

Case Study: Increasing Resource Recovery for Broken Hill

COUNCIL NAME

Broken Hill City Council

WEB ADDRESS

www.brokenhill.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

170 square kilometres

POPULATION

18,856

Overview

Broken Hill City Council was successful in receiving a grant under the Waste Less Recycle More Program to build and operate a Community Recycling Centre targeting household hazardous wastes. The facility was officially opened in November 2015, and has to date collected approximately 6 tonnes of problem wastes for reprocessing and recycling from the Broken Hill Community, and has enabled Council to engage with the community and implement other changes to its waste program to support increased diversion from landfill.

Background

The City of Broken Hill is the largest regional centre in the western half of NSW. It lies 300km to the north of Mildura in Victoria and 500km northeast of Adelaide with a population of approximately 18,800 people. Resource recovery and recycling has always been a challenge for Broken Hill given the isolation of the community and cost involved in moving recyclables to a viable market.

In 2013 the NSW Government released funding under the Waste Less Recycle More initiative for a wide range of waste reduction activities including the construction of Community Recycling Centres (CRC) across the state. The centres are designed to capture household hazardous wastes including gas bottles, fire extinguishers, paint, fluoro globes and tubes, car batteries, household batteries, motor and other oils, and smoke detectors. Broken Hill was successful in receiving a grant for the development of a CRC.

The Broken Hill Community has been participating in the annual Household Chemical Collections program since 2010. Through these annual collections approximately 1.8 tonne of hazardous waste has been reprocessed or recycled, with collections capturing volumes from 20kg to 500kg each year. These volumes indicated how much hazardous waste is going to landfill in between these collection days, and demonstrated the need for a more permanent solution.

The objective of the project was and still is to provide Broken Hill City Council with the capability and support to effectively manage problem wastes for the Broken Hill Community.

Implementation

Broken Hill City Council partnered with NSW Environmental Trust (Waste Less Recycle More), NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and NetWaste, with \$113,000 in project funding coming from the Waste Less Recycle More initiative.

The construction of the CRC occurred in parallel with the installation of a weighbridge at the Broken Hill waste facility. This was a major project for Broken Hill. It also included the introduction of fees and charges for selected wastes for the first time ever in Broken Hill in a bid to increase resource recovery at the landfill.



A local contractor undertook construction of the CRC, which was completed in July 2015 and came in under budget. A variation was approved to extend the CRC to provide an extra area for full stillages and expansion of collected items over time. The facility was officially opened in November 2015 with the extension completed in December 2015. The entire project took approximately 18 months to implement.

Broken Hill households can use the CRC facilities for free and the EPA will cover the recovery costs until mid 2017. Businesses can still use the service however fees apply.

Outcomes

Since opening in November 2015, 6 tonne of household hazardous wastes have been collected through this service, well above what was ever achieved through the total annual collections since 2010. To date Council has been successful in achieving the following outcomes:

- Problem wastes are managed in a manner that aligns with legislative obligations and community expectations
- An increase in the quantity and types of problem wastes being managed by Council, and an expanded capacity within Council to manage those wastes;
- The local community is engaged and supportive of the project and its overarching objective;
- A long term solution for managing problem waste is realised.

Council is now working with NetWaste to implement the Community Engagement Program, over a 3 year period. In January 2016 Council staff surveyed CRC facility users to determine how they knew about the service and what they previously did with these waste types. Most respondents found out about the service through 'word of mouth', and previously would 'place the waste in the garbage' before the service was available.



Following the opening of the facility a 3 week campaign of radio and newspaper adverts promoted the service. A CRC flyer was placed in the annual rates notice for every resident. A further survey will be undertaken to determine the success of this mail out. The longer term success of this project will rely on further education of the community about the availability of the service.

Over the next 12 months Council will also be implementing a transfer station design drop off facility at the Council Waste Facility, with the intention of further increasing resource recovery.

Key Learnings

The project has now put a permanent facility in place at Broken Hill to remove problem waste from the general waste stream. Funding has enabled Council to implement improved resource recovery options at no cost to the community, which is an important achievement given the low socio economic status of the Broken Hill community.

Council will take on the collection costs once EPA sponsorship ends, and this will be recovered through waste fees and charges in place.

Already the CRC has added non-core items for collection including oil filters, oily rags and printer cartridges. These items were added within months of opening the facility as the demand became apparent through community use.

If the project was embarked on again timeframes would be reviewed to be more realistic, as the initial project timeframe was short by approximately 6 months. Stronger community engagement and more direct contact with residents may increase usage of the facility and will be addressed as the project continues through the implementation of the engagement strategy. There will also be an opportunity to expand this service to include commercial waste and Council operational areas in the future.

The project has already increased awareness within Council and the business community in making decisions on how to dispose of particular hazardous wastes generated across the community.

Contact

Name: Libby Guest

Position: Environment, Waste and Recycling Specialist

Phone: 08 8080 3345

Email: elizabeth.guest@brokenhill.nsw.gov.au

This project was the 2016 winner of the Resource Recovery Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards