



## **Sustainable Cities 2012 –New South Wales**

**Recipient:** City of Penrith

**Population:** approximately 179,000 people

**Location:** 50 km west of Sydney and east of the Nepean River

### **Category: Community Action and Partnerships**

By working in partnership with residents, local business and visitors, Council aims to deliver a higher quality of life for all through a healthy local economy, progressive environmental protection and social equity.

Key initiatives and programs include:

- Penrith City Council engages with a broad range of community partners in the non-government sector to foster community capacity and support cultural development.
- Through the Neighbourhood Renewal Project the Council engaged with communities by implementing projects aimed at building community ownership and pride and enhancing the amenity and appearance of local neighbourhoods. A recent example of this is the Bennett Road Primary School mural project, partnering with local indigenous elders and the local primary school to create a community mural.
- Council plays an important role in supporting and working in partnership with agencies in researching and planning for the provision of suitable services to meet local prioritised needs.
- Council also facilitates local service development and resources community service networks to support social cohesion through the operation of inter agencies and other service provider networks.
- Examples of programs that create positive social change and build relationships within communities include youth engagement and anti-social behaviour prevention in the Mondo precinct, the Ruby Roo early childhood literacy program, the Stocklands fitness trail partnership, and the distribution of free healthy foods at Council and community events.
- Council's graffiti hotline is a successful partnership; working in tandem with the community, local businesses and utility providers to quickly report, remove and prevent graffiti in local neighbourhoods, and provide input into the expansion of green screening at graffiti hotspots. 41, 720 sqm of graffiti was removed last year to improve local amenity, and 6000 metres of green screening of graffiti sites were planted.
- Council is an active member of the Greater Western Sydney Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development, which links organisations in the Western Sydney region to share expertise and resources, and identify funding and other project opportunities. RCE is also recognised by the United Nations Other partners in the RCE include the University of Western Sydney, TAFE, Blacktown City Council, Television Sydney, WSROC, and the Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean.
- Council recently consulted with over 5,000 residents for Council's new Strategic Plan, and with a number of adults and children for Council's Child Friendly City Strategy.

## **Category: 'Dame Phyllis Frost' Litter Prevention**

Penrith City Council is committed to maintaining a tidy city and has a number of litter services in place to keep the City clean. Council is developing a litter management strategy to encapsulate all of councils litter prevention and management services. Council has over 30 Public Domain maintenance staff and contractors whose work contributes entirely or in part to litter removal throughout the City .

Key actions include:

- Council provides waste services throughout the town centres, parks, reserves and public places including bus stops, to ensure there are adequate disposal services for residents.
- Council provides recycling services at Council events, and is integrating public place recycling services into the redevelopment of Council's town centres. Council is proud to see local businesses following this trend with public place recycling services, including Penrith Panthers and Penrith Westfield.
- Council is the lead member of the Western Sydney Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) Squad. Penrith along with 6 neighbouring partner Councils work to educate to prevent and combat illegal dumping. The RID Squad and Council rangers work closely to ensure city wide coverage through the Eye Spy Illegal Dumping Program. The 1800 EYE SPY hotline was set up to make it easy for residents to report and follow up on incidents of illegally dumped waste in the region.
- Council has repeatedly conducted the Don't Be A Tosser education and litter awareness program, most recently working in partnership with local fast food businesses shopping complexes and large government agencies to educate residents about litter.
- Council is actively involved with Clean Up Australia Day activities, working with residents, local community groups, schools and businesses to clean up Penrith City. In 2012, over 50 sites were cleaned up involving schools, businesses, and church and youth groups. Nearly 4,500 students participated in Clean Up Schools Day and over 320 volunteers cleaned up on Sunday 4 March.
- Council has been actively providing dog litter bags in local parks and reserves. Council has for a number of years provided compostable doggie bags free to residents in these parks, in addition to awareness campaigns run by Companion Animal Officers to educate residents about cleaning up after companion animals.
- Council has installed a number of Gross Pollutant Traps (GPTs) within local catchments to reduce the volume of litter entering the local creeks and waterways. The new Herbert Street GPT has prevented over 18 tonnes of waste from entering Werrington Creek since its installation in late 2010.

