

### **3.5. Sustainable Business Programs Report**

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**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

The report provides an update of program reach, major focus areas and recent and upcoming events for each of the business programs.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides an overview and update of North Sydney Councils Sustainable Business Programs - CitySwitch and Better Business Partnership.

The programs exist to support both small local businesses and large corporate tenancies with their efforts in reducing their energy, water, and waste consumption.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Sustainable Business Programs are funded through the Environmental Levy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the report on North Sydney's Sustainable Business Programs be received.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment
  - 1.2 North Sydney is sustainable and resilient
  
3. Our Future Planning
  - 3.1 Prosperous and vibrant economy

## **BACKGROUND**

North Sydney Council has been a partner to two successful sustainable business programs since 2005. The Better Business Partnership and the CitySwitch program engage over 60 small businesses and large corporate tenancies in improving their environmental performance through the provision of environmental audits, recommendation of sustainability upgrades and initiatives and education and engagement programs.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Nil.

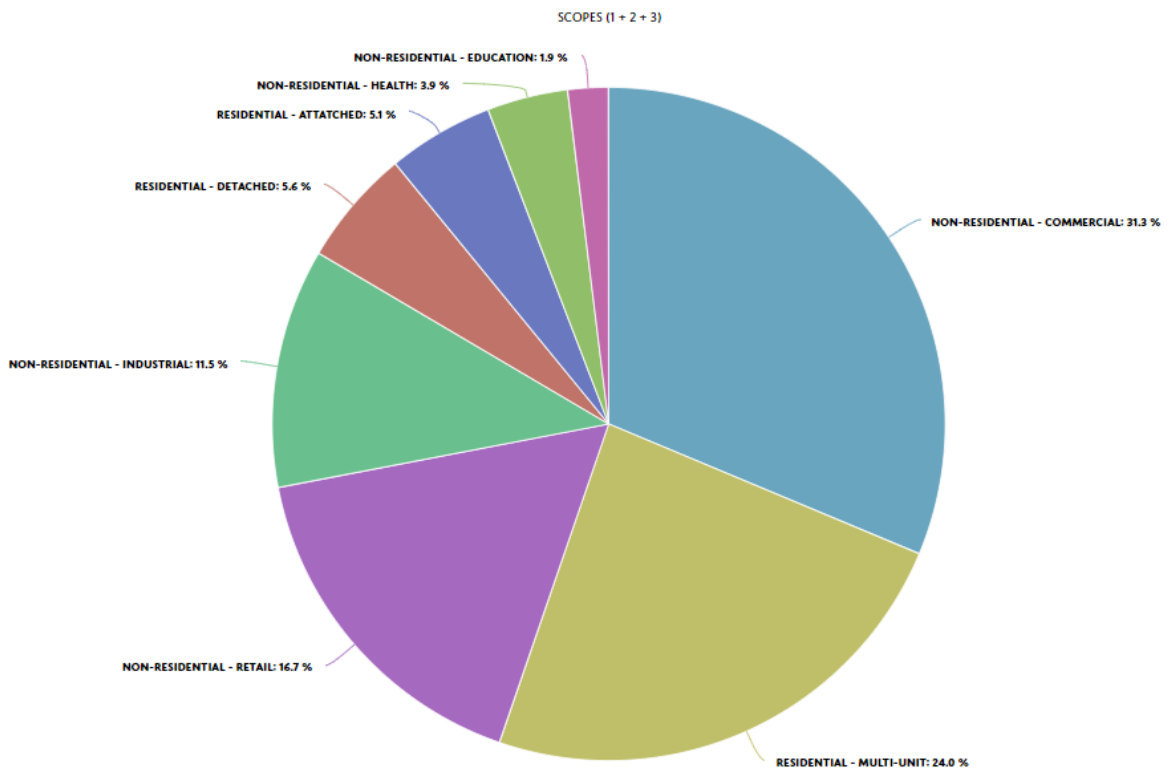
Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

North Sydney Council supports two sustainable business programs, the Better Business Partnership (BBP) and City Switch. BBP is aimed at small to medium sized organisations including shop fronts, small offices, and childcare centres, whilst CitySwitch works with corporate tenants in large office towers. Both programs aim to assist businesses and tenancies identify opportunities to reduce energy and water use, improve waste diversion, and assist with sustainable procurement and staff engagement. The programs assist businesses and tenancies achieve local and national recognition through social and environmental sustainability initiatives, with both programs celebrating and rewarding environmental leadership and achievement through annual awards.

The need for the sustainable business support programs is highlighted in recent data from Resilient Sydney that shows that 48% of all the greenhouse gas emissions for North Sydney in 2019/20 were from the commercial and retail sectors (see fig 1). A major focus of the business programs going forward will be to reduce greenhouse gas emissions via promotion of electrification, provision of energy audits, waste reduction programs and implementation of organic waste streams and incentives such as rebates and subsidies.

NORTH SYDNEY LGA: GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS BY SECTOR - 2019-20



Above: Fig 1: Report from the Resilient Sydney platform - Kinesis

### Better Business Partnership (BBP) Program

The BBP program currently supports 41 businesses in North Sydney, by assessing the environmental impact of the business through audits and subsequent sustainability recommendations. Once implemented these recommendations provide financial savings for the business and accreditation for steps they have taken. Business partners have seen the benefit of the program by reducing overall running costs as well as the opportunity to connect and network with other members.

