



Just Change Evaluation Report

Energy Efficiency for Low-income Renters in Victoria

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Executive Summary

Key figures from the pilot

Total cost per house: **\$1230**

Insulation materials and installation: **\$1070**

Other materials: **\$80**

Installation of other materials: **\$80**

Total revenue per house: **\$1147**

Insulation rebate per House: **\$911**

VEET certificates per house: **\$236**

Net cost per house: **\$83**

Excludes uncosted volunteer time
(at least 10 hours per house)

Energy efficiency is a cheap and easy way to reduce energy costs, increase comfort and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, low-income renters face numerous barriers to accessing energy efficiency.

The Just Change Pilot

Just Change was established to help low-income renters navigate these barriers and enjoy the benefits energy efficiency can bring – reduced energy costs, increased comfort and lower emissions

The Just Change pilot project aimed to retrofit 10 low-income rental properties in metropolitan Melbourne. The pilot has identified key barriers to and opportunities for delivering energy efficiency to low-income renters.

What we found

There is a large pool of funding available to support household energy efficiency activities. However the schemes and rebates are complicated, difficult to access and change frequently.

There is a lack of knowledge about existing insulation levels. Partial insulation is common and in many cases, neither tenants, agents nor owners know whether the property has insulation.

Low-income renters face the additional barrier of trying to get consent from the landlord before their homes can be improved.

Participants

Tenants

In all households, tenants were more comfortable after the installations and in most cases were using less energy. All tenants were anxious about interacting with property managers and owners, particularly in relation to making requests to improve their homes. Tenants recognised the limitations on their ability to reduce their energy use in their rental properties.

Property Managers (Agents)

Real estate agencies managed most properties. Property managers, commonly known as agents, generally did not have the time or incentive to assist Just Change. The agents who did engage with Just Change were able to fast-track the consent process. Participating agents recognised that Just Change reduced the time they needed to invest to improve the properties and placed high value on this aspect of the program.

Owners

Owner attitudes varied greatly. A number of owners did not engage with the program. The main reason for non-participation was the proposed 12 month rent freeze. Participating agents recognised that the improvements to properties organised by Just Change required little effort on their part, and placed a high value on this aspect of the program.

Executive Summary

What it means for policy and programs

There are an estimated 2.05 million occupied dwellings in Victoria of which around 20 percent are privately rented. Approximately 350,000 Victorians have Low Income Health Care Cards.

Based on Just Change's findings, these people are more likely to miss out on the benefits of energy efficiency without further action by the government and community organisations.

Obtaining consent for retrofits in rental properties is difficult. Tenants are reluctant to ask for improvements to their homes, particularly if this creates a risk of a rental increase. As Just Change has found, tenants will often try to "fly under the radar" to avoid dealing with their agents or landlords.

Programs that seek to assist low-income renters must be prepared to mediate between the tenant and owner to assist with consent and installation. A one-size fits all approach to energy efficiency is unlikely to work for low-income renters.

Environmental and community organisations should become familiar with the numerous sources of funding available for retrofits. Funding for energy efficiency retrofits will often complement their other programs, such as those dealing with fuel or food poverty, or greenhouse gas emissions.

Working with real estate agents presents a real opportunity and the REIV was an early supporter of Just Change. Further education and promotion may improve engagement in the short-term. Over the long-term, incentives or support may be necessary to ensure wider participation.

The current system of rebates, certificates and subsidies is complicated and labour intensive. Simplifying and streamlining these schemes for those lacking information and time is crucial to a wider uptake.

Recruitment remains a key challenge. Large-scale delivery of energy efficiency products to low-income renters will require partnerships with trusted third parties that can reach numerous potential participants at low cost.

Legal reform could have a significant impact. Mandatory disclosure of energy performance will improve knowledge but may not advantage low-income renters. Many of the consent issues could be resolved by amending the Residential Tenancies Act to remove the requirement to "make good" the property at the end of the lease for approved energy efficiency modifications.

The Victorian Energy Efficiency Target scheme (VEET) can be channelled to benefit low-income households, even though it does not target this group. Incorporating a low-income component into the VEET scheme, as is done in other jurisdictions, could improve access and drive the market in certificates.

Key messages

Providing energy efficiency is a low cost, effective way to improve health and comfort while reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

There are numerous sources of funding available, so retrofits are not expensive.

Levels of knowledge about energy efficiency and available funding are generally low.

Low-income renters are unlikely to benefit from this funding without assistance in navigating the consent process.

The Problem

Low-income households spend a higher proportion of their income on energy. Around 30% of the highest 5% of electricity consumers are classified as 'low-income'. And low-income households make up a disproportionate share of the rental market.

What is a split incentive?
Where ongoing costs and rights to improve are not evenly shared between parties, in this case between tenants and landlords.

According to the Victorian Council of Social Services there are many Victorian households that are currently experiencing "fuel poverty" – the inability to meet their basic energy needs.

However tenants are usually unable to access measures to improve the efficiency of their rented houses because of the landlord tenant market failure known as the 'split incentive' problem.