## **Category: Resources Recovery and Waste Management**

Penrith City Council is committed to reducing waste and developed a Domestic Waste Strategy to reduce waste to landfill by 66% by 2014 in line with State Government Strategy.

Significant achievement includes:

- The ongoing of improvement of waste services has environmental, social and financial benefits for Penrith residents.
- The most significant milestone occurred when Council introduced an organics recycling service to 50,000 households in Penrith City in August 2009. This service collects food, garden and all other organic waste for composting.
- By recycling household organic waste, Council is diverting a valuable resource from landfill and creating an essential product needed to maintain a green City- compost. Compost is used on parks and sporting fields throughout the local government area. This has resulted in significant diversion of waste from landfill (from 21% to 66%) and a high quality compost product for use in the local community.
- Council has implemented a contamination management and education program, spearheaded by "The Green Bin Bloke." This character creates a human face to challenges presented by incorrect items being placed in the bin, and is a local identity continually educating the community about waste. Information from Council's regular waste audits is fed back into bin monitoring and education programs, to continually improve results and provide feedback to the community.

- The Green Bin Bloke has been integrated into Councils existing waste education programs, including schools education, community workshops and Love Food Hate Waste cooking classes. The Green Bin Bloke has taken part in 6 primary school education programs and engaged with hundreds of children at events during 2012. Recently, the Green Bin Bloke has delivered a Keep Cup to each member of staff, to reduce the number of disposable cups brought into Council each day.
- Council hosts annual chemical clean out days for the Penrith community to safely dispose of hazardous household items, including paint, oils and gas cylinders. Additionally, Council also runs twice yearly electronic waste recycling days, and has collected over 122 tonnes of electronic waste in 2011/12.
- Council has a number of recycling schemes for the waste produced in Council operations and recycles paper, cardboard, comingled containers, batteries, oils, electronic waste, CDs, toners, cartridges and even spectacles. Council has a partnership with their neighbouring Blue Mountains City Council to reuse road base in an arrangement that benefits both communities.
- Penrith Council is continually looking for avenues to avoid and reduce waste and better options for recycling.

### **Category: Environmental Innovation and Protection**

Penrith City Council works strategically and holistically to conserve natural local biodiversity while engaging their community to partner with them. The Penrith Biodiversity Strategy includes a range of actions to protect natural habitats on private land, manage public land and encourage sustainable business practices. It is aligned with the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity, and the NSW Biodiversity Strategy. Several site specific Plans of Management for Riparian and Bushland Corridors as well as a generic Plan to protect smaller areas have been adopted.

- The innovative Werrington Creek project, due to finish this year, is a NSW Environment Trust funded project that has:
  - Revegetated 106,100 square metres of bushland including 3km of riparian zone.
  - Installed a GPT which collected 10 tonnes of litter in the 2011/2012 financial year.
  - Engaged the community via tree planting days, Clean Up Australia Days, sustainability workshops and displays at community events.
  - Developed curriculum based teaching resources based on the creek environment and engaged with school teachers and students.
  - Undertaken water efficiency measures at Penrith Valley Sports Stadium which adjoins the creek. It is estimated this will save 657,000L of water annually.
- Council coordinates a comprehensive Bushcare and tree planting program including 9 volunteer Bushcare Groups. Over 5,000 native plants have been planted. Council coordinates and support annual tree planting events including 'Trees for Mum' (Mother's Day), and National Tree Day.
- Council runs an annual 'Water in Penrith' photographic competition to engage the community with local water issues. This includes a water themed nature photography walk where participants learn about local water issues while learning photography skills.
- Council coordinated the Ropes and South Creek Project from 2008 to 2010, with funding from the NSW Environment Trust. This program included:
  - Large-scale vegetation management plans focused on six sites with two identified endangered ecological communities.
  - Riparian restoration. Over 500 hectares of river bank and open space surrounding Ropes and South Creek were improved by removing weeds and over 110,000 native plants were planted.
  - Engaging the community through workshops, guided biodiversity walks, planting days, plant giveaways and the 'Big Green Day Out' community festival.
  - The project also established a River Recovery Nursery at Greening Australia's Oxley Park complex to promote outcomes including environmental education, volunteering opportunities and increasing knowledge of Cumberland Plain species.
- Two 3-year Environmental Trust grants have been awarded to Council for the restoration and rehabilitation of the badly degraded Jamison Creek within three reserves. Work included on

site weed and erosion control of 30,000m<sup>2</sup>, 4,600 trees, shrubs and sedges planted, and a community training day.

