



Knowledge Sharing

June 2026

Providing Electrification Advice

Insights from ZapCat Programs



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Summary

This report summarises what we have learned about providing electrification advice through our community electrification programs. It is the second report in our Knowledge Sharing Series.

Our central finding is that information and tools are not enough. Households can already access calculators, quotes, and articles online. What prevents mainstream households from acting is not a lack of information, but a lack of trust and confidence to make a significant, often unfamiliar, decision. The advisor's role is to close that gap. Effective advice builds confidence, is tailored to the household's circumstances, and is delivered by a skilled, independent advisor who supports the household throughout the process.

The data also shows that advice is only effective when supported by strong case management. Reaching an installation takes an average of 109 days, 31 touchpoints, and multiple critical interactions. Much of this work is administrative—collecting information, coordinating with installers, following up residents, and removing barriers. This is why ZapCat delivers advice through trained employees supported by robust systems and administrative staff, rather than contractors or volunteers.

Key Takeaways

- Great advice does not just inform; it builds confidence and helps households make decisions.
- Advice must be personalised and backed by human judgement. Generic or seemingly AI-generated advice quickly erodes trust.
- Advisors need deep practical and technical expertise and must specialise; no single advisor can cover all aspects of electrification well.
- Advisors must adapt their communication style and level of detail to each household's needs and readiness.
- Independence (no lead fees or commissions) is essential for trust and consistently rated highly in council evaluations.
- Providing a clear next step, often through a vetted installer referral, reduces overwhelm and maintains momentum.
- Advice is largely ineffective without proactive support and strong case management to help households overcome barriers.
- Decisions take time and require consistent, non-pushy follow-up.

Introduction

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

ZapCat is a certified social enterprise helping Australian households transition their homes to clean energy by electrifying everything. We work with local councils and other organisations to deliver end-to-end community electrification programs. Our scope covers solar and batteries, hot water heat pumps, EV and EV charging, induction cooking, reverse-cycle air conditioning, and insulation and draught proofing, across houses, townhouses, apartments, social and community housing, and small and medium businesses.

A resident's journey through the program runs from a curious enquiry to a completed installation (see Figure 1). It begins with an instant cost, savings and rebates estimate completed online in around two minutes. Residents who want to go further receive a personalised recommendation from a Clean Energy Advisor, by email or virtual consultation. If they decide to proceed, we connect them with vetted local installers and hand-hold them through quoting and installation. All advice is free to the resident and fully independent.

This report covers the full hand holding process all the way to installation, but does not deep dive on the installer aspect or on the quotes. The average conversion rate from personalised recommendation to installation is 11-25% after 12 months, but varies significantly by location, program, and product.

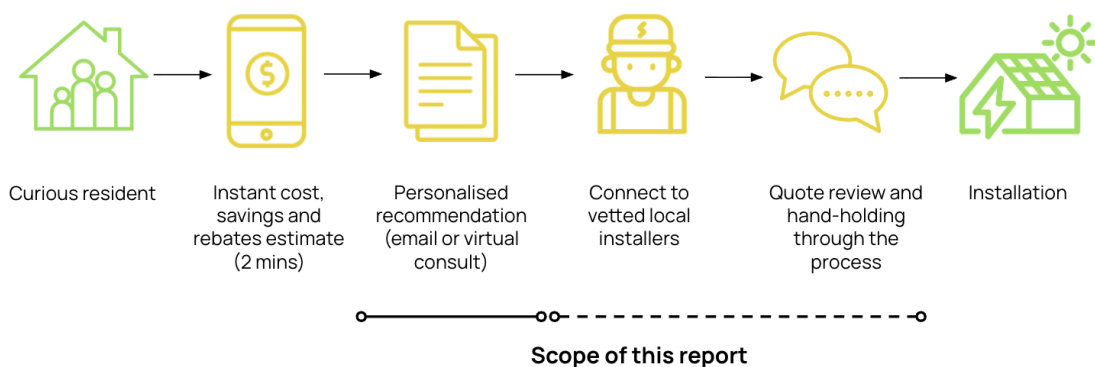


Figure 1: Program steps and the scope of this report. This report covers the personalised recommendation and the hand-holding that follows (the dotted section).

Sample

Most data in this report was collected between 1 January 2025 and 28 May 2026. In total the dataset includes 1,182 cases managed by advisors - each case being a single upgrade an advisor helped a household with - of which 212 resulted in an installation. We also draw on extracts from independent program evaluations conducted by councils, and on qualitative feedback from residents.

Resident feedback was drawn from surveys and emails, giving 229 responses. Of these, 128 were substantive enough to be coded into themes. Across all feedback, approximately 92% was positive and around 5% negative. We reference this feedback throughout the report. The

focus of this report is on freestanding houses & townhouses. Apartment buildings will be covered in a future report.

