

Australian Tidy Towns 2011 Program Report

Town/Community: WAIKERIE SA **Date judged:** 12 & 13 December 2010

Population: approx 3 000

Organisers: Loxton Waikerie District Council (DCLW) in partnership with the general community

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COMMUNITY ACTION/ PARTNERSHIPS

WAIKERIE is situated around 140kms by road, north-east of Adelaide. It is located in the Murray Darling Basin on the River Murray in SA's Riverland Region which is renowned as one of Australia's most important areas for food and beverage production.

The local WAIKERIE economy is built around agriculture with predominant crops being grapes/wine and citrus with nuts, berries, and other fruits and vegetables.

WAIKERIE has a strong tradition of community involvement and volunteerism which is a key to their success. It has had a long association with KESAB (Keep SA Beautiful) but it's most recent achievements have been named the Murraylands Sustainable Community in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

The District Council of Loxton WAIKERIE has had and continues to have successful partnerships with different sectors and interest groups within the community including Service Clubs such as Rotary, Lions, Apex and other community organisations.

These partnerships have evolved from specific areas of concern or vision. They have provided WAIKERIE with significant progress towards creating a sustainable community.

WAIKERIE has a rich and varied history with a desire to retain its heritage. The community is friendly, enthusiastic and dedicated to caring for their unique environment while encouraging business to develop and thrive in a sustainable manner.

The community is committed to ensuring that homes and private gardens are tidy and maintained. Residents and Council ensure that approaches to the town, including signs and features, public parks, and sporting areas and median strips are well tendered.

LITTER PREVENTION

Positive litter control strategies and the community's commitment to keeping WAIKERIE litter free are more than evident.

Various litter reduction approaches are in place throughout the town, in particular within the town's education systems together with a strong community commitment to clean up activities.

The District Council of Loxton WAIKERIE has little problem with illegal dumping mainly due to the WAIKERIE Lions Club who at the Lions Park on the WAIKERIE riverfront conduct monthly auctions. This event resembles a huge garage sale with vendors bringing along pre-used items, such as crockery, furniture, white goods, trailers and boats, etc. The Lions Club has been conducting these auctions for the past 25-30 years. This is a fun way of discouraging illegal dumping that also encourages householders and the Lions Club by rewarding participants for doing the right thing by the environment.

For the past ten years, local residents John and Ruth Maywald have walked the town streets on a six day planned walk. They each take a litter bag, enjoy the walk and keep the streets free of litter.

RESOURCE RECOVERY & WASTE MANAGEMENT

WAIKERIE's recycling and resource recovery initiatives divert extensive tonnes of waste from landfill each year.

WAIKERIE has a long history of recycling and resource recovery within the community.

The WAIKERIE Bottle and Can Depot are the sole recycling and recovery facility in WAIKERIE for the last 20 years. This business accepts most items for recovery and has demonstrated its commitment to ensure a viable service to the community.

The business works in partnership with council, all schools in the community, businesses and community organisations in the area regarding effectively recycling.

Depot proprietor, Bob Sampson, is continually looking for different markets and recently was able to dispose of paper and tin foil packaging which is now reused by a local citrus company.

Council has a number of recycling and litter prevention strategies in place including signs, council by laws and website promotion to encourage the community to maximise the services on offer.

ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION & PROTECTION

WAIKERIE is the gate way to a wide range of unique wetlands and floodplains. These include Birds Australia Gluepot and Banrock Station wetlands.

The district area has a unique collection of biodiversity which can be found throughout the area but in particular conservation parks and wetlands.

Biodiversity is particularly important for creating sustainability because of the specialised roles each species plays in maintaining ecological balance. WAIKERIE communities have promoted healthy wildlife by supporting integrated approaches for managing, protecting, and enhancing wildlife populations and habitats appropriate in the district.

WAIKERIE district has wonderful examples of wetlands, some managed by environmental groups some privately owned. These wetlands are a most important asset as they are a key to a healthy river.

Allan Buckley, founder of the Mallee Sustainable Farming site, has been an innovator and ground breaker in sustainable farming. Many techniques from his trial plot are used extensively by local and interstate farmers.

There is some acknowledgment emerging of the extent to which the actions of farmers and horticulturalists can produce significant environmental benefits for the wider community. The value of environmental services provided by the farming community is now becoming recognised and more broadly implemented.

Many of the WAIKERIE & District horticulturalists are leaders in sustainability and environmental stewardship. Numerous vigneron growers are EntWine Australia members which recognise national environmental best practice and highlight the grower's commitment to sustainability reducing environmental risk and associated costs.

WATER CONSERVATION

WAIKERIE has just come out of its fifth year of the most devastating drought in its history.