- Various departments within Council work together to come up with innovative solutions to local environmental issues. An example of this is the establishment of 'no-mow' areas to encourage natural revegetation that was developed by different sections in Council including Bushcare, Environmental Health and Parks and Gardens.

### **Category: Water Conservation**

Penrith City Council has a number of programs and projects to raise awareness of water management issues amongst the community and to directly decrease usage of potable water. Key achievements include:

- Council adopted its strategic Water Savings Action Plan. The plan identified the top 14 water-intensive facilities owned by Council and the best ways to make them more water efficient. These actions have since been implemented across these facilities.
- Water efficiency upgrades have been undertaken across a range of Council sites. These include using recycled water and creek water for irrigation, installing rainwater tanks at over 30 locations, and utilising water recycling when undertaking graffiti removal.
- As a result of the actions outlined above, during the 2010-2011 financial year Council reduced its water consumption by 13.5%.
- As part of the innovative Werrington Creek Restoration Project, Council water saving actions have been undertaken at Penrith Valley Regional Sports Centre. It is estimated that this will save 657,000L of water each year.
- Council also coordinates a comprehensive schools education program on water. In the 2011-2012 financial year 1,960 students participated in these programs. The key components of this include:
  - Catchment tours, where students spend the day visiting Warragamba Dam and learning about water supply, then visiting local waterways in the local area and learning about catchment health.
  - The Regional Catchment Field Day, which is an innovative regional event run in conjunction with Blacktown Council. Students participate in a range of fun educational activities learning about water in the western Sydney context and how we can work together to have a positive impact.
  - 'In-school' activities are also offered for local schools which include the stormwater education program, drain stencilling, stormwater audits, and Council's Enviro Adventure.
- Council also works to engage the wider community with water in the local area. This includes:
  - The Water in Penrith photo competition, which encourages residents to explore how they experience water in their local area.
  - Drain stencilling with community groups. This fosters ownership and stewardship with the individuals who participate, and also helps to raise awareness in the broader community about the impact of stormwater.

### **Category: Energy Innovation**

Council has a strong commitment to the Penrith community to actively improve energy efficiency in the context of a changing climate and the increasing cost of energy.

Key achievements include:

- Council's adoption and implementation of an Energy Saving Action Plan to improve the efficiency of Council's top 10 energy using sites. All of the cost effective actions identified in the ESAP have been implemented, and Council is developing a new ESAP to coordinate their future efforts. Overall Council reduced energy consumption by 12,448.1 GJ and 3,283.8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-e per annum from actions implemented since the Plan was adopted in 2007.
- Council has undertaken a number of measures to improve its energy efficiency across its facilities. This includes installing solar PV and solar hot water systems on numerous

childcare centres and community halls, upgrades to the Council Civic centre lighting, as well as purchasing green energy.

- Council has also undertaken to improve the fuel efficiency of its vehicle fleet, including the proactive purchasing of 4 cylinder vehicles for staff.
- Alternative energy sources are actively pursued for Council buildings. By the end of financial year Council will have installed 19 solar photovoltaic systems across its facilities, along with one large solar thermal installation at Ripples Leisure Centre.
- During the 2010-11 financial year Council decreased its direct and non-direct greenhouse gas emissions by 923.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-e over the previous year.
- The trialling of new and innovative technology is actively pursued by Council. Examples in recent years include heat reflective roof paint being applied to the Civic Centre, LED lighting in the Civic Centre, and a micro wind turbine being installed at a community facilities precinct in Glenmore Park. These actions help to determine the feasibility of adopting these measures more broadly across Council's asset base in a way that reduces the risks associated with new technologies.
- Council also actively incorporates energy efficiency in the services it provides for their community. A recent example of this is the installation of solar powered lighting at three public spaces, which has been undertaken to enhance community safety.
- The local community has been engaged with energy savings at home through the provision of power meter meters. These have been made available through Council's libraries, and allow residents to track the energy use and cost of specific appliances. These have proved to be extremely popular.

