

The Dirty Dozen: 12 Rules for Your Yellow Bin

COUNCIL NAME

Lismore City Council

WEB ADDRESS

northernriverswaste.c om.au

SIZE

1,267 square kilometres

POPULATION

45,800

Overview

In May 2014, Lismore City Council officially opened its \$3.65 million Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and Glass Processing Plant, sparking a recycling revolution in the Northern Rivers. The MRF and Glass Processing Plant rely entirely on community participation, so it is important to give the community a sense of ownership over the MRF and therefore a greater sense of responsibility to recycle right.

The MRF construction has been accompanied by a colourful education campaign called The Dirty Dozen: 12 Rules for Your Yellow Bin. The education campaign uses numbers, bright bold colours and quirky images of children to engage and empower the Lismore community to recycle right. The Dirty Dozen campaign introduced the new recycling programs to the community, while ironing out any uncertainties or myths surrounding kerbside recycling.



Image: Truckside artwork

Background

In 2013, Lismore City Council completed the largest community consultation in its 134-year history and the environment was the top priority, with residents wanting Lismore to become a model of sustainability. A centrepiece of achieving this is the new \$3.65 million Materials Recovery Facility and Glass Processing Plant.



The MRF will process more than 15,000 tonnes of recyclables a year, reducing the community's environmental impact and providing a revenue stream for Council. The Glass Processing Plant keeps hundreds of tonnes of glass out of landfill, which is crushed and turned into sand for use in road base and asphalt. Council has devised a way to recycle plastic bags and polystyrene in our kerbside bins for the first time. Council is also able to



collect 'problem waste' such as batteries and mobile phones thanks to a new innovation called the Resource Recovery Collection Satchel.

The opening of the MRF is regionally significant, with several neighbouring councils coming on board with the program and bringing their recyclables to the MRF for processing, making Lismore the recycling hub of the region. This will have a significant impact on the way that the Northern Rivers community views and indeed practices recycling in the future, and has the potential to divert thousands of tonnes of waste from landfill.

Whilst providing clear information on new recycling programs is important, clearing up uncertainties or "myths" around recycling is one of the main objectives of the MRF, as well as empowering the community with knowledge of what is expected of them. People often become confused by the finer facets of recycling, for example, whether it is necessary to wash containers or remove labels and lids, and this can be a barrier to them recycling at all.

Implementation

To get the Dirty Dozen messages across, Council used various media to engage all facets of the Lismore community. Information on the Dirty Dozen and MRF has been dispersed through Council's fortnightly newsletter as well as via direct mail to all residents and businesses in the LGA.

Local print media, television and radio news were used to promote the Dirty Dozen campaign. Social media and the Northern Rivers Waste and Council websites were also used to engage the community, and Facebook played a strong role in giving the community a forum to ask questions about things they were unsure of. Having discussions with people and providing them with the Resource Recovery Collection Satchels and promotional Bag-the-Bag plastic bags proved very effective.

The intensity of the campaign increased once the facility became operational in May 2014. Approximately \$25,000 was allocated to the rollout of the education campaign, with assistance from the Australian Packaging Covenant, the Packaging Stewardship Forum and the NSW Government.

Outcomes

The MRF has been operating for approximately three months and in this time the response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. Changed recycling habits are starting to be represented in the amount and type of material that is coming through the MRF, with bagged plastic bags and collection satchels becoming commonplace. The naming of the recycling facility as 'Our MRF' has given the community a real sense of ownership.

It is anticipated that through expanding the Dirty Dozen program to other Council areas, greater yields of plastic bags, polystyrene, glass product and problem wastes will be able to be recovered, helping Council to reach the projected 15,000 tonnes of processed recycling per annum.

Key Learnings

If embarking on this project again Council would reconsider direct mail-out to residents and businesses in the Local Government Area. Although Council engaged Australia Post to



deliver the information package and fridge magnet to residents, many reported that they had not received the information. Given the cost incurred to have this material printed and distributed, the value for money is not present, and other forms of communication have proved more efficient.

The Dirty Dozen Education Program is an ongoing program that will continue to support Our MRF to work as efficiently as possible. Over the next twelve months, we will be working towards the following:

- Continued community engagement public displays and face to face engagement through shopping centre displays, community events and large scale events.
- Contamination management programs bin inspections and reward programs to ensure residents are receiving the messages and doing the right thing.
- Tours of the Lismore Recycling and Recovery Centre, which includes Our MRF for school and community groups. Set up monthly tour dates for general community tours
- Expansion of the Resource Recovery Collection Satchel program increasing distribution points for the satchels by using local primary schools as collection points for residents to grab a satchel.
- Development of an educational film, showing the workings of the MRF for school and community education, as well as made available on the Northern Rivers Waste and Lismore City Council websites.
- Working with partnering Councils to implement the Dirty Dozen Education Program in the region, therefore expanding the amount of material that can be recycled in the Northern Rivers Region as a whole, benefitting thousands of residents and revolutionising recycling.

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This project was the 2014 winner of the Resource Recovery Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.