

2012 BECC Conference: Poster Presenter Abstracts

Presenter: Nina Hall, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation

Other Contributors: Dr Lygia Romanach, CSIRO; Peta Ashworth, CSIRO

Creating Energy Behavior Change in Low-Income Households

Australia's leading science organization, CSIRO, has shared its earlier success with BECC regarding the 'EnergyMark' longitudinal program, which cut residential energy use by 20 percent through behavior change around energy consumption. CSIRO has adapted EnergyMark to a low-income audience with the 'CSIRO EnergySavers' program. Low income households are particularly vulnerable to rising energy prices due to their lower disposable incomes. This pilot program is designed to create long-term and empowering changes to decision-making around energy consumption, as well as reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The focus of CSIRO EnergySavers is to deliver an innovative program to a low-income population that does not normally hold strong environmental attitudes, but are mainly motivated by the potential cost savings. CSIRO EnergySavers provides a multidisciplinary approach by combining approaches from science communication, behavior change theory, and social research. The result is a creative combination of information materials and a style of delivery that ensures trusted access to low-income participants. This presentation shares the emerging results of this pilot program, which has been implemented in 2012 in Brisbane and Melbourne, cities with contrasting climatic conditions. The program is being evaluated using both technical (meter data) and social measures, including increased control of energy use and increased personal comfort for heating and cooling. The close engagement of the Australian government in this program reflects their interest in possible policy contributions around energy efficiency, climate change responses, science communication, and protection of low income households against rising electricity prices.