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### 3.0 Social Research

The Project Management Team decided to conduct a two phase social research program targeting both the general community and industry.

Community attitude surveys (phone poll) were used to assess both the community and business understanding of:

- sources of stormwater pollution
- contribution to stormwater pollution by the individual and industry
- the environmental impacts associated with stormwater pollution
- measures which minimise stormwater pollution
- concern about stormwater pollution relative to other environmental issues
- relevant pollution control legislation.

Focus groups were used to make a more detailed assessment of current business practices in the Catchment and the willingness of business to change practices and move to cleaner production. They provide a valuable addition to the quantitative findings achieved through the 'phone polling.

The surveys were undertaken by Taverner Research Company.

Prior to each survey being undertaken prospective respondents were advised by letter of the 'phone survey, its purpose and seeking their assistance in participating. Each 'phone poll required the issue of 1500 letters by the project team.

A summary of the outcomes of the social research are provided below.

#### Community Attitude Survey

##### Stage 1 Benchmarking Survey

A relatively high achievement rate of 64% of in-scope numbers was achieved for the business portion of this study. However the residential portion of the study required extra telephone numbers to be added to the original 800 and an achievement rate of 32% of in-scope numbers was experienced. We experienced a high percentage of refusals (47%) which was attributed to the timing of the study being two weeks before Christmas.

The Cooks River EA & E Project commissioned this survey to monitor the success of their community education program regarding stormwater pollution issues. Prior to commencing the education program, a benchmarking survey was conducted in December, 1999, with:

- 301 Cooks River Catchment Residents
- 151 Cooks River Catchment Business Owners or Managers.

The level of concern and knowledge regarding stormwater and stormwater pollution among the Community is relatively high. Both Residents and Business people support the clean-up of the Cooks River thus should welcome education efforts.

In summary, results of the benchmarking survey show that:

- 84% of Residents and 80% of Businesses say stormwater pollution in the Cooks River Catchment area concerns them "a great deal" or "a fair amount".
- 87% of Residents and 88% of Businesses are able to accurately define stormwater.
- 75% of Residents and 79% of Businesses know stormwater is treated differently than sewage.
- 54% of Residents and 52% of Businesses are aware that stormwater in their area goes into Cooks River Catchment waterways.
- 71% of Residents and 63% of Businesses believe that the Cooks River is a degraded river which has value and needs a major clean up. A further 24% of Residents and 25% of Businesses believe that the Cooks River is in reasonable condition with need for improvement in some areas.
- Littering is the activity the community perceives as having the greatest contribution to stormwater pollution with 73% of Residents and 75% of Businesses mentioning litter as a day to day activity which contributes to stormwater pollution. Also when asked to rate the contribution of litter to stormwater pollution in the Cooks River Catchment, 65% of Residents and 60% of Businesses say litter has a "high contribution".
- Pollution of the waterways, the impacts on fish and aquatic species and the negative visual impression are seen as the main impacts of stormwater pollution.
- 94% of Residents and 95% of Businesses say that littering should be punishable by law. Over 7 in 10 of both groups felt that allowing detergent, chemicals or paint and cooking oil into a stormwater drain, not cleaning up dog droppings, dropping cigarette butts and not securing garbage & recycling should be punishable by law.
- 47% of Residents and 44% of Businesses say that their Local Council is the organisation mainly responsible for stormwater management in the area. The remainder either said another organisation is responsible or could not say who is responsible.
- In general, females, those who were born in non-English speaking countries and those who speak a language other than English at home are less likely to express concern about the effects of stormwater pollution and are less knowledgeable about stormwater issues.

There are several questions in the survey that received a relatively high percentage of "don't know" responses. We suggest that one measurement of the success of the education program will be the amount of reduction in the percentage of "don't know" responses for the following questions:

***As far as you know, does stormwater and sewage end up in the same place and receive the same treatment or is it different?***

(Don't Know - Residents 15%, Businesses 9%)

***Can you tell me where stormwater in your area goes?***

(Don't Know - Residents 40%, Businesses 44%)

What day to day activities do you think contribute to the

pollution in stormwater?

(Don't Know - Residents 8%, Businesses 4%)

**What impact does stormwater pollution have on the local environment that you are aware of?**

(Don't Know - Residents 15%, Businesses 23%)

**As far as you know which one of the following organisations is mainly responsible for stormwater management in your area?**

(Don't Know - Residents 16%, Businesses 15%)

The complete report is in Appendix 24.