Usual methods of engagement with program members included regular meet ups and networking events, however, over the last 2 years due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the program switched to running online webinars. Topics have covered a range of subjects including community recycling hubs; carbon offsets; how to make your business more sustainable; and what is net zero. Upcoming events in the BBP online Program include the NSW Plastics Ban for Businesses - What you need to know! This event will be held online, Wed 6 April, 2pm – 3pm. These member events have also encouraged new businesses to join the program and start their sustainability journey.

The most recent networking event was held at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in February 2022. This was the first face to face event since the Better Business Awards back in June 2021. Over 60 attendees enjoyed a warm sun-drenched afternoon on the Coal Loader Platform, with the event using members of the BBP program to supply the food, drinks and entertainment: Trolley'd, Agape Organic and Kristen Fletcher from Studio K Music. In keeping with the ethos of the sustainability centre and the focus of the BBP program, the event was zero-waste using repurposed and recyclable materials, RUZI reusable plates and glassware and composting of all organic waste.





*Above photos: Better Business Partnership networking event – The Coal Loader*

The program has recently embarked on a new partnership with Green Caffein (<https://greencaffein.com.au/>) a swap cup program providing an alternative to single use coffee cups. Recent reports from Best Bagel Co located in Cremorne suggest that in just the first two days of the initiative running they have reported a diversion of over 100 single use coffee cups which would otherwise have been destined for landfill. Averaging this out over a year, this is a saving of 368.44kg of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>e), 33kgs of plastic and A\$2,000 saving to the business for not having to purchase single use cups.

## CitySwitch

CitySwitch works with commercial office tenants to reduce their environmental impact. There are currently 22 signatories in the program for North Sydney.

Reporting for this program happens in September and the 2021 Annual Report and State Award winners have recently been released to signatories and stakeholders. The report provides a review of up-to-date building and office space energy ratings, and business sustainability achievements over the last year. In 2021, program signatories across Australia saved 762,341 tonnes of CO2 from entering the atmosphere through energy efficiency, carbon offsets and renewables (See Fig 2).

The postponed 2021 Awards (due to COVID-19 and Local Government election delays) will be held on Thursday 28 April at Town Hall, City of Sydney. This is the first face to face networking event that signatories have attended in NSW since 2020 and all signatories are encouraged to attend. Both the Lord Mayor of City of Sydney and North Sydney are attending and will talk about how the program benefits their respective LGAs. State Award winners and the National and overall winners will also be announced.

A major focus for CitySwitch in 2022 will be the transformation of the program based on signatory feedback and evaluation. It is hoped that by refreshing the program and creating a less arduous and more streamlined approach to reporting, engagement levels by signatories will increase.

Upcoming events in the CitySwitch Program include:

- CitySwitch Lunch and Learn: Resource recovery solutions for the hybrid workplace, Thursday 31 March 12:30 – 13:30pm
- National Awards: In person City of Sydney and Melbourne, and an option to dial into the live broadcast to those who can't make it in person. Thursday 28 April 2022 5:30pm

## 2021 ACHIEVEMENTS



**19%**  
of all Australian office space  
signed up to CitySwitch<sup>1</sup>



**\$62.6**  
million avoided this year by  
tenancies combined action  
since first rating<sup>5</sup>



**227,023 sqm**  
NLA joined in 2021



**106**  
tenancies with an accredited  
NABERS Energy Rating  
of 4-star and above



**762,341**  
tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> saved<sup>2</sup>



**9**  
tenancies with an accredited  
6-star NABERS Energy Rating



**557,670**  
tonnes of carbon offsets  
purchases<sup>3</sup>



**4.8**  
stars weighted average  
accredited NABERS Energy  
Rating with GreenPower<sup>6</sup>



**204,671**  
tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse  
gases saved through  
energy efficiency<sup>4</sup>

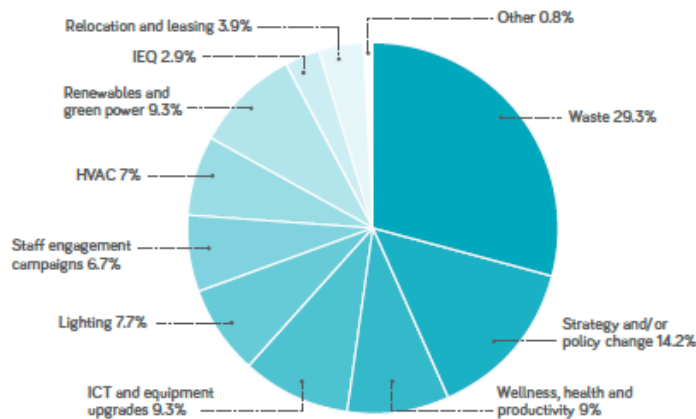


**99%**  
program satisfaction rating

1. Based on 26,037,495 million sqm total per Property Council of Australia, Office Market Report 2021
2. Avoided and abated emission this year through a combination of energy efficiency projects and carbon offsetting.
3. There has been a change in the methodology for counting offsets since last year. Only offsets that were retired during the CitySwitch reporting year were counted.

4. Derived from accredited and indicative National Australian Built Environment Ratings and third party verified savings comparing latest emissions to their highest ever emissions.
5. Based on calculated energy consumption at average rates per state.
6. The rating in 2020 annual report was incorrectly reported as 4.8 which should have been 4.6.

### Breakdown of 796 environmental projects carried out by CitySwitch signatories in 2021



All figures accurate as at 18 February 2021. Prepared for CitySwitch by Strategy Policy Research

Fig 2. 2021 CitySwitch Program Achievements.