

Cooma Organic Kerbside Collection

COUNCIL NAME

Cooma-Monaro Shire Council

WEB ADDRESS

www.cooma.nsw.gov.

SIZE

5,184 square kilometres

POPULATION

10,073

Overview

Cooma-Monaro Shire Council were facing challenges with the management of solid waste due to increasing waste generation, diminishing landfill and increasing community demand for sustainable practices. In response to those challenges, this project aimed to minimise the amount of reusable, recyclable and recoverable resources going to landfill. With the organic waste that Cooma collected through this project, they went on to manufacture their own compost product for the community, which is now known as 'Coompost'.

Background

Cooma Shire is committed to providing best practice services to their community. They proudly employ their own staff for waste and recycling services and also operate their own landfill site. This allows them to take real ownership and pride in the quality of the services they provide. At the same time, the Cooma Shire community is increasing their understanding of waste avoidance and resource recovery.

Through this project, Cooma managed to transition from just 'running a tip', to operating a topclass resource recovery service and dramatically reducing the amount of waste going to landfill. The staff at Cooma strongly believe that being a smaller rural council should not prevent them from achieving big results.

In an effort to determine the viability of a potential 3 bin system in the township of Cooma, the Council conducted an organic waste collection trial involving around 100 households. This occurred between April 2012 to August 2013, during which 46.99 tonnes of organic waste was collected with a participation rate of 70%.

The data that was collected during the trial showed that a 3 bin system, incorporating a food and garden waste bin would service the community well and also had community support.

Implementation

In 2014 Cooma Shire Council received grant funding through the NSW EPA's *Waste Less, Recycle More* initiative. The objective of the grant was to implement a 3 bin kerbside collection system, including the retrieval of organic matter from the residual waste stream across the Shire.







Prior to commencing the project, a baseline audit was carried out. In August 2014 a total of 224 residual waste bins were sampled. This showed that there was opportunity to redirect 65.4% of organic and recyclable material out of the collected residual waste stream.

Cooma then commenced the 3 bin service including a green mixed garden and food bin collection. The organics material collected is pasteurised the compost at the local landfill (to eliminate pathogens) on its way to becoming compost. The name of the product — Coompost — was arrived at through a naming competition for residents, that Council ran at the Cooma show. Now, both council and the community use Coompost which is in high demand.

Once the 3 bin system was implemented, Council reduced the size of the residual bin from 240L down to 120L due to the decrease in residual waste. They also established a communications and education campaign for the community to address on-going issues such as participation rates and contamination.

Outcomes

The key outcomes of the project are:

- Diversion of around 348 tonnes of food and garden waste and 50 tonnes of dry recyclables in the first 6 months of operation.
- Overwhelming community support and uptake of the new system.
- The *Coompost* product is being used by the community, community gardens, Council and as part of a noxious weed African Lovegrass eradication project trial.
- Council is now considering expansion of the organics service to commercial businesses in the Shire.

Key Learnings

There were a number of learnings resulting from this project, each are outlined below:

- Monitoring and evaluation was essential for ensuring project viability and effectiveness
 throughout the trial, project implementation and communications campaign. It also
 provided Cooma with valuable information to steer their communications campaign into the
 future.
- In order to assist the small number of residents that had trouble with the reduced capacity
 of the residual waste bin, Cooma staff carried out household visits to help residents identify
 materials that could be diverted from the red bin to the yellow or green bin.
- Compost is a great way to teach the community to change behaviour, thereby steering them away from a throw away culture and toward closed-loop practices.

Contact

Name: Mandy Thurling

Position: Resource and Waste Coordinator

Phone: 02 6455 1921

Email: mandy.thurling@cooma.nsw.gov.au

This project was the 2015 winner of the Resource Recovery Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.