**Stage 2 Post Project Survey**

The Stage 2 post program survey was conducted in late July, 2000. Each survey consisted of interviews with:

- 301 Cooks River Catchment Residents
- 151 Cooks River Catchment Business Owners or Managers.

This report focuses on comparisons between the Stage 1 and Stage 2 results and awareness of the education campaign and behavioral changes resulting from the campaign.

In general, the research shows that there is a greater awareness of stormwater going into the Cooks River and some of the activities which contribute to stormwater pollution at the completion of the program. There was also significant awareness of the promotional activities sponsored by the project and of the "Bringing the Cooks River to Life" slogan.

Table 1 shows the percentage of residents and business people who expressed opinions, knowledge and attitudes about stormwater and the Cooks River.

- The education programs seem to have had a greater effect on changing the opinions and knowledge levels of business people than on residents.

In terms of the activities which contribute to stormwater pollution:

- Litter was seen as the main contributor to stormwater pollution in both stages, with 77% of residents and 72% of businesses mentioning litter as contributing to stormwater pollution in Stage 2.

- In Stage 2, more residents and business people said that improperly disposed industrial waste and cigarette butts had a high contribution to stormwater pollution than did so in Stage 1.

- Residents and business people in Stage 2 were also more likely to say that dropping cigarette butts and allowing car wash runoff into the stormwater drain should be punishable by law than they were in Stage 1. Residents were more likely in Stage 2 to say hosing down the footpath or driveway should be punishable by law than in Stage 1.

Various community activities and educational campaigns were sponsored by the Cooks River EA & A program during the project. The EPA also sponsored TV and bus shelter media campaigns on stormwater pollution and littering which complimented the Cooks River EA & E program. In terms, of awareness of advertising:

- 57% of both residents and business people said they were aware they lived or worked in the Cooks River Catchment prior to receiving the letter about the survey.
- 41% of the businesses had been visited by an Environmental Assessment Officer and 17% were displaying information sheets or posters about stormwater pollution at their business.
- 52% of residents and 56% of business people recalled seeing an advertisement or information about preventing stormwater pollution in the prior 3 months.
- Of those that recalled seeing advertising, over half (61% of residents and 55% of businesses) recalled television ads. The other main types of advertising recalled included:
  - Newspaper ads (12% of residents and 1% of businesses of those recalling ads)
  - Drain labeling (11% of residents and 8% of businesses)
  - Posters or leaflets (9% of residents and 13% of businesses)
  - Newspaper articles (8% of residents and 13% of businesses)
  - Bus shelter ads (5% of residents and 0% of businesses)
  - Brochures (4% of residents and 8% of businesses).

The main messages that residents and business recalled from advertisements were:

- Litter ends up in the waterways (30% of residents and 20% of businesses that recalled ads)

Table 1. Stage 1 and Stage 2 Survey Comparisons

	Residential		Business	
	Stage 1 %	Stage 2 %	Stage 3 %	Stage 4 %
Concerned "a great deal" or "a fair amount" about the effects of stormwater pollution on the environment	87	83	79	87
Able to correctly define stormwater	88	87	87	93
Say stormwater is treated differently than sewage	77	70	79	75
Say stormwater in the catchment goes in the Cooks River	28	37	28	38
Feel the Cooks River is a degraded river which has value and needs major clean up	71	75	63	72

- Put rubbish in the bin (14% of residents and 14% of businesses)
- Take care of the Cooks River (13% of residents and 15% of businesses)
- The drain is just for rain (12% of residents and 9% of businesses).
- Although few people were able to quote any stormwater slogans unaided, 24% of residents and 28% of business people remembered hearing or seeing "Bringing the Cooks River to life" when prompted. 48% of residents and 46% of businesses recalled "The drain is just for rain" with prompted.
- 34% of residents and 43% of business people had recently made changes at home or elsewhere to reduce stormwater pollution. The main changes included:
  - Washing car on grass or at car wash (44% of residents and 37% of businesses of those making changes)
  - Recycling (12% of residents and 23% of businesses)
  - Not hosing pavement (12% of residents and 18% of businesses)
  - Not putting chemicals down the sink (18% of residents and 11% of businesses)
  - Disposing chemicals or paints properly (8% of residents and 17% of businesses).

There were several questions in the Stage 1 survey that received a relatively high percentage of "don't know" responses. Table 2 shows the percentage of don't know responses for the Stage 1 and Stage 2 surveys for these questions.

While there is not significant difference in the response rate for most questions, considerably more residents and business people were able to say that stormwater in the area goes to the Cooks River, Botany Bay or the ocean.

The complete report is in Appendix 25.