The split incentive refers to the divide between costs and benefit in retrofitting rental homes. Landlords do not directly benefit from energy savings stemming from energy efficiency investments. The tenant has an incentive to reduce ongoing costs but lacks the power to make alterations or modifications to the property under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. In addition, private tenants are more mobile than other tenure types and are unlikely to invest in a property they do not own and will not occupy for a long time. This helps to explain why renters have much lower rates of insulation than owner occupied houses.

The Tenants Union of Victoria (TUV) notes that the split incentive problem is entrenched by: a lack of awareness and appreciation the role of energy efficiency to reduce energy bills; a resistance to changing habits; and inadequate information about costs and benefits.

Alongside economic costs associated with poor energy efficiency, there are also associated health impacts. A 2007 New Zealand study¹, found that insulating low-income households has delivered significant improvements in the health and quality of life of the occupants.

Adults and children reported reduced wheezing, colds and respiratory problems reduction. People living in insulated houses were also less likely to take days off work and school (40-50% reduction) than people in houses without insulation. There were also fewer visits to GPs and fewer hospital admissions for respiratory conditions.

¹ Howden-Chapman, P., Matheson, A., Crane, J. et al. (2007). Effect of insulating existing houses on health inequality: cluster randomised study in the community. *British Medical Journal*, 334: 460-464.

The Just Change Pilot Overview

The Just Change pilot sought to overcome the barriers to energy efficiency for low-income renters by retrofitting ten rental households between November 2008 and August 2009.

Eligibility requirements for the pilot

- Rent the home you live in
- Have a valid Health Care Card
- Live in a stand-alone house (not an apartment)
- Live in a home built before 1991
- Have no or less than R0.5 of ceiling insulation

Services provided

Just Change organised free assessments and installation of the following energy efficiency improvements:

- ceiling insulation
- water saving showerheads
- energy saving light bulbs
- draught proofing on windows and doors
- exhaust fan covers
- 'Clear Comfort' window treatments

Just Change worked with Construct Ramsey and Domain Insulation to provide ceiling insulation. Ecovantage installed light bulbs, shower heads, draught proofing and Clear Comfort. Installers were fully accredited and insured.



Costs

In addition to support by partner organisations Just Change secured significant in-kind support, discounts and donation of materials. Costs were also recouped through Federal Government rebates and the creation of carbon reduction certificates under the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target scheme, which were purchased by Simply Energy. Installation costs varied depending on the size and needs of each house.

The average installation cost per house was \$1230, which was largely recouped through rebates or certificates.

Rent freeze

In exchange for the above retrofits and services, the landlords needed to agree to not raise the rent for 12 months.

Volunteer House Managers

Each house had a volunteer House Manager who oversaw all elements of the consent and installation process and liaised with agents and owners.

Just Change provided detailed guidance and training on roles and responsibilities of the House Managers and obtained volunteers insurance.

Eligibility

Approach

The Just Change pilot had four key eligibility requirements (see previous page). These requirements, their rationale and key learnings are discussed in this section.



Findings and future steps

Dwelling Type

Standalone dwellings were targeted in the pilot to simplify consent and simplify measurement.

Public, community and transitional housing, and apartments were all excluded. Rural and regional houses were also excluded because it was not feasible to work outside of metropolitan Melbourne for the pilot project.

Future Just Change work will explore working with other property types.

Health Care Cards (HCC)

Having a Health Care Card was an eligibility requirement because they are generally accepted as the broadest measurement of low-income status. In addition, when the pilot commenced, the Victorian Government required a HCC to access the highest Sustainability Victoria insulation rebate.

The HCC requirement narrowed the scope of participation, may have excluded some deserving groups from participating, notably newly arrived refugees. Within the pilot, 25 refugee houses were excluded because they did not have a HCC.

The focus on low-income renters was a key component of the pilot and a key feature of Just Change. In future, a general reference to concession cards, rather than HCC may improve access.

Ceiling Insulation

There was a requirement for houses to not have any ceiling insulation (or below R0.5).

Many Victorian dwellings have partial but not complete insulation, which meant they were not eligible for Federal Rebates.

In many cases neither the tenant, property manager, nor owner knew whether the property had existing insulation.

This caused significant project delays in negotiation of consent occurred before the ceiling was inspected.

Rental Freeze

The pilot required landlords to agree to a one year rental freeze. The purpose of the freeze was to protect tenants from being charged additional rent as a result of the retrofits. This requirement was a unique and important part of the pilot.

However, the rental freeze was a significant barrier to participation. Several landlords indicated they would not agree to any program that limited their choices in relation to rent. Equally, some tenants did not want to participate for fear of their landlord's reaction to the rental freeze.

Just Change will review this requirement in light of participant feedback and the increased availability of rebates. It may be necessary to shorten the period or require the landlord to agree not to use retrofits as a basis for a rent increase.

Recruitment

Approach

Just Change initially relied on referrals from other agencies to recruit participants. The aim was to compare two recruitment models by recruiting six households from social service agency referrals and four from real estate agent referrals.

Just Change formed relationships with many organisations, but did not provide any direct financial incentives for recruitment and did not pay for any advertising.