Limitations

The data is drawn exclusively from ZapCat programs in New South Wales, primarily in the Sydney area. The insights may not apply directly to other programs, locations, or contexts. This is not a formal research study; it presents applied, field-based data and insights. Our priority is to generate impact for residents and communities rather than to meet the highest standards of academic research methodology. We plan to update these insights as more data becomes available.

Qualitative feedback sentiment

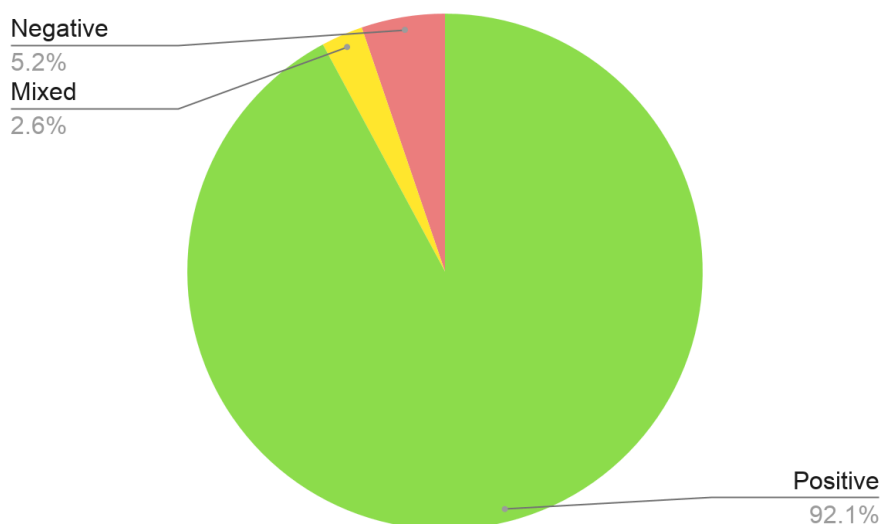


Figure 2: Qualitative feedback sample

Advice

Lesson 1: Great advice builds confidence and helps people reach a decision

If advice does not help someone act, it has not done its job. The two themes in our feedback that describe an outcome (rather than how we helped) were a decision being reached and confidence being built. Everything else an advisor does ultimately serves these two ends.

“Decision reached” – the resident committed to an installation as a result of the engagement – was a **top-three theme mentioned in 18% of feedback**. “Confidence and understanding built” – moving from uncertainty to informed understanding – accounted for a further **10%**.

“Thank you very much for your assistance and advice as it has helped me to decide on considering a quality installer rather than basing my decision on price alone.”

Resident feedback – Decision reached (18% of feedback)

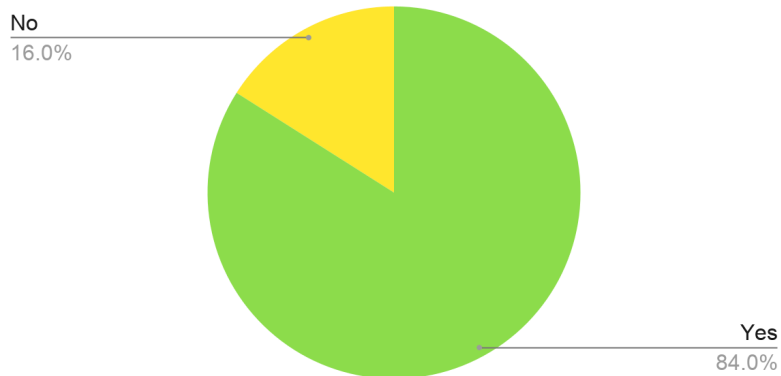
“We got a far more in-depth review than we expected. Our understanding of how our system fits together, along with weak spots, has greatly improved. We are more confident in our understanding.”

Resident feedback – Confidence and understanding built (10% of feedback)

Influencing decision-making is also a key program outcome for our council partners, and it is independently verified. In one evaluation, 84% of residents said the ZapCat service influenced their decision-making or action regarding home upgrades. In a second, more strongly worded evaluation, 69% said the program had a strong impact. This matters because some past programs found, on survey, that residents would have acted anyway - confirming genuine influence is where advice adds value.

Independent evaluation conducted by two Sydney councils

Did the ZapCat service influence your decision making or action regarding home upgrades?



Did the program have a strong impact on your decision-making or action?

