

Case Study Report – *Extreme Makeover Cherbourg Style*

Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

Background

The Packaging Stewardship Forum (PSF) of the AFGC was established in 2006 to deliver voluntary industry recycling, litter reduction and education programs on behalf of Australia's largest beverage manufacturers and their packaging suppliers. We work with remote and or indigenous community leaders, managers and technical service operators to improve the levels of cleanliness in the community and increase the recovery of PET, glass and aluminium beverage containers for recycling.

During 2007 the PSF funded Keep Australia Beautiful Northern Territory (KABNT) to develop a guide for indigenous communities to provide practical, easy to apply actions on how to prevent litter in their communities. The guide, *The Clean Up Book*, provides regional shire councils, remote community managers, community development associations and community waste service managers with the tools they need to facilitate and support indigenous community "champions" to work with their communities to reduce litter and start recovering resources for recycling.

In 2009, the Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council (CASC), in partnership with the PSF, committed to work closely with the community to develop a whole-of-community project to clean up, rejuvenate and beautify homes and public spaces. An agreement was formed between the PSF and CASC to implement the concepts contained in the PSF-developed *Clean Up Book* and conduct two (2) community 'Clean Up Days' in the Shire in conjunction with 'Extreme Make Over 2009', a Federal Government funded community rejuvenation and beautification project.

The resulting project, *Extreme Makeover Cherbourg Style*, has been a council, industry, government and community driven effort which is successfully tackling the issues of vandalism and public littering, while at the same time strengthening community and household pride. It was also the first step for the introduction of recycling into the community. The project has continued with '*Keep Going Keep Growing*'.

Objectives of the project

'*Extreme Makeover Cherbourg Style*' focused on a community makeover where residents and organisations came together to clean up, rejuvenate and beautify their homes and public spaces (including public art). It was paramount that a culture be established within the community in which littering was seen as inappropriate behaviour and community pride in public and residential spaces was instilled in residents.



The establishment of improved waste disposal areas at the local landfill site, including the provision of a dedicated recycling collection area, improved signage and secure compound were also a key objective to the success of this project.

Implementation

Delivering industry recycling, litter reduction and education programs on behalf of Australia's largest beverage companies and their packaging suppliers

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Executive support for sustainability

The CASC in tandem with Australian Government Department for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) developed a community competition to beautify homes, build community spirit and encourage pride of place.

Understanding the baseline

The commitment between the PSF and CASC acknowledged the importance of developing community ownership of the need to reduce littering as a precursor to the introduction of recycling initiatives in the CASC area.

Littering and vandalism had been identified as two of CASC's priority issues. In order to address the littering and vandalism issues in a holistic manner, social, environmental and economic issues had to be addressed. Using principles from the PSF-developed *Clean Up Book* the concept of a community clean up was decided upon to take ownership of the littering issues followed by a beautification program to increase community pride of place and reduce vandalism.

Getting the planning right

To ensure success of the project a detailed Clean Up Action Plan was developed before the implementation of the litter and recycling initiative. Remote and indigenous community requirements and circumstances vary and it is vital to work in partnership with community leaders, managers and technical service operators to improve the level of cleanliness and/or recovery of recyclables.

Financial and industry support

The PSF provided funding to support two 'Clean Up Days' held in June and September 2009 and to enable the establishment of a recyclables collection area at the local waste transfer station.

For the beautification project, FaHCSIA provided funding for garden supplies such as sugar cane mulch, rocks, soil, native plants and paint with further funds assisting with transport and labour. Clean Up Australia also provided some equipment for residents whilst a philanthropic donor donated plants as well as provision of landscaping staff to provide advice to residents.

Support systems in place

Prior to the 'Clean Up Days' and beautification project, CASC was experiencing high levels of vandalism and public littering, limited community and household pride with a real need to get the community working for the community. Basic supplies such as brooms, rakes, bags and shovels were not widely available to the community. PSF funding support for implementation of the *Clean Up Book* enabled these items to be purchased and provided to the community.

Outcomes

Approximately 64 residences and 15 organisations were made-over during 'Extreme Makeover Cherbourg Style' with around 450 members of the community involved in the project, or around 37% of Cherbourg's population. However all 1200 Cherbourg Shire residents have been positively affected by the project through improved public spaces and increased pride in community residential houses.