## Focus Groups

Three industry Focus Groups were conducted in mid-January, 2000. A further three post project focus groups were conducted in July 2000.

### Stage 1 Focus Groups

The Cooks River EA & E Project commissioned three focus groups with owner or managers of businesses in the Cooks River Catchment. The focus groups were designed to assist the Cooks River Catchment Association of Councils in determining the current level of knowledge and attitudes toward environmental and stormwater issues among business owners in the Cooks River Catchment and ways that the Association can assist businesses regarding environmental issues.

In summary, the major observations from the focus groups were:

- There is a perception that the condition of the Cooks River has improved considerably over the past 5 years or so. There, was a general agreement that more work is needed and justified, however as the condition of the River improves it is possible that a sense of complacency will develop.
- Motor trades participants recognised that past practices such as hosing down the workshop floor, allowing oil and petrol onto the ground or gutters and improper disposal of used parts and chemicals were a big problem. They felt that the industry had greatly improved over the past 5 to 10 years mainly due to regulation and controls.
- Participants from the food industry were least likely to recognise the possible negative environmental effects of their business. Their feeling was that having a grease trap was the only environmental concession they needed to make. Waste reduction, reuse or recycling were considered too expensive and inconvenient.
- Large business participants tended to think about environmental issues in terms of major or toxic pollutants.
- There was considerable criticism of the lack of Council rubbish or recycling pick up for businesses. The fact that small

Table 2. Stage 1 and Stage 2 Survey Comparisons of Don't Know Responses

	Residential		Business	
	Stage 1 % Don't Know	Stage 2 % Don't Know	Stage 3 % Don't Know	Stage 4 % Don't Know
As far as you know, does stormwater and sewage end up in the same place and receive the same treatment or is it different?	14	13	9	11
Can you tell me where stormwater in your area goes?	41	34	44	32
What day to day activities do you think contribute to the pollution in stormwater?	5	7	5	7
What impact does stormwater pollution have on the local environment that you are aware of?	18	19	23	25
As far as you know which one of the following organisations is mainly responsible for stormwater management in your area?	16	13	15	18

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businesses do not generate enough recyclable rubbish for contractors to bother with means that businesses have no economical option but to put all waste into their rubbish bins.

- There, was a general feeling that enforcement was not consistent across all industries and businesses. Large businesses and motor trades in particular felt they were singled out for environmental enforcement.
- Most participants had a good understanding of what constitutes stormwater and waste/trade water. They understood that stormwater ends up in the Cooks River and Botany Bay with gross pollutant traps being the only form of treatment for stormwater.
- Businesses want the Councils to be educators and to be available for assistance. Some of the main suggestions for Council assistance to business are given in Section 5.

The complete report is in Appendix 26.

### **Stage 2 Post Project Focus Groups**

The Cooks River EA & E Project commissioned three focus groups with owners or managers of businesses in the Cooks River Catchment as part of their evaluation of the Cooks River EA & E Project. These post project focus groups consisted of owners and managers of businesses that had participated in the Assessment process. They were designed to evaluate the success of the program and gauge the changes in attitudes of business people who had participated in the Assessment process.

Participants were recruited on the basis of having participated in the Assessment process and knew the discussion would relate to the Cooks River and environmental issues. The implication of this is that participants could either represent the more environmentally aware and conscientious business people in the area, or conversely those that might have strong negative attitudes toward the Assessment process and view the discussion as a means of airing their grievances.

In reality all participants were very positive toward the Assessment process with none of the recruited participants expressing negative views. While we can not assume the people in the groups represent all business people that took part in the Assessment, it is a positive reflection on the process and the Assessment Officers that group participants did not come to the discussion to complain about the process.

In summary, our major observations from the focus groups were:

- Group participants had a high level of concern about the condition of the Cooks River and the associated waterways. The reason for concern generally related to health issues and living in a safe, healthy environment that can be enjoyed by themselves and future generations.
- Participants were able to relate some positive recreational experiences in the Cooks River area, generally in the parks along the river and bay. However some had negative experiences with fishing and jet skiing in the river.
- While participants agreed that everyone has a responsibility to clean up the Cooks River, they felt that Councils needed to

improve their practices and play a more active roll in cleaning up rubbish, litter and the waterways.

