

3.1. Sustainability Rebates Program Update

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ATTACHMENTS	Nil
CSP LINK	1. Our Living Environment 1.1 Protected, enhanced and biodiverse natural environment 1.2 Environmentally sustainable community

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on North Sydney Councils' Sustainability Rebates Program since its inception in October 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The Sustainability Rebates program launched in October 2023 and supports properties in North Sydney to implement energy and water saving initiatives for households, strata and businesses.
- The Sustainability Rebates program has proven to be well received by the North Sydney community and has had a strong up take of rebates across all property types and most rebate items available.
- Since program inception, Council has approved 41 community applications and has allocated over half the annual budget over a three- month period.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report on the Sustainability Rebates Program be received.

Background

From March-June 2023, the North Sydney community was consulted to gain feedback on a proposed sustainability rebates program. A total of 89 responses were received from the community with most respondents indicating that a rebate program would make a difference in whether they would take action to adopt clean energy technology and transition to all electric homes and apartment buildings.

As a result, the Sustainability Rebates Program was launched in October 2023, with a program budget of \$80,000 funded from Council's Environment Levy.

Report

The key statistics for the program so far include:

- 41 approved rebate applications (See Figs. 1 and 3).
- 99 kW solar PV approved.
- 42 kWh solar batteries approved.
- \$331,029 community spend.
- \$43,894 Council rebate spend.
- 7.5 community investment to rebate ratio.
- Approved rebates for all three property types (See Fig. 2).
- Even spread of approved rebates across the North Sydney LGA (See Fig. 4).
- 428 visits to the Sustainability Rebates webpage since program launch.
- Positive feedback provided by the community and program participants (See Fig. 5)

