

Australian Tidy Towns 2012 Program Report

Town/Community: WEST ARTHUR WA **Date judged:** 6 & 7 February 2012

Population: approx 880

Organisers: WEST ARTHUR Tidy Towns Committee in partnership with WEST ARTHUR Shire

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COMMUNITY ACTION/PARTNERSHIPS

WEST ARTHUR's Tidy Towns Committee and extensive network of business, industry and community groups play an important role in preserving and enhancing the local environment through a range of projects and partnerships for a sustainable future.

Various projects are a feature of WEST ARTHUR Shire's welcoming presentation and promote numerous examples of community commitment, achievement and pride. Four main communities have contributed to the WEST ARTHUR Tidy Towns success and include Darkan, Arthur River, Duranillin and Moodiarrup.

The Shire leads by example and encourages the community to ensure that homes and private gardens are tidy and well maintained. It has excellent partnerships with the community and the Tidy Towns Committee, providing support through administration, funding and commitment to community values.

Relationships between Shire, business, industry and community are extremely strong. Notable example has been the successful development of the Darkan Sports and Community Centre.

This project brought together sporting codes, children's service needs and social attributes into one location, reducing duplication of facilities and bringing the community together. The entire project budget was in excess of \$1.8 million.

Numerous community-building events and activities have contributed to the display of pride in the community.

West Arthur Community Resource Centre promotes participation providing activities for seniors and school children and everyone in between.

A strong commitment to community sustainability and development of partnerships was proved when the secondary section of the Darkan District High School closed in 2010.

As a result of the Age-Friendly Communities study a Senior's Coordinator has been employed by the Shire to support a number of projects to increase opportunities and improve the lifestyle of seniors in the community.



'DAME PHYLLIS FROST' LITTER PREVENTION

Residents of the WEST ARTHUR Shire view litter prevention as important to promoting respect for the environment and improves not only general appearance, but also increases community pride.

Keep Australia Beautiful 's Litter Report Scheme and 'Adopt-a-Spot' programs have active participants in WEST ARTHUR. Local school children have 'adopted' Nangip Reserve, keeping it clean and planting new trees. Much of this work is done out of school hours in partnership with the community.

Other community initiatives include the locally designed dog waste station installed in the Railway Reserve which includes an innovative dog drink bowl.

The townships of Darkan, Duranillin and Arthur River are kept clean and tidy with the community taking great pride in their towns. There is very little rubbish on the approaching roads to the towns providing a welcoming landscape.



RESOURCE RECOVERY & WASTE MANAGEMENT

WEST ARTHUR Shire has introduced a range of initiatives that aim at increasing appropriate resource recovery approaches and responsible waste management.

In addition to the kerbside recycling bin service in towns provided by the Shire, a bin exchange service has been provided for those not living in the townships. When bins are full they can be exchanged for an empty one at the Shire Depot for an annual fee.

Currently, five tonnes of recyclable material is collected per month within the Shire with each household contributing 15kg per fortnight.

Numerous waste and recycling initiatives are carried out in the WEST ARTHUR community with partnerships between the local school, businesses and the Shire. The 'Bleat' community newspaper and the Community Resource Centre (CRC) regularly advertise the current recycling options available to residents and the CRC is often a collection point for these initiatives.

Collection points for recycling materials from rural residents who do not have a recycling bin are located at the Shire depot, Duranillin and the Arthur River hall. Wren Oil collects waste oil. The Shire promotes Drum Muster and Chem Clear.

A community mulch collection is used by shire gardeners and residents that is made up of tree and plant pruning carried out by Shire staff. Timber felled when carrying out clearing for road works is collected and milled for future use as guideposts and street furniture.

The community's WAX 11 event showcased the use of recycled materials with the theme of 'Bloom or Bust'. Residents were encouraged to construct sculptures from recycled materials found in their homes. The sculptures were presented in the town centre with a celebration and announcement of competition winners.

Eleven local Councils, including WEST ARTHUR, have formed an alliance to improve waste management across the region. This includes a waste management plan, site plans for individual refuse sites, joint purchases of fencing, signs and recycling bins for better pricing, and joint employment of a project officer.



ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION & PROTECTION

Over 350 community members have contributed to over 5 500 volunteer hours to the protection of cultural and natural heritage values and to establish a sustainable future in the WEST ARTHUR Shire.

The community, Natural Resource Management Office (NRMO) and government have jointly tackled many environmental issues such as non-wetting soils and salt affected land. Agencies.

Nangip Reserve is an 'Adopt-a-Spot' location for local school with children taking pride in keeping it weeded, clean and tidy. Children and Friends of Nangip Creek are involved in tree planting and ongoing environmental health monitoring, silt removal and controlled burns in line with the Darkan Fire Management Plan. The Shire has installed and upgraded paths and signs within the Reserve and continues to control weeds utilising a low environmental impact method.

Community members lobbied the Shire to convert the leased Kylie area to a reserve and restore it to its original state. It is now vested in the National Trust of Australia (WA), which is coordinating a rehabilitation project to conserve the built and natural values of the site and benefit salinity containment across the Catchment.

With a grant obtained for revegetation and fencing, tree seed has been collected from the reserve and surrounding areas to be planted this year. The community continues planting and fencing, controlling feral animals and weeds and further planning to plant the next degraded section.

The annual 'Red Card for Red Fox' hunt culled foxes, feral cats, rabbits and a pig, raising over \$600 for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Locals have also laid fox baits and are involved in the regional feral pig project and rabbit baiting.

Work has progressed on the 'Dardadine Block', a private reserve with nine rare or endangered floral species. Vested in the National Heritage Trust, it has a 'Land for Wildlife' agreement. A community action grant, through Caring for Our Country, has been secured for fencing and revegetation of degraded areas. This community project involves landholders, local NRMO, Darkan Primary School and various other volunteers.

A Herbarium is located in the library consisting of over 960 mounted specimens with 1 125 located in the State Herbarium including Declared Rare Flora and Priority Species.



WATER CONSERVATION

Facilities around the Shire have been built considering the need for effective water conservation. The Darkan Sports and Community Centre has been plumbed to be self-sufficient in water with capacity of 500 000 litres per annum when funds for tanks become available.

Synthetic bowling greens have been installed at the Darkan Sports and Community Centre and at Moodiarrup Bowling Club, replacing grass greens.

Many community members and the Shire use native plants and mulch to reduce water consumption. The Community Resource Centre conducts popular gardening workshops including Waterwise gardens, use of grey water and mulching and composting.

A water requirements survey found the majority of local farmers had sufficiently prepared their properties for dry years, maximising their water catchment and storage potential.

A new toilet at Arthur River Historic precinct is a composting type with Arthur River and Lake Towerrinning's public toilets having automatic shut off taps installed.

Local landholders regularly participate in trials to ensure the sustainability of farming and native vegetation. Farmers trialled Lure H2O to reduce water consumption/losses. Trials are underway to compare other methods of combating water repellence. Other trials on agricultural land include installing deep drains to reduce salinity, sewing water and use of salt tolerant perennial pastures.

All landholders are committed to preserving their soil and managing saline and/or wind and water erosion prone, or affected areas on their properties. As a result, landholders are protecting Natural Heritage and water conservation areas adjacent to their properties.

ENERGY INNOVATION

Examples of projects underway in the WEST ARTHUR Shire include:

- Solar heating the outdoor swimming pool and installing blankets to reduce heat loss and reduce evaporation. This has enabled the pool season to be increased by four months. It has also increased use with several groups regularly using the pool early each morning.
- Installation of sensor lights as part of extension and upgrade of Darkan Sport and Community Centre.
- A resident uses waste cooking oil from local business to create bio-fuel to use in his vehicles.

Plans for the future include:

- Solar panels on the Community Resource Centre and Sport and Community Centre buildings.
- Approval given for a test mast to be installed for investigations into a wind turbine site in the Shire.

