

Mercy Services

Organisation Overview

Mercy Services provides in-home and community support to the aged, people with a disability, families and people recovering from AOD issues. Based in the Lower Hunter region of NSW, Mercy Services has around 130 staff (82 FTE) on site over an average week. The organisation runs 25 programs that assist over 3000 clients. It has five facilities with most services provided in client's homes or in the community (e.g., Home Care Packages, Home & Community Care services, Community Transport, parenting interventions and AOD counselling).



Location: Tighes Hill, NSW

Size: 130 staff

Building style: various

Major energy uses: office equipment, lighting

Energy uses

Since 2008 Mercy Services has conducted annual environmental audits and made concerted plans to reduce its negative impacts on the environment. By making a number of changes Mercy Services has been able to reduce its gas usage by 16% and electricity usage by over 23,000kwh or 23% from 2008 to 2013.

Mercy Services Energy Usage 2008-2013



Energy Saving Opportunities

Mercy Services joined the NSW Government's Sustainability Advantage program in 2010 and, since then, has reduced electricity usage by 30%. This program assisted in the systematic and strategic assessment of how operations could be altered to reduce negative environmental impacts.

In response to education and identification of energy savings opportunities Mercy Services environmental projects have included:



- Introduced compulsory two hour environmental responsibility education for all staff.
- Established a Mercy Services Environmental Responsibility Workgroup, with representatives from all business units, that meets every two months to consult and coordinate environmental initiatives.
- Developed annual Sustainability Action Plans with regular reporting throughout the year on progress on reductions in electricity, gas, transport fuel, and water usage along with waste sent to landfill. A full annual report is published on initiatives and outcomes for each site and service within Mercy Services.

- Encouraged staff to use desk top fans or open windows as an alternative to air conditioners and to set their air conditioner at 18 to 21°C in winter and 23 to 25°C in summer.
- Reduced electricity use by: setting the computer system to turnoff any computer that was left on at the end of the day; removing unnecessary equipment; using a networked printer rather than many desktop printers; and using a kettle rather than a continuous zip style urn.
- Established regular rewards for high achievers: free lunch provided to the site with the best environmental savings over a year.
- Changing less efficient fluorescent tubes with T5 tubes (at a cost of \$4587) - saving 93kwh or \$25.73 p.a.; and
- Installing 10kwh solar photovoltaic panels (at a cost of \$28,500) - reducing the site's electricity use by 57% in a full year – saving 18,540kwh or \$4760 p.a.

The NSW Government supported Mercy Services through its Sustainability Advantage Program, including financial assistance with the cost of installing the rainwater tanks and the solar panels. The payback period for the cost of the solar panels would have been six years if not for the grant from the NSW Government.

There is an ongoing challenge in ensuring staff understand and support these environmental projects.

One of the ways Mercy Services builds this support is by regularly reporting how much money environmental projects have saved and reporting how many more services to clients were enabled by these savings.

