

Water Education Case Studies

Project Title: The GreenHome Water Project
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Online Resources: GreenHome Water Educators Kit:
<http://www.acfonline.org.au/greenhome>

Abstract

In 2007, the Australian Conservation Foundation undertook the GreenHome Water Project with funding from the NSW Government's Water for Life Education Program. The GreenHome Water Project specifically targeted 18-35 year-olds living in Sydney. This group did not have strong representation within water saving programs and low engagement in water saving actions.

The project was designed to encourage younger adults to save water at home and use their social and professional networks to involve others to adopt and promote water conservation actions. The project design was underpinned by literature research and focus groups that informed the methods and tools used to engage the target audience. As a result of this research a program that included events, seminars, workshops and multimedia and online communications was developed.

The evaluation from this project indicated that a number of participants had enacted water saving behaviours in their lives. The range of offerings allowed project coordinators to tailor delivery methods to suit the client and audience, for example seminars during lunch hours for young professionals and upbeat social events like *EcoSounds* trivia for 18-25 year olds that were hosted at local pubs. Much of the learning about the efficacy of this project was derived from trialling a variety of delivery messages and tools.

The project also developed a range of tools for use by other educators wishing to design and deliver targeted water education projects in their own areas. A range of posters, questions, factsheets, workbooks and other information is available for download on the ACF website. Additionally, the methods trialled here and the close link to the broader GreenHome project has meant that many of the learning activities such as eco-trivia can be applied beyond water issues to other environmental themes.

The Challenge

What need was being addressed?

The project was positioned within the context of growing water use within the Sydney metropolitan region. Approximately 70% of greater Sydney's water use occurs in and around the home, and Sydney's population has increased by 950,000 in the past decade. Per capita demand for water has dropped during this period largely as a result of water saving technologies and education programs. According to the DECC bi-annual survey *Who Cares about the Environment (2006)* younger people (especially generation Y adults aged 18–25) are less likely to think that water conservation is the most important issue in NSW than other age groups. Generation Y were also less likely to say that water supply and conservation was the most important environmental issue, or the most important initiative for the NSW Government in the next few years. This is also reflected in significantly lower levels of engagement in pro-environmental water related behaviours.

In Australian society, many individuals can be alienated from concepts of community and social action that do not focus on the acquisition and protection of property. The GreenHome and the GreenHome Water Project intentionally operate in a both a consumer and a social action space and context.

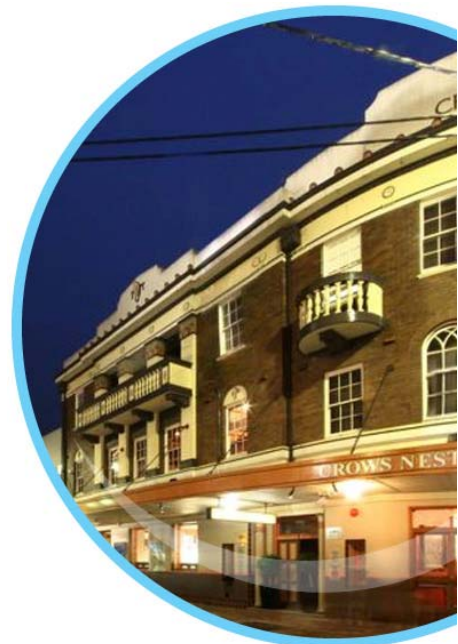
Stakeholders

Who participated in the project?

The GreenHome program was developed by the **Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF)** and in NSW was funded by the **NSW Environmental Trust** administered by **NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change**. Development of the GreenHome Water Project was funded by the **Water for Life Education Program**). The project was widely publicised and supported by **Chanel Seven's Sunrise**, **Sky News Eco-Report** and **Channel 31's Making The Switch** programs. This helped bolster the profile of the project to a larger commercial audience.