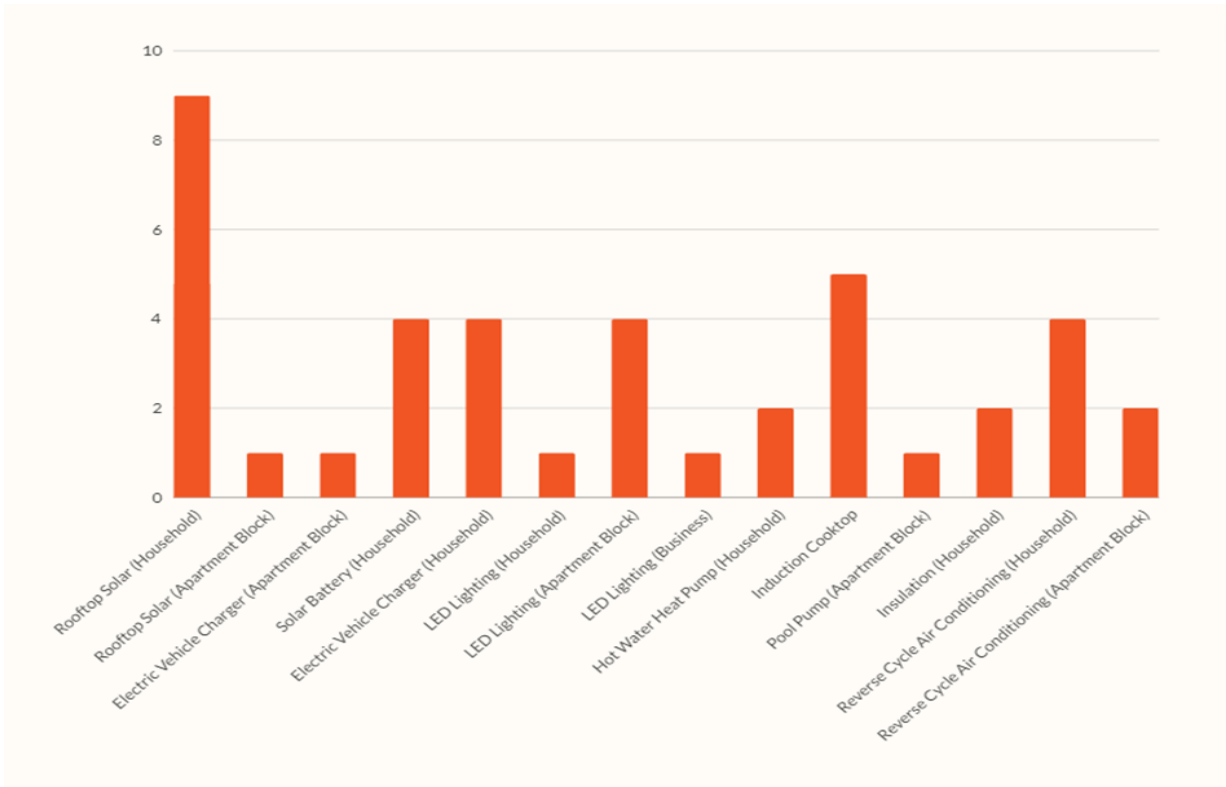


Fig. 1. Approved rebate items.

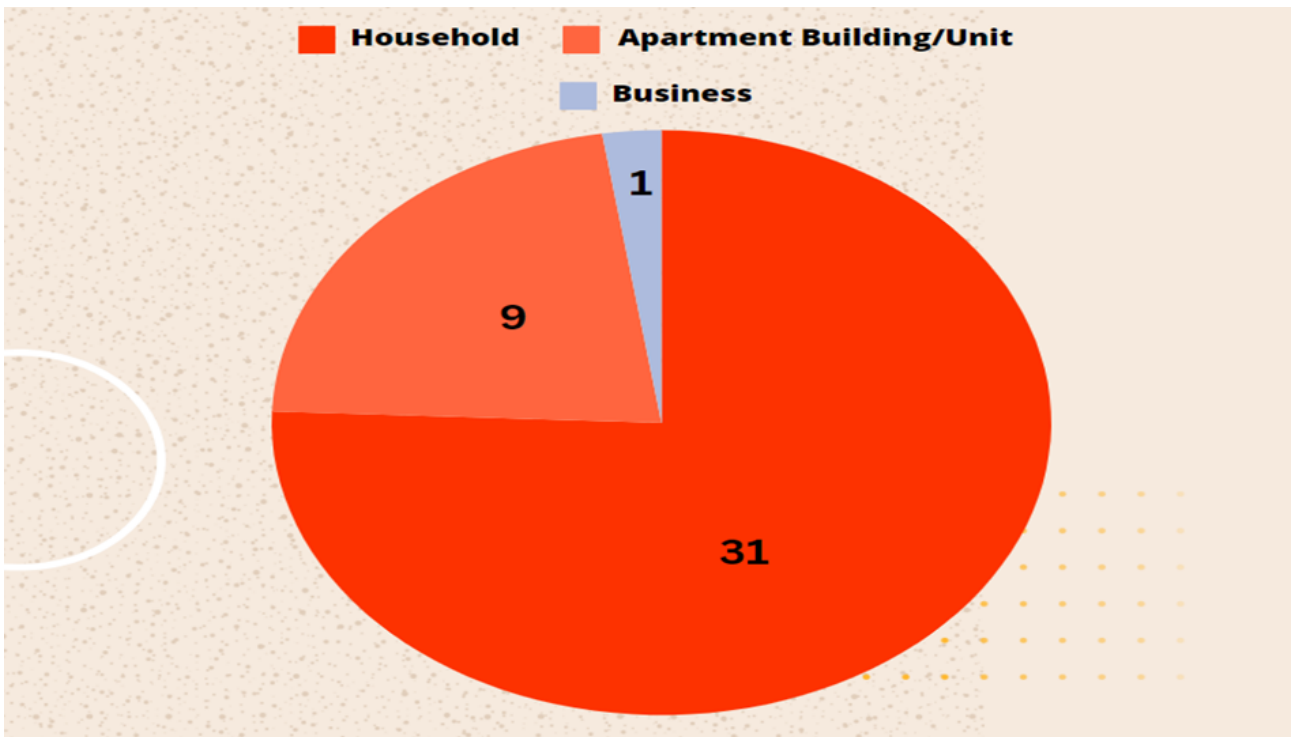


Fig. 2. Rebate property type.

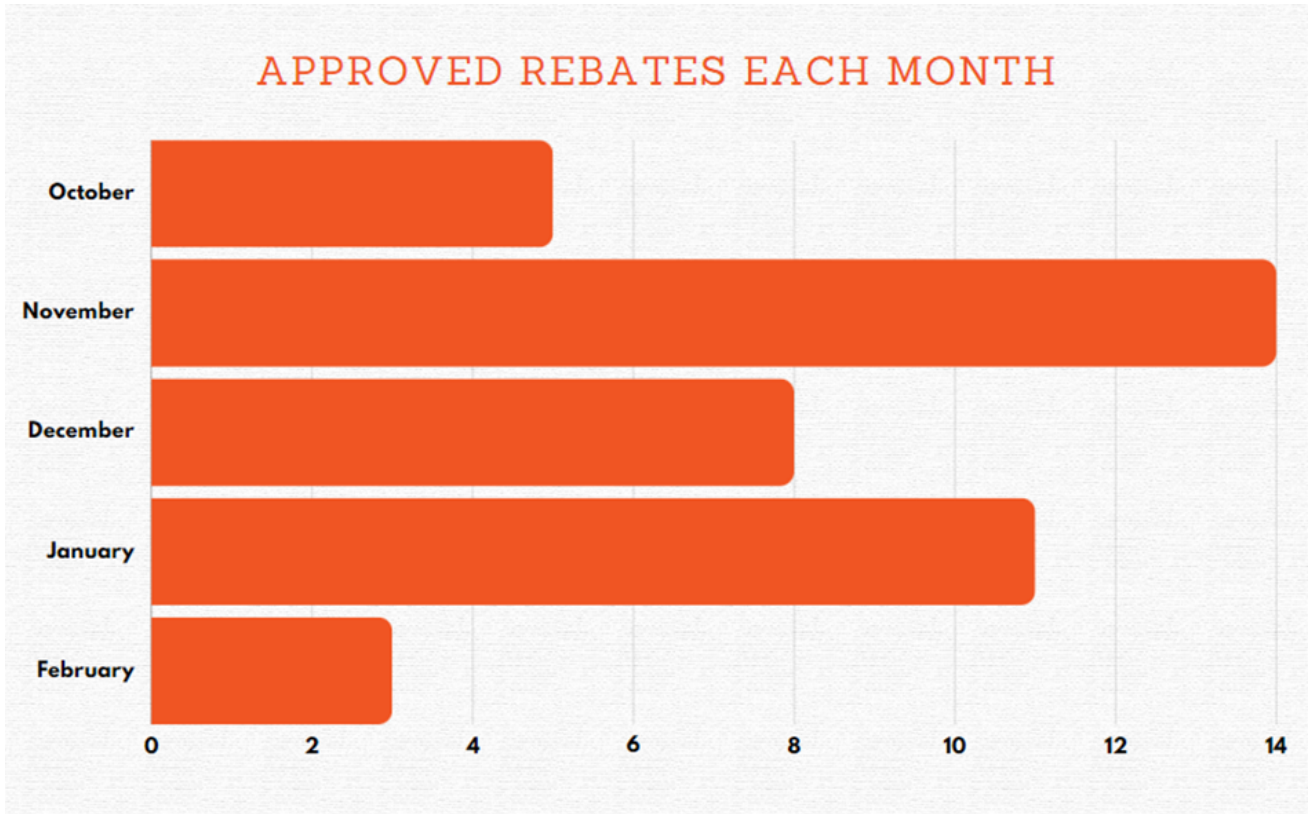


Fig.3. Approved rebates each month since launch of program.

