

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS: IT'S ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

WHAT WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE?

Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society
Liz Cameron, Secretary
"For us, it was about peoples' empowerment - everyone was quite willing to have a bit of a go at re-doing their gardens."

Food Connect Sydney
Julian Lee, General Manager
"It's actually built a relationship between Food Connect and a couple of groups that are strong and will continue into the future. That means ongoing education and community building around sustainable, local and ethical food."

Linking Communities Through Permaculture
Our organisation has been able to look at sustainability as an objective, as a priority, and see how we can apply it by working with other groups in the region. Sustainability and social justice - our core work - can now be practically applied.

Carrs Park Community Garden
Mariam Hii, SGMRC
Asha Ramzan, ISWCDO
"We've gone from being a small group to a larger group. It's about changing behaviour all the time... and so many of the locals come in and say 'This is a fabulous venture, we really love that it's here!'"

Permaculture Sydney South
Matt Heffernan, Group Leader
"We've been skilled up to be better educators, which is the stepping stone to better community education. We have better confidence in facilitating education and the 'doing'."

St George Community Housing
Rowa Omari, Community Development Officer
"It really really touches my heart as a community worker to see the relationships that have formed through this project. The CEO said to me: 'We've got to ensure we have more projects like this... we'd like to see more gardens across social housing.'"

THE SUSTAINABLE BOATING PROJECT

We wanted to engage local businesses to self-determine their own sustainable practices. The boating & fishing industry and recreation groups were a perfect fit.

Colin Bransgrove
"The partnership was the catalyst... it provided necessary resources between environmental groups and councils. There was vast networking between exhibitors - many of whom hadn't met before."

* We partnered with the Marina Industries Association and engaged eight marinas, and achieved Clean Marinas accreditation for 4 of them.

* Estuary Open Day, October 2011

BUILDING CAPACITY WITHIN COUNCILS:

IT'S ALL ABOUT PEOPLE!

Hurstville City Council
The most significant change has been the staff interest and engagement - because that's going to give the best long-term result. The learning process was central and enabled us to implement WSUD projects and solve problems.
Stormwater Outflow pipe and Stabilised Drainage Path at Myles Dunphy Reserve, Hurstville

KOGARAH CITY COUNCIL
Prior to the WSUD Action Plan, people were aware of WSUD but not aware how council could be part of it. Since then we've had a lot of projects come about as collaboration between groups - all of them working together around one project.
Green Roof Design at Kogarah City Council

ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL
It's been a factor in raising awareness to engage community more too... because they are the drivers of council. We are here to reflect the community's needs.
Hydrocon Pipes at Peter Depeña Reserve, Rockdale

Sutherland Shire Council
People think that money was the barrier to the things we do and decisions we make... the problem is more than that. It's communication about who's going to do what, research and technology.
Street trees at Sutherland

LESSONS:

BARRIERS ARE SOCIAL, NOT TECHNICAL

- * Sustainability is fundamentally about human behaviour. The barriers to more sustainable practices are primarily **SOCIAL** rather than technical, and **CONNECTIONS THROUGH NETWORKS** and the capacity for action are critical ingredients in changing to more sustainable practices in organisations and households.
- * The LGRSI has provided knowledge, skills and plans for action to enable organisations and households to confidently engage in new and more sustainable practices.

Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative

We had a \$2 million grant ...

We wanted to improve the health of the Lower Georges River catchment through:

1. **Water Sensitive urban Design** in council policies and works.

2. **Organisations** integrating their planning and project management.

3. **Adopting** sustainability policies and practices in council activities.

4. **More sustainable practices** in businesses and households.

5. **Improved bushland, biodiversity and riparian health.**

The Team

4 Councils

- Alex Vandine (Rockdale City Council)
- Ian Curtis (Hurstville City Council)
- Beth Noel (Sutherland Shire Council)
- Tom Heath (Kogarah City Council)

2 agency reps

- Alison Hanton (Catchment Management Authority Sydney Metropolitan)
- John Dahlenburg (NSW Government)

GRCCC

Georges River Combined Councils' Committee

- Melina Amerasinghe (2 staff)
- Bruce Cooke (2 Community Group reps)

2 staff

- David Kuhn
- Col Freeman



The Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative is a partnership between Kogarah City Council, Hurstville City Council, Rockdale City Council, Sutherland Shire Council, the Georges River Combined Councils' Committee and the Sydney Metropolitan CMA. It has been assisted by the NSW Government with funding through the Environmental Trust.

WHAT WE DID

IN 2009, WE SAID ...

BUT THERE WERE BARRIERS ...

SO WE ...

WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED ...

1. SUSTAINABLE URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT

Water management is important and timely...

...Water Sensitive urban Design (WSUD) seems the right response.

Previous plans have identified (mostly social) barriers.

BUT ...

We are unsure of the extent of commitment to WSUD among council management.

AND ...

We suspect community interest has drifted.

...Developed and conducted a rapid assessment of institutional capacity for WSUD within each council, to ensure we had plans and commitments for action.

- * 4 x WSUD Action Plans
- * 2 x follow-up workshops
- * 4 x council implementation of WSUD
 - > 1 roof garden
 - > 1 wetland rehabilitation
 - > 2 Hydrocon pipe systems
 - > 20 Stormwater re-use tree pits
- * Won a Stormwater Industry Award
- * 4 x Quarterly WSUD newsletters

We've created tools that other councils are using.

Action Plans are in place to guide councils.

2. NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (NRM) INTEGRATION

Agencies need better monitoring and reliable reporting of NRM projects.

There is a desire to use resources more effectively.

We suspect the community is unaware of and/or confused by the range of NRM project activities.

BUT ...

There is no overarching framework for managing the Lower Georges River.

AND ...

There appears to be a lot of overlap in funding sources and aspirations.

...Convened a group to coordinate activities to ensure we were acting effectively, and collaborated with the River Health Program and four councils in on-ground projects.

- * Convened Botany Bay Coordination group
- * Identified and collated baseline studies
- * Georges River Conference Cruise
- * Georges River Estuary Handbook
- * 4 riparian regeneration projects
 - > 14,250 native plants planted
 - > 10,765 m² weeded

Supporting a new integrated framework:

- ~ GRCCC's Management & Implementation Plan
- ~ Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Plan, and
- ~ Georges River Coastal Zone Management Plan

3. ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PROGRAM

There is a framework (Brown) which identifies critical elements of organisational capacity.

Barriers are social, not technical.

BUT ...

Each council is a different animal, and has different cultures, structures and processes, which are difficult to change.

...Conducted an assessment of organisational effectiveness in councils to ensure councils were aware of priorities for improvement.

- * 4 Council Organisational Profiles
- * 4 Action Plans based on Organisational Profiles
- * Four council groups with a sustainability agenda
- * 4 Sustainable Choice or Green with Env-E training activities
- * Sustainable Events and Sustainable Purchasing policies

4 council groups have been developed which drive a sustainability agenda.

4 & 5. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM GETTING GREENER!

There are many community-based players in existing groups, each with an existing structure, networks and membership.

BUT ...

While councils have sustainability processes, it's not clear how the community could plan or act for sustainability.

...Supported existing groups to plan for and conduct projects to ensure they could take the next steps in fostering more sustainable practices within their communities.

- * 32 Training or Community days held
- * > 1300 People attending events
- * > 450 People who've changed their practices
- * 40 New members to community groups
- * 740 Native plants established
- 4 Clean Marina accreditations

6 groups have plans for the future, and improved implementation skills.