instant estimate and recommendation rates between LGAs and between suburbs within the same LGA. The strongest statistically significant relationship was with socioeconomic status ($p < 0.001$). Middle to high income areas had the highest instant estimate rates, while low to middle income areas had the lowest, likely reflecting affordability constraints. Rates were also somewhat lower in very high to extremely high income areas. This may be due to lower sensitivity to energy costs or other confounding factors.

After completing an instant estimate, the likelihood of progressing to a consultation and recommendation increased with socioeconomic status ($p < 0.007$), suggesting residents with greater financial capacity are more likely to view the estimated costs as feasible. Lower engagement in lower socioeconomic areas has informed the development of a dedicated program stream for low-income residents, renters, and vulnerable groups. As this program has only recently launched, results are not yet available.

Dwelling type at the area level (e.g. apartments versus freestanding houses) did not have a statistically significant effect on engagement or progression. This may reflect the program's tailored advice for apartments, supported by anecdotal feedback that apartment residents are motivated to electrify but need additional support with strata processes and technical complexity.

Figure 2: Engagement by postcode socioeconomic category



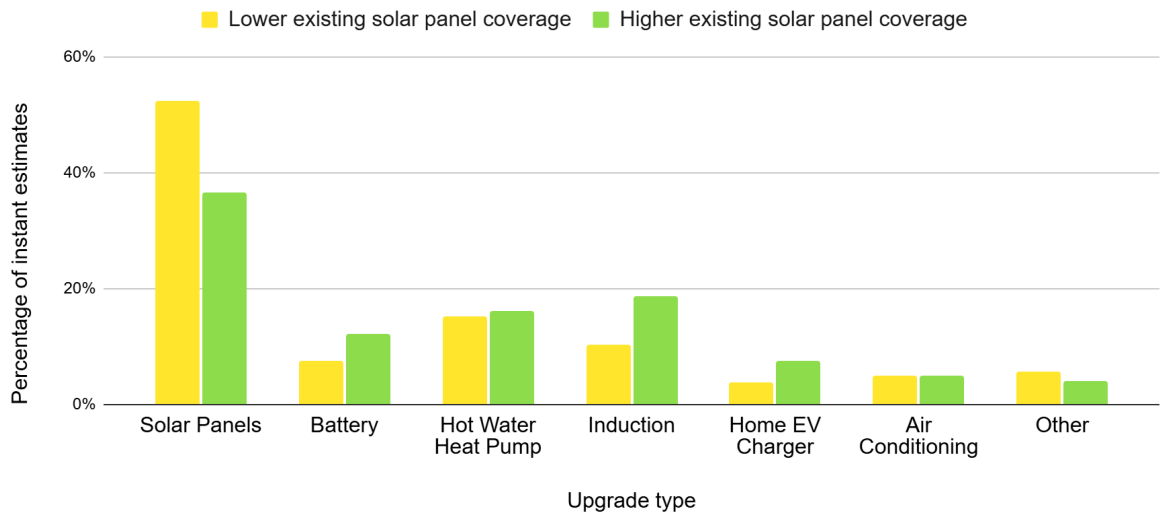
Lesson 8: Interest in different types of upgrades varies by existing solar panel coverage.

Solar panels were the most popular upgrade type across all locations; however, the mix of solar versus other upgrades varied significantly by existing solar panel uptake ($p < 0.0001$). In areas with lower existing solar coverage, most residents were primarily interested in installing solar panels. In contrast, residents in areas with higher solar penetration were more likely to enquire about other upgrade types.

We interpret this pattern as reflecting solar's role as a key entry point to resident electrification. In NSW, solar panels are often the most financially attractive initial upgrade. Once residents install solar, they begin to reassess the value of gas, leading over time to the electrification of appliances and, eventually, electric vehicle (EV) uptake to make greater use of the electricity they generate.

Insights from consultations also suggest a second entry point to electrification: the purchase of an EV. Interest in home EV charging often prompts residents to consider installing solar to reduce running costs. We plan to expand the program to provide additional support for residents considering EVs, which will allow us to gather further data and test this pathway in future analysis.

Figure 3: Interest in upgrade type by existing solar panel coverage in the area



Conclusion

The engagement data collected through our programs to date has been valuable in identifying what has and has not worked when engaging residents for our program. Several clear implications emerge for the ongoing development of the program.

First, we will continue to focus on delivering programs in partnership with local councils, as council channels are able to drive engagement at a significant scale. In parallel, we will deprioritise channels that do not reach large audiences.

Second, our messaging approach will continue to emphasise product-specific communications. We will avoid messaging that attempts to persuade audiences using scientific facts or emotional arguments, as this has been shown to attract negative engagement and detract from program effectiveness.

Third, we will prioritise the development of instant estimates across all upgrade types, building on recent launches for insulation and draught proofing, as these tools play a critical role in enabling scalable, self-service engagement.

We will also continue to expand our support for strata and apartment residents, given the relatively high engagement rates observed in areas with a large proportion of apartment buildings. In addition, we will continue developing dedicated program streams for low-income residents, renters, and vulnerable groups to improve engagement in lower socioeconomic areas.

Finally, the significant variation observed between locations within Sydney, including areas that might otherwise be expected to behave similarly, highlights the importance of local context. We therefore expect even greater variation when delivering programs in regional areas, other states, or different community types. As a result, communication channels and messaging will need to be tested and refined in each new context to determine what works best, and the results will be shared in future reports.

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