Findings and future steps

The time and resources necessary for recruitment were underestimated. Just Change approached over 10 social service agencies and 15 real estate agencies, both local and head offices (see Appendix 1 for details). In some cases Just Change cultivated relationships over many months. However, this resulted in minimal referrals, with no eligible houses referred by social service agencies and one house by real estate agents.

Of the real estate agencies that did respond, two commented that they were looking for houses that fitted the criteria and whose landlords would be interested. The agents were unwilling to suggest the program to landlords that they expected would be uninterested.

Other referral pathways were then explored, including environmental organisations, media and the Just Change website. Word of mouth was an effective referral pathway, particularly recommendations from pilot participants, volunteers and their social networks.

Engaging property managers

Time

Agents responsible for each participating household were invited to participate in a ten minute follow up survey about energy efficiency, rental properties, and the Just Change pilot project.

All agents that responded to surveys identified time as the primary barrier to participation. Agents acknowledged that the Just Change approach minimised their time commitment, with one agent commenting that the tenant and landlord “like me more even though [the House Manager] did all the work”.

However, even the time required to pass on landlord details was seen as prohibitive.

One agent noted:

“It didn’t take much time. But to be honest, anything that takes any of my time is too much time”

Knowledge

Agents did not know where they would look for information about energy efficiency. The internet was identified as a likely source but no one was able to name a specific website.

Agents were also not able to identify three ways that tenants and landlords could improve the energy efficiency of their properties, and most struggled to name three options for landlords.

All agents said they would like to know more about energy efficiency options for the houses they manage, and thought that individual action on the environment was worthwhile. Their preferred formats for learning were workshop or conference, brochures, or a website. Topics suggested included:

- average daily energy consumption for different family types;
- general information about energy efficiency options (particularly information for landlords);
- information about rebates; and
- “anything that is free for landlords will be of interest.”

Recruitment

Referral agency survey data

To examine how Just Change could work more effectively with referral agencies, we sent a brief survey to 37 entities that had been asked to recruit for the pilot program. As community workers and real estate agents are busy, the survey was only six questions and all respondents went into the draw for a double movie pass.

Just Change sent a recruitment survey to 15 real estate agents and none responded. This implies a lack of agent engagement with Just Change in relation to recruitment.

Respondents from social service and environment organisations tended to fall into two categories. Either they had no clients that met the eligibility criteria, or they had over 100 low-income clients that may have been eligible. This implies that the administrative complexities of larger organisations were a barrier to referrals, or that Just Change failed to engage the right people in those organisations.

The main reason nominated for not referring clients to Just Change was lack of time to discuss the program with clients.

Some pilot project participation criteria were also seen to be a barrier: home owners, community and public housing, uncertainty around HCCs, flats and apartments were all cited as reasons for



not referring clients. HCCs were nominated as a particular problem due to difficulty asking clients what is considered a personal question.

All respondents strongly agreed with the statement that "Just Change's work is important". However, "Just Change's work is exciting" rated slightly lower and "Just Change's work is relevant to my organization" rated slightly lower again.

Respondents were given a list of options for Just Change to make it easier or more appealing for

referral agencies to participate and selected a wide spread of options including:

- speaker to explain program to staff;
- speaker to explain program to groups of clients;
- information in languages other than English;
- additional written information;
- finder's fee of \$10-\$15 for each house referred;
- a sign to put up at reception; and
- "nothing could have been done differently".

Approach

Tenants cannot make alterations to their property without their landlord's consent, so negotiating with owners and property managers is critical to improving energy efficiency for low-income renters.

Just Change provided a standard consent form, with advice from Deacons law firm, and worked with agents and owners to obtain all consents on behalf of the tenant.

Findings and future steps

Tenant/Agent/Landlord relationship

The consent process was slow and required many follow up calls to property managers and landlords. This is discussed in detail below.

Even in cases where information and rebates are provided, many tenants feel unable to negotiate with their agents without assistance.

Most, if not all, tenants displayed some degree of anxiety about the relationship with their property manager or landlord in the consent process.

For example, participants decided to withdraw from the project because: "if you make a change to your house, they can evict you. I can't afford to lose this house". This reflects views of other tenants who decided not to participate.

"We're at the bottom of the market so I never feel like I can make any demands"

Many tenants commented that they try to "fly under the radar" or "hide" from their agent. Many tenants stated that they felt their rent was more likely to be increased if they made requests.

Several tenants made the unprompted observation, "this would never have happened without you".

Most tenants were reassured by having Just Change negotiate on their behalf. Some tenants were nervous that their agents might be angry about being contacted by Just Change and called in advance to advise them.

Tenants also observed that Just Change had more credibility with landlords than tenants, and knowledge of rebates and installation process made it more efficient.

"I can request it, but there's not much obligation or incentive for the landlord to do it. That's why this program works so well."

"Hounding" for consent

House Manager diaries showed that many phone calls were necessary at all stages of the process.

Contacting tenants typically required several phone calls over a short time period.

Contacting property managers and landlords required high numbers of phone calls, emails and sometimes personal visits to establish initial contact and then to get signed consent. This typically occurred over long periods of time (gener-

ally between 10 and 40 contacts over a period between two weeks and over two months).

Despite these efforts from Just Change, several landlords refused to consent and several were unresponsive (neither refusing nor consenting). In some cases, agents acted as gatekeepers and Just Change never had direct contact with the landlord.