### **Category: Heritage and Culture**

Penrith City Council has a proud history of rural lifestyles embracing today's cultural diversity.

- Penrith Council is responsible for 21 heritage listed items and has funding resources allocated to maintain and conserve heritage assets. Council also has conservation management plans with funding currently in place for continuing conservation and management of those assets.
- Penrith Council offers a number of benefits and incentives to heritage property owners to assist them to effectively undertake regular maintenance and upkeep of their heritage buildings. These include the Heritage Advisory Service, the Heritage Advisory Committee, and the Heritage Architectural Assistance Fund. Funding was provided to 6 applications in the 2011/2012 year, which included restoration works to antiquated ornate ceilings and restoration of traditional sandstone decoration. The funding assists in the promotion of a positive community attitude to heritage conservation and provides greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of heritage within Penrith City.
- The Castlereagh Hall was originally built in 1895 as the Castlereagh Council Chambers and has been restored and reopened to the community. The reopening has allowed residents to enjoy and utilise a beautiful part of their local heritage.
- The Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest continues to provide a unique and valuable space for creative activity. Penrith City Council together with other public and private sector partners supports the Gallery to present ongoing activities and programs.
- Council has a suite of cultural development programs, which value cultural history and promote integration of diversity within communities. A recent event, Spicy Penrith, celebrated the contribution of the local community from the Indian sub-continent, including culture, dance, song and food. Penrith City also celebrates NAIDOC Day, Refugee Week and Harmony Day and upskills new residents to concepts of nutrition, sustainability and workers rights, and promoting the contribution of new cultures to the local community.

### **Category: Young Legends**

Involving children and youth in community planning and action towards sustainability is a key component of the Sustainable Penrith program. Council implements education activities and partners with a range of agencies to integrate sustainability into the activities and spaces for young Penrith residents.

Key programs and initiatives include:

- Penrith Council provides a large proportion of child care facilities in the local government area. These centres accommodate worm farms, veggie gardens, water tanks, recycled mulch, mod wood decks, timed flick taps, solar panels and natural environments for children to observe, learn and explore.
- Trained educators visit children's centres to conduct entertaining and engaging programs focussing on recycling, composting and worm farming.
- Council has, an internal network of Educators that conduct ongoing programs with school students ranging from class groups and environment committees to entire school communities:
  - Waste education programs including Enviromentors run by Keep Australia Beautiful educators and visits to schools by The Green Bin Bloke.
  - Tours of the landfill, material recovery facility and composting facility, where Penrith waste is recycled, sorted and managed.
  - Catchment management tours showing children important aspects of water management.
  - School tree planting days are supported with Council providing native tubestock to schools on request.
  - The Sustainable Times newsletter, which is distributed to local teachers each term.
  - The Penrith Sustainable Schools Network, which is an email network where teachers receive information such as grants, curriculum based resources and so on.
  - The Sustainable Schools Hub is a resource network for teachers provided on Councils website.
- As part of the Waste Education Program, in 2012, VISY Recycling provided 8 Sustainability Grants to schools to support a variety of initiatives. One example is Kingswood Public's veggie gardening project that not only engaged primary school students in veggie gardening, home composting and healthy eating, but engaged Kingswood High School technology students providing them with a funded design and recycled building project, developing essential practical skills for their curriculum.
- Penrith Council partnered with UWS to engage university students in a Love Food Hate Waste program providing them with life skills in healthy cooking and avoiding creation of food waste. This program also targeted other young people at school age and school-leaving age to provide them with these valuable skills.
- A variety of groups of young people have engaged in Clean Up Australia activities to clean up their local communities. Church youth groups have conducted clean-up activities for the annual event and other groups have showed ongoing commitment by conducting ongoing clean ups in their local areas. For example the Sikh Association of Australia conducts clean-up activities in their local area but has conducted additional neighbouring site clean ups.