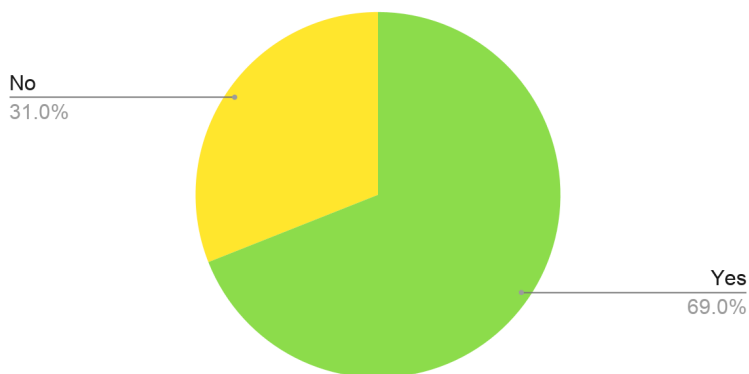


Figure 3: Independent program evaluations conducted by two Sydney councils: the proportion of residents reporting that ZapCat influenced their decision-making or action.

Lesson 2: Advice must be personalised and backed by human judgement, or it won't be trusted

Personalised advice is tailored to the specific household: to the property (site constraints, roof, climate, existing appliances, layout), to behaviour (current usage, who is home and when), and to motivation (what the household is trying to achieve). This was a strong theme, at 15% of feedback.

“Thoroughness of information. Honest, clear advice on options based on the challenges of the address (heritage overlay, significant shading from trees).”

Resident feedback – Personalised advice (15% of feedback)

The clearest way to see why personalisation matters is to look at what happens when it is missing. Negative feedback is rare (around 5%) and usually stems from a misunderstanding or a human error, but the reaction to advice that feels generic or automated is strong.

“It felt like a chatbot or scripted experience. I’m wondering whether they’re using AI to answer as it felt disjointed and also explained away errors in a similar way to AI.”

Resident feedback – strong negative reaction to perceived generic or AI-generated advice

This high bar makes sense when you consider what an advisor really is. An advisor is like a doctor. You do not visit a doctor to be told that stomach pain is common, that there are various options including over-the-counter medication and surgery, and that you should do your own research. You visit a doctor for their judgement – their diagnosis and their prescription for you specifically. You would not trust an AI to tell you which drug to take, and households are similarly wary of trusting a \$10,000 decision to advice that does not feel made for them.

Personalisation also means recognising that residents hold different motivations and worldviews. We group residents into personas along two axes: what motivates them (the environment, bills and savings, or pride and comfort) and how much intent and effort they bring. The same neutral question can produce completely different reactions across personas. For example, one resident praising an installer for cleaning up thoroughly, another reading the same care as wasteful expense. There is no single right answer; advice simply has to be tailored to the person in front of you.

This is especially important for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) audiences, where the key difference is often culture and worldview rather than language. Different cultural groups tend to contain different proportions of personas. For example, recent migrants are more likely to be bargain hunters while people from historically developed countries are more likely to be eco nerds. It is the advisor's job to meet each person where they are.

Residents have different motivations and worldviews



Figure 4: Resident personas. Households differ by motivation and by intent, and advice must be tailored accordingly.

Advisors

Lesson 3: Advisors need in-depth practical and technical knowledge

Technical expertise (depth of knowledge across products, specifications, and industry norms) was a major theme at **14% of feedback**. The core requirement for our advisors is genuine, practical industry experience, not just theoretical knowledge.

People who have worked in the industry see what actually goes wrong in installations, how prices really move, and where official guidance diverges from practical reality, and that is what makes advice actionable. As we have expanded into more product areas, it has become clear that advisors must specialise. A solar advisor needs depth on panel placement, switchboard upgrades, inverter compatibility, AC/DC coupling,

and current brands and models; an insulation and draught-proofing advisor needs depth on the thermal envelope, R-ratings, climate zones, and DIY methods. It is difficult and expensive to scale a service that relies on finding “unicorn” advisors who know everything well; a team of specialists is required.

“Very knowledgeable around the technical aspects of solar and at all times was looking to ensure that any solar system/battery configuration was the most appropriate solution for my immediate and future needs.”

Resident feedback – Technical expertise (14% of feedback)

Example: Specialist knowledge

The two lists below highlight the different expertise required for insulation and draught-proofing versus solar. We have found that relying on advisors who know everything is difficult and expensive to scale. Instead, specialist advisors are needed for each area.

Insulation & draught proofing

- Thermal envelope
- Insulation R ratings
- How to DIY
- Climate zones
- Brands & Models

Solar

- Panel placement
- Switchboard upgrades
- Inverter compatibility
- AC / DC coupling batteries
- Brands & Models

Lesson 4: Advisors need to be able to speak to many different types of people

Knowledge is not enough on its own. Advisors must translate technical content into plain English, adapt to each resident's level of prior knowledge, and engage patiently with questions of any sophistication. "Accessible communication" was a top-three theme at **18% of feedback**.

"She was so easy to talk to and made me feel like my questions were valid."

Resident feedback – Accessible communication (18% of feedback)

Households differ in confidence. Across 137 virtual consultations, we asked each resident how technical they wanted the conversation to be: 63% wanted it slightly technical with key concepts explained simply, around a third wanted it

very technical, and only 4% wanted it not technical at all. An advisor who is only ever warm and non-technical will lose the trust of a resident who wants detail; one who is only ever highly technical will overwhelm the mainstream.

