

Australian Tidy Towns 2012 Program Report

Town/Community: WUGULARR (BESWICK) NT **Date judged:** 8 November 2011

Population: approx 450

Organisers: Roper Gulf Shire Council (RSGC) in partnership with the community

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COMMUNITY ACTION/ PARTNERSHIPS

WUGULARR (or Beswick), is an Aboriginal community and is situated approximately 118 km south east of Katherine and sits on the traditional lands of the Jawoyn people. It is located near the banks of Waterhouse River and is within the Roper Gulf Shire.

The WUGULARR community have a relatively new and proud involvement with the Territory Tidy Towns program and have been successful in being recognised for various commendable Tidy Towns projects over recent years.

WUGULARR has deservedly achieved the prestigious honour of being the Territory's Tidy Town for 2011. It is both the individual and community culture of pride and self esteem that achieves and maintains this high standard of expectation by all.

Homes and buildings are well maintained, free of graffiti and in good condition. They are neatly painted with most houses having fences in place.

Community approaches are well maintained, clean and tidy in appearance with resealed roads and highly visible street signs. Native tree and vegetation landscapes are scattered throughout the community.

The Roper Gulf Shire Council (RGSC), in partnership with the community and traditional land owners, is dedicated to offering the best possible service to the community. A proactive approach to caring for their environment encourages the community to create a place that all residents can be proud to live in.

Council is committed to improving overall living conditions within the community and to promote a greater capacity for self-management and self-sufficiency.

WUGULARR's new sporting ground and facility is well maintained and residents are continually encouraged to participate, to maintain a healthy lifestyle and build on community support and strength. Sporting teams from surrounding communities are encouraged and 'challenged' to matches in the spirit of healthy attitudes and sportsmanship for all to enjoy and benefit.

The Shire has recently refurbished the single men's units and conducted numerous renovation works with landscaping and beautification projects throughout the community. Both the Aged Care facility and Women's Centre are newly painted and improved.

With numerous CDEP projects currently underway throughout the community, it bears the testimony that WUGULARR residents care for their surroundings and take pride in living in their special part of the Northern Territory.

DAME PHILLIS FROST LITTER PREVENTION

There is a total waste management program and community focus on litter control in WUGULARR with 'Do the right thing' signs posted on bins in place throughout the community.

This approach maintains continual awareness and assists in reducing unwanted litter within this unique outback environment.

Residents and staff from the Shire demonstrate pride in keeping public and private areas clean and free from litter with regular clean ups. This also sets the standard and expectation of residents and visitors to their community.

School litter reduction programs include participation in Keep Australia Beautiful Week activities as well as Clean Up Australia Day and generally keeping the school grounds free of litter.

WUGULARR Primary School students create and illustrate their own 'anti-litter' posters for display to ensure continued emphasis and education on the need to place rubbish in bins provided in public areas.

RESOURCE RECOVERY & WASTE MANAGEMENT

Due to the town's remoteness, there is major focus on a broad range of resource recovery practices which includes the approach of recycling and reusing materials within the general community, where possible.

Waste separation occurs within WUGULARR's landfill site to reduce loss of resources and to increase the site's cell life. Various items recovered include timber, steel, batteries, bottles, cans, copper pipes from old buildings. These items are collected, sorted for reuse or packaged for transportation to a major hub recycling centre. The recent refurbishment of the 'Men's Business Centre' (Men's Shed) included some of these recovered materials.

The community's response to resource recovery has been extensive with numerous residents involved in beverage container recycling programs. Residents that attend the community social club have been recycling their beverage containers for some years now with containers collected recycled.

Fallen trees are recycled, mulched and reused in and around the community to conserve water and for beautification programs. Smaller tree trunks are painted white and used effectively as guide posts throughout the community creating a 'horse and cattle ranch' style impression. The Youth Centre has also benefitted aesthetically from the new style of fencing.

Timber mulch is also stockpiled and used freely by the community to assist in beautifying homes and gardens.

ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION & PROTECTION

The WUGULARR community and Shire work in partnership with the Jawoyn Rangers to effectively protect the environment in and around WUGULARR.

The community and rangers have a shared understanding and care for their country and this effective partnership is delivering positive results for the environment and its residents.

Services delivered as a result of the partnership include feral animal eradication and control plus management of unwanted weeds. Wild buffalo, feral pigs and donkeys present challenges with the outcome leading to environmental and property damage if not managed correctly.

The actions and effective management practices by the Jawoyn Rangers has reduced the incidence and numbers of wild buffalo, feral pig and donkeys roaming through the community.

Fire break management initiatives are in place such as clearing immediate bush surrounding community properties and hazard control programs that minimise the risk and likelihood of a devastating bushfire threatening life and property within the WUGULARR community.

The Shire has also removed and landscaped the community central area, which was once swamp, into a well maintained grassed area surrounding a natural spring. This has reduced mosquitoes, rodent numbers and looks to achieve a reduction in disease.