The *EcoSounds* trivia nights were coordinated in association with 3 local inner city hotels; the **Crows Nest**, the **Republic** and the **Forbes Hotels** and with the support of **Lane Cove**, **North Sydney** and **Willoughby Councils**. **Local artists, bands and presenters** were also engaged to deliver the *EcoSounds* trivia night and contribute to the delivery of water education messages in a fun, informative and social format. **Australian Documentaries** was engaged to film and package up several short vignettes from the series for use in a variety of mixed media outlets.

Several businesses also engaged ACF to deliver a suite of water education seminars some independently and others as part of a wider GreenHome series. Some of these businesses included **Bartier Perry**, **Mallesons Stephen Jacques**, **Reuters**, **Vodafone** and **Westpac**.





Project Steps

What methods and tools were used?

As a result of the research phase of this project, a series of events, seminars, workshops and multi-media and online communication more specific to mainstream gen-x and gen-y demographics was developed.

For a younger audience with limited-to-moderate interest in environmental issues, a unique combination of social setting, live music and incidental education via informative eco-trivia competition linked to ACF's GreenHome Guide was developed and trialled at three *EcoSounds* events in inner suburban and CBD Sydney with audience size ranging from 25–100 people.

A sequence of daytime seminars and facilitated discussions was delivered to workplaces. These ranged from informal to formal in style with varying content focusing on Sydney's water crisis, detailed urban water solutions or water saving tips. Audience size ranged from 15 to 90 people.

To expand the reach of this program and to showcase the ideas, messages and behaviours, several television program segments were produced with, and broadcast by, Seven's *Sunrise*, Sky News *Eco-Report* and Channel 31's *Making The Switch* programs. The project also commissioned Australian Documentaries to produce a set of three video clips on *EcoSounds*. The video clips and program segments were repackaged as web, podcast and seminar content.

ACF was committed to implementing key Education for Sustainability (EFS) principles as part of this project. Informal education can involve a variety of ways to facilitate learning, and it can include a range of techniques such as some direct instruction, experience-based learning, activities, discussion and action-research. By targeting a known group that had previously been difficult to reach this project sought to engage people in an informal and peer driven learning process. The project also sought to engender calls to action that supported behaviour change and embed those changes into the daily lives of participants. Additionally, the production of a suite of transferable tools for use by other educators has contributed to an enhanced sectoral capacity to deliver water education to younger target groups across Australia.

Project Outcomes

How persuasive was the project in addressing the need?

Survey data from the *EcoSounds* events showed that the project was successful in reaching its target audience. The majority of people in attendance at the *EcoSounds* events were regulars at the venue or had found out about the event from a friend through word of mouth. This suggests that the people who attended the events were likely to be a good cross section of the 18–35 year old age group, and not necessarily those who had previous interest in green issues or water conservation.

Participants were also asked to complete a commitment card at the conclusion of the event and indicate what changes they would make to their water use upon returning home. A follow up phone survey revealed that participants had carried out many of the behaviour change actions they committed to at the events, and had also taken up further changes.

Reflections

What lessons were learned?

Initially, public outreach presentations were delivered at mainstream events including the RAS Easter Show and HIA Sustainable Living Expo, but these did not attract audiences in the target demographic. To recruit participants from a younger audience with limited-to-moderate interest in environmental issues, a unique combination of social setting, live music and incidental education via informative eco-trivia competition seems to work most effectively.

One of the most significant outcomes from this project was the application of a suite of tools and methods to attract and engage the target market. Acknowledging the reluctance of this group to engage in more traditional forms of education projects and or access existing services meant that a new way of delivering key messages was needed. The research phase of the project was instrumental in informing how new messages could be delivered and trialling new media forms has delivered successful outcomes.

There are future opportunities to use growing social marketing mediums to promote events like *EcoSounds* and indeed this may be the most effective way to secure participation at events. Additionally, there is scope for facilitated discussions and forums to develop as an outcome of events and this could lead to the establishment of a network of communities of practice that support further learning, behaviour change and exchange of information and ideas.

As part of this project, ACF conducted a number of presentations at educators' conferences to promote the tools and resources developed as part of this project. The capacity building element of the project was important from a sectoral viewpoint and it is hoped that future rollouts of this project will be coordinated by local councils and others so as to continue engagement with this target audience on a range of sustainability issues.