Tenants that were not able to participate due to lack of consent were provided with a package containing a Renter's Guide to Sustainability, a showerhead exchange form, energy efficient light globes and weather stripping.

Working with government rebates

Numerous changes in government rebates complicated the process. For example, during the pilot project the Federal Government announced a new insulation rebate of up to \$1,600 and, accordingly, the State Government withdrew their lower rebate.

The Federal Government insulation scheme initially created onerous requirements for quotation and claiming of rebates.

Although these problems have now been remedied, it demonstrates that the design of rebate and certificates schemes is critical.

Members of Just Change found dealing with the changing requirements and schemes very difficult, even though we had detailed information and experience with the issue. The average person would be in a far worse position.

Labour and House Managers

Approach

There were four levels of labour for the pilot:

Just Change Committee

The committee was responsible for program design, funding, materials, administration management of House Managers and external relationships. The committee volunteered its time.

Just Change Advisory Group

The advisory group provided high level strategic advice. The advisory group volunteered its time.

House Managers

Each house was allocated a House Manager to negotiate consent, coordinate installations, and provide education. House managers were provided with training and an instruction guide. All House Managers volunteered their time.

Installers

[Construct Ramsay](#) and [Domain Insulation](#) were contracted to install insulation, [ecovantage](#) were contracted to install all other appliances

Findings and future steps

The House Managers for the pilot were selected based on their ability to support tenants and provide energy efficiency information. This was a strength of the project.

All tenants and landlords surveyed were 'very satisfied' with their Just Change House Manager, and all estate agents were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied.' When asked to comment on how the house management process could be improved, one landlord commented that "I can't think of anything. On the contrary, I think he went out of his way to listen carefully to what I had to say and certainly went out of his way to draw up a non-standard agreement [more suited to the household's needs]. This reflects very well on him personally and very well on the organisation".

The initial aim was to have one House Manager per house so that strong relationships could be established with all participants. Because the process was so protracted some households had several different House Managers. This did not make a difference to the level of tenant, agent and landlord satisfaction.

One of the benefits of having several House Managers serving one house was that different skill sets were needed for different aspects of house management. Working with property managers and landlords to obtain consent required assertiveness and persistence, and a significant amount of time to consistently re-contact agents or landlords. The consent process improved when a dedicated Just Change Committee member took over all outstanding consents.

In the future the House Manager's position would ideally be split so that an assertive, professional approach is made to agents and landlords. Because the consent process is extremely time consuming and requires many contacts to be made during business hours, it is not feasible to continue using volunteers for this role.

Behaviour Change

Approach

Just Change believed it important to include an education component in the household installation visit.

This consisted of two related parts:

- The Alternative Technology Association and Environment Victoria both released excellent renters' guides to sustainability this year. Each household received one of these guides.
- A walk-through of the home to discuss the installations and associated behaviours. Each House Manager was provided with an information sheet to guide this discussion.

The information sheet was based on accepted principles of behaviour change:

- Habits are more likely to change at times when other changes occur. Although this generally applies to lifestyle/behavioural changes, the upgrades to the property may assist residents to adopt energy efficient behaviours. Therefore the energy information focuses on behaviours directly related to retrofits.
- Actively involving residents in household assessment has more impact than providing a report. Therefore the House Manager information outlined ways to involve the tenant in the walk-through (eg. touching windows to learn about thermal transfer).

“ I’ve been arguing with one of my housemates about energy efficiency ... We should be turning fluorescent lights off when we leave the room ”

Findings and future steps

Some House Managers did not feel confident providing education, particularly to tenants who had already embraced sustainable behaviour changes. Future programs could improve the education function by running a separate training module on behaviour change, increasing the behavioural information provided to House Managers, employing staff with sustainability or education qualifications or accessing other schemes such as the Federal Government's Home Sustainability Assessment Scheme.

Tenants generally had a high level of interest in the energy efficiency discussions.

Of eight tenants who answered the question about whether their behaviour had changed since participating in the project, five could identify specific changes in behaviour. The most popular was a reduction in the use of heaters. One tenant explained, “it is less draughty and we retain heat better” and another, “we don't need the heater on as much and we turn it off because it gets quite hot now.” other changes included:

- replacement of 50 watt globes with 15 watt globes;
- turning lights off more regularly and;
- the purchase of door snakes to reduce draughts.

The overwhelming ability of tenants to name behaviour changes as the result of retrofits indicates that the behaviour change strategy was effective. Behaviour change should be retained or increased in future programs.

Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Scheme **VEET**

Several of the retrofits were eligible for Victorian Energy Efficiency Certificates (VEECs) under VEET. With the consent of the owners and tenants, certificates were generated by ecovantage on behalf of Just Change. These were then sold to Simply Energy.

The quantity of VEECs generated depended on the amount of eligible work in each of the ten houses and the continued eligibility of ceiling insulation under VEET.

