

NE WASTE ANNUAL REPORT

..... 2023-24



MAY 2025



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

North East Waste acknowledges the unceded sovereign traditional lands of the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl nations, upon which we operate, and we pay our respects to Custodians of the old ways, today's leaders and the knowledge holders of tomorrow. We hope our work helps to protect and enhance this country's lands, oceans, skies and communities.



The North East Waste acknowledges the funding contribution it receives from the NSW Environment Protection Agency.



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FOREWORD

This report outlines the activities and outcomes of North East Waste (NE Waste) for the 2023-24 financial year. We are a group of seven Councils working towards regional solutions to effective waste management. Our member Councils are Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore City, Richmond Valley, and Tweed Shire. Over the past 12 months we have delivered a range of projects and engaged with our community, schools, businesses and government in many waste minimisation, avoidance, and recovery activities.

Our core projects and achievements, and those of our member Councils, are the subject of this report. Our primary focus is on waste avoidance and reuse, education and awareness raising, the recycling and safe disposal of problem waste, and reducing litter and illegal dumping. Other priorities included training, research, regional collaboration and fostering relationships with State Government and the broader waste community.

In developing and funding our programs and advising Councils on the changing waste regulatory landscape we have worked closely with the NSW EPA, who provide 40% of our operational funding, under the

Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041. We are guided by our own Regional Waste Strategy and Implementation plan, developed in collaboration with our 7 member Councils. It was approved in January 2023 and reviewed in February 2024.

Our vision remains to achieve more sustainable waste management and better resource recovery through a proactive and collaborative approach with our member Councils and community. The ongoing support of our member Councils and our success in securing grant funding allows us to engage our region in an innovative and proactive way. This year we have been the recipient of 5 significant State Government grants. This will allow us to continue to promote the circularity of our regional economy – we are targeting recovery of the Construction and Demolition waste stream, improving organics recovery and investigating the potential of reusable products to replace single use items.

Jeanie McKillop, NE Waste Coordinator



OUR TEAM



Jeanie McKillop
Coordinator



Linda Tohver
Education Coordinator



Karen Rudkin
Project Coordinator



Nicki Walker
Organics Program



Joanne Hoy
Asbestos Program



REGIONAL PROJECTS AND ENGAGEMENT

In 2023-24 NE Waste coordinated 13 major projects focused on community engagement, reuse, business waste management, builders waste, organics, training, illegal dumping, litter, and problem waste management. We also successfully secured 5 new grants. The following section outlines the key features, and highlights outcomes of each project.

NE WASTE COMMUNICATION & PARTNERSHIPS

OVERVIEW

Communicating a consistent yet interesting message about waste avoidance and reduction is an ongoing activity of our contractors and Councils. We develop a wide range of communication collateral and employ a range of distribution mechanisms that change depending on the target audience and the type of message we are hoping will influence behaviour and raise awareness. We employ the traditional methods of print, radio, and television, particularly for projects and campaigns that are suited to these mediums. For example, if we are targeting working members of our community who commute we can use radio to engage them. In more recent years there has been an increased focus on social media to maximise our reach, through Facebook and Instagram. While many of our campaigns are project driven and change depending on funding, we have maintained a constant voice in the community through our weekly presence on ABC radio 'Talking Rubbish' and our regular monthly columns in a local magazines and through multiple media releases.

We also get our message out and share our experience beyond our region through networking, consultations with government and industry bodies, involvement steering committees/panels and through presentations at conferences or webinars.

In the 2023-24 Financial year we were very active in this space and in the delivery of our projects we have formed new partnerships as well as maintaining our long term relationships with LGNSW, and the NSW EPA. The organisations we have worked with this year included:

- Northern Rivers Area Health Service
- Master Builders Association
- Southern Cross University
- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- Northern Rivers Sustainability Network (Summerland Bank)
- Byron Writers Festival
- LisAmore! Festival
- Shedding Community Workshop
- Richmond Waste
- Bens Bins
- Mullum Cares
- Positive Change for Marine Life
- Northern Rivers Joint Organisation of Councils
- Richmond Tweed Regional Libraries; Upper Clarence Richmond Regional Libraries
- Northern Rivers Group of Environmental Educators (NRGEE)

We attended Waste 2024 at Coffs Harbour and presented on our C&D Recovery project, sat on the FOGO expert panel. Presented at the Australian Association of Environmental Education National Conference. Sat on the expert panel for the Tweed Shire Council's Events Workshop.



“Increase the awareness of waste reduction activities across the region and engage the community.”



MAIN ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGNS



Social
Media



239K+
engagements

SECOND HAND SATURDAY

435+ Garage sales

500 x 240L wheelie bins
were avoided from landfill.

SCRAP TOGETHER

RECEIVED **89K**

funding for next Scrap
campaign.

RESOURCE RECOVERY

58.5%

REGIONAL
RECYCLING RATE

Wipe Out Waste

WASTE ED PROGRAM

Delivered

112

education event days

C&D WASTE

90% estimated as
potentially
recoverable

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

44

ABC North Coast Radio
"Talking Rubbish" segments/
interviews

COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRES

244 tonnes
of waste was dropped off

\$495k annual cost saving for
councils and the community

HOUSEHOLD ASBESTOS PROGRAM

495
TESTS

ALL MEDIA

WEBSITES
69K+
VIEWS



PRINT ADS
78



AIRED
3000+
TV Commercials

NEWS
30+
EDITORIALS



60+
RADIO
INTERVIEWS



930
RADIO ADS



168
Community
EVENTS



REGIONAL COORDINATION AND STRATEGY



OVERVIEW

NE Waste develops and delivers multiple projects, seeks funding, and engages contractors to fulfil the objectives of our Regional Waste Strategy 2022-27 and Implementation Plan 23-25

NE Waste's Regional Strategy was developed during 2022-23 and has been reviewed and updated in 2024, in collaboration with our Councils. Our specific objectives remain unchanged and our Implementation Plan has been expanded to incorporate a stronger focus on Circular Economy projects to meet our objectives. In 2024-25 our Memorandum of Agreement will be revised and evaluated.



“To guide our strategic direction through regional projects and coordinate north east waste in its operations and liaison with state government and industry.”