- Business people felt that industry practices had improved considerably over the past few decades and industry contribution to stormwater pollution had been minimised by environmental and WorkCover regulations and improved work practices.
- The overall reaction to the Environmental Assessment process was very positive. Participants in all groups felt the Assessment was a valuable experience and information was presented in a constructive, cooperative fashion.
- Assessment Officers were perceived as being very professional in their approach. Their cooperative, advisory approach was seen to be the most appropriate method of educating businesses and ensuring compliance with environmental legislation.
- Recommendations made by Assessment Officers were generally clear and thoroughly explained so that participants knew exactly what changes where needed and why. All suggestions made by Assessment Officers were well received and acted on.
- The general attitude of participants was that they wanted to comply with environmental regulations because it is the right thing to do for the environment and future generations. However they admitted that some businesses would need to be forced to comply by means of fines or other penalties.
- Participants felt strongly that Environmental Assessments should be conducted at least annually. This would ensure that work practices were continually assessed and that they received reminders and up-dates regarding environmental regulations.

The complete report is in Appendix 27.

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#### **4.0 WHO MADE IT HAPPEN**

The project was coordinated by a Project Manager and Project Officer, located at Canterbury City Council, and supported by a team of 6 roving assessment officers based strategically across the catchment at Marrickville, Hurstville, Bankstown, Kogarah and Botany Councils.

Project Manager – Peter Salier

Project Officer Environmental Assessment – Paul Cristofani

Environmental Assessment Officers -

- Rob Storrs      • Rhonda Sternbeck
- Matthew Andrews      • Nicole Parsons
- Larry Melnick      • Zahiruddin Khan

Kathy Burton joined the team as an environmental assessment officer in April and Sally Thompson and Jacqui Cord joined the team in May following the departure of the Project Officer.

#### **Steering Committee**

Strategic direction for the project was administered by a Steering Committee who met monthly. Members of the Steering Committee and the organisation they represented are given in Appendix 28.

#### **Working Groups**

In addition to the Steering Committee three short term Working Groups were established comprising representatives from Councils and other organisations with specific expertise in training, education and assessments. The training group was incorporated into the Assessment Group once its charter was completed. Representatives of each Working Group are given in Appendix 29.

#### **Strategic Alliances**

The project team were aware of the roles of various other government departments, apart from the 13 Councils in the Cooks River Catchment, whose roles overlapped those of the assessment officers. Close contact was therefore developed with organisations such as Sydney Water, WorkCover Authority and the EPA.

Other organisations and groups where close contact was established included;

Local Government and Shires Association, SSROC, ECC, Oz GREEN, Cooks River Catchment Management Committee, AWT, Inner Sydney Waste Board, Southern Sydney Waste Board, Waste Services NSW, DLWC, Educational Institutions, Industry Associations and Environmental Groups to name just a few.

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## 5.0 PROJECT EVALUATION

### 5.1 Project Proposal - Amendments

Changes to various components of the project proposal were made as the project progressed. These alterations were made for various reasons. The changes together with why they were undertaken are given below:

- It was originally proposed to conduct a number of Community Workshops during the course of the project. In consultation with the EPA, it was agreed that it would be more beneficial to the Cooks River Catchment Councils if a training module was developed for Council Officers to provide them with the necessary tools and skills to conduct community workshops. This was agreed to by the Steering Committee.

Community Workshop Training, facilitated by Oz GREEN was held for catchment Council Officers in May at Bankstown City Council. It was hoped one of the catchment Councils would then conduct a community workshop using the skills developed from the training. The workshop would be supervised by Oz GREEN to allow further training. This did not eventuate, and instead a follow-up workshop to refine the plans already developed was organised for early July. This in turn had to be cancelled as only four Councils expressed an interest in attending.

- Part of the Communication strategy included development of a Cooks River Environmental Education Kit for schools. However, in discussions with the EPA it was agreed that the project should instead focus on the development of a Cooks River School Supplement providing specific Cooks River catchment information to compliment the EPA's generic Stormwater Kit which was already in production. This component was undertaken by Oz GREEN.
- The original proposal submitted to the Stormwater Trust included a catchment wide water monitoring program. After much debate, the Steering Committee decided that in the time available for the project, it would be difficult to demonstrate any improvement in water quality resulting from the industry assessments over such a large area. For this reason, the water quality monitoring program was modified to look at three sub-catchments and link these to the assessment program.

### 5.2 Project Timetable

A major concern regarding the project timetable was the relatively short time frame allowed for a project of this scale. The original time frame submitted in the project proposal was 12 months, beginning in July, 1999. This was assuming all project employees would be available and commence at this time. This in fact did not happen. The Project Manager did not commence duties until 27th July 1999, and the Project Officer and assessment officers did not commence until mid September. Delays in the commencement of the project team meant that the project was effectively reduced to a nine month time frame. This meant as the project deadline remained unchanged (except for the communications strategy) evaluation of the project was commenced before the project was actually completed.