The estimated quantities of VEECs for ceiling insulation, CFLs, showerheads, draught stopping and weather treatment is based on the VEET calculator: www.esc.vic.gov.au/public/VEET/VEEC+Calculators.htm

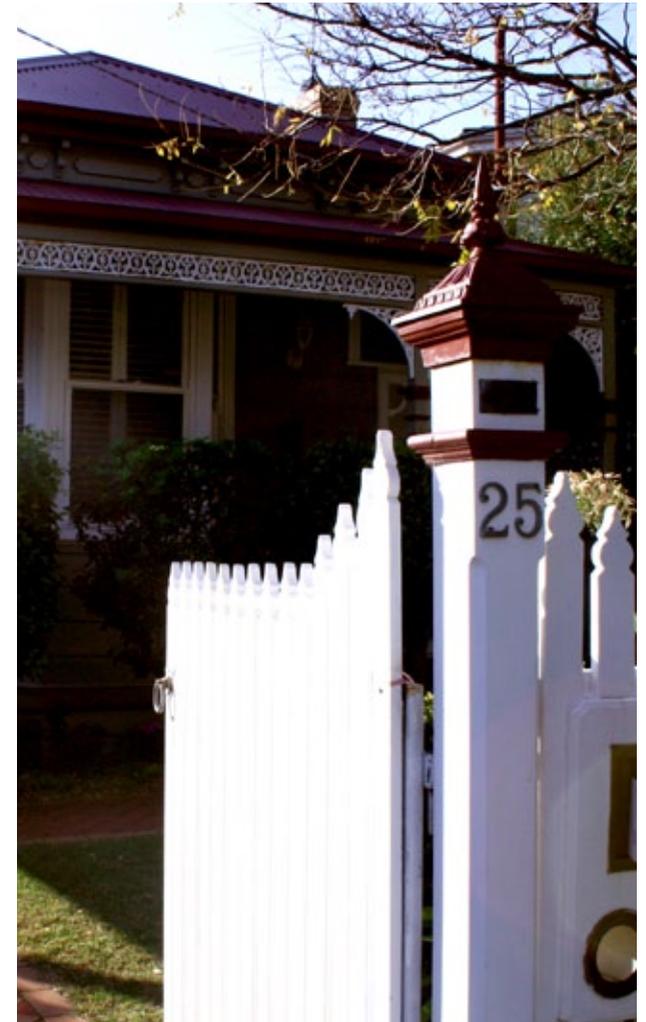
The VEET scheme currently does not incorporate an equity requirement. Most beneficiaries under the status quo are middle to high income.

A similar scheme in South Australia, albeit with much lower a target, requires that a percentage of certificates are created from retrofits to low incomes households. The UK Energy Efficiency Commitment also included such a requirement.

As VEET is reviewed beyond the 2009-2011 period, Just Change would propose a greater emphasis on equity and a requirement that a number of certificates to be generated in low-income households. Including such a requirement in Victoria could improve access and drive the market for certificates.

VEECs from the pilot

Activity	Total
Ceiling Insulation	77
CFLs	23
Showerheads	7
Draught proofing	11
Total	118



Outcomes

Economic benefits:

Participating landlords received installations at no cost. Just Change's work increased the value of the property and may also reduce renter initiated rental turnover.

Tenants benefit from the assurance from the landlord their rent will not increase for twelve months.

Participating tenants are expected to have reduced power bills compared to what they would have experienced if the retrofits weren't undertaken. See Environmental Benefits for more information on energy savings.

Health and social benefits:

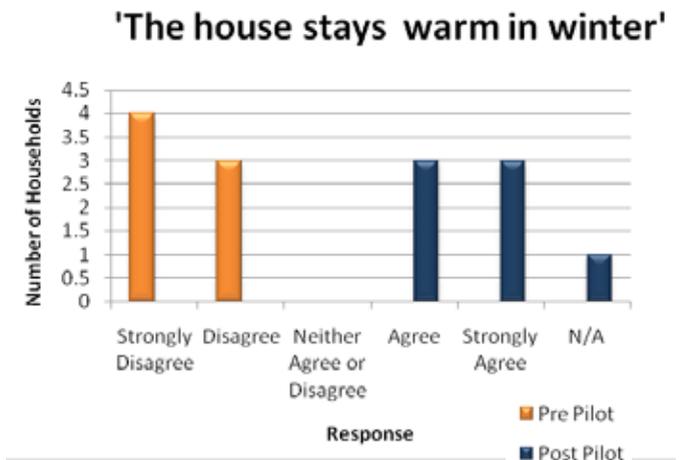
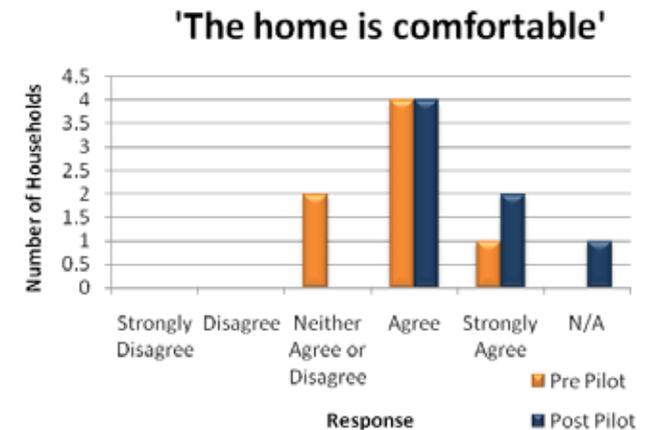
Equity and health are strongly linked. The Just Change pilot project has demonstrated a way that the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Scheme can promote equity (by facilitating uptake of a VEET compliant package by low-income households) where it otherwise may be disproportionately accessed by those who are able to pay.