KEY OUTCOMES

- 13 projects were delivered in the past 12 months by 6 contractors, most of whom are long term coordinators or project officers.
- 5 formal NE Waste meetings were held with waste managers, 6 with waste educators, and 4 with Council operational staff.
- We secured grant funding for a Local Government Waste Solutions Fund Round 2 Grant (\$110,224), the continuation of the Scrap Together campaign (\$89,700), a pilot under the Business Program for reusables (\$13,130), A Flood Recovery Grant for Byron Shire Clean Up (\$51,000) and another round of Community Recycling Centre funds (\$142,094).
- We organised the kerbside compositional waste audits for Byron Shire, Clarence Valley and Richmond Valley, liaising with Council and the chosen consultant.
- We consulted with the NSW EPA on 10 occasions for input into program development and for policy or regulatory review.
- We provided information to a variety of consultants working on behalf of government and worked with LGNSW on 6 submissions
- Networking with special interest groups and recycling companies happened at conferences and workshops around upcycling for construction and demolition, battery safety, reusable alternatives and difficult to recycle wastes such as bulky hard plastics.
- All Councils recommitted funding to NE Waste for the year and were actively involved in project delivery. This year their contribution surpassed that of the Regional Coordinators Program.
- We did not complete the reporting requirements for the NSW EPA as the new template was not available in this financial year, however, we contributed significantly to its redesign.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM



OVERVIEW

The program is designed through desktop research, surveys, learning from other Councils and regions, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Delivery of the program occurs through a multi-faceted approach to reach various sectors of the community and includes face to face engagement at events, schools, preschools, activities and workshops at libraries and Councils, partnerships with other organisations; social media marketing and broader communication approaches.

A collaborative leadership approach with our regional waste educators group in the design and delivery of this program and the activities it provides, optimises its value, efficiency, ownership and cost effectiveness. Indicative of the success of the program and the team who deliver it, can be seen by the increase in Council requests to participate at events, provide workshops and educate their communities. School relationships have also flourished, as demand from schools has increased.



“This program aims to drive behaviour change initiatives to achieve the region’s waste diversion and recycling targets across community, schools and early childhood services. The program also supports council’s in their delivery of education programs.”

KEY OUTCOMES

- The education and community engagement program estimates a reach of approximately 185,000 across the Northern Rivers region through the range of activities provided.
- More than 10,000 householders across the region participated directly through 112 x WOW education event days, including School, Community workshops, community event days and audits.
- Reach of 45+ schools and preschools across the region.
- Workshops at 12 libraries covering the region; Presentations at Probus Club, Garden Clubs, Community Gardens.
- Social media campaigns - Plastic Free July, International Repair Week, National Recycling Week, Sustainable Christmas, International Compost Awareness Week, Stop Food Waste Day, Fashion Revolution Week.
- 44 x ABC North Coast “Talking Rubbish” segments/ interviews. This segment is a regular spot on Wednesday mornings with the NE Waste Ed Coordinator and ABC’s Breakfast Program presenter: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/AAno1wwF9WdQ6vtt/>
- ABC NSW – 4 x interviews.
- 2 x successful grants – Phase 1 Regional Reusables Research Project, and SCRAP 2 funding.

DIVERTING FOOD FROM LANDFILL EDUCATION ABOUT ORGANICS MANAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

This year the region was faced with the complex issue of aligning education and communication messages with the NSW EPA's Position Statement on FOGO and the NSW Compost Order. The funding from the NSW EPA's Scrap Together program assisted and supported our region in doing this. Additionally, the issue of PFAS in fibre-based packaging emerged in the face of its increasing use of single-use plastic containers. The education around household and commercial FOGO services will need to continue for years to come, as we 'undo' practices established in our communities since FOGO was adopted in Council areas.



"Increase awareness about food waste issues and increase skills and adoption of food waste avoidance behaviours and best practice fogo recycling in households."

KEY OUTCOMES

- Aired Scrap Together TVCs during Sept/Oct to reinforce best FOGO practices.
- Visited 15 schools approx. 5000 students running sandwich sushi demo and beeswax wraps.
- 9x Home composting workshops, 3x garden club/community garden presentations – reaching approx. 300 householders
- International Compost Awareness Week – media, workshops, social media, Council newsletters.
- Delivered 30+ beeswax wrap workshops as part of WOW education events.
- Integrated LFHW into social media campaign messages.
- Integrated 'Scrap' and food waste avoidance messaging into Sustainable Christmas campaign. Applied for and received 89K funding for next Scrap campaign. Updated all Council & NE Waste resources to reflect NSW EPA Position Statement. SCRAP TV ads Sept/October 23.
- Attended "Urban Agriculture and Sustainable Food Futures Roundtable" workshop and contributed to Food Security research conducted by UTS, Northern NSW Area Health Service and Sustain Australia.
- Applied for 90K of funding through the SCRAP Together grant successfully. The grant funds are being used to create and update resources and communication materials that now only food and garden waste are accepted in household kerbside FOGO services, as per NSW Compost Order. The grant includes airing of TVCs, as well as presence at community events and FOGO workshops at libraries.
- The resources can be viewed at:
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/vke5f3sym52fkdu4c319l/h?rlkey=repapv id7f31w9xqexjh7anqb&st=xyyvurjv&dl=0>



ILLEGAL DUMPING PROJECT



OVERVIEW

Illegally dumped waste can cause harm to human health, pollute the environment, reduces amenity, results in a loss of valuable resources and is very costly to manage.

The regional illegal dumping program continued to develop and deliver education resources and facilitate coordinated networking and knowledge sharing opportunities, to support council's own prevention initiatives, including greater awareness and prevention of the dumping of asbestos containing materials and the clean-up of flood disaster waste.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Completed an assessment of the distribution of suspect asbestos containing (ACM) debris and some illegally dumped ACM - post-flood disaster, to support and inform eligibility for securing EPA grant funding for clean-up
- Facilitated successful Illegal Dumping & Disaster Clean up (Round 2) funding applications for Lismore and Byron Councils and coordinated the implementation of the Byron clean up program.
- Supported Kyogle Council in the delivery of their grant funded 'illegal dumping in parks & public bins prevention project'.
- Assisted Byron in the development of their Litter & Illegal Dumping Strategy (2024-29).
- Delivered the first NSW Council Asbestos Waste Management & Regulation Workshop (Mar 2024) in partnership with LGNSW. Attended by 45 council officers from all 7 member councils.
- Continued to participants in the LGNSW Asbestos Network, sharing knowledge with others on asbestos related issues, and contributed to submissions on the Asbestos National Strategy Plan 2024-30, and other key documents.
- Delivered asbestos safety messaging to the community at public engagement events including the Lismore Housing Expo, and more broadly through planned media promotions including Asbestos Awareness week/month (Nov 2023) and facilitating council involvement.
- New resources developed to support the Household Asbestos Scheme -including sticker and flyer for testing and disposal kits.
- Implemented a regional 'Responsible Donation Campaign' to prevent dumping on charities over the festive season (Dec 2023 - Jan 2024) – recognised by LGNSW as 1 of the 2 best supported campaigns in NSW.



“To reduce illegal dumping across the NE Waste region and improve our member Council’s capacity to prevent illegal dumping behaviour.”



