

Warringah Creative Space

COUNCIL NAME

Warringah Council

WEB ADDRESS

warringah.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

150 square kilometres

POPULATION

140,741

Overview

An old run down scout hall that was proposed for demolition was completely rebuilt including a beautiful botanical garden (featured on Gardening Australia) for \$650,000. The project used 80% salvaged materials, had significant community involvement and generated only 1m³ of waste for landfill.

Instead of beginning with a detailed design and tendering for construction, Council had only a vision and concept. Council then project managed the trades on site, designing as construction progressed, on the basis of the materials that were found each day. Council salvaged materials from the site itself, the local Kimbriki Resource Recovery Centre and other demolition sites on the northern beaches.



Image: Warringah creative space near completion

Background

The Cultural Plan for Warringah was developed in 2008 in line with the NSW Ministry for the Arts and the Department of Local Government guidelines. The Cultural Plan is a strategic document that defines the way Warringah Council will provide for the cultural wellbeing of the community.

In developing the plan, Council identified that a good sized section of the community was crying out for artist space. They needed an affordable space where they could exhibit their art, be creative and come together to build the art scene in Warringah. Through consultation with both the community and local artists, it was determined that a large gallery space was required with additional workshop/studio spaces for resident artists. A particularly run-down community hall that was previously used by a local Scouts group had been proposed for demolition, but the general layout of the building was suitable for a gallery with studio spaces.

REFERENCES

warringah.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/general-information/cultural-plan/culturalplanfinalweb.pdf

[youtube.com/watch?v=4C0TgoDixg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4C0TgoDixg)

This project is of global significance because Council has shown that the technique of using reusable and recyclable materials and designing as the project progresses is not only viable but a desirable way to rebuild public buildings in a way that is both beautiful and functional.

The objectives of the project were as follows:

1. Activate the public building and surrounds through innovative design;
2. Utilise 80-90% salvaged reusable materials;
3. Create cost effective solutions through an innovative approach;
4. Deliver a program that drives community connectedness and involvement; and
5. Delivery of the project within the established timeframe.

Implementation

Council set up a project steering committee to oversee the project, and applied the Prince 2 Project Management methodology to the project to ensure appropriate controls were in place. After determining that the existing building would be renovated with salvaged second-hand materials, Council undertook significant community engagement activities working closely with local environment groups, residents and artists to garner their support and involve them in the process from start to finish.

Council partnered with the Kimbriki Resource Recovery Centre to obtain salvaged second hand materials. Management at Kimbriki arranged for their staff to monitor materials coming into their facility on a daily basis and put aside any common materials that might be needed in retrofitting the building.

Contractors were sympathetic to the project philosophy of reuse, working well to repurpose materials onsite and incorporate second hand materials throughout the renovation. The work was more labour intensive e.g. removing old nails from second hand timbers, but proved better for the local economy and environment.

The project had a high risk of going over budget and timeframes (6 months). Estimates of the cost to rebuild were \$1.2M. Council set an initial budget of \$550,000 and the project was delivered for \$650,000k and the timeframe was met.

Outcomes

The project was completed using approximately 80% salvaged reusable materials. From a waste minimisation perspective, this is an outstanding result in comparison to a typical build/renovation that would use 0% salvaged reusable materials. Only 1m³ of waste left the site to go to landfill, compared to a typical build/renovation of this type producing approximately 60m³ of waste for landfill. All other waste materials on site were either reused or returned to Kimbriki Resource Recovery Centre for recycling.

Since opening the Warringah Creative Space, Council has had five successful exhibitions with up to 150 people per day coming through the gallery. Additionally, the gallery space is booked back to back for the remainder of 2014.

Another achievement was the successful community volunteer day - the 'Community Blitz' - held on site nearing completion of the project. Volunteers built and planted expanses of garden surrounding the building, and as they worked in the gardens, qualified landscape

gardener and reuse consultant, Andrew O'Sullivan educated the groups on best practice for preparing soil and planting.

Key Learnings

Council identified that this project would be difficult as it challenged the paradigm on which standard building renewal projects are based. Committing to the use of salvaged reusable waste materials impacted the design phase of the building renewal in that it was not possible to foresee the exact materials salvaged on a day-to-day basis and therefore have a detailed design plan before construction began. This meant that Council had to create visual concepts and mood boards on a day to day basis as the materials came to hand.

Repurposing or reusing materials posed another challenge in that the materials required a lot of preparation before they could be reused. Removing nails from large amounts of timber for instance, took a significant amount of time.

This innovative approach to renovation required a major shift in thinking for all who were involved in the project. Convincing architects, engineers and builders that this was something that could be achieved successfully without the standard detailed design of traditional renewal projects proved challenging.

This project also allowed Council to develop a stronger ongoing partnership with the Kimbriki Resource Recovery Centre, allowing Council to consider this methodology when redeveloping all of its building stock. It also enabled Council to strengthen its relationships with a number of local environment groups.

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This project was the 2014 winner of the Waste Avoidance and Reuse Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.