Also unaccounted for in the project timetable was training of the assessment officers. Training was considered by the project management to be important as, unlike Council officers, the project assessment officers were not authorised to enter premises against the wishes of the business owners or managers. It was vital that assessors developed a good relationship with participants from the beginning to save time and ensure a satisfactory result.

It is considered a more appropriate time frame for a project of this magnitude would be eighteen months to two years. An extended project length would have allowed more time for the messages to be communicated to the target audiences and allowed a more thorough and accurate evaluation period.

Further delays occurred early in the Communications program and the water quality monitoring. These are discussed in the Section below.

### 5.3 Setbacks and Solutions

Minor difficulties in project implementation occurred in the education program, water quality monitoring, database development and industry assessments. The problems encountered and how they were overcome are outlined below.

#### Education Program

A major drawback to the project was the inability to fill the position of Project Officer Education, which was a critical position in bringing the community forward with the project. Following approval from the Stormwater Trust, the original project plan for all community education activities was amended to allow the work to be undertaken by Consultants. The majority of this work was undertaken by GEMS Pty Ltd under the direction of the Project Manager.

The result was a delay of some six weeks in the preparation of the communication strategy. The Stormwater Trust therefore granted an extension of six weeks past the project deadline for the education component.

There was also a delay in the commencement of the Ethnic Community Education Strategy. This delay was due to the need to determine the outcomes of other stormwater projects being undertaken by the ECC for both the EPA and Stormwater Trust, to ensure there was no duplication. The six week extension of the education program meant that this component could run for a period of six months which was considered reasonable although not ideal.

The Pollution Prevention Training Workshops facilitated by Oz GREEN were poorly attended despite nearly 800 invitations being distributed and extensive advertising in the local press. This could be attributed to time constraints on business people which would suggest that conducting environmental assessments is more productive in terms of finances and resources unless some major incentives are given for attending future workshops.

Industry workshops similar to the ones conducted by Oz GREEN were also planned for the NESB communities. However, due to the poor attendance at the industry workshops, it was decided at short notice to prepare an Industry Kit for distribution to the nominated NESB businesses.

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## Water Quality Monitoring

This element was delayed due to the need for clarity in the expected outcomes from the monitoring. Further delays also occurred in gaining access to sites once the contract had been let. Monitoring therefore did not commence until May 23. This caused delays in the assessment schedule at the monitoring locations resulting in some assessments being conducted beyond the 30th June, the project completion date.

The final water quality monitoring report will not be completed until after this report has been submitted. An interim report however, showing baseline water quality data is provided with this report (Appendix II).

## Database Development

Development of the database by Golder and Associates should have been completed early in the project to allow input of the environmental assessment data by the assessment officers as the assessments were conducted. The database however, was not finalised for data entry until near the end of the assessment phase of the project. For this reason, all data entry was contracted to Harbour Data Document Imaging Services Pty Ltd (HDDIS).

## Industry Assessments

The original submission indicated that assessment officers would undertake 1,000 environmental assessments of businesses within the catchment. This figure was subsequently increased to 2,000 based on the belief the project would run for its original term. This figure was subsequently adopted by the Steering Committee. The total number of industry assessments completed at the end of the project was 1,729.

This figure is an outstanding result considering the assessments did not begin until mid October 1999 and the project was completed on 30th June 2000. The number of businesses closing or winding down over the Christmas period caused a four week period of reduced assessment activity which further impacted on the overall assessment figures. Also unaccounted for in the figure of 2,000 was the time required to complete follow-up inspections which numbered 355.

It was recognised that the target of 2000 would be difficult to achieve and in order to boost the number of assessments, it was agreed to increase the number of assessment officers. One officer was employed for 2 days/week from April and two were employed full time for the last six weeks of the project following the resignation of the Project Officer Environmental Assessments. This significantly added to the total number of assessments undertaken.

The delay in the commencement of the Water Quality Monitoring Program also impacted on the assessment schedule as assessment officers were unable to be deployed to the areas where the study was being conducted due to the need to obtain baseline data first.

## 5.4 Outcomes and Value of the Project

The outcomes and value of the project are demonstrated by the following:

- 1729 Industry Assessments completed in the Project's ten month operation.
- The development of a consistent set of stormwater management protocols or checklist for carrying out environmental assessments/audits of business premises which identifies the standards and procedures for dealing not only with stormwater but a range of environmental issues. This component has been developed in a generic form for ongoing implementation by Local Government not just in the Cooks River Catchment but Australia-wide.
- The development of an Industry Environmental Assessment Database Management Tool linked to the assessment checklist. The database in Microsoft Access will be made available to all catchment councils and councils across the State through the EPA as a CD for a small cost. A procedures manual has also been developed.