CIRCULAR ACTIVITIES & PROJECTS

North East Waste has been assisting businesses across the region for many years to achieve better waste avoidance, reduction, recycling and reuse. Our Regional Waste Strategy 2022-27 is firmly grounded in the NSW EPA's Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 that supports a move to a more circular economy. This year our programs and projects aimed specifically at facilitating this change include the new Northern Rivers Circular C&D Project, Reusables at Events, Second Hand Saturday, Reuse Trail and the Scrap Together Campaign.

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND REUSE & REPAIR TRAIL

OVERVIEW

NE Waste has run a number of business projects that continue to be sustained over the years through electronic engagement and on the ground support. The Circular Cafes project was originally funded through an EPA grant (Bintrim) and assisted cafes to adopt better practice in waste reduction, organics diversion, and reusables.

We also supported a range of other commercial operations and small businesses who wished to assess and improve their waste management. We have been advising construction businesses, kitchen manufactures, retirement villages and local markets and events vendors.

In 2023-24 we expanded the project to promote reuse and repair businesses through the on-line reuse hub, as well as applying and receiving funding from the EPA business unit for a pilot project with events and markets around reusables. The need for this pilot project has been due to the replacement of one type of single use take-away packaging with fibre-based, containing PFAS and unable to be commercially composted. The only solution it seems for take-away packaging is the use of reusables, as indicated by this shift in the EU.



“To support businesses to adopt better practice in waste reduction, organics diversion, and transition to reusables.”



KEY OUTCOMES

- Circular Cafes continues to be available to businesses with online toolkits, advice and case studies and the opportunity to book assessments and site visits from our team. Cafes can contact us through this platform on circularcafes.com.au.
- Presented to Ocean View Retirement Village at Terranora.
- Worked with 2 local building companies and Master Builders association on source separation of recyclables.
- Assisted 4 cafes and 9 Brunswick businesses.
- Audited both Sample and Writers' Festival to support Byron Council's Single Use Packaging Policy.
- Support of Byron Shire Council's Bring it Back to Bruns reusables project.
- Successfully sought funding from EPA for a REUSABLES research project for 4 x markets/events in the region.
- Lisamore Festival and Bangalow Markets were both audited, results compiled. Murwillumbah Markets and Ballina Farmers Markets scheduled for July 2024.
- What's On Tweed Events Workshop – presented to Tweed Shire event organisers; attended and presented at Market Organisers Workshop coordinated by Byron Shire Council.
- Reuse trail website has expanded content to include workshops, repair guides as well as 60+ businesses involved in reuse and repair across the region. See www.reusetrail.com.au

NORTHERN RIVERS CIRCULAR C&D PROJECT

OVERVIEW

A small C&D waste pilot project in 2022 helped identify and partially quantify the various categories of material within this waste stream and develop relationships with the industry stakeholders who purchase, use and dispose of them. Data collected during the trial indicated that an estimated 90% of C&D waste is potentially recoverable, however current recovery rates are much lower due to the lack of onsite separation opportunities and practices, high contamination rates, cost and limited service availability.

The Northern Rivers Circular C&D project which began in July 2023 is addressing this problem by investigating and developing systems in collaboration with service providers and Councils to improve resource recovery in the building sector.



“To build council, industry and community capacity to better divert hard to recycle building and demolition (C&D) waste from landfill, due to current limited systems and markets to support recovery and reuse. This is an essential step in establishing collection services and systems to enable local and regional C&D waste market development.”



KEY OUTCOMES

- Gyprock collection service established at Byron recovery centre. Transported to SEQ for processing and fertilizer manufacture.
- New storage systems installed at Ballina Salvage Shed and Byron Re-market shops, increasing capacity to safely store and display doors, windows and timber and increasing throughput.
- Measured C&D waste to council landfill – by auditing full day of building waste dropped at Ballina WTS. Identified opportunities for increasing recovery through improved systems/design and got customers feedback on barriers to separation/recovery.
- Audit identified 52m3 per day of mixed C&D waste. Customer feedback said the cost of onsite waste separation and lack of services for recycling some materials were the main barriers.
- Audit resulted in a trial of improved separation at the builder's pile including: redesign for improved separation, more bins and signage, hire of excavator, new work procedures, increased engagement between staff and customers.
- Trail results indicated significant C&D recovery potential and cost saving compared to landfilling, so trial was extended with innovative plans to further improve design and infrastructure in the next stage (2024-25).
- Increased collaboration with member councils via regular waste management and waste operation meetings – monitor and review project activities and progress and facilitate improved knowledge sharing.
- Partnership and capacity building via collaboration with other Regional Waste Groups (RENEW) to share challenges and successes in C&D recovery e.g. participation in Wood Waste Circular Labs to find pathways to prevent wood to landfill.
- Engagement with local builders and the Master Builders Association - presentation at two regional information sessions, attended by 60+ builders.
- Accelerated promotion of the council Tip Shops through NE Waste's Reuse and Repair Trail.
- Presentation of the project at the WMRR Waste Conference 2024.
- Facilitated training for council staff to improve knowledge and understanding of weighbridge processes and the waste levy and how issues impact the effective recovery of C&D and other waste materials.

SECOND HAND SATURDAY PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

Second hand Saturday was held on Saturday 4th November 2023. The program provides an opportunity for the community to buy and sell pre-loved goods, keeping items circulating within our community. This year there was a focus on how buying second hand can benefit the community during the cost of living crisis, as well as contribute to reduced waste to landfill and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.



“To highlight the benefits of reuse and repair and reinforce circular economy practices in the region through promotion of a garage sale day with free participation and advertising”

KEY OUTCOMES

- Council media package including web banners, social media images and snippets, newsletter articles and access to back-end registration on the secondhandsaturday.com.au website.
- Communication plan coordination and delivery, including 4 x media releases, 4 x radio interviews, print ads in 8 publications interspersed over a 6 week period.
- Full page print ads of garage sales listings in 6 publications, as well as on Second Hand Saturday website and smartphone app.
- Update of website, app and education resources for 2023.
- 435 households signed up to hold a garage sale on SHS, 116 of these which were joint garage sales.
- Thousands of shoppers visited these garage sales across the region, purchasing and exchanging goods and contributing to a circular economy.
- According to evaluation, approximately 500 x 240L wheelie bins worth of items were avoided from landfill.

"Thank you to all the Councils for organising this great event! We sold alot, but we really enjoyed the social aspect and meeting different people."



ONLINE PRESENCE:

- Website views: 38,770
- Unique Users: 13,477
- App Downloads: 1,370



MANAGING HAZARDOUS WASTE

An important part of NE Waste's role is to assist our Councils in the management of hazardous wastes to help fulfil the NSW EPA's objective of protecting the environment.

Our aim is to keep hazardous products, such as asbestos and chemicals, out of our environment and products that need special pathways to recycling, such as paint and batteries, on track to the correct facilities. This is achieved through our Community Recycling Centres, our Asbestos Testing and Disposal Program and the Household Chemical CleanOut special events.

COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRES PROJECT



OVERVIEW

Community Recycling Centres (CRC) are permanent drop-off facilities for common household problem wastes that can't be collected via council kerbside waste and recycling services. NSW householders can drop off problem wastes at these centres year round, free of charge.

2023-24 has continued to see significant and sustained improvements in the community's correct use of the region's CRC network. The state-wide program has now been operating across the Northern Rivers region for 7 years and includes 8 CRC's conveniently located at existing council resource recovery centres and 30 mobile drop off stations (CRS).



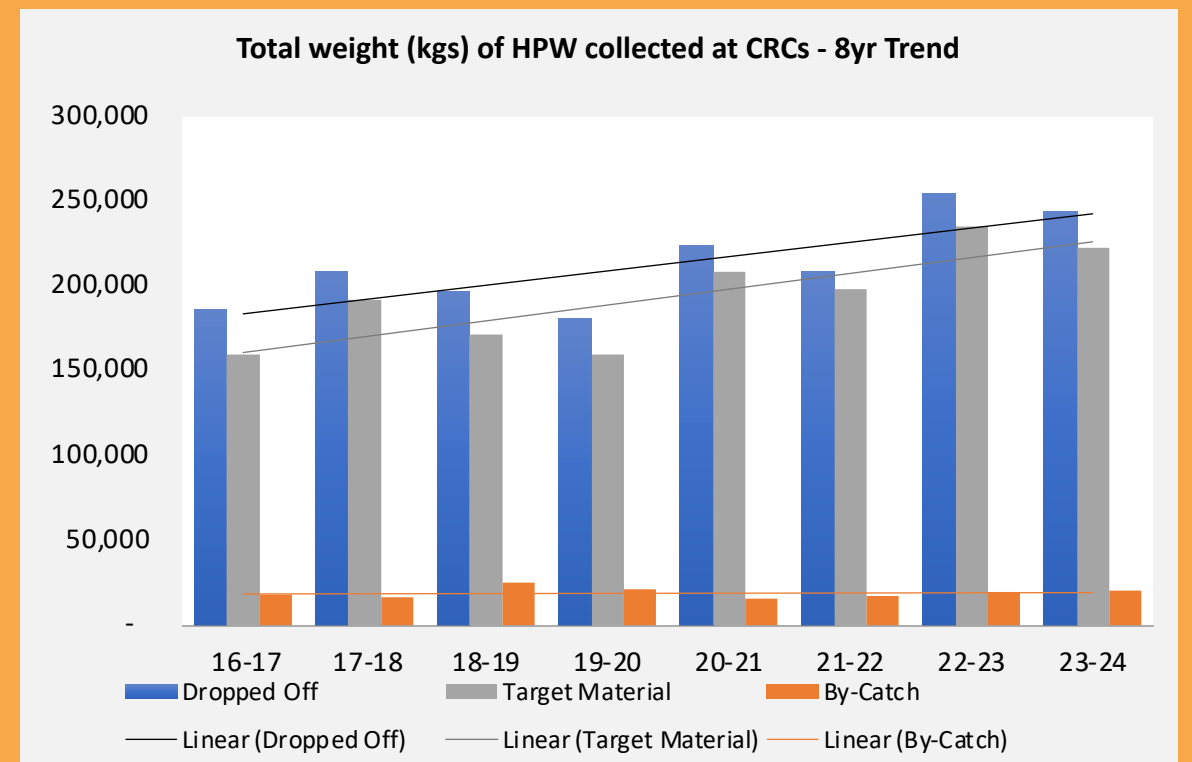
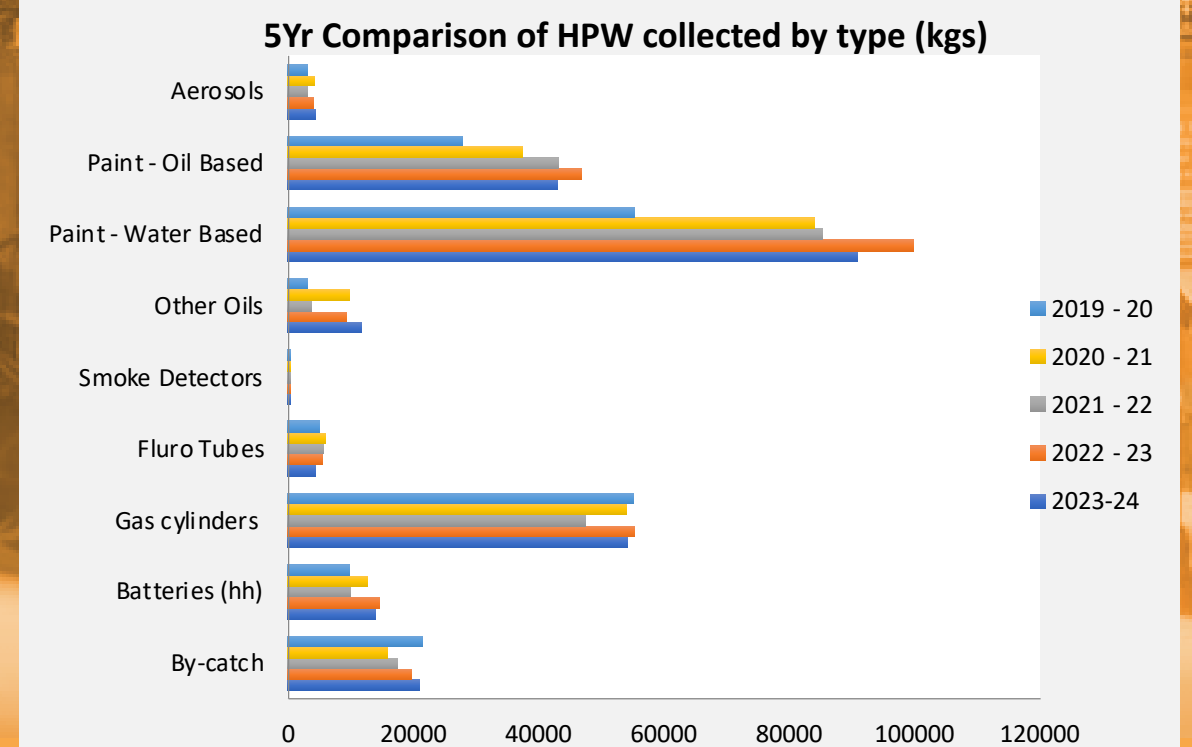
"To deliver a communication and education program to maximise community participation in the correct use of the regions network of free and easily accessible community recycling centres and small 'community recycling stations', for the recycling or safe disposal of targeted household problem wastes."

