

# Case Study: SSROC waste avoidance and resource recovery education

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**COUNCIL NAME**

Southern Sydney  
Regional Organisation  
of Councils (SSROC)

**WEB ADDRESS**

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

## Overview

Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils ran 131 workshops delivered in 9 months to over 2200 people, to share practical knowledge for tackling management of food waste, recycling and reusing, 'living with less' along with correct disposal of household problem wastes. Evaluation has shown 85% of participants committed to a change and a follow up survey showed 86% of participants had changed how they manage waste.

## Background

This project was initiated to deliver the aims of the SSROC Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy (2014-21) (WARR Strategy). A key focus of the WARR Strategy is to bring about an increase in 'responsible citizenship' which means that more residents are correctly following the waste hierarchy of avoiding and reusing first before recycling or disposal.

A project steering group made up of waste management and education staff in SSROC member councils identified the need for a regional education program to complement their individual education and change programs and help support Councils with insufficient resources. The education project aimed to engage new audiences in workshop programs and focus on typically harder to reach target audiences such as new migrants, young adults, young families and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

## Implementation

The project design was informed by SSROC literature reviews which identified barriers and opportunities for influencing behaviour change and engaging target audiences in topics including recycling, food waste, problem waste and illegal dumping.

Using adult learning principles this project was designed to engage with the values and motivations of the target groups. It also makes reference to McKenzie-Mohr's principles of community-based social marketing. By targeting established community groups, learnings from the workshops could continue to be exchanged and explored amongst members.

The project is also strategically aligned with the NSW EPA Changing Behaviour Together: NSW Waste Less Recycle More Education Strategy 2015-17, and complements SSROC member councils' strategic and operational plans. SSROC is working on a complementary media campaign for release in 2017/18.



This project was delivered with a budget of \$281,000 from NSW EPA Better Waste Recycling Funds.

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## Outcomes

This project reached over 2,200 residents through 131 workshops, 85% of these participants committed to a specific action to reduce waste. Currently, 86% of the participants that responded to the follow up text messages answered 'YES' they have completed their action to reduce waste; 14% answered 'NO'.

One of the huge successes of this project has been the high number of workshops delivered to typically 'hard to reach' audiences. By targeting English language classes this project engaged a high number of migrants, specific language groups, parents and young people from diverse backgrounds and age ranges. Workshops were also offered in different languages allowing us to reach new audiences that councils might otherwise miss in their education programs. This project delivered 84 workshops in English, 28 in Mandarin, 17 in Cantonese, 9 in Arabic and 7 in Vietnamese. Over 70% of the workshops had participants from CALD communities.

Engaging directly with community groups encouraged peer to peer learning as groups would discuss their actions to reduce waste with each other during the workshop and at subsequent meetings. Of the 131 workshops, 27 groups did more than one workshop giving the educators a chance to reinforce the learning outcomes and facilitate group discussion on how participants were progressing with their commitments to reduce waste.

Many sustainability education projects use feedback forms to encourage participants to make a pledge to change their behaviour. This innovative project went one step further by trialling the use of the text messaging to remind and allow participants to report back if they had completed their behaviour change. SSROC invested in a comprehensive evaluation process that will help other councils consider different ways to measure and report behaviour changes.

## Key Learnings

One of the challenges for the project was managing the follow up text messages to workshop participants as this was a new evaluation method for the sustainability sector and it was difficult to find evaluation consultants with experience using text messaging. Whilst it is very cost effective to send text messaging there is quite a significant investment of time to have a staff member or consultant manage this process. In the future, we would consider how to make this process more efficient, and search for a specialist market research company to handle the text messages.

The next step for the project is to secure funding for another year and if successful build on the contacts and networks made to gain greater penetration across the SSROC region. We will also consider diversifying our approaches and workshop topics to attract specific audiences (e.g. university students).

## Contact

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