

Australian Tidy Towns 2012 Program Report

Town/Community: CALOUNDRA Qld**Date judged:** 29 November 2011

Population: approx 50 000

Organisers: CALOUNDRA Tidy Towns group in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and the Sunshine Coast Regional Council

Contact Names: Col White Email: bubcol@hotmail.com
Rhonda Alexander Email: rhonbill@bigpond.net.au

COMMUNITY ACTION/ PARTNERSHIPS

CALOUNDRA is a dynamic and environmentally aware city, and is situated 90kms north of Brisbane. Gateway to Queensland's Sunshine Coast, CALOUNDRA is promoted as a seaside escape and the perfect base to explore the region which is geographically diverse with beaches, lush rainforests and numerous botanical, environmental and national parks.

CALOUNDRA is a coastal community bounded by Bells Creek to the south and Currimundi Creek catchment to the north. The foothills of the Blackall Ranges form a western boundary and the stretch of surfing beaches acts as the eastern boundary. The first white settlers arrived in about 1860.

CALOUNDRA has a rich and varied heritage with residents having a desire to maintain and preserve its history. The community is friendly, enthusiastic and dedicated to caring for their unique environment.

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council works in partnership with the community to ensure that homes and private gardens are tidy and maintained. Council ensures that approaches to the city, including signs and features, public parks, waterwise gardens and sporting areas and median strips are well tendered.

Volunteers play an enormous role in ensuring CALOUNDRA thrives and maintains its reputation as a caring and committed community. Various groups including anti-litter, historical and environmental groups work in partnership with the CALOUNDRA Tidy Towns group, an active Chamber of Commerce and Council to achieve positive social, environmental and economic outcomes.

CALOUNDRA provides an extensive range of approaches that encourage health and wellbeing and specifically involves a broad network of community volunteers to ensure the success of initiatives.

CALOUNDRA's proactive Tidy Towns group oversees numerous activities and links with representatives from various community groups all who have a range of skills and local knowledge ensuring the effective coordination of tasks. The group's aim has been to educate the community in the Keep Australia Beautiful philosophy and to encourage participation by all.

CALOUNDRA's success as Queensland's Tidiest Towns for 2011 has highlighted the great number of people from government, council, numerous community groups, individuals, students and teachers who are



contributing by working in partnership for the overall benefit of the CALOUNDRA community.

The cumulative effect of this success has provided an incentive to continue to work together in the future to achieve a common vision for a better environment, proud community and enhanced quality of life. Community awareness has developed an enthusiasm to be a contributor to a better and more sustainable future for CALOUNDRA.

DAME PHILLIS FROST LITTER PREVENTION

Effective litter preventive initiatives and good litter management have been basic to the success of overall environmental protection and sustainability in CALOUNDRA.

These are both important Council contributions to assist with reducing the amount of litter throughout CALOUNDRA. The community is active in setting the standard with regular daily pickups by locals, regular working bees and participation in Clean Up Australia Day and similar initiatives.

Local schools and community groups are encouraged to work with the Council to further improve litter control.

The Resource Management Community Education program conducted for Council by Environcom is a key to educating the community in the best ways to prevent litter polluting the environment.

All schools include environmental studies in their school programs and this has become an important tool for maintaining and improving litter awareness into the future.

Special problem litter such as used fishing gear and cigarette butts are individually catered for with specialised, well signed disposal units while special dog disposal bags are attached to bins in dog walk areas.

Litter filters are provided where drains enter creeks to trap litter before it enters the creeks on its way to the ocean and drains are stencilled with *'This drain flows to the creek'* messages to raise awareness. Regular water monitoring allows early warning of the presence of litter pollutants in the water to enable corrective action to be quickly undertaken.

Beaches are monitored by Surf Life Saving personnel who encourage good litter behaviour by beach users. Beach sand is turned over daily by machines to collect what may be beneath the surface such as sharps, etc, which are disposed of safely.

The well-used Coastal Pathway, constructed by Council, assists with keeping users to a defined area with a resultant decrease in litter deposited into the bush. Litter hedges at the Ahern Bridge also assist with preventing highway traffic litter reaching local waterways.

Council contributes significant resources to reduce the impact of plastic bags and litter within local waterways by funding initiatives such as Partnership Program/Environmental Grants to community groups who undertake on-ground and educational activities. These include Currimundi Day, Weeding Bees, the annual Riversweep, volunteer River Watch patrols and Clean Up Australia Day activities.