KEY OUTCOMES

- Regionally, 244 tonnes of household problem waste (HPW) was dropped off for free.
- Only marginally down (5%) on 2022-23 eight year record of 255 tonnes.
- An estimated annual cost saving of \$495k for councils and the community.
- The quantity of by-catch at 8.6% remains below the 8 year average of 9.2%.
- Slight overall reduction in the drop off of other HPW materials compared to 2022-23, in response to the cleanout following 2022 floods and success of the evolving B-cycle and Paintback schemes.
- CRC's promoted at 18 events across the 7 member councils by incorporating CRC display material and face to face engagement with the community, into our broader 'Wipe Out Waste' schedule.
- Direct engagement estimated at more than 500 people in addition to high visibility to many more.
- 200+ people participated in the CRC quiz/challenge and CRS/CRC flyers and fridge magnets were distributed at all events.

KEY OUTCOMES *CONT.*

- New resources developed including banners, table throws and coasters for display and engagement at community events and for increasing reach of project via distribution of drink coasters (35k) across the region's most high profile pubs and clubs.
- Implemented 3 regional media/communication campaigns during National Recycling Week, Xmas/summer holidays and Easter (March to April 2024) including: TV ads (1,250+), radio ads (850+), press ads (29), editorials (18), Council print/digital media in newsletters and online, brochures & fridge magnets distributed, CRC webpage views (1.55k), digital ads (32.5k engagements).
- In partnership with NE Waste member councils, collaborated with another regional waste group (NSROC) in development of the CRC Operator Li-ion Battery Handling Guidelines.



FLOOD WASTE RECOVERY PROJECT



OVERVIEW

Following work undertaken by NE Waste after the Lismore Floods, to identify legacy asbestos remaining from the clean-up, a new project was conceived, and a second round of the Illegal Dumping and Flood Waste Recovery grants was opened for Northern Rivers Councils. The program aimed to assist Councils in a clean-up of the debris on Council land that had not been effectively dealt with in the hectic aftermath of the floods. In Byron Shire and Lismore City (grant recipients) an extensive cleanup of highly visible and hazardous waste was undertaken by Public Works Advisory and the Council. However, less visible and less accessible but still significant waste was not removed at this time. There are also some areas where the extent of remaining flood waste had not been adequately assessed due to competing priorities or a lack of resources to do so. NE Waste was the lead applicant for the Byron Shire grant and assisted Lismore City Council in their application.

BYRON FLOOD WASTE

In Byron Shire the funding supported the removal of a flood damaged asbestos shed (council asset), the synthetic turf from the tennis courts at Mullumbimby, and inspection and clean up of 4 flood effected open spaces on Council land.

The total tonnage of waste cleaned up is 19.44 tonnes and included:

- 13 tonnes of synthetic turf was disposed of at Myocum Resource Recovery Centre.
- 0.74 tonne of asbestos 0.48 tonne of scrap metal 4.22 tonnes of mixed waste commercial from the shed site. The site was cleaned and scraped.
- At Azalea and Casuarina streets a 1.5 x 4 m3 skip was filled (6 cubic meters) with flood debris, approximately 1 tonne.

The project worked across different sections of Councils, providing us with the opportunity to engage with project officers we wouldn't normally deal with. This not only increased our understanding of the internal workings of Council but improves collaboration and cooperation.



LISMORE FLOOD WASTE

North East Waste was engaged to conduct a re-assessment of the previously identified ACM flood debris, to ensure it was flood related, not as a result of renovations. It was completed in October 2023. The re-assessment involved revisiting the addresses at which asbestos debris material had been positively identified in the May 2023 assessment.

To assist in the re-assessment, Lismore City Council provided the addresses of the properties that have been listed for demolition. These were then cross

referenced with those where ACM had been positively identified.

The conclusion of the reassessment was that:

- 2/3 of properties hadn't been renovated.
- Those that had used skips, mostly fenced, inside property or on footpath.
- Scale of the flooding - ACM could have been transported far from source not just adjacent properties.

- Most ACM fragments observed in May 23 appeared undisturbed when re-observed in Oct 2023.

This supported the premise that fragments of ACM could feasibly have remained in situ and unobserved since the kerbside clean-up was completed in June 2022.

Lismore applied for and were successful in securing new funding to remove the asbestos from the roadside and is currently in the process of implementing this work.



HOUSEHOLD ASBESTOS TESTING PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The Home Asbestos Testing Kit program has been running for 8 years now and allows homeowners two free of charge tests to identify asbestos in their homes before undertaking renovations. Instructions and PPE are provided to the householders with a satchel to deliver the sample for laboratory analysis. Post a positive result, the coordinator forwards advice from SafeWork NSW and provides information about professional asbestos removal in the region to encourage residents to do the right thing. The material is updated regularly to ensure we provide current best practice advice.

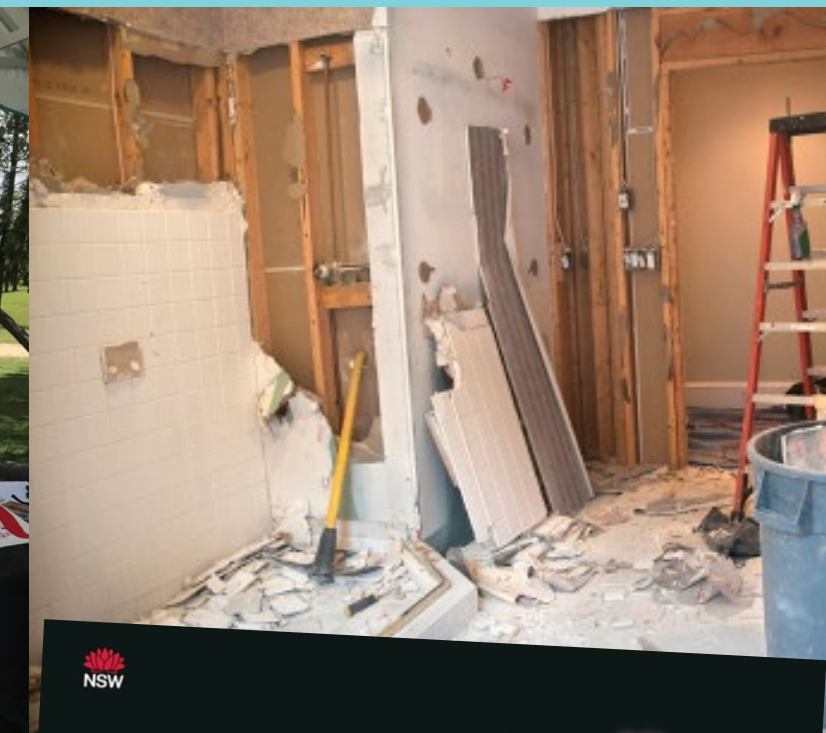


“To increase public awareness about the disposal of asbestos and improve their ability to deal with asbestos disposal safely”