The Just Change pilot project has also highlighted the unequal impacts of climate change and energy price increases within Australian society.

Studies have linked thermal comfort to improved health outcomes. Just Change is contributing to this emerging body of research. Households have provided data on frequency of illnesses (such as flu and respiratory illnesses) that are associated with draughty, uninsulated houses and Just Change will follow up in 12 months to establish whether there is a change in frequency post-installation.

Surveys with tenants contacted before and after the pilot project indicate that household warmth increased substantially after the retrofits, and draughts decreased. There was also a slight increase in comfort levels (see graphs below). There were no significant changes in perceived dampness levels as most tenants commented that their homes had never been damp.

Changes in Perceived Household Comfort Levels according to Pre and Post Pilot Survey Data



*NB: N/A refers to a house in which the tenancy changed in the time between the retrofits and post data analysis

Outcomes

Environmental benefits:

Greenhouse gas abatement will vary from house to house. The retrofits selected have well-demonstrated abatement capacity.

It is difficult to make robust claims about energy consumption due to the short-term measurement period, small sample size, rental turnover and changes to household composition and working patterns. However, energy use for the five households that we have comprehensive metering data for shows promising results. This is particularly pleasing considering that the installations were performed during autumn and winter when household energy use would typically be expected to increase.

Electricity Use

Household	Daily average kWh's pre-installation	Daily average kWh's post-installation	Average daily temperature pre-installation	Average daily temperature post-installation
1	5.27	5.30	18.97	14.78
2	3.49	7.67	13.41	11.37
4	13.93	10.03	12.30	12.44
5	4.21	5.42	11.31	12.73
6	24.74	33.25	11.34	13.16



Testimonials from Participants



John Cornford, Tenant

"Our home is cold throughout winter. We have no way to keep the heat in and the wind just rips through the house.

Real estate is also such a fast paced business set out to make money, they do not listen to the needs of renters.

My family and I have already done everything we can to reduce our energy usage. But this still didn't meet our needs the way insulation would.

I was considering insulating the roof with old mattresses to reduce heat loss this winter. Then I heard about Just Change. They are going to organise the insulation for us. We'll be warmer this winter and have lower bills."

Toby Archer, Tenants Union of Victoria

"Just Change's work actively reduces financial stress among groups that are struggling. Just Change has achieved a rare double – improving energy efficiency without sacrificing housing affordability. Insulation will also makes houses more comfortable, which protects the health and wellbeing of tenants now and into the future."

Judith Walker, Home Owner

"Tenants are in a very difficult position and are often reluctant to ask for improvements to the property, especially if they are dealing with an agent or a landlord they don't get along with. I personally know people that have felt very intimidated when they requested reasonable repairs to their property.

Even if the tenants are confident to make a request, many landlords might consent to retrofits but then say that they have to put the rent up.

Obviously landlords have to cover their reasonable expenses, but I hear all the time of rent increases that happen very frequently, and there seems to be no limit to the amount of the increase. I know of people who have had to seek alternative accommodation because of the many rent increases they have faced from their landlord.

Just Change is doing something truly significant because it gives tenants some leeway when asking for improvements to their homes."



Edward Crossland, Tenant

"When we look outside and see how freezing cold it is, we realise that the house is so much warmer now with the insulation. One of the biggest differences since the retrofits is that we use the heater a lot less, and for shorter periods of time.

After the retrofits, our landlord came to the house and she was very happy. She was walking around saying what a great initiative it was."

Beyond the Pilot

A larger program would be most effective in a specified geographic area, in partnership with local agencies and representative bodies.

Scaling Up

Just Change will seek to expand the number of houses retrofitted. We will do this by the following methods:

Recruitment: Formally partner with organisations that have access to low-income rental clients including social welfare groups and real estate bodies at the executive level. This could include creating a financial incentive for referral agencies eg. a finder's fee for each house.

Simplify eligibility: Revise the criteria for involvement, particularly for HCCs and dwelling type.

Consent: Revise the consent process and rental freeze clause to ensure fewer forms and greater participation of those in need – while balanced against equity concerns and the need to protect the renter. Advocate for only renter consent when seeking permission for energy efficiency retrofits.

Funding: Access funding for paid staff member(s) through Government and Community grants, and through partners' sponsorship. Ensure funding is sustainable through involvement in VEET.

Labour: Ensure Just Change moves from all voluntary to some paid staff. This could include a dedicated staff member to liaise with agents, tenants and owners.

Other installations options: As government programs evolve, Just Change may offer additional energy efficiency tools. Examples includes water tanks and the \$1600 federal rebate to upgrade from electric to solar or heat pump hot water. Just Change may establish partnerships to offer these additional upgrades

Engaging Property Managers

Further research on barriers and drivers is needed in engaging with agents. This would complement the work that Department of Sustainability and Environment is undertaking with landlords and tenants.

