

Snowy River leads best practice in waste management

Snowy River Shire Council's Waste Manager, Sean Crowe, has been acknowledged by peers with an invitation to present to the Waste Expo, Management, Recycling & Sustainability Conference in Melbourne, and the Waste MINZ Conference in New Zealand, both in October 2013.

This is tremendous recognition for the small waste team after several difficult years of reviewing, consulting with the community and planning for a full overhaul of the Shire's waste services. Council has now implemented several 'firsts' in waste management.

One of the major challenges to the Shire's infrastructure and service delivery is the massive influx of temporary residents and tourists to the region every winter. On any night during winter our population swells from 2,500 up to 30,000 in Jindabyne alone.

When Mr Crowe commenced his role six years ago he identified several problems with the existing system: inadequate 60L crates were used for separated recycling; inadequate 240L bins for waste, which were owned by residents; an excessive number of waste facilities, landfills and transfer stations.

The recycling crates didn't allow for comingling and participation rates were disappointing with only 49 percent of residents recycling.

"We live in an alpine region where the winds can be extremely strong and damaging," Mr Crowe said.

"Rubbish regularly ended up on roads, our parks and in residents' gardens. It was obvious that a better solution was needed."

Residents owned the bins and recycling crates and therefore weren't concerned with recycling. If they wanted another bin, they bought one, placed it kerbside and Council would collect. This meant residents and businesses were using multiple services but only paying for one service charge.

The waste team initially trialled industrial stickers for waste bins. Paying for two charges on Council's property database, got two stickers. Residents placed the stickers on the bins and that notified drivers to pick up the bin. This worked for a while and allowed the charging regime to become more equitable with the additional income available for Council to invest further in waste management services.



Bank of bins for rural residents

However, the association between stickers and waste management charges meant theft became an issue; stickers had the same value as the waste management charge and during the winter season, bins would be stolen or stickers removed.

Council decided to get a step ahead of the industry and introduced a comingling 360lt bin – the first Council in Australia to do so.

Another Australian first was fitting all bins with SULO C-Trace RFID tracking systems, addressing bin theft

and providing valuable, reliable data for future planning. This system involves a microchip applied to every bin identifying bins to a property address.

"We can now gather automatic data on how many bins were collected, on what days, and what was collected," Mr Crowe said. "This information will provide for future planning needs of our infrastructure/assets and the needs of our community."

Next up: investment into two new Volvo trucks fitted with side loader bodies,

single driver operated, fitted with C-Trace Systems, four cameras to ensure rubbish contamination is monitored and exhaust gases injected with AdBlue converting into harmless nitrogen gas and water vapour.

Seven waste facilities were consolidated into three, streamlining service delivery, reducing costs and improving environmental standards.

A bin roll-out to rural communities which had never had a domestic collection service commenced and our rubbish and

recycling bin service now covers 70-75 percent of households within our Shire.

Areas unserviceable due to unsuitable roads have been provided with a 'Bank of Bins' which are conveniently located for identified rural residents. This has been a great success and Council is currently looking at new locations to offer the same service to other rural residents.

Sean Crowe is happy to speak with other Councils about Snowy Mountain's experiences on (02) 6451 1195.

Commonwealth funding*

With the election over, the Coalition is settling into the Government side of the benches in Canberra. What does this mean for Commonwealth funding delivered to your local government? Will it all stop, will there be new programs or will everything be channelled through the states?

With a bit of forensics it is possible to get some clues. Starting with history, there are programs for local government which were established by the Howard Government that just keep on going, regardless of who is in power. The most public is Roads to Recovery. A

search through the Coalition Policy Documents, released before the election reveals the statement: "The Coalition will seek to ensure that Roads to Recovery is extended and is adequately funded so that local councils can continue to provide essential

transport infrastructure for the community."

What about new grants? Here is another statement: "From 2015, councils and community groups will be able to apply for grants between \$20,000 and \$10 million, to meet half the cost of community building

projects under the National Stronger Regions Fund"

And the grants released before the election such as RDAF? That is trickier and at the time of writing it is a bit unknown how the politics will play out with projects approved, but without a funding agreement. What

is known is that there are multiple statements from the new government that they will honour signed funding agreements.

Despite the referendum not proceeding, budget cutbacks and the challenges of projects without funding agreements, one thing is certain. Funding

directly to local government from the Commonwealth is likely to continue, and with the current state of the United States Government Budget, we may even need a stimulus package, which local government is ideally suited to deliver.

*Copy supplied by Section 51



Commonwealth funding

Section 51, based in Canberra, understands how the Commonwealth funding system works, regardless of who is in Government. We know what is going on behind the scenes and what the change of government means for grants to Local Government. In response to demand, we are running workshops on 'Local Government Funding under a Coalition Government'. In the one day workshops:

- we help demystify the funding process, including where funding has been identified in policy and other statements, and expected timeframes;
- we talk about what may happen to existing projects;
- we cover the 'whole of life' of a grant, changes to the Canberra public service, new reporting arrangements and your State Government funding opportunities.

Plus, if you have a challenge with any aspect of existing Commonwealth or State grants or funding programs, we can help. We have a proven track record.

Contact **Colin Steele** on (02) 6162 2092 or admin@section51.com.au or via www.section51.com.au and we can send you details of our courses and what we do.