Households also differ in readiness. In our instant estimates we ask whether the resident wants to learn about a product, see if it is worth it, or find a provider and install. Readiness varies markedly by product. Residents investigating reverse-cycle air conditioning are more likely to be ready to install, while those investigating solar and battery are more likely to be weighing up whether it is worth it. Advisors must read this and avoid pushing an installer too early, or over-explaining a product the resident has already decided on.

How technical do you want the discussion to be?

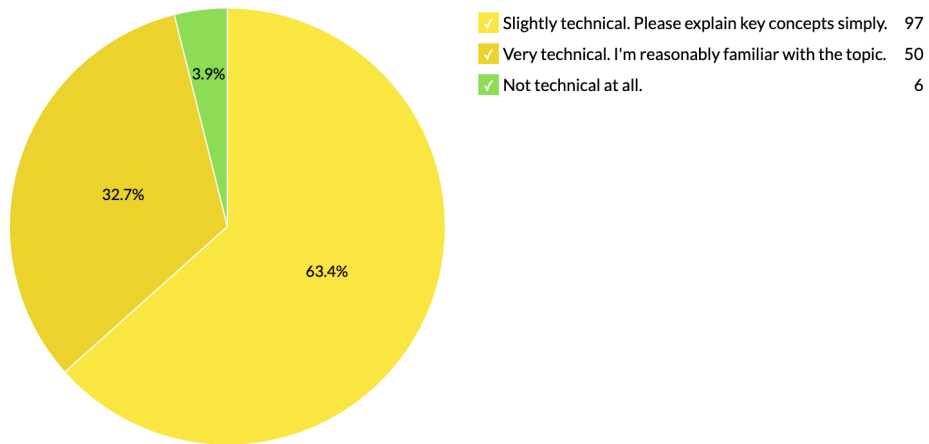


Figure 6: People have different levels of confidence. Data from 137 virtual consultation bookings.

What is your goal?

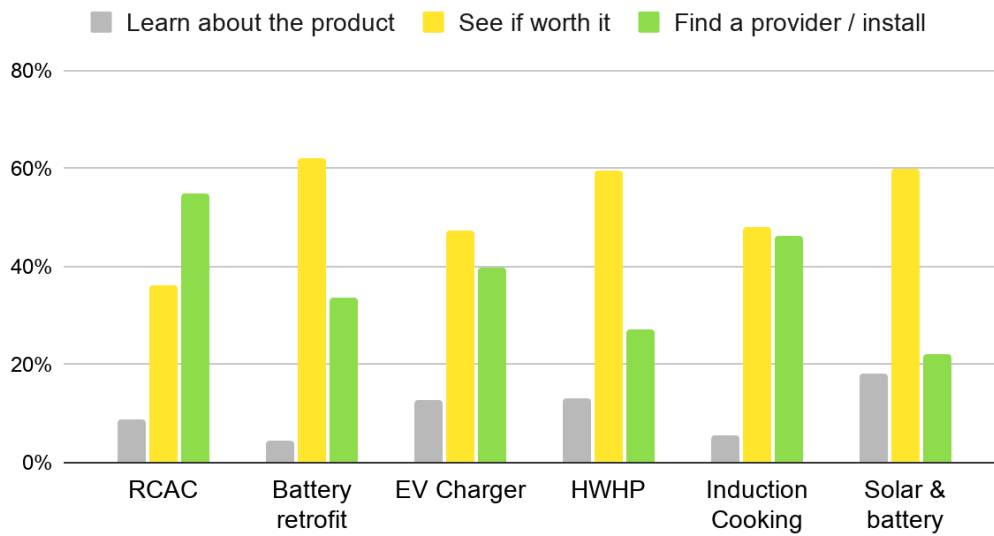


Figure 7: People have different levels of readiness. Data from 3,603 instant estimates.

Service offering

Lesson 5: True independence is table stakes for trust

Independence means an absence of commercial bias in the advice provided - impartiality between products, suppliers, and installers. It featured in **12% of feedback**, and it is one of the single strongest positives in council evaluations. Many households are guarded until they learn the service is funded by their council and that we take no lead fees or commissions; at that point their demeanour changes and they engage openly, because they trust we will not sell them something they do not need.

"This has been extremely helpful. I've spoken to quite a few salespeople, but it's hard as a layperson to separate out the reasonable claims from the nonsense."

Resident feedback – Independent advice (12% of feedback)

Independence comes through strongly when councils independently evaluate our programs. In the evaluation below, independent advice was the most frequently cited positive, well ahead of other benefits.

What were the positives about using ZapCat?

