



Case Study: City of Parramatta R3 program – Resource rescue and reuse

Local government leading by example

Introduction

The City of Parramatta R3 program sought to prevent waste and maximise resource recovery and reuse during the relocation of Council’s administration building and library in late 2015.

Background

In 2015 City of Parramatta Council announced it would be relocating its main office building and library to make way for the redevelopment of Parramatta Square.

The process of moving 450 office staff would inevitably mean a surplus of furniture, stationary and other miscellaneous items, many of which would become redundant before the end of their useful life.

Parramatta’s sustainability and waste team saw an opportunity to lead by example by ensuring that as much of this material as possible was diverted from landfill.

The R3 program was developed to ensure as many materials as possible were reused, and if not, recycled.

City of Parramatta’s sustainability and waste team saw an opportunity to lead by example and demonstrate the application of sustainability policies in their day to day operations.

The program

The R3 program ran between May and September 2015 and was coordinated by a project team consisting of staff from Council’s sustainability team as well as the communications and property development teams.

The R3 program relied heavily on the involvement of City of Parramatta staff to identify unwanted

office materials and take them to a central collection point for redistribution, with champions were enlisted from each of the 12 floors of the building to encourage involvement and ensure a smooth process.

These ‘move champions’ were responsible for distributing messages from the communications



and property development teams so were ideally placed to promote the R3 program.

The R3 team began a staff engagement program involving presentations, meetings, signage, articles in staff e-newsletters, and direct email.

While redundant materials were being collected, the R3 team set to work identifying both internal and external stakeholders who could assist connecting Council's excess materials with willing recipients such as schools, community organisations and charities.

In addition to word-of-mouth, the R3 program was also publically promoted through community newsletters to garner interest from individuals and groups who may not have been reached through existing networks.

Outcomes

The R3 program was able to divert 70 ute-loads of materials from landfill, and support 52 local organisations with much needed materials.

This included public and private schools, charities, social enterprise and community groups working with local youth, multi-cultural groups, senior citizens and the community.

City of Parramatta staff were extremely engaged in the program. Participation in the program not only exceeded original expectations, but has set a new

Learnings from the project

City of Parramatta has the following tips for other councils wishing to run a similar reuse program:

A flexible approach is key

Organisations seeking to reuse materials are often non-for-profit or volunteer-run and therefore may not have the capacity to pick up items at short notice.

As much leeway as possible must be given to these organisations to maximise the amount of materials that can be recovered and reused. Maintaining a high degree of flexibility can be time consuming for council staff and this should be taken into consideration when planning the project.

Promotional materials ensured that messaging on the importance of reuse and waste avoidance, as well as Council's support of communities, was front and centre of the program.



City of Parramatta staff dropping off unwanted stationary items.

precedent with staff from different operational areas of Council contacting the R3 team with follow - up reuse opportunities from the refurbishment of other Council facilities such as branch libraries and sporting facilities,

A number of smaller reuse projects have also emerged out of the R3 program including the donation of redundant paper stock to Council's childcare centres for art and crafts.

Get everyone involved

In a larger organisation it is essential to engage as many staff as possible. The R3 program relied heavily on all staff to 'do their bit' towards the total outcome. Using a network of 'move champions' to spread the word, and making it as simple and convenient as possible for staff to participate in the program was key.

Greater lead times would be ideal

In the case of City of Parramatta, the time between staff starting to clear their desks and vacating the building was approximately six weeks.



This was quite a tight timeframe for the program, particularly when taking into account the time needed for senior management approval and planning project delivery.

Starting project planning and approvals well in advance of a move will allow a more comfortable project timeline and, potentially, better waste diversion outcomes.

Measuring success

Because of the short lead times for the project, Council staff did not have time to develop a detailed inventory and record management system prior to the project starting. Future resource recovery programs would benefit from more detailed measurement tools so that councils can accurately record the amount and types of materials prevented from going to landfill.



Teachers from Granville Performing Arts High School picking up donated items.



Representatives from Shakti Association collecting stationary items for reuse.



**CITY OF
PARRAMATTA**

For more information, contact:

Kartik Madhira
Sustainability Officer
City of Parramatta

PO Box 32, Parramatta NSW 2124
Tel: 02 9806 8291
Email: kmadhira@parracity.nsw.gov.au

The Western Sydney Regional Waste Strategy project is managed by Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd (WSROC) on behalf of ten Western Sydney councils. This program is supported by the NSW Environment Protection Authority with funding from the waste levy.

