



Newsletter Enquires To:  
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July 2006

## Who is the North East Waste Forum?

The North East Waste Forum (NEWF) is a voluntary local government group that was formally established in 1996 to specifically address waste management issues on a regional level. The group's membership currently consists of five councils in the North East Region of New South Wales - Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Clarence Valley, Lismore City and Richmond Valley. The NEWF also has strong ties to the neighbouring councils of Kyogle and Tweed Shire. The NEWF member councils see significant benefits in belonging to the NEWF, working collaboratively and co-operatively to achieve local and regionally based solutions to waste management.

## Reusable Bags

NEWF and councils partnered with APN Newspapers in a sponsorship arrangement that saw 21,000 reusable bags distributed via The Weekend Star and the Grafton Daily Examiner during October 2005. This was a great opportunity to promote the waste avoidance message and get people thinking about creating less waste every time they shop.

## Sub-Regional Waste Management Planning

The NEWF has continued to facilitate the process of investigation into regional waste disposal options for councils of the northern sub-region. A Working Group of council waste and executive staff has been formed to plan for the potential development of a Regional Waste Disposal Facility and examine options for Regional Recycling Opportunities.

## Business Waste Reduction Project

The Business Waste Reduction Project grew from a desire to work closely with and develop relationships with businesses across the region with the aim of assisting them to reduce waste to landfill. The success of the project has been in building and maintaining these relationships and providing ongoing support, encouragement, expertise, advise and guiding businesses through the maze of waste reduction and avoidance.

In total, eight businesses have been given intensive assistance as part of the project. Along the way the Acmena Juvenile Justice Centre was unable to continue working with the NEWF, and the BCS Maranoa Retirement Villages in Alstonville and Lismore joined in. The following businesses were involved: Alstonville Adventist Retirement Village; BCS Maranoa Retirement Villages (Alstonville and Lismore); Byron Central Apartments; Grafton Correctional Centre; Acmena Juvenile Justice Centre; Lismore Shopping Square; Casino RSM Club.

The project has achieved major outcomes in terms of waste reduction and costs savings for businesses. Figures contained within the final report indicate that for each business the following reduced waste to landfill figures and costs savings apply.

Business	Waste Reduction Figures	Cost Savings
Alstonville Adventist Retirement Village	11,730 kg/annum	Not known at this stage
Byron Central Apartments	10,995 kg/annum	\$1,774
Grafton Correctional Centre	24,133 kg/annum	Not known at this stage
Lismore Shopping Square	169,000 kg/annum	\$12,625
Casino RSM Club	13,927 kg/annum	\$1,040 + 15% in paper costs & 3% in gross profit
BCS Maranoa Retirement Villages	4,056 kg/annum	Not known at this stage

Specific outcomes from the BWRP include:

- Staff surveys, waste audits (and secondary audits) and Waste Reduction Action Plans completed for all businesses.
- Waste audits completed for all businesses.
- Business waste composition analysed.
- Waste reduction opportunities identified.
- Project Newsletter developed and distributed.
- Presentation at the Voluntary Regional Waste Groups Forum.
- Media promotion carried out in some council areas.
- Final Report complete.



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## Second Hand Saturday

For the second year in a row the NEWF co-ordinated Second Hand Saturday across the region on behalf of councils. In a change from last year, Clarence Valley Council was involved, with the total number of garage sales reaching 456. Once again council staff took on the role of registering participants, answering inquiries and distributing promotional information.

SHS was boosted again this year by sponsorship of over \$30,000 provided by APN Newspapers (for the Northern Star and Grafton Daily Examiner) in the form of advertising and promotion. In addition promotion was conducted across the region in local media, radio and even we even found ourselves on TV!

In terms of the potential for keeping waste out of landfill, the SHS campaign increases further reuse of goods, and therefore may not be directly contributing to a decrease of waste to landfill. Items which are being sold may still be in good condition and repair, and are 'unwanted' rather than 'useless'. Therefore the exchange of reuse materials is much greater than the quantity that would otherwise have been sent to landfill. It is estimated that the total of materials to have been saved from landfill includes 31.75 x 240 litre Mobile Garbage Bins; 42.5 trailer loads and one cubic metre. The results also include an increase in awareness of reuse after participating in SHS and a direct contribution to involvement in reuse activities from those participating.

## Landfill Operator Training

The NEWF Landfill Operator Training course has been one of the success stories of the NEWF activities over the past few years, with over 80 staff participating to date. This year 21 staff participated in the two day training, including 7 from outside the region and 3 Education Staff. The training was held at the Grafton office of Clarence Valley Council, with the practical sessions being conducted at the Grafton Regional Landfill, Hazardous Waste Store, Materials Recovery Facility and the MI Organics operations. In a change from previous years, the workshop sessions were facilitated by NEWF and council staff, with feedback from participants indicating that this provides a more effective learning experience. This approach also provided a professional development opportunity for staff, as they prepared for and facilitated each session. The training course provides an annual networking opportunity for operations and Education staff to discuss issues with staff from other work sites and to discuss issues with waste management staff.

## Waste Costs and Charges Workshop

In 2003 the NEWF commissioned a Review of the Waste Costs and Charges in the North East NSW Region to address the concern that the costing and charging systems by councils for solid waste management may not have been adequate or appropriate in terms of relevant legislation concerning waste management charges and in terms of the collection of adequate finances for dealing with long term waste management and its impacts.

Following on from this report in 2005 the NEWF established a working relationship with the Northern Rivers Finance Professionals Group and conducted a workshop with council finance staff from across the region. The workshop included an overview of the detailed costing model prepared as part of the review and the recommendations from the report.

As a result members of the Northern Rivers Finance Professionals Group agreed that:

- Council's should adopt the costing model as the basis for the generation of future budgets and financial plans.
- Finance and Waste Managers will work together to assess the implications for their own budgets and how to make the transition.
- To examine where the differences in budgets exist and what if anything needs to change.

**For more information on any of these projects please contact:**

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