

ARTARMON SUSTAINABLE LIVING COLLECTION

overview of the project

The Artarmon and Tulloh Street community Sustainability Street Groups, together with Willoughby Council, established a 'Sustainable Living Collection' in Artarmon Library which provides information on sustainability education to the community. This collection contains a range of media on topics such as recycling and composting, self-sufficiency, reducing pollution and sustainable building and design.

The collection has proved popular with the community, council and local sustainability businesses, with some resources such as the Garnaut Climate Change Review being on loan continually. As a result of the project, Willoughby Council has seen this model as an effective tool under the Council's new sustainability education policy and has committed to ongoing support for the Artarmon collection and its use as a model for other libraries.



Book banner launch.

how the project was carried out

The original collection list was developed using the expertise of environmental professionals within the Sustainability Street Groups and through recommendations by the Artarmon librarian. The Sustainability Street Groups reviewed the collection annually and discussed and analysed gaps in topics, media and information in general. To help inform these discussions, a user survey was created which asked borrowers about community awareness and use of the Sustainable Living Collection. As a result of the survey they discovered a lack of Chinese specific sustainability resources and that 14% of library users spoke a different language at home, which was primarily Chinese.

The collection is housed in a dedicated area of the library, with a mural created by local students from Artarmon Public School drawing peoples' attention to the collection. The mural was created as a series of detachable panels so that it could be easily moved or updated.

Items are processed into and out of the library by Council library staff using the existing library system and resources are covered using bio-degradable plastic wrapping donated by Bio-pak.

A launch was held in the library to celebrate and publicise the collection, and over 70 community leaders and members of the public attended. There was strong council, stakeholder and volunteer input into the launch which included the supply and use of display materials, posters on sustainability, and free sustainability products. The launch was covered by the media in the North Shore Times and in the regular Sustainability Street column in the Artarmon Gazette.

Details on the collection and how to access it online appear on the Artarmon Sustainability Street section of the Willoughby Council website, where the collection is also linked to other sustainable activities such as talks on climate change and practical environmental workshops. Five hundred bookmarks were distributed through council offices, local fairs and the Artarmon

library to advertise the collection and provide links to websites on a range of sustainability topics such as water efficiency, bike riding and fuel efficient cars.

outcomes now and in the future

Access and exposure to high quality environmental education has been increased through this project. This was further extended through the extension of opening hours, holiday activities, children's storytelling and the use of the library for various community group meetings.

The community has responded positively to the collection with a steady borrowing rate of around 30%. Library surveys conducted during the project showed a 10% increase in borrowing from the collection over a year, which showed increased interest in the collection. Over 91% of surveyed borrowers who used the collection believed that the collection helped them live a more sustainable lifestyle, demonstrating attitudinal and behavioural change.

As a direct result of the project, Willoughby Council has funded and established sustainability collections in Castle Cove, Northbridge and West Chatswood libraries.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This project has demonstrated that local sustainability projects can be successfully developed and implemented by community groups, through a small core of dedicated local residents.

Team meetings were combined with monthly Sustainability Street meetings held in the library to provide the opportunity for input from other Sustainability Street group members. This also allowed for the inclusion of other agenda items, enabling the project to be linked with other group activities.