



## FORM BEST PRACTICES CONTEST 2017

Municipality Alexandrina Council (Cittaslow Goolwa) Country Australia

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### Name project

Alexandrina Council Fortnightly Waste Collection

### Category Certification Criteria: mark the category of your project

- Energy and environmental policies (politiche energetiche e ambientali);
- Infrastructure policies (politiche infrastrutturali);
- Quality of urban life policies (politiche per la qualita' urbana);
- Agricultural, touristic and artisan policies (politiche agricole, turistiche, artigianali);
- Policies for hospitality, awareness and training (politiche per l'ospitalita, la consapevolezza e la formazione);
- Social cohesion (coesione sociale).

### Summary project

Leadership is doing what is right, not what is easy. Alexandrina Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 introduced fortnightly kerbside landfill collection.

The decision and final implementation was the final stage of more than four years of investigation and commitment. That is a commitment to sustainable waste management through waste diversion from landfill and long term financial optimisation for the community.

The implementation was governed by the Project workgroup but the entire journey included numerous internal and external stakeholders over many years. This consolidated effort was rewarded with a difficult but strong leadership decision from Alexandrina Council Elected Members. With this decision they provided the mandate for the workgroup to start the arduous task of preparing an entire community for significant cultural change.

In the 6 months since implementation the project has delivered;

- 24 % decrease in waste going to landfill,
- 34% increase in recycling
- 34% increase in green waste composting

The sustainable improvement not only significantly reduces the environment footprint of an entire region it also provides a profound precedent for the potential future adoption by other organisations.



## Goal project

The project inception and later implementation was determined by its alignment with a number of Alexandrina Council Strategic goals.

One of the four main Alexandrina strategic pillars is to 'thrive in clean green future futures'. This is the Council's commitment to leadership in environmental and sustainability. The strategy is built on some underlying imperatives which include but are not limited to;

- Climate change adaptation
- Waste Management (Landfill diversion and increase recycling)
- Reducing the communities environmental footprint

Additionally one of Council's aspirations is to promote innovation throughout the region. The intent of this strategy is to focus on building proactive, resilient and productive communities. This includes providing leadership via the optimisation of our services to reduce the economic impact on community and/or improving environmental benefits.

The final driver for change came from the Council's decision to make the significant step towards a more sustainable future. That decision was facilitated by the extensive amounts of initial research that supported and validated the required change. The success of the rollout was based on sound change management principles prior to implementation.

Culturally Council understood that to create improved waste management ownership and hence recycling, habitual behaviour must sometimes be challenged and steered into alternative directions. Prior to implementation, policy changes were instigated to protect those adversely impacted. The project workgroup developed risk assessments to proactively manage project & community sensitivity.

Two reoccurring and fundamental principles were identified throughout this process.

The need for effective communication & education. The project communication plan became a key qualitative measure for implementation success.



- Adapted to and anticipated problems throughout the journey

To achieve the reported result, while reducing the total impact on the community, was the result of over four years of preparation.

In 2012 FRWA undertook a regional kerbside bin audit. The audit identified that 55% of kerbside landfill waste could have been recycled. The initial investigation identified the opportunity of potentially diverting waste by altering the bin collection schedule. This highlighted a deficiency in available recycling with the current 4 week collection cycle.

In 2014 a pilot program of fortnightly collections was undertaken in a subset of the community comprising of 630 dwellings. The program ran for 4 months and included the peak holiday period, ensuring the seasonal demands were captured. This pilot program proved that altering the bin collection cycle increased the diversion of waste from landfill.

This program was utilised to highlight project sensitivity and community demographics that would be adversely impacted by the change. As a result the following were key areas requiring proactive management.

- Households with large families.
- Households that produce nappies.
- People that produce medical waste.
- Holidays homes
- Households that don't have a full suite of bins
- Households with green collection services
- Community Education on recycling

The Project was initiated early in 2016. Resourcing and project governance were established early with the formation of a project workgroup. The workgroup consisted of cross functional representatives from both FRWA and Alexandrina Council, including project management, executive governance and operational expertise.

The workgroup would meet with a set agenda covering;

- Project updates



- Communication Plan
- Publications & Education
- Risk Assessments
- Operational Impacts
- Actionable Items

### Result project

Many of the key deliverables of the project have already been realised in a relatively short timeframe. This is testament to the professionalism of the individual project stakeholders involved and the community's positive response to the program.

The below figures are just some of the indicators that are showing significant decrease in the community's environmental footprint. These include;

- 24 % of waste diverted from landfill.
- 34 % increase in the volume of recycling.
- 34 % increase in the volume of green waste collected.

Cost saving metrics are only in their infancy as the true impact of waste diversion will become more apparent with increases in landfill levies and a carbon constrained future. Irrespective of future adjustments it is already apparent that there is a 24% decrease in the cost of disposing of kerbside landfill compared to the previous year. The implementation project was budgeted for 185k and is tracking to plan.

Recycle and green waste collections are now becoming easier to service with an increase in waste capacity. Indicative evidence also suggests that the quality of waste diversion is increasing with less contamination noticed to date. This will be further substantiated through appropriate auditing processes as part of normal operating requirements.

In conjunction with the key environmental benefits the ongoing success of the project was assessed on how the community responded to the implementation initiatives. To proactively manage and facilitate community transition a number of subsidies, educational sessions and incentives were utilised.