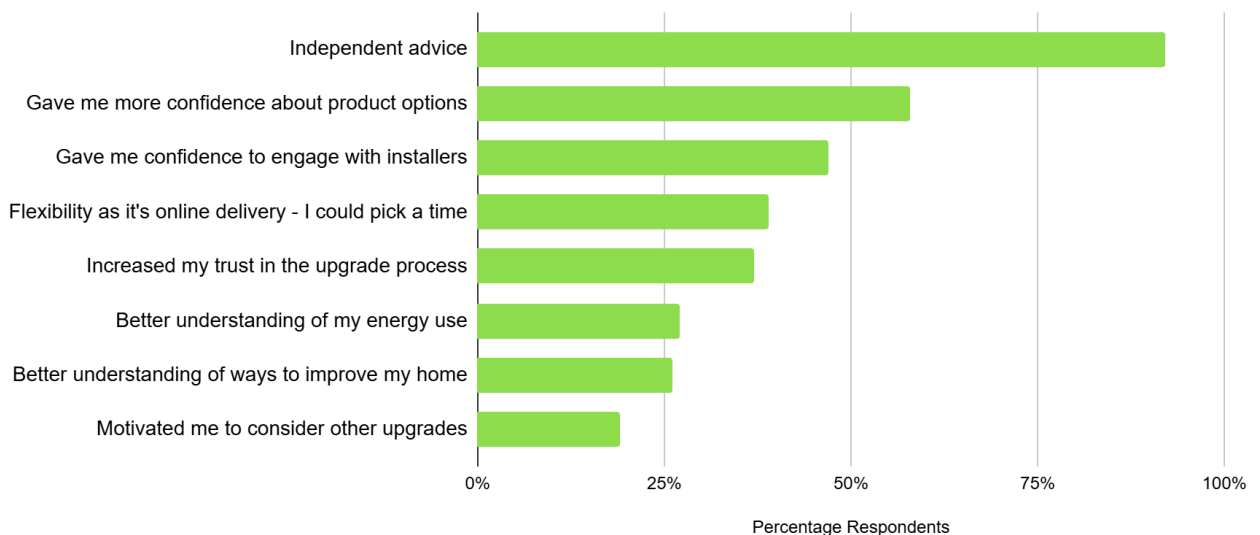


Figure 8: Positives about using ZapCat. Independent program evaluation conducted by a Sydney council (102 responses).

Lesson 6: Actionable next steps reduce overwhelm

Good advice always ends with a clear, defined next step - get a quote, ask a specific question, weigh up a particular trade-off. We never make the decision for the resident; we give them the context and confidence to navigate it themselves. "Clear next steps" accounted for **12% of feedback**.

"Last time I looked into solar I got bombarded and it totally overwhelmed me and I gave up in the end, so thanks for making this whole process much more manageable. I have a plan and will run with it."

Resident feedback – Clear next steps (12% of feedback)

The most effective next step is usually an introduction to a vetted local installer (**10% of feedback**). When a resident is ready to act and asks who we would suggest, having no answer is where momentum is lost – there are countless installers and no continuity of trust. A warm introduction to a vetted installer keeps the process seamless.

"Having vetted suppliers available for quotes was invaluable for the momentum of the project."

Resident feedback – Vetted installers (10% of feedback)

Process

Lesson 7: Advice is ineffective without proactive hand-holding and strong case management

Advice delivered once, without follow-through, is far less effective. Proactive hand-holding (checking in, staying with the process, remaining available for follow-on questions) was a top-three theme at **17% of feedback**.

“[The advisor] has stayed with the process and even followed up with hints and tips to manage the process once he knew the order was proceeding. Follow up was appropriate to make sure we had the info we needed – but not annoying.”

Resident feedback – Ongoing follow-through (17% of feedback)

Making this follow-through possible at scale requires strong business systems and processes. Each upgrade is a “case” that moves from instant estimate to recommendation to installation. On average a case involves **31 touchpoints** (instant estimates, emails, calls, automated and manual follow-ups), **6.7 case notes** logging critical interactions, and takes **109 days** – with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 353 days. Multiplied across thousands of cases, this is unmanageable without robust systems.

Although there are many touchpoints per case, some are automated and many do not take a lot of time (e.g. checking in to see if a quote has been sent).

However, despite being small actions they are critical for ensuring residents continue moving through the process, minimising drop off.

A broad range of activities sits within this hand-holding - system hygiene, following up residents, quote review, providing advice and recommendations, following up installers, and making introductions. Roughly half of this work is administrative rather than advisory. Like doctors, advisors are highly trained professionals who should spend their time diagnosing and advising, not chasing emails. We therefore route administrative work to dedicated admin support - an “admin fairy” that works behind the scenes - so advisors can focus on advice.

This administrative effort is necessary because barriers are pervasive. Even across the 212 cases that did result in an installation, advisors repeatedly logged barriers: residents not responding, installers failing to make contact, technical or property constraints, installer delays after committing, concerns over quotes or price, strata complications, and client overwhelm or decision paralysis. The advisor acts as a buffer between the client and these barriers, identifying and unblocking them so the process can continue.

