



July 2007

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, Richmond Valley & Tweed Shire. The NEWF also has strong ties to the neighbouring councils of Kyogle & Lismore City. 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.

Regional Contracts

NEWF councils have signed joint contracts this year for metal waste, hazardous waste and green waste processing in addition to the tyre waste contract signed in 2006. These contracts have proved to be beneficial to councils in both improving the price for collection and disposal of materials and in the price received for recyclables. Joint contracts can provide greater certainty for service providers and materials contractors and in collection times and arrangements for councils. (See the resource recovery table on sheet 1 for details on how much material was recovered for recycling and reuse).

A – Z of Waste

The A – Z of Waste information sheets have proved to be a valuable resource for schools, university students and community groups and organisations when searching for information about a range of waste related issues. There are 84 fact sheets and all have recently been updated to ensure that they contain the most current information and web-links.

Council Waste Reduction & Sustainable Purchasing

NEWF councils are constantly asking the community to reduce the amount of waste they generate, so what happens when councils take a look inside their own operations to measure waste generation & improve resource recovery? Karen Rudkin, the Project Co-ordinator conducted a series of waste assessments on the administration buildings of each council (two in Clarence Valley) to determine what councils were currently doing to reduce waste & capture resources; determine how much waste was being produced; & develop a range of recommendations for improving the way this is done. Karen has been working closely with council waste, education, IT, admin & purchasing staff for 8 months to implement improved systems & infrastructure, & develop a commitment to sustainable purchasing.

- ✓ Waste assessments conducted at admin buildings;
- ✓ Waste Assessment Reports completed & discussed with each council;
- ✓ Waste Reduction Action Plans developed for each council with implementation continuing in all councils.

Other major initiatives include:

- ✓ A 'launch' of the new office waste reduction initiatives & an ongoing program of information sharing with staff at the Grafton and Maclean offices of Clarence Valley Council.
- ✓ A staff information session (of improved system for recycling & organic waste) at Maclean & Grafton offices of Clarence Valley Council.
- ✓ Presentation by Sustainable Choice Program Manager at NEWF meeting, highlighting the benefits of joining the program and introducing the sustainable choice product database.
- ✓ Workshop conducted in conjunction with the Sustainable Choice Program Manager for purchasing staff across the region, providing the opportunity for debate on current council purchasing habits, options for integrating sustainability into purchasing decisions and some of the issues & concerns for councils. A display of sustainable product samples was available.

Northern Rivers Group of Environmental Educators

The NRGeE represents a forum for exchange, information sharing, collaboration and networking amongst professional environmental educators working in the Northern Rivers region. The NEWF continues to co-ordinate this group, and two meetings have occurred this year in addition to an email network. Group members have also come together to work collaboratively on regional projects including the SUSS Forum and the Clarence Valley Environment Forum. Many members also participated in the education training coordinated by the NEWF.

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH EAST WASTE FORUM

NEW WAYS WITH LESS WASTE



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Eco-friendly Youth Project

The focus for the second year of the Eco-friendly Youth Project was sharing the lessons learnt during the pilot at Byron Youth Service (BYS) with other youth organisations across the region and beyond. With the toolkit (including a poster, DVD and CD ROM) finalised Linda Tohver, the Project Co-ordinator and Simon DuBois from BYB, gave a presentation of the project and the toolkit to a very receptive audience at the National Youth Affairs Conference in Melbourne. The toolkit and website (www.ecofriendlycentre.com) were launched along with the new eco-garden at the BYB in March.

Workshops were held with staff at a number of youth centres/organisations across the region, including New School of Arts Neighbourhood House (Grafton); Casino Youth Services and the YWCA Northern Rivers (Lismore). At the conclusion of the workshop each organisation was asked to nominate 10 actions that they could undertake to improve their ecological footprint. This then became the basis for a sustainability action plan.

The project has proved that implementing change across a youth organisation is possible with the commitment of staff and management. By incorporating waste and sustainability issues into existing programs these messages can reach the young people that access programs and services on a regular basis, and have a greater and longer lasting impact.

NEWF Communication

The NEWF aims to promote the collaborative nature of the work undertaken by councils through the NEWF as well as inform the community of specific projects where participation from the community is vital to their success. To achieve this, the NEWF has used a number of media opportunities & national events for targeted promotion of projects & features regularly in local & regional media.

- a International Composting Week
- b The 'Little Green Book'
- c 'North Coast on the Move'
- d National Recycling Week
- e @ Your Library education project
- f World Environment Day

Early Childhood Centres Waste Wise Education

This project began in May 2007 with the aim of working with childcare centres to reduce waste & chemical use by providing training & support for implementing simple waste reduction measures in their Centres. The project will focus on reducing paper & organic waste & increasing recycling & resource recovery. An important aspect of the project is to build the capacity of teachers & parents to implement change.

Additionally, assistance with introducing waste avoidance/reduction messages & themes into the curriculum will be provided. Early Childhood Centres, Preschools & Long Day Care Centres will all be targeted to participate in the project.

Hazardous Waste

The two permanent hazardous waste stores in Grafton and Lismore are providing a much needed service to the north coast community. Approximately 10.5 tonnes of hazardous material was disposed of safely through the stores. Our promotion of the stores continues to ensure that all members of the community are aware of and can make use of this valuable service.

Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire Councils participated in regional household chemical collections from February to April 2007, again providing a vital service to the community. 9.3 tonnes of material was collected over 6 collection days.

Council staff attended a one day training workshop to improve their skills in identifying and handling hazardous materials at landfill and transfer stations.

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