

News



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Researchers to work with industry to cut energy consumption

UOW researchers are part of a new consortium that will encourage energy efficient behaviours and reduce energy bills of low income elderly households.

Researchers will work in partnership with a range of businesses and industries in the Illawarra on the \$2.3 million project led by Regional Development Australia Illawarra (RDAI) and funded as part of the Federal Government's Low Income Energy Efficiency Program.

"The project is an exemplar of how the university, business and community sectors can respond to big picture problems such as climate change and a rapidly transitioning regional economy, and deliver practical outcomes for the community," Professor Chris Gibson, Director of UOW's Global Challenges Program said.

Director of Innovation and Commercial Research at UOW, Elizabeth Eastland, said UOW's Business Development Manager, Bruce Thomson worked closely with Green Jobs Illawarra and RDAI, on the bid and secured UOW researchers in the consortium, a critical aspect of the project.

“This project, which is called ‘Energy Efficiency in the 3rd Age (EE3A)’, demonstrates the impact cross disciplinary research can deliver. In this case the enablement of efficient energy usage initiatives and pathways to the most vulnerable in our society,” Ms Eastland said.

Professor Paul Cooper, Director of UOW’s Sustainable Buildings Research Centre, will lead the retrofitting and technical monitoring component of the project.

“We are delighted to be a key part of this project that will lead the way in helping older Australians reduce their energy bills and establish the best technical options for retrofitting homes for energy efficiency and thermal comfort,” Professor Cooper said.

Professor Gordon Waitt, a member of the UOW’s Australian Centre for Cultural Environmental Research will investigate the cultures of energy consumption among low income older people living in the Illawarra in range of housing types.

How do low income older people keep warm at home in winter? How do they keep cool at home in summer? How do they use and save hot water at home? These may appear very mundane question, yet, insights from these day-to-day homemaking practices will help shed light on practices and regulations that both work against, and towards, lower energy consumption.

Dr Ross Gordon, from the Faculty of Social Science and Centre for Health Initiatives, will lead a team to design, implement and evaluate the social marketing programme.

“This novel collaborative project offers the chance to put low-income elderly residents first by engaging and empowering them and delivering a consumer oriented social marketing program designed around their needs and lifestyles to facilitate energy efficient behaviours,” he said.

UOW and RADl will work with a range of businesses and industries on the project, including Illawarra Retirement Trust, Warrigal Care, Royal Freemasons’ Benevolent Institution, Dux (WGE Group), Southern Councils Group, Illawarra Forum and WEA Illawarra.