Strata adds a further layer of complexity. Counting case notes for key interactions, a strata case is at least two to three times as complex as a regular case, due to body corporate processes, more parties, and group decision-making. We will cover strata in detail in a future report.

Throughout, responsiveness is critical - it was in fact the most common positive theme at **20% of feedback**. Prompt replies matter both for service quality and because decisions are often time-sensitive (a rebate deadline, a strata meeting, an installer's availability). Slow responses can jeopardise a decision the resident is ready to make.

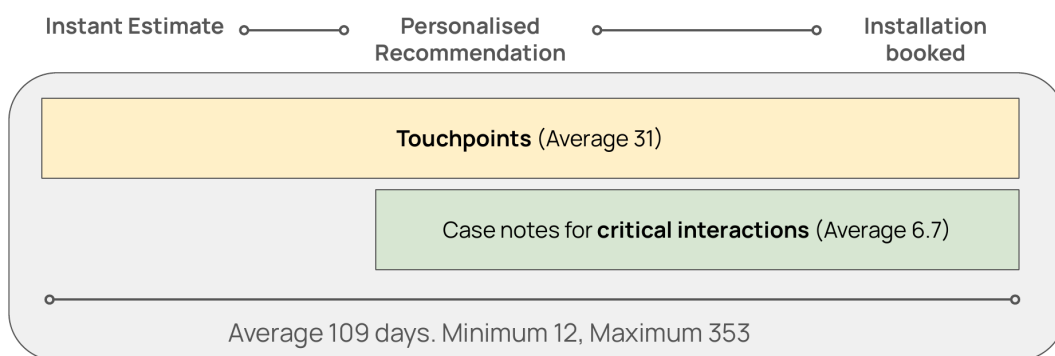
This level of consistency and responsiveness is difficult for contractors and volunteers to sustain.

When we have relied on them, clients waited too long for responses, operational consistency suffered, and follow-up discipline lapsed. Our conclusion is that permanent part-time or full-time employment is required to deliver the service well.

"Good advice and quick to respond, which made the whole process easy to follow."

Resident feedback – Responsiveness (20% of feedback)

Average interactions per case



Each upgrade (e.g. Solar, Induction Cooking) is a case

Figure 9: Each upgrade is a case managed from instant estimate to installation, averaging 31 touchpoints (instant estimates, emails, calls, automated and manual follow-ups) and 6.7 critical case notes over an average of 109 days.

Activities involved in hand holding

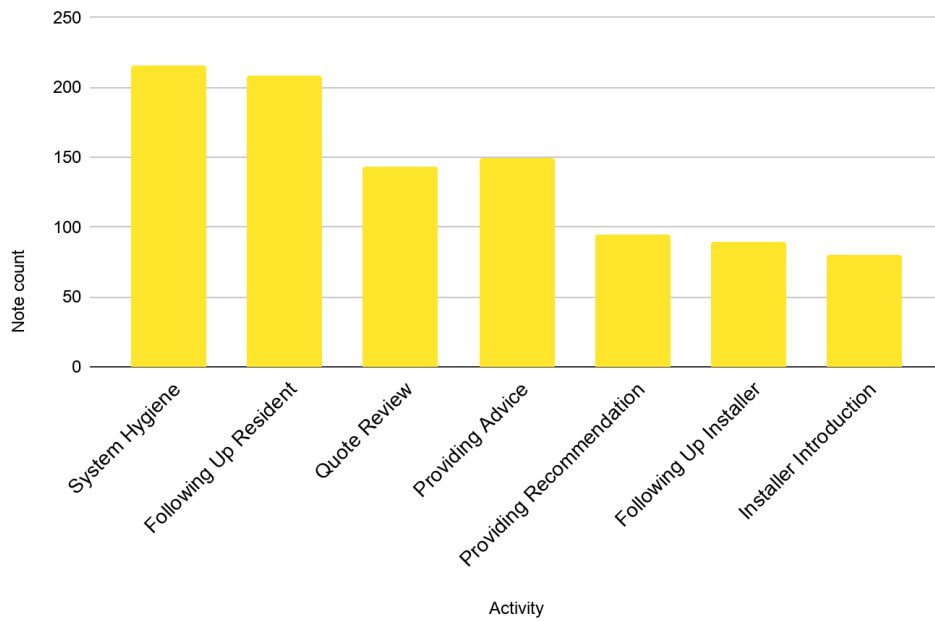


Figure 10: A broad range of activities is involved in hand-holding. Data from 1,417 case notes across 212 cases that resulted in an installation.