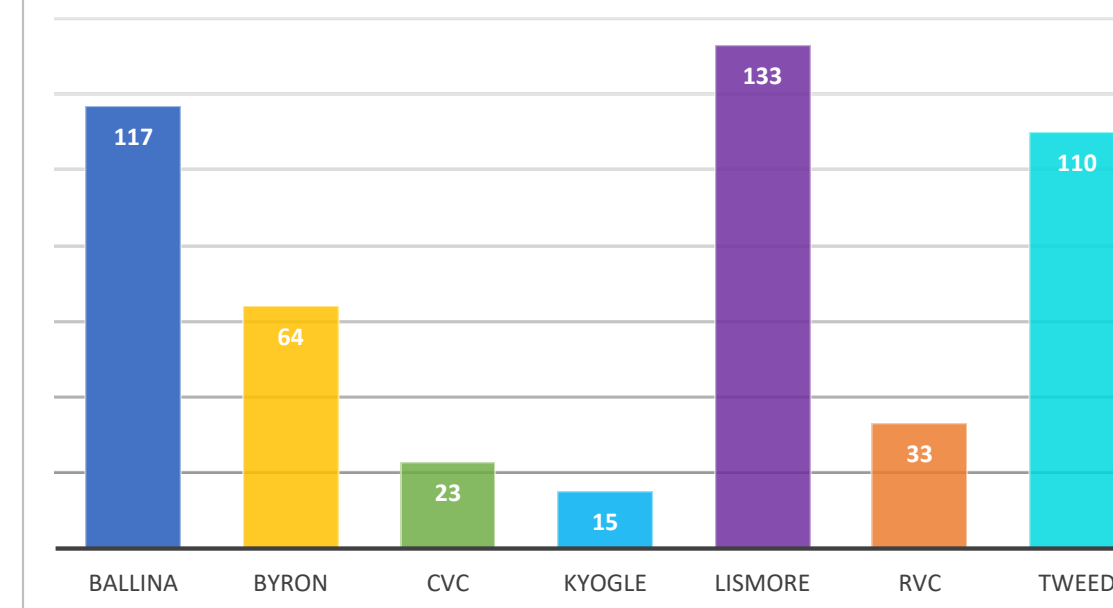
KEY OUTCOMES

In 2023-24 the program tested 495 samples across the region’s seven Councils. This is 14.7% less than last year, potentially due to the dropping off from flood related testing in 2022-23. The program has continued to be supported by the Councils, who subsidise the testing costs. It’s has also been adopted by other regional waste groups in NSW who have seen the value in supporting their residents to make informed decisions.

This program is promoted throughout the region during events such as National Asbestos Week (November) and a variety of Council activities and community events and expos.



ASBESTOS TESTS PER COUNCIL 2023-24





MEMBER COUNCILS INNOVATIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

This year our member Councils have implemented a broad range of projects independently and in collaboration with us. There have been a significant number of design and capital works programs from upgrading leachate and storm water systems to the construction of new landfill cells, site offices and tip shops.

BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL



LLOYD ISAACSON
MANAGER RESOURCE RECOVERY
@ BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL

INNOVATIONS AND *ACHIEVEMENTS*

- Contracted out their kerbside pick-up service (commencing November 2023). With improved operational structures in place more staff are now available at the Resource Recovery Centre.
- Resealed the internal haulage roads and upgraded the front of house.
- A Circular C&D audit was completed by NE Waste and a Compositional Waste audit was undertaken by EC Sustainable, providing Council with up to date data.
- Commenced a project to close off an old landfill in Wardell on Crown Land and assess contamination issues.
- Began trialling EPS separation and taking to Lismore.
- Completed a detailed concept design for site Master plan that was sent to market for detailed design, Development Approval and then construction.



Circular C&D audit

BYRON SHIRE COUNCIL



DANIELLE HANIGAN
MANAGER RESOURCE RECOVERY
@ BYRON SHIRE COUNCIL

INNOVATIONS AND *ACHIEVEMENTS*

- Litter and Illegal Dumping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029 Adopted by Council.
- Successful in obtaining WASM Litter Prevention Stream 3 funding – to deliver Litter aspect of the Litter and Illegal Dumping \$420,000 over 3 years.
- Successful in obtaining WASM Local Gov Waste Solutions Grant - \$198,000 to assist with infrastructure upgrade and contractor costs to implement the adopted Single use Packaging and Materials Policy.
- The Policy is the first of its kind in Australia and will see single use packaging – particularly food and beverage packaging eliminated from Council operations as well as at markets and events on Council land and at Council facilities.
- Won Local Government Excellence – Environmental Leadership Award for the Bring it Back Bruns Pilot Project.
- Ballon Ban implemented across the Shire supported with media, signage and pavement stencilling in high impact areas eg parks and recreation spaces.
- Construction tender awarded for Stormwater upgrades at the Byron Resource Recovery Centre - \$600,000 project.
- Increase in resource recovery with 839 Mattresses, 507 tonnes of concrete and 19 tonne plasterboard recovered that was previously going to landfill.



Ballon Ban implemented across the Shire



Byron Shire's Move to Reuse - Farmers Market

CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL



RICHARD ROPER
SENIOR WASTE & SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER
@ CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL

INNOVATIONS AND **ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Completed and began using Landfill Cell 4C in July (capacity 220,000m3).
- Went to tender for a new landfill compactor.
- Commenced a new 10 year waste collection and processing contract.
- Commenced construction on a new 4th organics tunnel at the Organics Recovery Facility (ORF) located at the Grafton landfill and completion in late 2023. It provides an additional 4000 ton PA of processing capacity.
- Began a new 'book online' bulky waste service.
- Progressed the solar farm and landfill gas electricity generation project at the Grafton Regional Landfill to manage landfill gas for the next 15 years. Council will retain a share of the revenue from carbon credits and potentially electricity sales.
- Completed a compositional waste audit in October 2023. The study found a high diversion rate (62%); high resource recovery rates for recyclables (77.2%) and compliant organics. There was also a high recycling bin contamination rate (18.2%); a high percentage of food waste by weight in waste bins (23%).
- Undertook National Recycling week education activities with 90 students coming to the Environmental Learning facility, at the Landfill with the Wipe out Waste crew. Worked with NE Waste to roll out FOGO EPA required changes. So far weekly ads and editorial in our local newspaper; weekly social media posts; launch of new fridge magnet. Continued resource recovery education with school, Tafe and community groups at the ELF.



Maclean Transfer station site visit South Grafton Landfill



- Council has engaged a contractor (Troy Uren from UTL) to undertake a review of our network of waste transfer stations prior to going to tender for 8 WTS's later this year. The review will look community needs, costs and efficiencies and make recommendations to Council if efficiencies can be made.