This will be a very powerful tool for Councils completing their own assessments as it is able to rank businesses by environmental risk, can be used as a scheduling tool for follow up purposes and can be linked to complaints handling and other Council systems. It will assist Councils preparing their State of the Environment Reports through the use of the statistical information it can deliver.

- Major improvements to the way hundreds of businesses manage their environmental impact. A significantly improved understanding of the requirements of the environmental laws within industry.  
  
As well as conducting environmental assessments, assessment officers also offered advice to businesses on a range of issues including preparing Environmental Management Policies and Certificates of Support for the Environment. Many people today will choose a business which conducts their operations in an environmentally responsible manner over one that does not.
- Real time case studies involving real industries and real achievements which can be used as a basis for future industry training programs.
- Industry information leaflets and promotional posters in generic form that can be adopted throughout Australia. Some Catchment Councils have already taken up the opportunity to have the Business Stormwater Posters rebadged with their Council logo prior to completion of the project.
- Multi lingual industry information sheets developed for the Project are also being used throughout the country.
- Training for Catchment Council Officers in conducting community workshops by providing them with the necessary tools and skills to enable them to conduct a successful community environmental workshop. The benefits of the training initiatives will be realised over time as practical skills are developed.

- The New Environmental Assessment Toolkit (NEAT) is another outcome of the project which will continue to provide support to Catchment Councils and to Local Government generally over time. It is designed as a package for all Councils to consider for ongoing implementation.
- The project has linked to and added value to other EPA initiatives such as the Solutions to Pollution Information Guides, the mainstream mass media and NESB stormwater campaigns. A number of products developed by the Project have already been taken up by the Authority's Cleaner Industries Unit.
- An industry survey of small to medium business enterprises on the scale undertaken has not previously been carried out, this information will be valuable to a range of stakeholder organisations (eg EPA, Ethnic Communities Council, Local Government and Shires Association) and will help to develop and refine future industry education programs.
- As evidenced by the post project evaluation reports the Project has been successful in raising community awareness with both industry and residents about stormwater as an environmental issue. The messages will however need further reinforcement over time.
- The project logo and tag line "**bringing the Cooks River to life**" has now been handed over to the 13 catchment Councils for their use, so they can keep the project moving forward.
- All project materials were placed on Canterbury City Council's Web site at [www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/cooknet](http://www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/cooknet) and will be available through the EPA Web site at [www.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au)
- The "Kids, Companies and Creeks" Program has been instrumental in enabling young people to realise they have an important role to play in protecting the environment. The program has also enhanced their communication skills through interaction with other students, teachers, companies and council staff.

- The development of a Cooks River resource kit for schools will provide catchment schools with a much needed resource. The kit has been prepared to meet the requirements of the new HSIE curriculum and is sure to be in great demand.

### Benefits to State Government Organisations

A number of state government organisations benefited from the industry assessments in the following ways:

#### Waste Boards

A cross regional project headed by the Western Sydney Waste Board in conjunction with the Kurnell Landfill Company began last year. In its first phase of recycling woodwaste, non-treated wood is reconditioned into reconstituted particle board engineering products such as panels.

Companies generating non-treated waste were made aware that their wood waste could be recycled and dropped off at the Kurnell Landfill Company site for only \$40/tonne which is half the cost of it going to most of the landfills and waste transfer stations.

#### Sydney Water

High risk category activities relating to sewerage connection that require further investigation were identified by the assessment officers. Information supplied was invaluable to Sydney Water in the light of its new Trade Waste Policy 2000 – 2003. One key focus of the policy is to address high risk category operations. This is a very time consuming process which has been dramatically reduced by such premises being appropriately flagged for immediate attention.

#### WorkCover NSW

With the new OHS Act recently enacted (1st July 2000), valuable information can now be supplied to WorkCover NSW allowing for enhanced implementation of the Act.

Storage of dangerous goods, particularly flammable liquids in excess of 100 litres without a license was commonly found amongst wood turning and smash repair premises.

### 5.5 General Comments / Evaluation

The following section comprises general comments made by the project assessment officers on various aspects of the industry assessments. Statistical information on outcomes of the industry assessments were given in Figure 5 after analysis of the assessment data.