- 1139 number of subsidised kerbside bins sold.
- 298 Compost Bins sold.
- 403 kitchen caddies sold.
- 252 biodegradable bag rolls sold.
- 227 Worm farms sold.
- 876 Approved exceptional circumstances bins (EC) introduced.
- >4000 Customer service queries processed.

The predominant enquiries related to EC applications, equipment purchases and changes to schedule. FRWA and Council Customer service divisions have also stated that the initial hostilities and concerns regarding the change have largely abated. This is an important qualitative indicator for the program's successful implementation.

Original concerns regarding illegal dumping of waste have been largely disproven with an almost 100% decrease in costs against a four year average. This is a surprising statistics as it was managed as a key risk for the project. This result could be utilised within the sector to show that despite concerns or detractors of the change it has not influenced the values of individuals within the community.

Success of the project was intrinsically linked to the effectiveness and execution of the project communication plan. This program was extensive and impossible to cover within this nomination. The below areas of engagement were utilised as key qualitative indicators for effective community consultation. They include but were not limited to;

- Community Impact Risk & Corrective Action Assessment
- Development & updating of community FAQs
- Regular radio advertising.
- Development and distribution of the new waste calendar
- Articles in the Alexandrina Newsletter & other regional publications.
- Foyer displays and Q&A sessions
- Social media communications
- Formal correspondence to all ratepayers
- Community Information Sessions held in each district.



- FRWA presence at local Markets
- Compost Workshops
- Engage directly with key demographics;
  - Rental Properties.
  - Local Schools
  - Commercial Businesses
  - Community Centres
  - Aged care & retirement facilities
  - Real Estate Agents
  - Community groups
  - Housing SA Managers
  - Home care providers
  - Disability housing support organisations
  - FACS and Child Care services

#### Finance (costs and benefits)

The implementation budget was \$185,000. Benefits will be seen over time in the reduction in the State Government Solid Waste Levy due to reduced amounts of waste and increased recycling.

#### Staff (staff involved and use of time)

Three teams of staff were involved:

- 1) Sustainable Natural Resources team – for the overall concept and drive to achieve the project
- 2) Customer service team – for assisting with communications and public engagement re the implementation of fortnightly waste
- 3) Fleurieu Regional Waste Authority – for coordinating the new waste collection timetable

The project took approximately twelve months to complete.

#### Additional information (if necessarily)

Modern organisations have embraced the triple bottom line (TBL) framework to



better evaluate performance and business value in a broader social context.

Through environmental impact reduction, cultural reform and long term financial optimisation this project is leading the business, sector and the community into a future of improved performance.

Benefits and alignment with the organisation's strategic objectives has already been addressed in previous sections of this nomination.

The success of this program will hopefully provide an illustration to internal professionals that pursuing a cross functional, collaborative and committed approach to innovation can have a profound influence on the community.

The extensive historical work mentioned throughout this application is testament for the Council's ability to not only identify but adopt innovative solutions.

If the waste management sector had a universal goal for the industry it would almost certainly include the diversion of reusable or recycle refuse from landfill via economically sustainable means. The holistic environmental benefits & economical results of this innovative solution have been well document throughout the body of this application.

The methodologies and techniques established by Alexandrina Council and the Workgroup could be utilised by any industry professional looking to undertake similar implementation plans.

Council endorsed the fortnightly collection of domestic and recyclable waste on the 21st of September 2015. In doing so it was the only Council constituent FRWA to make the decisive decision to commit to change regardless of the challenges.

Professionally the project has provided a prevailing example of using scientific methodology and objective data as a useful foundation for policy reform.

This decision and the ultimate success of the program will provide a strong precedent for local government officials to take the required steps to a more sustainable future.

It has been well documented by the waste sector that MSW is one of the most difficult waste streams to improve waste diversion. This project proves that innovative solutions and effort can make it a reality.

Not only is the above possible it may have already influenced a neighbouring Council to initiate a similar program.



Projects of this magnitude rely on the diverse skillsets from a fully cross functional professional group. Despite being a keystone to the success of the program the project workgroup relied heavily on the historical efforts of individuals, internal and external to the organisation.

The success of the project has further strengthened the capability and confidence of those members that were paramount to its success. This project could be promoted as an example of how professional collaboration, skillset diversification and determination are important ingredients to workgroup success.

Furthermore, an often understated but essential attribute of high performing teams is emotional intelligence. The group's ability to absorb, often emotional and reactive, problems and rationally resolve issues was an indicator of the team's professionalism. Exposure to this environment will only improve future endeavours within Council and the sector where these members are involved.

Within the waste sector it is well established fact that the cost for disposal of wastes to Landfill will increase dramatically. Alexandrina Council's decision to initiate the project will protect the community from those uncontrolled liabilities.

Climate change adaptation is becoming more prevalent in the social conscious. There are already numerous legislated abatement initiatives that have been instigated to meet the need for reducing CO2 emissions. The waste management sector will not be immune with waste diversion via reuse and recycle clear areas from reducing the sectors footprint into the future.

It is indicated that landfill costs within South Australia are to increase significantly. Any diversion from this waste stream protects current and future generations of these costs. This anticipation and policy reform is essential for true service sustainability.

Link website <http://www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=2444> (if available)

**Once filled in this form please send it to: [info@cittaslow.net](mailto:info@cittaslow.net)**

**- Participation Deadline 10 April 2017 -**