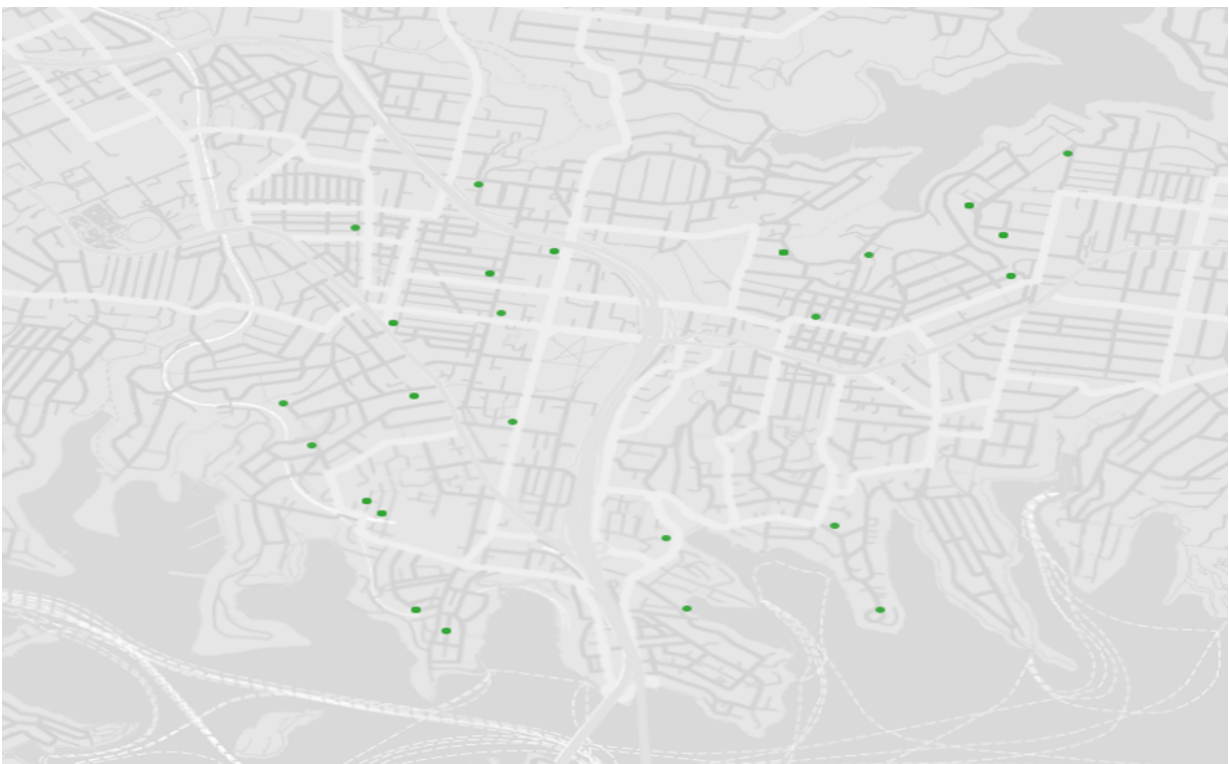


Fig. 4. Rebate locations across North Sydney.