KYOGLE COUNCIL



AMANDA CLARK
MANAGER DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY
SERVICES
@ KYOGLE COUNCIL

INNOVATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Kyogle Council was granted a temporary exemption from the NSW Waste Levy until 30 June 2027. The exemption took effect on 1 March 2024 but implementation has resulted in a high administration burden due to the need to maintain recordkeeping and create a separate waste disposal fee structure for waste received from within the Regional Levy Area.
- Council has continued to work on the roll-out of our new 3-bin kerbside collection service, conducting bin and lift the lid audits and education events in schools and at community markets.
- Council has continued work to deliver our Parks for People illegal dumping project which is targeting illegal dumping of household waste in and beside bins in our Kyogle public parks. Increased regulatory effort and surveillance has proven effective with a 51-67% decrease in the number of dumping incidents across the five bin locations. As part of the project Council has produced an information pack for rural households on how to correctly dispose of their waste which contain an information brochure on correctly sorting and disposing waste, fridge magnets, composting brochure, bin stickers and information on illegal dumping.
- Council has completed upgrades to the general waste drop off and truck wash down bay at the Kyogle Landfill Facility.
- In April, Council recommenced operating the Kyogle Tip Shop, after 4 years of being run by a local NFT enterprise.



The new three-bin service community information sessions

- Council has also nominated new fees and charges for 2024-25 in response to the findings of our Illegal Dumping Community Survey. Lower fees are proposed to enable people to dispose of smaller quantities of waste. Council has also proposed discounted fees for sorted C&D waste.
- Council has proposed to change the terms and conditions of our Tip Voucher to enable people to use the voucher to dispose of high fee disposal items such as mattresses and tyres in an effort to stop these items from being dumped illegally around the LGA.

LISMORE CITY COUNCIL



STEFANIE STANLEY
MANAGER OF WASTE OPERATIONS
@ LISMORE CITY COUNCIL

INNOVATIONS AND *ACHIEVEMENTS*

- Waste Services Review completed and Regional Balanced Model A adopted by Council. Lismore City Council is planning to undertake a feasibility study for a regional landfill, support other Councils to find a regional solution for FOGO and green waste, transition to processing co-mingled recycling off site, retain our collections fleet and retain our Revolve Shop at Lismore Recycling and Recovery Centre.
- A Masterplan is underway for the Lismore Recycling and Recovery Centre to determine the future of operations including investigations into reinstatement of Cell2B and improving resource recovery, including the possibility of a Circular Economy Hub.
- Council took on project management of Flood Recovery Program from Public Works and the growth of that team to combine planning and delivery of flood restoration and capital works (landfill reinstatement and capping, leachate capture and treatment, roads and hardstand infrastructure).
- Our Return and Earn Container Deposit Scheme is experiencing continued growth. A second singulator is planned for FY24-25.
- After more than 2 years of being used as office space (following the February 2022 Natural Disaster), the Lismore City Environment Education Centre opened its doors again in June 2024 for Council meetings, school & community group events. One event included World Environment Day, where Council coordinated a program of activities with Dorroughby Environment Education Centre, Friends of Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens, North East Waste and Rous County Council for over 90 students from Goonellabah PS, Nimbin Central School and The Channon PS, and the Yamato Takada Student visit.



The Recycled Christmas Tree in Lismore's CBD



Lismore City Environment Education Centre

- In February 2024, Council was awarded the EPA's Illegal Dumping and Flood Waste Recovery Program grant to implement the clean-up of flood related asbestos debris from flood affected areas of Lismore.
- The Recycled Christmas Tree made a welcome return in Lismore's CBD after a hiatus following the 2022 natural disaster.
- Fire hydrant upgrade completed to better respond to fires on site and included upgrades to the Washbay system.
- Continued work with Southern Cross University on the ReCirculator program – shredding plastics to trial replacement of aggregate in concrete.
- Planning changes and streamlining residential collections for implementation in FY24-25.
- Stefanie Stanley is now the Manager of Waste Operations, including Lismore Recycling and Recovery Centre, Nimbin Transfer Station, and Collections teams.

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL



TODD WESTGATE
WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY ANALYST
@ RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL

INNOVATIONS AND *ACHIEVEMENTS*

- Construction of the new landfill cell (Cell 6) was completed to cater for council's landfilling needs for the next decade or more.
- This included completing the construction of a new leachate pond and sedimentation lagoon. Only some minor ancillary equipment remains to be installed to make the pond and lagoon fully operational.
- To complement the new infrastructure all landfill staff and technical support staff attended a landfill operations training program delivered by an external expert on landfill operations.
- Council commissioned its fifth new sidearm collection truck to complete its modernised kerbside collection fleet.
- A dedicated weighbridge officer was employed, to provide a specialist resource to help manage the ever-changing regulatory environment associated with waste and recyclables movements in and out of our landfill site.



Nammoona new landfill cell aerial view



Our crew and the new collection trucks



TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL



ROD DAWSON
UNIT COORDINATOR
RESOURCE RECOVERY, WASTE MANAGEMENT
@ TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL

INNOVATIONS AND *ACHIEVEMENTS*

- Concrete crushing completed with majority of reprocessed aggregate to be used in Councils master plan road works.
- Compositional waste audit completed.
- Site access and new office and weighbridge complete.
- Council has measures in place to address fire ant risks including screening and treatment.
- Tender awarded for construction works on road to the new landfill in adjacent development.
- Continued development of design and approvals for various site masterplan infrastructure including upgrades to leachate and stormwater infrastructure, replacement of the transfer station and a tip shop upgrade.
- Trial Textile project underway – EOI taken to market to incorporate this into operations.



Garden organics processing



Recovered aggregate to be used in road construction



Stotts Creek Resource Recovery Centre Offices and Training/Education Room

WASTE DISPOSAL AND RESOURCE RECOVERY

Reporting from
1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

2023-24 showed general waste and recycling remained much the same as in 2022-23.

There was an increase the tonnage of organics collected at the kerbside and dropped off at our facilities which could indicate an increase in FOGO uptake or in garden organics produced. There was an increase in tip shop recovery and mattress collection across the region with a slight decrease in the recovery of metal, e-waste and hazardous waste. The domestic recycling rate has increased and remained above the state average.



DROPPED OFF

Recycling
2,552
TONNES



Garden Organics
16,708
TONNES



Tip Shop Recovery
845
TONNES



Mattresses
1,532
TONNES



E-waste
286
TONNES



Batteries
181
TONNES



Metal
6,687
TONNES



Tyres
119
TONNES



CRC Problem Waste
244
TONNES



58.5% REGIONAL
RECYCLING
RATE



CAPACITY BUILDING

TRAINING

“Provide training, professional development and networking opportunities for contractors, landfill and education staff in the region”

Training and professional development is an important part of making NE Waste a cohesive and collaborative entity. It enables contractors and Councils to build skills that contribute to an enhanced performance in their roles.