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A culture has been established within the CASC community where littering is seen as inappropriate behaviour. The disposal of waste, along with the infrastructure to enable residents to recycle at the local waste and resource recovery facility, has become normal practice. There has been an improvement in waste handling practices at Cherbourg Waste Management facility through improved *Do The Right Thing* signage.

The involvement of youth throughout the project assisted in the reduction of vandalism and increased their understanding of incorrect behaviour.

Issues and recommendations

Detailed below are some of the issues identified during implementation of the Cherbourg project and potential actions to address them:

- **Waste management is not a priority in many remote and indigenous communities and as such poorly run landfills can have a major impact on the environment and the ability for community members to care for their country** - Develop the community's ownership of the need to reduce litter as a precursor to the introduction of recycling initiatives. The *Clean Up Book* aims to get all community members involved, including men's groups where possible (generally men do not participate in litter clean up as this is seen as women and youths responsibilities). Clean up activities can be successful when they are run under the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) program.
- **The link between waste and health/social issues is not clear in communities** – Develop a Litter Education Plan to be promoted through schools, indigenous TV Channels, ABC and indigenous radio stations (licensed broadcasters). The correct management of litter and waste has many benefits for the community including improved health, reducing environmental harm (i.e. contamination of food or drinking water or burning of wastes, in particular plastics, in 44 gallon drums), increasing the recovery of resources for recycling and increased community moral and pride.
- **Money spent on waste and recycling infrastructure was seen to divert funds from other essential services or infrastructure (i.e. upgrades to water treatment plants, youth recreation programs or cutbacks to nutritional programs at the women's centres)** - Educate communities about the financial, social and environmental rewards associated with town beautification, reduced littering and vandalism. The *Clean Up Book* guidelines provide remote and indigenous communities with the tools they need to facilitate and support improvements to waste and litter management - to get the community working for the community.

Improvements in public and residential open spaces will have a roll-on effect to other aspects of community life, including environmental (decreased disease and water contamination), social (increased pride and community spirit) and financial (decreased cost of sending waste and recyclables to local landfill and extending landfill life).

- **Limited heavy equipment and large costs to purchase inhibited collection and transportation of waste and collected recyclables** – Waste management equipment such as trucks, vehicles and trailers are essential to improving waste and litter management. These items need to be

identified and discussed at Council meetings with all Department representatives present. It is more than likely that the identified assets can be used and shared by different departments within Council or that multi-purpose equipment is purchased. For improved waste and resource recovery management include: a: backhoe, loader, forklift, dozer or compactor.

- **Toxic chemical wastes such as paint, pesticides, car batteries, herbicides and pesticides are a problem in the community** - Step 5 (Municipal Clean Up) of the *Clean Up Book* addresses the issue of organising the removal of high-risk waste before community Clean up Days. It is recommended that high risk items are taken to the local transfer station during the municipal clean up period.
- **Dogs and other animals such as horses scattering rubbish is a major problem in Cherbourg and other remote and indigenous communities** - It is important that waste and recycling receptacles be designed, constructed and installed to address issues of animals and vermin accessing and scattering waste and recyclables causing litter and associated health related problems.

The future

The successful implementation of the *Clean Up Book* principles and beautification program '*Extreme Makeover Cherbourg Style*' has led to CASC experiencing increased levels of community and household pride, lower littering levels and lower vandalism rates.

With lower littering levels and improved community and household pride CASC was able to commence Phase 2 of the 'Cherbourg Makeover' project to address resource recovery issues within the Shire.

During 2010 CASC applied for and was successfully awarded Federal funding to support the implementation of kerbside recycling services throughout the Shire, to procure a new waste collection vehicle and to investigate local sorting and bailing options for collected commingled recycling materials.



The PSF in partnership with Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management has subsequently provided funding support towards CASC's new kerbside recycling services to purchase sorting equipment, establish a baling facility for commingled recyclables and educate the community on how to recycle. It is envisaged that the new kerbside recycling system and sorting and bailing facility will commence operation in the second half of 2011.

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