Just Change will investigate creating marketing or financial incentives for agents to participate. It will also include efforts to minimise the time investment by agents. This may include additional written information and promotional material that can be forwarded to landlords, or displayed at reception to encourage self nomination by tenants and landlords.

In certain circumstances, agents can make changes to properties without consulting landlords, eg. urgent repairs or changes under a certain budget. In consultation with the REIV, Just Change will research ways that such situations can be used to maximise efficiency and equity.

Community Outreach

Just Change will seek to reach a wider number of communities by:

- Providing more material about Just Change for non-English speaking community groups;
- Developing a package and presentation that can provide others with the skills to roll out similar programs;
- Regional programs to engage different organisations in the same area, in conjunction with local media;
- Leaving information or sign-up post cards with participants to enhance word of mouth referrals
- Providing information or referrals to programs for community and public housing residents or income poor home owners;

Mandatory Disclosure

There are a raft of household energy efficiency policies being developed by the Council of Australian Governments. A major initiative will be the introduction in 2011 of mandatory disclosure of energy performance when buying or renting properties. Although this will raise the profile of energy efficiency in the residential sector, low-income renters will not necessarily be able to act on this information because their housing choices are limited by their financial constraints. Just Change will monitor this issue and advocate for policies that address the needs of low-income renters wherever possible.

The Just Change Team



The Just Change team
L-R: Kathryn Bowen, Michaela Lang, Roland Dillon, Bonnie Learmonth, Dougal McInnes, Kati Thompson

Team Members	Key Accountabilities and Responsibilities
Roland Dillon, President	Project management, legal affairs, contact with high level partners
Kathryn Bowen, Vice President	Evaluation, key public health issues, market research and survey data
Kati Thompson, Secretary	Delivery, training of House Managers, internal communications, installation and delivery issues
Michaela Lang, Treasurer	Government engagement, referral of houses, grant funding, training of House Managers, budget
Bonnie Learmonth, Board member	Communications strategy, spokesperson, networking
Dougal McInnes, Board Member	Carbon policy including VEET, spokesperson, engagement with referral agencies for delivery

The Just Change team met through the Centre for Sustainability Leadership's Fellowship Program (www.csl.org.au). Without this program, and the support of all involved, Just Change would not exist.

In addition to our financial partners and advisory board, we would like to thank:

- Organisations that provided invaluable advice: Deacons, TUV, MEFL, VCOSS, ATA and BSL.
- Our volunteer House Managers, who we were proud to have as the face of Just Change, and helped make the pilot a success:
 - Nancy Lang;
 - Alex Houlston;
 - Amelia Easdale;
 - Kieran Perkins;
 - Sarah Lowcock;
 - Tina Gallico;
 - Bruce Matheson; and
 - Imogen Schoots (who also made a significant contribution to our media coverage).
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- The many others that volunteered their time, energy and expertise to our organisation.

Photography:
Compton & Green: Cover image
Rebecca Feiner: Pages Contents, 4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 18, 19, 20
Mila Robles: Page 16 Alison Wong: Page 14
Images are for illustrative purpose only, unless stated otherwise.

Appendix 1 - Barriers to Recruitment

Below are some of the key barriers to recruitment reported by potential recruitment agencies. These are not all of the referral agencies approached, as many were unresponsive to requests or did not provide reasons for not participating.

Social Service Agencies

Referral Pathway	Barriers
Kildonan	Wrong point of contact within the organisation. Many public housing tenants, few private rental. Bushfire recovery took 65% of all staff away from energy efficiency work. Clients thought there was a cost to participate.
Uniting Aged Care	Most clients are elderly and own their homes despite being low-income.
Best Chance	Due to their extreme circumstances, clients receiving crisis payments during the pilot period were all deemed unable to participate in any program.
SAIL	Clients are low-income and have refugee/migrant status but do not have HCCs.
Asylum Seekers Resource Centre	Clients are in public housing.
Good Shepherd	One referral but landlord refused consent because of rental freeze clause and language barriers.
Community Welfare Northcote	One referral but was ineligible because lived in an apartment.

Real Estate Agencies

Referral Pathway	Barriers
Fifteen Real estate agencies (Local and Head offices)	Property managers could not find renters who met the criteria with landlords that were thought to be receptive.
	Three property managers were proactive but they mostly managed high-cost rentals and therefore had wealthier tenants. Property managers were concerned about time involved in searching files for HCC status.
	No clients receiving rent assistance.
	Many agencies did not respond to Just Change requests for referral.
	Two homes were referred and consent was negotiated. The homes were then found to have sufficient (R3.5) insulation.

Appendix 1 - Barriers to Recruitment

Environmental Organisations

Referral Pathway	Barriers
Environment Victoria	Many referrals that did not result in retrofits. Reasons include: house being sold, house already insulated and tenant expecting repairs to downlight wiring, tenants in flats and apartments, tenants without HCCs, tenant refusal due to fear of eviction.
Monash Environment Group	Recruitment approach coincided with exam period.
North Melbourne Sustainability Street	Most members are owner-occupiers.

