

# Case Study: Sustainable Living Blacktown

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**COUNCIL NAME**

Blacktown City  
Council

**WEB ADDRESS**

[blacktown.nsw.gov.au](http://blacktown.nsw.gov.au)

**SIZE**

247 square kilometres

**POPULATION**

348,030

## Overview

Blacktown City Council is committed to being a leader in sustainability by building the best, and being a sustainable organisation. By using a multi-pronged approach, consistent monitoring and evaluation, and being flexible and adaptable, Council can achieve its sustainability goals through community engagement and works programs.

## Background

Blacktown City is rapidly expanding, especially in its built environments and population, which gives the organisation a unique and important opportunity for change. Council has set environmental and sustainability policies and strategies enabling it to implement best practice sustainability and be a community and industry leader responsive to ever changing people and places. Flagship programs address energy and climate change, community capacity building, resource recovery and organisational leadership.

The overarching objectives are to: encourage healthy and sustainable living, enhance community well-being and neighbourhood amenity, protect and improve water quality, conserve, restore and enhance our biological diversity and ecosystem health, adopt innovative strategies to reduce our environmental footprint, and respond to climate change.

One of the operational plan actions is to improve the skills and knowledge of residents to grow food at home in a more environmentally friendly way. With food security a very real problem, the Bungarribee community hub project fosters behaviour change towards sustainable living and partners with 9 external stakeholder groups. The community garden component is a thriving asset that reflects the diversity of the community and provides access to fresh food for residents.

The building is constructed of straw bales using sustainable building materials and techniques. In its construction it provided a valuable training opportunity in sustainable building techniques for TAFE students. The project also allowed for community input into the design and provided employment for Indigenous Australian's. Water and energy efficiency and sustainable landscaping were also incorporated. Council manages the volunteers at this garden with 1200 volunteer hours being donated during 2017/18.

This project also crosses over other focus areas outlined in Council's operational plan. This includes the enhancement of community well-being and neighbourhood amenity through provision of a beautiful facility available to the public and the social benefit this type of asset brings, but it also demonstrates how innovative strategies can be used to reduce our environmental footprint.

## Implementation

A key step in Blacktown Council's approach is to forge partnerships with stakeholders, with the strength and success of its projects attributable to Council being a 'platform for connection'. Strong partnerships allow for rewarding and relevant sustainability projects for our community and the local environment. For example, Council has had an ongoing partnership with TAFE NSW since 2011 to run courses at Council's Sustainability Hub which cater for carrying levels of experience and commitment.

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Council has established an environment advisory committee, which includes Council and community representatives, to provide advice, support, and encourage environmental initiatives that build the community's capacity to meet the needs and challenges of the future.

Council also has multiple corporate projects to respond to and manage the impacts of climate change. The Cool Streets program engaged with residents about the value of street trees in managing climate change, with over 4000 trees planted in parks and local streets as part of the Council-wide street tree planting program. Council is currently installing 10 electric vehicle smart poles around the City, and its own leaseback fleet has 19 hybrid vehicles, 8 of which are plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. Electricity usage is offset by the civic centre rooftop solar panels. Council has 17 sites with solar panels installed, and in the last 12 months has generated over 52,000 kWh of energy saving over 44,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Council also established the Environmental Initiatives Steering Group, whose role is to assist in the coordination and governance of Council's large, ongoing cross-directorate environmental initiatives. The committee is responsible for implementing sustainability in new/refurbished buildings, new technologies and is currently undertaking an analysis of solar farm options and implementation.

## Outcomes

Council's sustainability engagement programs are broad with a great reach to our community, providing a wide range of opportunities for our community to get involved in environmental activities.

In 2017/18 Council:

- delivered 11 worm farming and composting workshops to 365 residents,
- facilitated 12 waste workshops to 461 people living in multi-unit dwellings,
- provided corporate waste training events to social housing providers,
- rolled out a real estate and strata managers forum reaching approx. 50 local operators,
- provided 45 community events and activities on sustainable living and resource recovery
- hosted 16 events at two community gardens with 691 participants, and
- delivered 14 workshops on improving food production skills to 287 participants.

The foraging for edible weeds workshop was also a hit, and 7500 people were reached through the Composting Awareness Week festivities. The Sustainability Hub accommodated 2468 visitors across 15 events including 6 community working bees. Between January 2017 and June 2018, the Bungaribee community garden grew 32 different sources of food including fruit, herbs and vegetables, equivalent to 700kg of fresh produce. The Showground community garden has numerous disability groups involved in activities and garden care. It also hosts the culturally and linguistically diverse, healthy living programs.

Engagement efforts through social media campaigns reached 1,326,256 people across 17 digital campaigns, while the litter prevention campaign reached over 492,000 people. Council digital campaigns to promote Earth Hour and Clean Up Australia Day events reached over 7500 people and 12,000 people respectively.



### Key Learnings

Blacktown City Council's organisational and community sustainability initiatives are ongoing, and Council continues to monitor, evaluate and report on them. Council programs takes a flexible approach and evolves programs as it learns through implementation, as this helps to maximise adaptability and the success of programs.

An example of this is the Blacktown Climate Change Action Plan which finished in 2011. The plan provided a springboard to reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to climate change. While the plan sets a good foundation, Council recognised the need to delve deeper and build on achievements while being responsive to changing technologies and environment conditions. Council's new Responding to Climate Change Policy has just been adopted which addresses those points and Council will continue to monitor and evaluate the actions from this policy as they get implemented.

Blacktown City Council aims to build the best Council it can. The advantage of being a large organisation means there are many opportunities to increase sustainability understanding and awareness. Implementing sustainability initiatives across several areas of Council enables the transfer of sustainability knowledge to other areas of Council and encourage them to share what they have learnt with the community too.

### Contact

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