Another community litter initiative, being supported by Council, aims to engage with individuals on their daily walks through the

Sunshine Coast Heart Foundation Walks. The initiative proposes to collect 10 items of litter whilst walking with participants provided with trendy shoulder bags. This community and corporate driven scheme is in the development stages and looks to be a great way of further reducing litter within CALOUNDRA.

RESOURCE RECOVERY & WASTE MANAGEMENT

Sustainable waste management in CALOUNDRA at Council, business, community and individual levels aims to control growing waste levels from increased population through the processes of Avoidance, Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling. Their Waste Minimisation Strategy is basic to minimising landfill area required.

As a result, CALOUNDRA's recycling and resource recovery initiatives divert extensive tonnes of waste from landfill each year.

Separate undercover collection areas at CALOUNDRA's Pierce Avenue Landfill site allow the deposit of additional recyclable materials. The site also enables the recycling of an extensive array of waste materials.

The site's extensive and well managed Recycle Market - Resales Centre also generates a funding source for the benefit of local community programs.

CALOUNDRA has an extensive network of public recycling facilities located in high traffic areas to maximise efforts in resource recovery and waste minimisation.

In an effort to further reduce waste and to reduce methane gas created by buried organic material, Council is promoting worm farming and composting. It is also conducting a trial within the community to recycle food and garden waste by using a special kitchen-top bin with compostable starch bags which are deposited into a domestic garden waste wheelie bin for weekly collection.

A new initiative has seen an extensive mattress recycling approach introduced for residents. As a result of Council's Waste Minimisation Strategy, Council and community organisation 'STePS', an employer of disabled people, formed a partnership to trial the diversion of 14 000 mattresses from landfill a year. This initiative is now underway with up to 95% of each mattress able to be recycled with work undertaken by STePS personnel.

Council has a Waste Strategy Development Plan which aims at continuous improvement in resource conservation and waste minimisation approaches. It employs Envirocom to administer a comprehensive education system aimed at community groups, individuals and schools.



ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION & PROTECTION

Numerous voluntary environmental groups work in alliances with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and effectively contribute to CALOUNDRA's well managed environment. Extensive rehabilitation of the region's unique environment is being undertaken by numerous 'Friends' groups with support from expert Council staff.

Friends of Currimundi Lake, Friends of Moffat Beach, Shelly Beach Conservation Group, Turtlecare Sunshine Coast, and Night Eyes are some of the volunteer groups working with Council on a range of environmental protection approaches.

Council is committed to addressing problems associated with climate change, biodiversity, flooding together with stormwater and coastal management.

Residents who care about the bush and native wildlife are invited to join council's Community Conservation Program. The program is designed to restore native habitat in the region's parks, bushland and dune reserves, with the assistance of local residents and community groups.

Water quality is monitored by Council's Waterways Health and supplemented by volunteer groups with funding assistance from Council.

These volunteers monitor registered sites monthly and feed results into the Waterways Health database using water monitoring instruments. Any reading at any site that is outside an acceptable range is reported directly to Council for immediate corrective action. This action quickly reverses what may have developed into a major problem



WATER CONSERVATION

CALOUNDRA's water recycling programs are extensive with notable examples being the local golf club course being watered with non mains water together with sporting grounds and reserves.

Numerous Council public facilities have water saving initiatives in place such as water tanks installed to supply toilet facilities, spring loaded taps as well as waterless urinals.

Council's Parks and Gardens section utilise plants and trees for their ability to handle drought conditions therefore saving water for long term sustainability.

Resource recovery-generated mulch from green waste is used on all Council gardens. Native lawns are also used as they use less water and cool the area around buildings.

Council continues to explore all options to reduce water use by including reducers and flow restrictors together with regulations requiring all new buildings needing to install rain water tanks.

No mains water is used in the Kings Beach public swimming pool which now exclusively uses circulated sea water. The water is being constantly turned over to ensure a complete change of water every 4 hours. The filters run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The popular Kings Beach



children's water playground has been converted from mains water to now using only sea water, a massive saving of mains water use.



ENERGY INNOVATION

Council has adopted the Sunshine Coast Transition Plan which supports the goal of Council's Coast Climate and Peak Oil Strategy by assisting to build a low carbon, low oil resilient future and is moving towards becoming a clean energy organisation. Education and encouragement of the community and business uptake is also a high priority.

Council's Corporate plan acknowledges the need to tackle energy transition. The plan has identified six key challenges and opportunities and has proposed six objectives for Council and the community.

These are to:

- provide energy management leadership;
- support economic diversification and maximise clean energy investment;
- transition to low carbon electricity and transport fuels;
- reduce consumption of crude oil based fuels;
- facilitate low oil food production and urban agriculture, and
- reduce household energy costs.

