



Queensland Council
of Social Service

Switched On Communities Grant Program

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Background

- \$500,000 contributed to the Department of Energy and Water Supply by AGL Energy. Administered by QCOSS.
- Purpose of the program is to assist, educate and empower vulnerable residential electricity customers following the deregulation of retail electricity prices in SEQ from 1 July 2016
- Targeting low income, seniors, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and linguistically diverse people.
- Grant projects to be delivered in 2016-17.

Grant recipients

- Salvation Army
- Multilink
- Council on the Ageing
- Queenslanders with a Disability Network
- Coast2Bay Housing
- Mangrove Housing
- Palm Beach Neighbourhood Centre
- Encircle
- Laidley Community Centre

Grants ranging from \$30,000 to \$92,000.

Projects targeted seniors, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, CALD communities and people experiencing financial hardship.

Timeline

- Applications period 11 July - 5 August 2016
- Decision and notification – 25 August 2016
- Energy literacy training – 30-31 August 2016
- Project set-up and recruitment – September 2016
- Project delivery – October 2016 to May 2017
- Projects acquittal and reporting – 30 June 2017
- QCROSS acquittal and reporting – 31 July 2017



Key outcomes

- Support to read bills and use EME
- Securing better deals (mostly non-conditional discounts)
- Concessions applied
- Support to access hardship programs
- Support to access HEEAS
- Building confidence to engage retailers
- Tips on reducing energy use
- Referrals to EWOQ



Key outcomes

- Over 4,000 people supported via face-to-face workshop
- 896 individual face-to-face sessions
- 632 phone conversations
- More than 30,000 received information kits and advice at community events, stalls, shopping centre booths, local markets, libraries, etc.

“I feel I can breathe again knowing how to fix my problems”

“I cannot speak confidently and I don’t understand the technology and terminology. If the service wasn’t available I would have been a mess. You made sure that my rights have been looked after”.

Key learnings

The Good:

- Value of peer education and co-design
- Embedding into existing services
- Place-based knowledge and service delivery
- Trusted and independent advice cuts through

The Bad:

- Lack of continuity - capacity built up then quickly lost
- Transient volunteer workforce
- Unable to build referral pathways with retailers
- Energy market more complex than anticipated

Key learnings

The Ugly:

- Lack of clear information for on-supply customers, tenants
- Barriers to concessions from retailers
- Disparity in quality and accessibility to hardship
- Best “pay on time” discounts not appropriate for most
- Confusing and inconsistent terminology on bills
- Digital literacy – access in outer regions, confidence / ability to navigate, vulnerability to email scams etc.
- Communication barriers for disability, CALD customers
- Complex issues people are experiencing – DV, mental health, etc.

What's next?

- QCOSS reviewing final reports from each project
- QCOSS Final Report due end July 2017
- Need continued co-investment and partnership approaches between industry, government and community sectors.
- Essential to engage consumers with tariff reform, smart meters, etc.