



Department of Planning and Environment

Evaluation Management Response

Sydney Water's WaterFix® Residential Program
Climate Change Fund 2019-2021



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Executive Summary

The WaterFix® Residential Program is Sydney Water’s ongoing residential plumbing service, with a focus on water efficiency and water savings for our customers. The program has been running for almost 20 years and has evolved and changed over that time to meet changing conditions and customer expectations. The original scope of the program focused on toilet replacement. It has since expanded to include water efficient fittings such as taps and showerheads; and repairing leaks.

The Climate Change Fund granted Sydney Water \$5.7 million towards the WaterFix® Residential Program in 2019. Given the drought conditions at that time, a decision was made to ramp up Sydney Water’s WaterFix® Residential program by way of increased subsidies.

This report is an evaluation of this investment in the WaterFix® Residential Program.

There were several key findings from the evaluation. They include that:

- Research on this program is of international significance
- Program activities were implemented as intended.
- Program participant numbers exceeded targets at higher customer satisfaction levels
- There is strong evidence that the program helped the customers who participated in the program to conserve approximately 11 kilolitres of water per year per residential customer

The program was evaluated to be a high-quality program. The following recommendations are aimed at reinforcing what is already occurring.

Table 1 Summary of recommendations and program team management response

Recommendations	Accepted (actioned)	Partly accepted	Not accepted
Maintenance of a stable governance structure. The danger is always ‘who owns the program?’. If this ownership is unstable in terms of management and contractors, the quality of the program will deteriorate.	Accepted (actioned)		
The present programs success shows that improving quality and productivity should remain the path towards reducing costs. An emphasis on costs as a primary driver will invariably work against the long-term effectiveness of the program.	Accepted (actioned)		
With increased complexity	Accepted		

surrounding inventory, automated inventory systems should be investigated to replace the present manual inventory processes.

Continue efforts to find high value and actionable participant segments based on the primary segmentation of geographic location.

Accepted

The continued impact of BASIX and WELS on overall demand is difficult to predict accurately without the quality of the research which this program has experienced up to date. This research needs to continue.

Accepted

Ongoing funding providing sustained capability is an important legacy of the Climate Change Fund's contribution, and through this need for funding has been recognised by the regulator, effort should be continued to demonstrate the value of the program.

Accepted (actioned)

Management response to evaluation findings

Table 2 Evaluation findings and response

Rec. No.	Report finding	Recommendation	Response	Action/ Explanation	Responsible party (proposed)	Action contributors	Timing
1	The project had a significant period of prior research and development, with comprehensive evaluations that showed the effectiveness of earlier program iterations. The research on this program is of international significance.	Maintenance of a stable governance structure. The danger is always 'who owns the program?'. If this ownership is unstable in terms of management and contractors, the quality of the program will deteriorate.	Accepted and action taken	The Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation team are the organisational custodians for water conservation at Sydney Water. Oversight of water conservation includes efforts across recycling, leak reduction and efficiency programs.	Sydney Water	Sydney Water	Completed
2	The program rapidly developed during the implementation phase. Critical bottlenecks in the process were enhanced with various software so that by the program conclusion,	The present programs success shows that improving quality and productivity should remain the path towards reducing costs. An emphasis on costs as a primary driver will invariably work against the long-term effectiveness of the program.	Accepted and action taken	Introduction of an Online Booking form as an alternative for customers to request appointments. Introduction of automating the data captured in Completion of Work forms for efficient billing, monitoring and quality metrics.	Sydney Water	Sydney Water	Completed

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	quality data was easily accessible in a timely manner for the most significant aspects of the program.			Introduction of automated customer survey forms to capture customer experience feedback efficiently. Ongoing review of customer feedback and continuous improvement of the program is embedded.			
3	The WaterFix® Residential program delivered value for money for Sydney Water and the NSW Government as demonstrated by meeting the Economic Level of Water Conservation in the planning and execution of the program.	With increased complexity surrounding inventory, automated inventory systems should be investigated to replace the present manual inventory processes.	Accepted	Currently working with service provider on how to improve the efficiency of stock management.	Sydney Water	Sydney Water Service Provider	February 2023
4	The project had a significant period of prior research and development, with comprehensive evaluations that showed the effectiveness of	Continue efforts to find high value and actionable participant segments based on the primary segmentation of geographic location.	Accepted	Currently working with the Strategic and Analytics team in Sydney Water to identify new customer segments to approach, e.g. age of residential property	Sydney Water	Sydney Water	June 2023

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	earlier program iterations. The research on this program is of international significance.						
5	The project had a significant period of prior research and development, with comprehensive evaluations that showed the effectiveness of earlier program iterations. The research on this program is of international significance.	The continued impact of BASIX and WELS on overall demand is difficult to predict accurately without the quality of the research which this program has experienced up to date. This research needs to continue.	Accepted	The Program Team continuously reviews customer feedback for improvement. The team is in the process of providing a wider range of products that meet WELS rating. This was a result of addressing two areas of below target customer satisfaction: quality of products and product range.	Sydney Water	Sydney Water	Ongoing
6	In using Climate Change Funding to further develop a tested program that focused on the most significant water user segment in response to an unusually intense drought, Sydney Water maximised the chances of a successful outcome.	Ongoing funding providing sustained capability is an important legacy of the Climate Change Fund's contribution, and though this need for funding has been recognised by the regulator, effort should be continued to demonstrate the value of the program.	Accepted and action taken	At the end of the Financial Year, The Program Team assess the program according to the Economic Level of Water Conservation (ELWC) principles. The algorithm integrates program business decisions into economic assessment and planning at a high level.	Sydney Water	Sydney Water	Ongoing

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