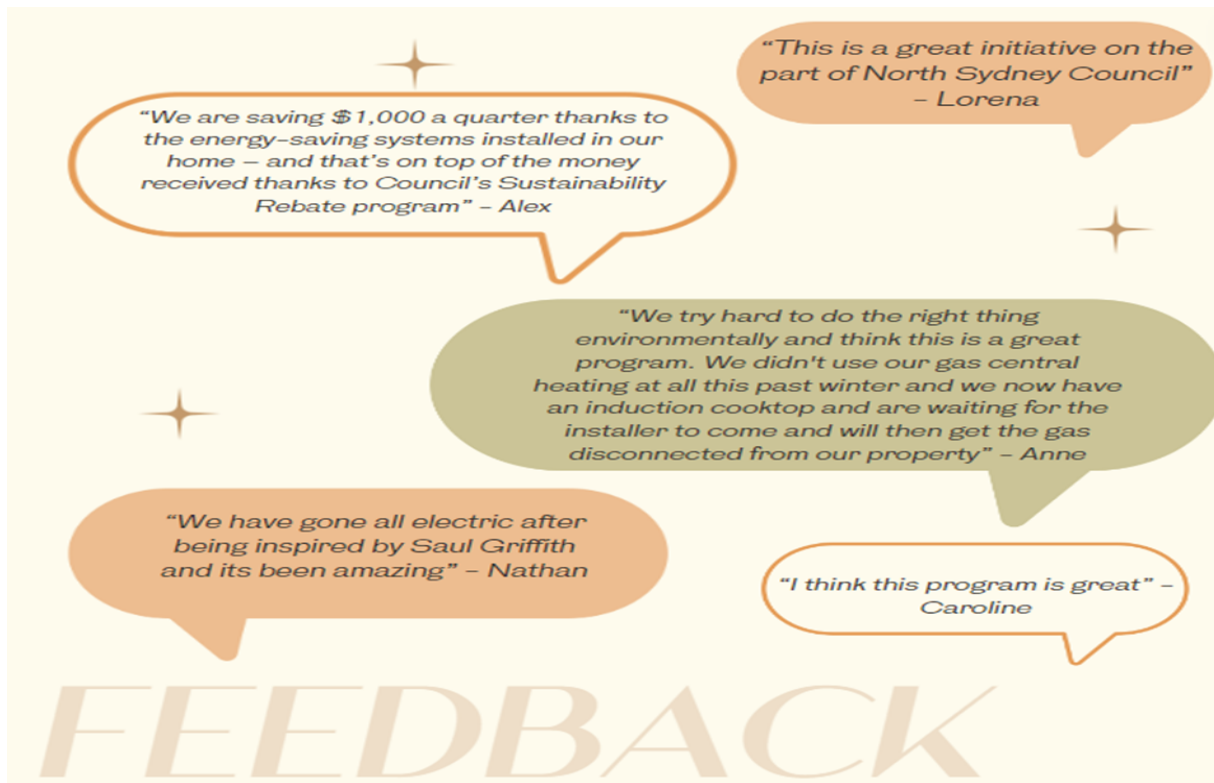


Fig. 5. Resident feedback from program.

NEXT STEPS

An annual review of the program will commence before the end of the financial year to determine which rebate items will be kept in the program for FY24/25. The review process will be on-going to ensure Council is providing rebates that are best placed to serve the community and assist with emission reductions.

Currently there are 5 rebate items that have not yet been applied for including Business Kitchen Electrification, Rainwater Tanks, Sydney Water's Waterfix Program, Business Level 2 Energy Audit and Rooftop Solar Health Check. Informal feedback from the community has identified potential rebate items that are not currently included in the rebate program including:

- Smart meter board upgrades
- Micro Grid rebate
- Technical advice for engineering or electrical work for strata
- E-bikes
- Green Energy
- Disconnection from gas

A more detailed evaluation of the resident experience in this program will commence closer to the end of the financial year and will include both quantitative and qualitative evaluation. Community feedback will assist to determine the level of support provided by Council is appropriate and to best ensure the program funding is fully allocated each financial year.

Funding

Based on the current rate of program expenditure it is expected that the funding for the Sustainability Rebates program will be fully allocated before the end of the financial year. After all program funds have been spent, the community will not be able to apply for a rebate until the start of the 24/25 financial year. North Sydney residents will be placed on a waitlist for individual rebate items and notified on 1 July 2024 when they can apply.

Other Sydney based Councils offering a rebate program have not received any negative community feedback about this process and have been able to manage any reputational risk by providing regular community updates on available funding, similar to the update that was sent in the February Green Events newsletter (See Fig 6 below).



Fig.6. Sustainability Rebates funding update in the February Green Events community newsletter.

Consultation requirements

Community engagement was undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol.

Financial/Resource Implications

This project is funded through Council's Environment Levy. The project budget is \$80,000 with funds being allocated for direct community rebates, minimal service fees and a software platform to process the rebates.

Legislation

There are no legislative considerations required for the update report.