Council and the community have worked together on severe water restrictions to maintain a clean, green and inviting town.

This partnership has seen further purchase of water by the community to be utilised on Council facilities.

As part of the Murray Darling Basin, irrigators in the district are some of the most efficient in Australia.

There are no open channels or un-metered irrigation in the WAIKERIE district. Restrictions in drought years have seen many growers move to drip irrigation, using pulse irrigation or polymers for water savings in soil.

All schools within WAIKERIE have a focus on conserving water with native gardens being irrigated by tank water together with plumbing installed from stormwater tanks to toilets and irrigation systems.

Rainwater is harvested and waters school grounds, used in toilets and for hand washing. Timers have been installed on taps in toilets with soil moisture monitoring in place to detect when moisture levels are sufficient to prevent over watering.

Innovative education programs such as the 'Save the Drip' program are delivered together with a range of water conservation initiatives in place through Youth Environment Team programs.

ENERGY INNOVATION

WAIKERIE residents have embraced the concept of reducing greenhouse emissions in the community, in schools and in council operations.

On entering WAIKERIE, the town has reduced greenhouse gas emissions with practical generation of electricity from renewable energy sources. Each town entrance sign uses small solar generators to light up the WAIKERIE sign at night.

Other initiatives include:

- Council purchasing 20% of Green Power as part of the newly agreed 'Across Government Contract for the Supply of Electricity'. Council saw the opportunity for energy saving and environmentally sensitive values important for WAIKERIE's future sustainable development.
- Solar technology is used to operate ferry boom gates at the WAIKERIE river crossing.

Home design and maintenance is used to promote and model more sustainable lifestyles. Healthy, non-polluting approaches at home and throughout the community are contributing to sustainability and support the local ecosystem.

HERITAGE & CULTURE

WAIKERIE has strong community engagement in heritage and culture. Numerous individuals and historic organisations are active in preserving and enhancing WAIKERIE's local history and culture.

Waikerie and Districts Machinery Preservation Society have 98 dedicated members that are involved in preserving the history of the district's machinery that was used from the 1900's onwards.

The club is represented at numerous machinery rallies and shows throughout South Australia and hold a biennial 'Hit 'n Miss' rally where over 3 000 machinery restoration enthusiasts, admirers and general public view examples of local machinery working in a farm environment.

WAIKERIE's National Trust volunteers are responsible for leading tours through a local fish farm, where fish are grown and harvested for local market, with water being obtained from the salt inception scheme water.

The group are responsible for road and street signs which identify places and equipment of historic significance together with plaques positioned on buildings and schools interpreting the heritage of the site.

YOUNG LEGENDS

Environmental awareness and education programs are an integral part of education in WAIKERIE with students actively involved in numerous community activities and partnerships.

All primary and secondary schools in WAIKERIE include biodiversity education activities. These can be on an individual school basis or include partnerships with other schools, council, community groups and service clubs.

The WAIKERIE Primary School's Youth Environment Team participates in a range of environmental activities including Water Watch and Gutter Guard programs, Road Watch, extensive recycling initiatives, plant propagation, and worm farming together with vegetable and native gardening.

They have been nominated for many awards and have been named the 2010 South Australian Environmental School of the Year.

WAIKERIE High School students also take part in a number of environmental activities including participation in a host of recycling initiatives together with learning the basics of plant and animal classification.

The town's Lutheran Primary School also participates in broad recycling programs, energy and water conservation initiatives together with general environmental education that focuses on hands on learning and monitoring.

SUGGESTIONS

WAIKERIE's Tidy Towns Award is a great achievement for the community and able to be promoted by local business, tourism operators and on Council letterheads, envelopes, etc. Promoting the community's great commitment to Tidy Towns may assist in encouraging involvement as well as developing positive economic benefits and marketing opportunities.

Allan Buckley's Mallee Sustainable Farming site is innovative and a national model for sustainable farming. This site may be a great opportunity for Agricultural Science classes from the local high school to get involved in learning more about dynamic dryland farming initiatives.

WAIKERIE's well established school system is available for a formal network of teachers to share ideas, initiatives and improvements at regular meetings. If not already in place, school rep(s) may also be encouraged as a member(s) of relevant WAIKERIE committee(s) for sustainability, etc.

WAIKERIE's unique orange bins certainly provide opportunities for residents and visitors to deposit litter and waste. As the town is now the state's Murraylands Sustainable Community and also Tidiest Town, there may be an opportunity to upgrade the receptacles but still maintain the unique citrus theme.

Congratulations to everyone involved in the WAIKERIE's Tidy Towns 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*