Media

Referral Pathway	Barriers
ReNew magazine	No interest expressed in pilot participation. May yield referrals in future.
Altona Star	Tenants in public housing expressed interest.
Around Laverton (from Laverton Community Centre media release)	One expression of interest; however it did not progress to consent because the house was sold.
Green Renters website	Interest expressed in Just Change generally; however not in pilot participation.

Government

Referral Pathway	Barriers
Moreland City Council	Low-income residents were being recruited to the Solar Cities project.
City of Melbourne health and community services	Because local government tends to work most closely with aged residents, many clients are income poor but asset rich (eg. pensioners who own their homes) and therefore ineligible.
Connecting Communities Program, Access Care Southern	One tenant referred but was in social housing, not private rental (referred by Kingston City Council).



Appendix 2 - Materials Installed

A suite of installation materials was developed based on the energy savings that would be made, and materials were obtained from various suppliers, including Sustainability Victoria, commercial suppliers and local government.

Low Flow Shower Heads: The average low-flow showerhead saves around 13,500 litres of water per resident per year. Water use averages 9 litres per minute, compared with 20 litres per minute from traditional showerheads. Greenhouse gas emissions savings vary depending on the type of hot water service in the house, but are approximately two tonnes per year on electric systems and 600 kg on gas.

Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs: Over the lifetime of a CFL (8,000 hour globe) half a ton of CO₂ is saved.

Draught Sealing: The average home in Victoria has so many gaps and cracks that it is equivalent to leaving one large window open at all times. This increases heating costs by about 25%. There are a few simple ways to stop this, including 'door snakes' and weather stripping. Feedback from installers was that further gaps were still present around doors in some homes.

Exhaust Fan Covers: To stop hot or cold air coming into the house through open exhaust fans and to prevent air leaking through a fan and into the roof cavity or outside, you can use exhaust fan covers. Just Change uses "Draft Stoppa" which has flaps which open when the fan is in use so that air is drawn out of the room (as it would if it were not there). It then closes when the fan is turned off so that hot or cool air is not lost from the room.

Window Treatments: In insulated homes 40% of heat lost and gained is through windows. There are many different types of window treatments. Just Change uses Clear Comfort, which is low cost and has little aesthetic impact. Clear Comfort is a clear membrane that is attached to the window frame with clear double-sided sticky tape. This double-glazing effect can reduce heating needs by 17% and cooling needs by 11%. It also reduces condensation. See www.clearcomfort.com.au.

Ceiling Insulation: Ceiling Insulation is the highest priced energy efficiency tool that we use, costing up to \$2000 per house. Insulating a home saves 45-55% of heating and cooling energy and reduces total energy costs by almost 20%, saving households up to \$314 and 2.2 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually. Just Change uses insulation of an R value of at least 3.5 in accordance with Australian standards and Federal rebate requirements.



Appendix 3 - Data Collection

Data collection tools were developed to evaluate the process and impacts of the project. Participation in the pilot project and the associated evaluation was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time.



Data collection tool	Comments
Tenant pre-project survey	Data was gathered on household energy use; tenant/landlord/agent relationships; knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to energy efficiency; and experiences relating to the process of the pilot project.
Tenant post-project survey	
Owner pre-project survey	The interview guides were developed using items from various sources, including the WEST evaluation (reference) and Sustainability Victoria's Energy and Water Taskforce, and took approximately 15 minutes to administer.
Owner post-project survey	
Real estate agent post-project survey	
House Manager's diary	House Manager diaries were developed to collect the procedural information, challenges and successes of the house managing process and to quantify the time investment required to negotiate works in rental properties.
Energy and Water Task Force household information sheet	The Energy and Water Task Force household information sheet collects information about the existing building and appliances. When paired with installation information the Energy and Water Task Force database is able to produce an estimate of energy savings.
Pre-installation, installation-day, post-installation electricity meter reads	Readings were taken to give an average daily energy use before and after installations. Carbonetix's Challenge to Change database was used to match these readings to weather conditions in the measurement periods as changes in weather can severely skew short term energy data.

Appendix 4 - Communications

Just Change had a public presence through presentations, mainstream and community media and our website:

www.justchangeaustralia.org

This is a key point for generating awareness of Just Change and our partners, providing information around residential energy efficiency and the findings of our pilot.

Just Change also used popular media to generate awareness for the project, our partners and to advocate for residential energy efficiency, especially for low-income rental households. During the later stages of the pilot, we were asked to discuss how the different rebate and certificate schemes could be accessed by renters.

Initially, we did not discuss recruitment in the media, because of the risk of getting too many interested houses. However, due to the many barriers to our initial recruitment work, we raised recruitment in later media coverage.

Just Change Media 2009

Media Outlet	Summary
The Age	Overview of Just Change Tenant profile
ReNew Magazine	Two feature articles: Overview of Just Change 'How to' guide for renters installing insulation
Estate Agent	Overview of Just Change Estate agent profile
Connecting Communities Forum	Overview of Just Change Initial pilot findings
Centre for Sustainability Leadership Fellowship Program	Presentation at the 2009 Retreat
Triple R radio station	Two radio appearances
Greenrenters.org.au	'How to' guide for renters installing insulation
Green New Deal Conference	Sustainability for renters panel discussion



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