General bad management practices uncovered:

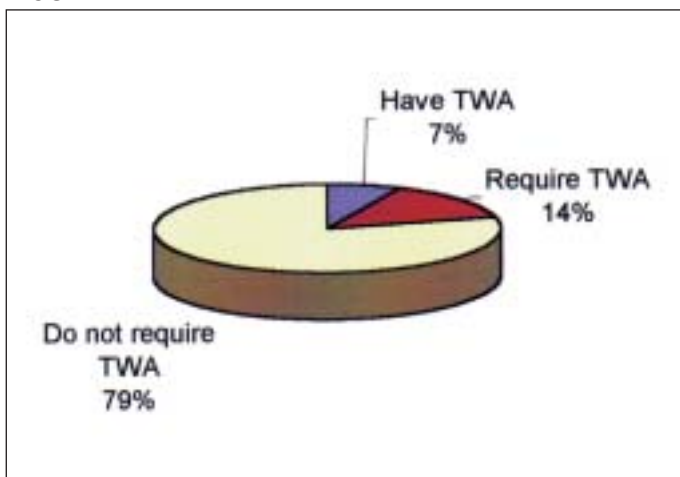
#### Wood Turning

No bagging of sawdust from wood turning premises resulting in potential air and subsequent stormwater pollution. A particular problem with treated timber, particularly when considering the cumulative impact.

#### Car Dealerships

Many car dealerships apply detergents to vehicles at least 3 times a week. All dealerships visited were made aware that this practice is unacceptable. Some have ignored the warnings whilst a few have begun the necessary installation of

FIGURE: 7



### Sydney Water Trade Waste Agreements

Percentage of all businesses assessed.

wash bays. Many of the big dealerships explained that it was time consuming to move each and every vehicle back and forth from the wash bay. A portable gurney bunding system was therefore recommended so that wastewater is contained and can then be diverted to the sewerage system once a Trade Waste Licence has been issued.

### **Contaminated Parts Storage**

Storage of contaminated parts was an issue at many premises visited. There seemed to be a general lack of understanding of the impact of contaminated parts. Recommendations included temporarily covering parts with waterproof material however many managers replied that it would be stolen the next day.

### **Spray Booth Filters**

Inadequate and poor maintenance of filters in spray booths was noted as a common problem, especially since WorkCover does not conduct direct assessments any longer.

### **Waste Skips**

Excess rubbish in waste skips with the potential for littering and/or stormwater pollution was also observed as a common problem. Illegal dumping was also noted by owners as a problem. It was recommended that skips be barred and locked at night.



*Evidence of paint entering stormwater drain.*

### **Lack of Recycling**

Poor recycling practices of office paper/cardboard was evident. Canterbury City Council for example offer a free commercial/industrial recycling service for small quantities of recyclable waste generated. Information was provided and discussed with all businesses however there was a poor response.

### **Excuses for not wanting an Assessment**

Some managers/owners used language as a barrier to co-operating with the assessor.

Translation services are generally not useful as they do not work for people who are contactable only by mobile phone. Other excuses included no time, too much work to do for GST implementation, and no environmental issues.

### **Comments from Business Managers/Owners**

Many business people said that it was very difficult to obtain accurate information from the EPA. If the EPA were contacted for various reasons either they could not get an answer or were referred to many different people and gave up in the end.

Councils were also subjected to criticism for their lack of environmental responsibility in their operations. This was used as an excuse for business owners/managers not to be environmentally responsible. For example at least one Council regularly sweeps grass clippings into the stormwater drains. Many businesses remarked: "How can we act environmentally responsible if Council can't even set an example!"

An educational approach does not always work and the backup of authorised officers is required. Council resources are overstretched however and people are aware of this. For example it was remarked to one assessment officer that Council officers are authorised to enter premises under the POEO Act 1997 at any time. The response was: "You've got to be joking, Council never comes here" Unfortunately, this statement is probably true as the area is very prone to illegal dumping and littering because of poor or no regulation in that area.

### **Sewage/Trade Waste**

Many businesses assessed discharge solvents to the sewerage system. This is an illegal discharge even with a Corrugated Plate Interceptor (CPI) unit installed. Solvents due to their characteristic properties emulsify within the waters and cannot be adequately separated.

Most companies were not aware of what a trade waste agreement was. Many of the premises visited were unable to provide their agreement for verification purposes. One of the possible reasons for this is that the actual document is held by the landlord of the property and not the proprietor leasing the premises.

Poor maintenance of CPI units was common. Companies seemed to have a perception that just because they have the system, it will last forever and work effectively without attention.

Very few businesses were aware of the Wastesafe Program which is a special tracking program for greasy waste generated from food premises. Brochures were handed out to businesses to explain the importance of being part of the Program. Unfortunately this brochure is only available in English and many food premises assessed were operated by people from NESB communities.