Local residents and farmers have participated in home insulation and solar panel schemes provided by the government. Numerous residents have installed solar hot water systems and farmers use solar pumps in dams.

Regional public forums on the effects of climate change have been held in the community to raise awareness and provide advice on how to manage climate change issues. These forums were advertised via community newspaper 'The Bleat' and also e-newsletters.



A private company has been investigating the establishment of a biomass facility in the south west of the shire. This facility looks to utilise tree plantations from the region in the production of energy. Whilst this project still requires funding to enable it to be further developed, it has been well received within the community.

HERITAGE & CULTURE

Maintaining WEST ARTHUR Shire's proud heritage is an important part of the community's historic restoration and cultural programs.

Numerous historical buildings have community groups taking 'ownership' of their preservation. Examples that have Conservation Management Plans include:

- Moodiarrup Hall - the Committee is nearing completion of the local oral history amassing numerous interviews over three generations. Socials, dances and games nights are regularly held at the refurbished hall.
- Duranillin School - a group has reformed and an application for funding lodged with reference to the Conservation Management Plan. The Shire has allocated funds for a refurbishment in 2012.
- The Arthur River Historic buildings - Arthur River Development Group replaced the Historical Society who restored the buildings. Lottery West funding was secured to create and implement an Interpretation Plan and signs installed. Drainage and stone work have been completed and new toilets constructed including a single composting unit
- Darkan Pioneer Hall's Conservation Management Plan was used to replace the roof to restore it to its original design.
- Darkan Railway Precinct and the Shearing Shed at Arthur River have Conservation Plans to ensure their preservation.

Cultural development of the district is fostered by the many events held annually.

YOUNG LEGENDS

Darkan Primary School is an active community recreating its identity as a Primary School after the government closed the high school section of the school.

A strong commitment to community sustainability and development of partnerships was proved when the secondary section of the Darkan District High School in 2010.

True to community spirit, the primary school has embraced the challenge, focussing on strong leadership and commitment to student education. Opportunity to be leaders on the student council has given the students a voice and have taken on numerous projects within the school to forge their own new identity as well as being involved in sustainable practices such as worm farming, composting, vegetable gardens and waste and recycling projects.



The Darkan Primary School Student Council is active with members involved in the WEST ARTHUR Tidy Towns Committee, attended 'Halogens Leadership Conference' in Perth together with extensive fundraising activities that have far reaching benefits for the community.



Students are involved in Keep Australia Beautiful's 'Adopt a Spot' program formalising their long-term commitment for the care and rehabilitation of Nangip Reserve. Activities include removing weeds, controlled burning and tree planting activities.

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) reformed after a recess of several years providing leadership and decision making opportunities for younger children. With the demise of the Darkan High School, an entire age group is missing from the Shire during school term. The aim is to bring them back to the Shire during the holidays for activities and entertainment.



SUGGESTIONS

If not already in place, WEST ARTHUR Shire's great achievement as being WA's Tidiest Town for 2011 could be promoted on local business materials as well as Shire correspondence to promote the award and hopefully derive benefits from increased visitation and subsequent economic opportunities.

The Tidy Towns Committee may wish to consider the introduction of community garden awards, particularly encouraging native gardens. The awards look to engage with a greater cross-section of the community to add to the beautification approaches currently underway.

With the commitment to composting toilets at the Arthur River historic building site in place, further opportunity to promote sustainability is available through the installation of solar lighting.

Cigarette butt litter is a challenge for all communities. Consideration may be made regarding a formal system of installing butt bins in high traffic areas, eg, sporting facilities, recreational clubs, etc.

With numerous Conservation Management Plans in place throughout the district, wish all the community groups best of luck to ensure the implementation of the recommended preservation initiatives of unique community assets.

Congratulations to everyone involved in the WEST ARTHUR Shire's Tidy Towns program and associated community action projects.

Good luck with future initiatives in helping to keep your part of Australia beautiful and sustainable.

*Dick Olesinski
National Tidy Towns judge*