In January 2024 NE Waste facilitated the delivery of a two day Landfill Operator Training Course. The training took place in the classroom at the Grafton Environmental learning facility and on site at the South Grafton landfill. Due to the high demand training two separate groups attended over 4 days. Over 30 staff received comprehensive instruction around topics such as:

- Environmental hazards and risks and controls of landfills – leachate, landfill gas, litter, noise, dust and sediment, odour, pests and vermin, fire.
- Environmental statutory obligations and Licences.

- Engineered landfill fundamentals.
- Landfill Operations best practice on compaction, cover, filling and working the face.
- Specialist filling applications e.g. fluff layer, starting a new lift, filling steep batters.
- Stormwater management.
- Risk assessment and management for landfill operations.

The other main training this year was the Asbestos Waste Management & Regulations workshop, the first NSW Council Asbestos Waste Management & Regulation Workshop (Mar 2024) in partnership with LGNSW. It was a by 45 council officers from all 7 member councils.

RENEW

“Providing training, professional development and networking opportunities for regional waste groups and personnel”

Our involvement with other state regional and metropolitan waste groups also significantly contributes to our continual improvement. We are one of eight Voluntary Regional Waste Groups (VRWGs), encompassing over 95 regional Councils and meet four times a year in the regions or Sydney. RENEW provides an excellent platform to share ideas, resources, and experience between the groups. Together we have built campaigns that provide a uniform, saving duplication and harnessing a wide creative talent pool. Our meetings enable groups to examine other facilities, share project ideas and resolve common issues with the State and at home. It also allows us to update the NSW EPA on our activities and hear from them about regulatory, legislative and program developments that impact on our and Councils activities.

In August 2023 we met in Orange and took the opportunity to visit a plastics recycling facility processing hard to recycle plastics,

such as wheelie bins. Enroute we toured the Illawarra Joint Organisation of councils facility at Nowra, where an innovative project produces tiles and other building products from a range of wastes that would otherwise be landfilled.

In May 2024 our meeting took place at Coffs harbour to coincide with the annual Waste conference, where regional coordinators and project officers get the opportunity to build their knowledge and network with over 600 attendees. New projects are showcased, new technologies are on display and other local and State government representatives are available to exchange ideas and provide advice.

In November 2023 and June 2024 the regional groups and metropolitan groups held a combined meetings in Newcastle and Sydney. This always allows us to explore and learn from our many commonalities and differences around waste issues and opportunities.

NE WASTE GOVERNANCE & FINANCE

GOVERNANCE OF THE *GROUP*

NE Waste is governed under a Memorandum of Agreement between the 7 member Councils, that outlines the role and obligations of Councils and the Coordinator. A host Council administers our financial obligations and ensures our operations under their own policies and procedures.

This year was our first year hosted by Tweed Shire Council and we express our appreciation of the support they have given us.

Member Councils meet in person at least four – five times per year. In addition, NE Waste contractors meetings are held on alternative quarters to allow updates to the Coordinator, resource sharing and support across projects. The waste educators also meet with the NE Waste team on a regular basis to ensure regional and consistent communications reach our community. This year we also created a Operational Group and we meet with them quarterly to discuss issues that relate directly to their on the ground activities and needs at transfer stations and landfills.

Reporting to the EPA by the Waste Group is annual and is currently undergoing a review. Once reporting is complete, funding is allocated for projects and administration.



THE NORTH EAST WASTE TEAM



FINANCES AND PROCUREMENT

The NSW EPA provides funding to develop and implement our projects and NE Waste reports on our outcomes, achievements and resource recovery on an annual basis. In addition, each member Council contributes between \$0.80 to \$1.00 per head of population towards operations, project development and implementation. This is capped at maximum of 50,000 residents. This means each Council shares in decision-making and contributes a proportionate share of running costs and project expenses.

Not all waste groups are fortunate enough to operate under this model and NE Waste appreciates that this combined expenditure allows us to develop and deliver high quality programs. Additional funding is sought from grant programs under the Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy, the Environment Trust and the other initiatives for specific projects.

NE Waste can authorise expenditure for works or services by resolution at a meeting of the Working Group. Unless otherwise directed by the Working Group, procurement is undertaken in accordance with the procedures of the Host Council. The Host Council is responsible for the calling of and awarding tenders. The coordinator and group assist the Host Council by preparing any technical specifications and tender documents, assessing tenders, and making a recommendation to the Host

Council regarding the preferred tenderer. NE Waste delivers its projects through the engagement of contractors and consultants. This engagement is made under the procurement policies of the Host Council. In addition to the primary project coordinators a number of long term and experienced casual staff support NE Wastes education program. These contractors are vital to the ongoing delivery of projects and some have been fulfilling this role for more than 15 years. In 2023-24 they included:

Peter Notley, Nicki Walker, Sascha Piotrkowski, Joanne Hoy, Flavio Stankievich, Sandra Signorini and Danae Elarde.

In our operational and procurement decisions NE Waste strives to minimise our footprint by choosing to:

- Offset air travel
- Carpool when possible
- Purchase local or Australian made products
- Adopt, reuse and repair where possible
- Minimise waste, compost and recycle
- Use energy and water efficiently
- Make socially and environmentally ethical choices when operating for NE Waste

PROJECT EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET 2023-24

PROJECT	BUDGET ALLOCATED	EXPENDITURE
ASBESTOS PROGRAMME	\$25,000.00	\$24,020.00
BUSINESS PROGRAMMES	\$65,000.00	\$39,626.00
COMMUNICATION/ADMINISTRATION	\$40,000.00	\$38,252.00
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	\$100,000.00	\$112,949.00
COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRES (CRC)	\$147,099.00	\$62,579.00
EDUCATION CO-ORDINATION	\$90,000.00	\$92,524.00
ILLEGAL DUMPING & FLOOD WASTE	\$51,630.00	\$23,262.00
ILLEGAL DUMPING PROJECT	\$24,000.00	\$21,163.00
NORTHERN RIVERS CIRCULAR C&D	\$170,528.00	\$81,760.00
ORGANICS PROGRAMME	\$32,326.00	\$19,339.00
REGIONAL CO-ORDINATION	\$110,000.00	\$105,150.00
RENEW	\$10,000.00	\$7,314.00
REUSABLES @ EVENTS TRIAL	\$13,120.00	\$0.00
SCRAP TOGETHER R2	\$89,700.00	\$28,761.00
SPECIAL PROJECTS	\$10,000.00	\$586.00
TRAINING	\$5,000.00	\$19,071.00
VEHICLE EXPENSES	\$0.00	\$2,908.00
TOTAL	\$ 983,403.00	\$ 679,264.00

NB: FUNDS NOT EXPENDED ARE ROLLED OVER TO NEXT YEAR OR RETURNED TO OUR RESERVE.



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2023 -2024

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