Advice vs administration - number of case notes

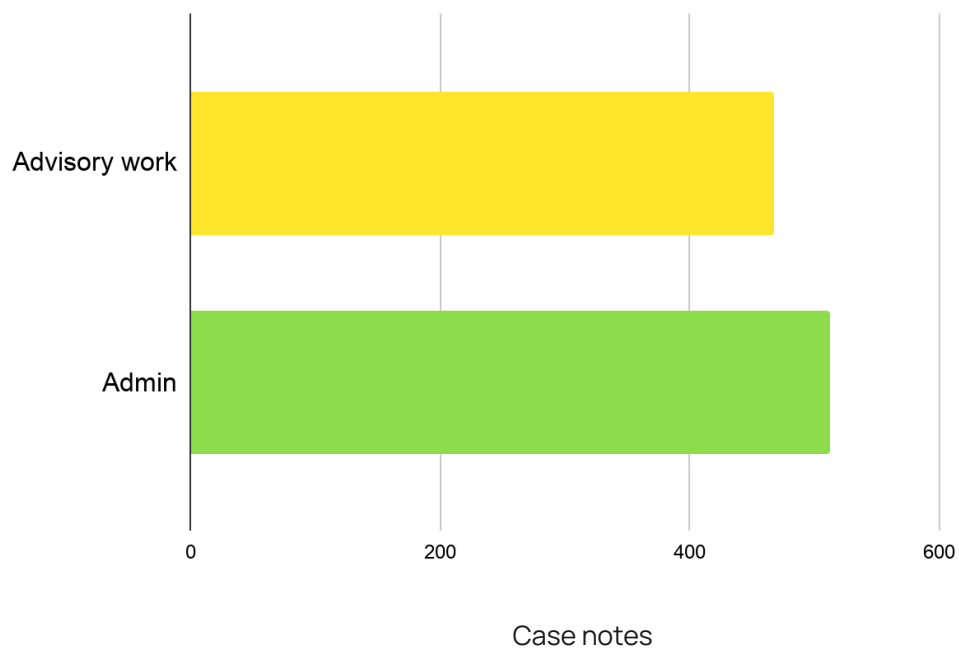


Figure 11: Around half of hand-holding work is administrative, which is best handled by dedicated admin support so advisors can focus on advisory work.

Barriers faced by residents

Note: When a resident goes quiet this is indicative of another barrier occurring in their life (e.g. becoming too busy, having difficulty making a decision).

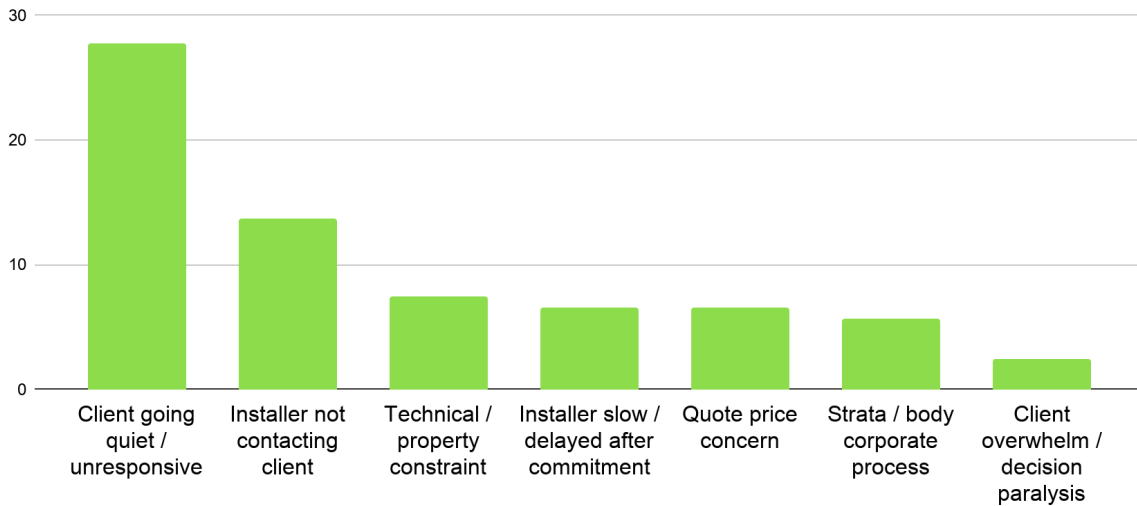


Figure 12: The advisor acts as a buffer between the client and the barriers encountered in the process. Data from 1,417 case notes across 212 cases that resulted in an installation.

Average case notes per product

Note: Apartment solar refers to shared or common area solar systems for whole apartment blocks.

This chart demonstrates that apartment solar (which involves strata) is significantly more complex than other residential upgrades for individual properties, generating roughly two to three times the case notes.