Council plans that CALOUNDRA will be the most sustainable region in Australia with its commitment to a 'Living Smart' program. The initiative uses learning and action modules which highlight the need to reduce water, waste, transport and energy use with participants receiving a 'Living Smart' sign with a leaf added for each module completed. A great way for residents to demonstrate a visual commitment to sustainability.

Unity College has introduced an energy conservation program spending \$50 000 on solar panels positioned on the school's library roof. The system powers computers, ceiling fans and interactive white boards with excess power being sold back to the grid. Ceiling fans turn off every 20 minutes during school time until the temperature rises and turnoff automatically during recess and at the end of the school day.



HERITAGE & CULTURE

CALOUNDRA has an interesting history which spans from Matthew Flinders naming Pumicestone Passage to the present time during which a special local culture has developed. It caters for all tastes from the excellent sporting facilities to the Museum, Art Gallery, Library, Memorials, Boardwalk, Bushland Reserves, Wildflower Parks and tourist facilities.

The history of the original inhabitants, the Gubbi Gubbi people is also well recognised and respected.

Heritage restoration and preservation is on a large scale in CALOUNDRA with numerous buildings and sites carefully preserved. Private and public buildings are professionally restored providing a welcoming character which is inviting to residents and tourists.



Numerous CALOUNDRA residents are committed to preserving the city's proud heritage. Members of various groups are dedicated volunteers who have the foresight to preserve the city's rich history for the benefit of future generations.



Notable example is the original CALOUNDRA Lighthouse which has been preserved and returned to its original site by a dedicated group of volunteers and is now open to guided tours. The second oldest lighthouse is also being restored.

CALOUNDRA's Headland Walkway is part of the region's coastal pathway. From Shelly Beach to Kings Beach it shows, through a series of plinths, part of the history of CALOUNDRA.



Some highlight the legend of the original inhabitants and others highlight the involvement of CALOUNDRA during the war. Plaques set into the concrete pathway illustrate the names of people who lost their lives in the service of their country.

Anzac Park has a special memorial to the Anzacs and is the venue for the dawn service conducted each Anzac Day.

YOUNG LEGENDS

Environmental awareness and education programs are an integral part of education in CALOUNDRA with students actively involved in numerous community activities and partnerships. They are also involved in companion activities of caring for people by fundraising for charities and flood victims and interaction with adults.



Many schools and groups provide a wealth of opportunities for youth to develop into positive members of the community. By being involved in these activities, young people develop a maturity and accept the responsibility for making the environment sustainable as well as a better place for all to live.



Unity College's motto is 'Respect for Self; Respect for Others; Respect for the Environment.' Their syllabus includes litter education in a way which demonstrates the disastrous effects of littering and encourages positive anti-litter habits.

CALOUNDRA State High demonstrates ways in their teaching that because litter can cause harm, then it is better not to litter. Students join community groups on Clean Up Australia Days and attend weeding bees where they learn about the environment in a hands-on setting.

Currimundi State School offers students a Life Saving course which teaches beach safety including the importance of the beach environment and how to protect the beach and creeks and drains that lead to the ocean.

CALOUNDRA's unique Junior Night Eyes program includes 4-17 year olds with the main aim of removing litter from Pumicestone Passage. The initiative also monitors mangroves, seagrasses and animal welfare. Protection of the environment is taught in a fun way to encourage youth participation.



SUGGESTIONS

CALOUNDRA's great success as being Queensland's Tidiest Town 2011 is able to be promoted on local business materials as well as Council correspondence to share the city's achievement and hopefully derive benefits from increased visitation and subsequent potential for economic opportunities.

If not already in place, Council may consider establishing or facilitating an Australian Association of Environmental Education (AAEE) or Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI) network through the current regional educational system. An AAEE or AuSSI initiative may complement a consistent approach to environmental education in the region.

Keep Australia Beautiful's Clean Site program's educational resources are available to assist with raising the building and construction industry's awareness of the need to build in harmony with the environment. The program in particular focuses on stormwater pollution prevention and resource recovery onsite.

If not already in place, 'Adopt-a-' programs are an effective method of encouraging schools, community groups or service organisations to take 'ownership' of public facilities or sites around the city. Examples could include looking after a verge or maintaining a park or cleaning part of a highway to provide long-standing benefits to the community and a saving in Council resources.

To complement CALOUNDRA's planned development approach, Council and the community may wish to introduce a consistent sign approach to promote the facilities/services available within the city.

Congratulations to everyone involved in the CALOUNDRA's Tidy Towns and associated community action programs.

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

*Dick Olesinski
National Tidy Towns judge*