WATER CONSERVATION

WUGULARR has commenced to expand its sustainable water management strategies by looking to trial water conservation actions that are new and totally innovative to the community.

Timers, automatic cut off devices and solar control systems for irrigation and pumping of reticulation services throughout the community are being investigated and assessed for application benefits.

Water, as in many communities, is a valuable resource. WUGULARR residents are looking to commence managing the challenges of controlling water use throughout the community as well as within the whole Roper Gulf region.

The KAB Territory Tidy Towns Water Conservation audit sheets have identified a number of water conservation areas for action. These actions are to be investigated, trialled and assessed in the future.

WUGULARR is currently looking to automate and upgrade reticulation systems plus assessing the shift from day time irrigation practices to overnight to reduce water waste through evaporation.

ENERGY INNOVATION

WUGULARR's public areas and streets have been made safer with increased street lighting installations which include trial use of energy efficient solar street lights.

Newly installed solar street lights will allow the community and Shire to assess costs and benefits of solar energy use. LED lighting trials are also being considered in an effort to further reduce energy use.

Shire staff have commenced self-auditing works to identify areas of potential energy waste reduction in an effort to work towards sustainable energy management.

Each area of action as identified in the Tidy Towns Energy Conservation audit sheets is being assessed for further recommendations and actions. The focus is on innovative energy efficiency measures that not only benefit the Shire but are positive in dealing with climate change issues. Energy savings directly relate to benefits in CO₂ reduction.

HERITAGE & CULTURE

The WUGULARR community has a rich heritage and culture, a special place in Australian history, and they share their country and heritage through sport and an annual cultural festival, held over the past 10 years.

WUGULARR's, Ghunmarn Cultural Centre is the focus for the community to sell various forms of Indigenous art such as bark, canvas, oils, water and wood carvings all created and produced by local residents.

WUGULARR's main cultural festival is known as '*Walking With Spirits*' is an annual Aboriginal festival held at Beswick Falls.

Held every year over the June long weekend, the community welcomes visitors from around the region. The festival is a unique opportunity to be part of a remote Aboriginal community, and share in corroboree and in the Jawoyn culture.

Visitors are invited to camp and be part of dancing ceremonies, share traditional bush tucker, and enjoy the many cultural activities on offer.

The Festival has developed into a significant celebration of Aboriginal culture, art, music in the region. It connects Aboriginal communities from across the Northern Territory and the Kimberley in Western Australia.

The newly completed 'Men's Shelter' provides a great venue for local residents to conduct their 'men's business' and further compliments both the Aged Care Centre and Women's Centre. It demonstrates confidence in skills and ability by the Shire to refurbish what was once a derelict building and put it to good community use again.

YOUNG LEGENDS

WUGULARR School is committed to developing pride amongst its students. Environmental improvement programs are conducted including recycling, litter reduction approaches together with ongoing beautification of the school's well presented facilities. The school also encourages student participation and involvement in health and daily nutritional programs.

Environmental awareness programs continue to educate children to encourage them to become actively involved at school as well as within the home and community environment.

The newly established nursery/vegetable garden is regularly maintained and tendered by members of the Youth Centre, with the harvest shared amongst the community.

The nursery is a hands-on learning experience designed to teach and gain student confidence. Agriculture is a relatively new concept in remote communities and residents are benefiting from skills being learnt, healthy eating as well as from an environmental perspective.

WUGULARR has a local Youth Centre and Advisory Committee that assists with the delivery of youth sports and recreational programs that promote a healthy lifestyle and are designed and aimed at improving health and well-being. Programs also improve quality of life, keeping youth engaged, teach skills and reduce chronic diseases.

Health services are designed to improve availability of youth health care, with prevention and early detection of chronic diseases plus professional management easily accessible.

A strong regional football sports program encourages youth participation in healthy activities that increase social skills and community pride. The BESWICK Junior Bears are a great example of the success of this program.

The community's BRACS facility also allows the opportunity for WUGULARR youth to participate and learn new skills related to radio media broadcasting technology in a fun environment.

SUGGESTIONS

WUGULARR's Territory Tidy Towns Award is a great achievement for the community and could be promoted on Shire letterheads, envelopes, etc. Promoting the community's great commitment to Tidy Towns assists in encouraging the community as well as developing positive marketing opportunities.

Opportunity for a Territory Tidy Towns sign to be positioned on the entrance to the town to encourage tourist visitation and a potential sustainable economic income together with reinforcing success amongst residents and visitors.

With the WUGULARR School being a major focus for the community, the concept of developing garden beds for planting fruit and vegetables should gain overall community acceptance. The concept may be able to be further developed as a community garden for residents to share the outcome of their labour.

An annual garden competition is a great way to encourage and celebrate the community who participate in beautifying homes and gardens. To further recognise achievement, a 'Tidy Garden' sign could be produced and fixed to the fence of the winning garden each year.

Congratulations to everyone involved in the WUGULARR (BESWICK) Tidy Towns program and associated community action programs.

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

*Dick Olesinski
National Tidy Towns judge*