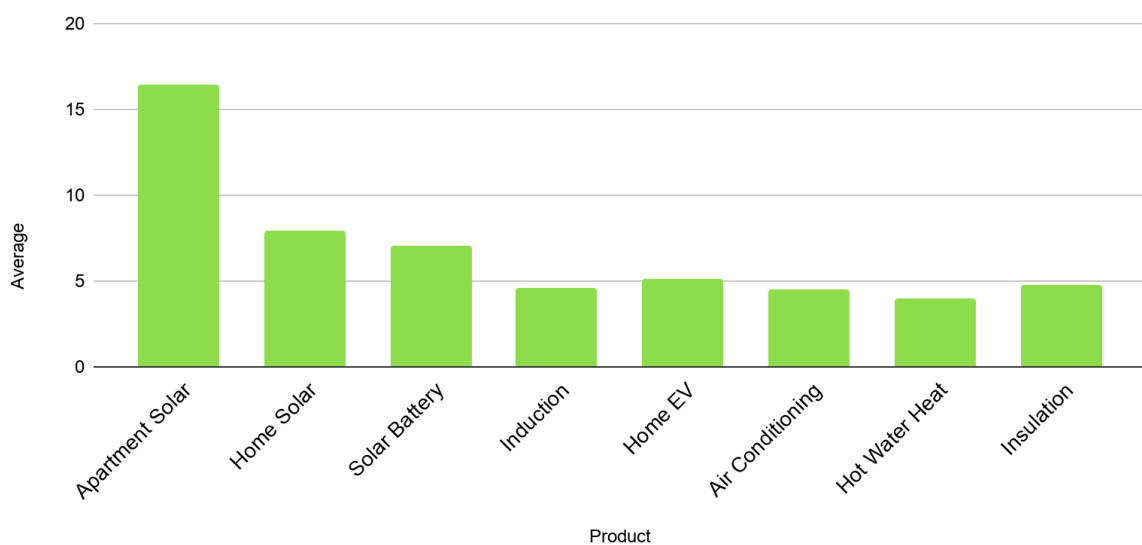


Figure 13: Average number of case notes by product type

Conclusion

Without advisors and proactive hand-holding, mainstream households may not make it through the electrification process. Everyone has access to information and tools - instant calculators, free quotes, articles. The problem is the gap between that information and a confident decision. Vetted suppliers, reliable prices, and savings estimates help, but they are still not enough: committing to a \$10,000 upgrade, changing the kitchen you cook in every day, or getting off gas after twenty years requires trust and confidence. That, in turn, requires independence and human judgement.

The residents who leave us the longest, most grateful feedback have one thing in common: they had been stuck,

sometimes for years, with paralysed intent. The role of the advisor is to convert that intent into action.

“Thanks again – your service made it possible to get going with this. We’d been thinking about it for over a year but felt overwhelmed and uninformed.”

Resident feedback – Converting paralysed intent into action

We hope the lessons we have learned are useful to others designing and delivering community electrification programs. We will continue to share data and insights in future reports, including dedicated reports on strata and on tailoring advice for specific communities.

The advisor turns information and tools into the trust and confidence required for a household to reach a decision

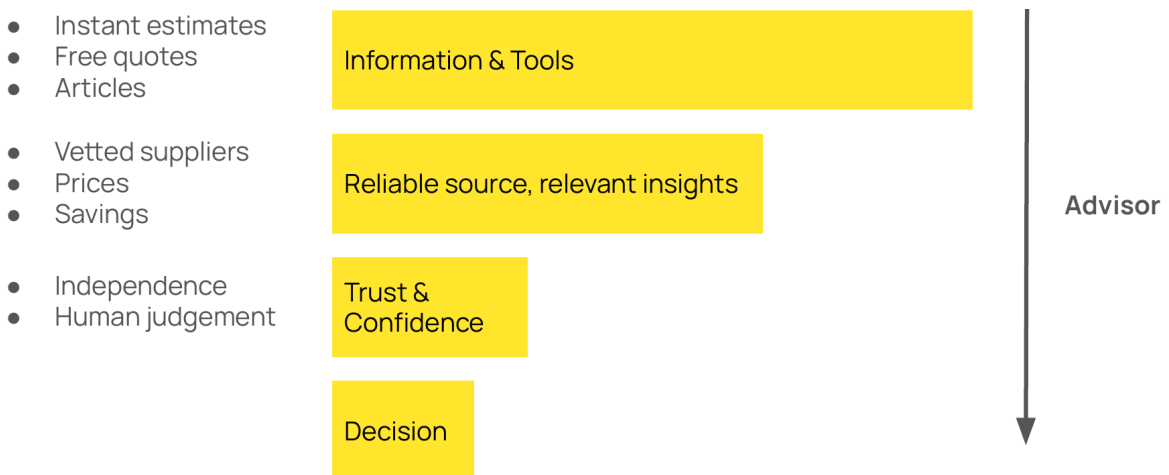


Figure 14: The role of the advisor in electrification advice.



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