


# Community Environment Credentials: The Mindarie Regional Council experience


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## Community environmental credentials

The Mindarie Regional Council experience




And Man created the plastic bag and the tin and aluminum can and the cellophane wrapper and the paper plate, and this was good because Man could then take his automobile and buy all his food in one place and He could save that which was good to eat in the refrigerator and throw away that which had no further use. And soon the earth was covered with plastic bags and aluminum cans and paper plates and disposable bottles and there was nowhere to sit down or walk, and Man shook his head and cried: "Look at this Godawful mess."  
*Art Buchwald, 1970*



## Community expectations

- o Environmental credentials of the corporate sector  
– *strong focus / very important*
- o Environmental credentials of communities  
– *weak focus / very important.*



## Inspiring community action

- o We can control what happens in our own home and backyard.
- o Tremendous opportunity to take thoughtful and sustainable action.
- o Even little things can make a difference.



## The waste picture

- o MRC – WA's largest waste management authority
- o Disposes of 350,000 tonnes of municipal waste each year.
- o Comes from 500,000 residents from its seven member councils.
- o The landfill at Tamala Park is the seventh largest in Australia.



## Key truth about waste

- o It is being generated at an increasing rate.
- o What should the response be?
  - Build more landfills, if we can find the land.
  - Introduce alternative waste technologies.
  - Improve recycling & recovery systems to reduce what goes into landfill.
- o None of these will stop waste being generated at an increasing rate.





### Finding our direction

- MRC comprises seven Member Councils – Joondalup, Wanneroo, Stirling, Victoria Park, Vincent, Cambridge and Perth.
- These Councils work jointly on waste infrastructure, but have done very little to jointly educate the community.
- Until now!

### WESSG

- Waste Education Strategy Steering Group
- All Member Councils attend
- Includes 2 community representatives from MRC's Community Engagement Advisory Group – CEAG.
- DEC invited to observe.
- Meets every five weeks.
- Discusses how to integrate on waste education initiatives to get a bigger bang for our buck.

### Terms of reference

- To identify and discuss issues relevant to regional waste education;
- To clarify the sustainable waste management vision and ensure its relevance for each Member Council;
- To share information about current and planned MRC and Member Council waste education activities;
- To explore opportunities for an integrated approach through messages, programs, communication materials, and other opportunities;
- To search for and assess alternative strategies for achieving sustainable waste behaviour by residents;
- To achieve consistent and aligned waste education activity at the MRC and Member Council levels; and
- To be a forum where proposals can be brought forward for consideration and discussion.

### Building the vision – the ladder

- Further rungs on the ladder include:
  - Improved householder decisions which minimise waste;
  - Improved efforts with organics to remove green waste from the waste stream;
  - Improved efforts with separation and safe disposal of contaminants to remove them from the household waste stream.

### Councils help communities move up the ladder

- Councils can make it easier to do the right thing by:
  - Creating appropriate retrieval, disposal and recovery systems;
  - Showing people how to work with compost and worm farms;
  - Supporting the message on packaging reduction and Extended Producer Responsibility.



### What behavioural change to target?

- Alternative waste facility
- Householder decisions
- Organics
- Recycling
- Household hazardous waste

### What are our options?

	AWT	Household decisions	Organics	Recycling	HHW
Schools	✓	?	✓	✓	✓
Schools Option 1		?	✓	✓	?
Schools Option 2		?	✓	✓	?
Schools Option 3	?	✓	?	?	?
Sustainable Households	?	✓	?	?	?
Community Service	?	✓	✓	✓	✓
REmida	?			✓	?
RRF/AWT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Branding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Earth Carers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Waste Free	✓			✓	

### Who do we aim at?

- Who in the community is it really important to reach?
- What other options for action exist, given the target audience we want to reach?

### What we've decided to work on

- Four programs:
  - Branding
  - Earth Carers
  - Community Service Initiative
  - Household Hazardous Waste

### Branding

- Outcome:** Regional visibility for the concept of sustainable waste management (SWM).
- Value-add:** raising the profile of SWM provides a basis for other programs.

### Earth Carers

- Outcome:** Community education outreach program through trained volunteers
  - Provides community members with knowledge and skills in waste minimisation practices.
- Value-adds:** Multiple

- ● ● | **Community service Initiative**
- **Outcome:** Provides direct experience to Year 10 students in waste management projects.
- **Value-adds:**
  - increased focus on waste management and waste reduction in schools
  - strong foundation for schools-based programs for battery collection and recycling.
  - Reinforces region's commitment to SWM.

- ● ● | **HHW**
- **Outcome:** Builds community knowledge about what to remove from waste stream, and how to dispose of it properly.
  - Important before the alternative waste facility starts operating.
- **Value-add:** The reduction in contamination in waste that goes to the alternative waste facility or to landfill.

- ● ● | **Outcomes to date?**

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world. *John Muir*

- ● ● | **Impact on environmental credentials?**
- Will these programs:
  - Help to establish community environmental credentials?
  - Help individuals to take control over their actions?
  - Inspire them to thoughtful and sustainable actions?
  - Start with the little things that people can do?

- ● ● | **The final word**

**Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not.**

*The Lorax, by Dr. Suess*