### **WorkCover Issues**

A number of varying types of premises were found to have LPG stored on the premise in excess of 150kg without a license. Some businesses expressed concern that their insurance premiums would be affected if they had a license even though the actual license is free.

Very few businesses assessed have Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDA's) and if they did, they were not accessible to staff or staff did not know what they were. All businesses were made aware of the importance to exercise a duty of care by

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providing relevant Material Safety Data Sheets for all staff members.

**Benefits of the project:**

Many businesses were happy with the educational rather than the regulatory approach and even admitted they needed the occasional reminder otherwise they become complacent about being environmentally responsible.

Once a good rapport was established with the business manager/owner, it produced a sound working environment for the future and made doing follow up inspections a lot easier and enjoyable. This also encouraged teamwork between the assessor and the business owner and assisted in the required goals being met.

Assessment officers found the communication training very helpful especially the use of reflective listening.

Assessment officers found the use of the catchment map useful to impress upon people the size of the problem and the fact that what they put down the drain ends up in the Cooks River and from there, Botany Bay.

The questionnaire at the beginning of the assessment was an excellent way to break the ice and gain rapport.

**Reactions to the Project from Business Managers/Owners:**

On being visited by an assessment officer a metal worker commented, that he had just been reading about the project at the local Council and was impressed with what the project was trying to achieve.

Some assessment officers were approached in the street by people asking when they will be coming back to see what they have done since the last visit. A number of businesses which had been missed asked assessment officers for an assessment of their premises. Waste management was one of their main concerns.

One business in South Sydney which repackaged liquid bath soap went to the trouble of finding the required volumes and bund heights for the area. He also researched the Australian Standards for the goods they carried and asked the assessment officer to come around to discuss the solutions with him.

Since the completion of the field assessments the Project has continued to receive calls from businesses assessed to advise that they had completed their 'schedule of works' and would like a follow up inspection. Each caller is advised that the file will be noted and passed to the appropriate local Council for attention.

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## 6.0 FUTURE OF THE PROJECT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project has achieved some significant outcomes that will ensure its benefits continue to be realised well into the future.

The following should be considered in future environmental education planning.

Areas should be targeted by sub-catchment and not exclude residential areas.

The project found there was some concern in areas where industry and residential premises were mixed together. Dealing only with industry seemed to cause conflict. It is difficult to convince businesses to be more environmentally responsible when there are burnt out cars, syringes, rubbish dumping and dog faeces about.

Businesses said more Council resources should be directed towards fining and following up complaints. It was also suggested that Council better advertise that people can 'phone their local council to report pollution incidents and have dumped rubbish removed. A large number of people also seemed to be unaware of the existence of the EPA's Pollution Line.

It would be worth targeting industry associations to provide environmental information to business as many operators remarked they had never received any environmental information relating to conducting their business from this source. While this might be a good way of side stepping the issue and many need to be hand fed, there is value in directing greater effort at the peak industry groups. The Project kept relevant associations up to date but did not actively work with the associations to develop material.

Councils came in for a lot of criticism as it was remarked on a number of occasions that the action did not match the rhetoric. This was particularly directed at Council maintenance activities, such as lawn mowing, where grass clippings were either left and not picked up or were swept into the gutter. Although not in the scope of this project consideration should be given to environmental issues training for field staff, to help them better understand the links between what they do and what we are asking others to do.

Construction sites are also a major source of stormwater pollution but unfortunately it was beyond the scope of this project to monitor these sites for breaches of environmental legislation. They need to be specifically targeted to improve stormwater quality.

A major concern with this type of project is that you need to invest a lot of time and effort at the beginning to enlist support, establish credibility and generate the required involvement from those you are trying to influence. This process, done properly takes time, however having once gained that support the project will generally move on under its own momentum.

This means that subsequent funding would appear to produce a greater outcome than the original grant as the groundwork has been done and the project enters a natural growth stage.

However, as with all grant funding, the funds are only available on a short term basis therefore the major "growth" stage is not always resourced. Environmental issues in the catchment have been brought to the attention of industry, the media, community groups and the broader community and yet the project, as far as funding is concerned, is coming to an end. The outcomes from educational projects are often difficult to measure as some results will not become apparent for several years. Strong follow up from committed councils is needed to continue the educational program that now has the potential to expand rapidly.

There is no doubt that the real benefit of this project has been the one on one contact with industry. This is heavily resource driven, but worth the time and effort when considering future projects of this nature.

During the course of the Project all Catchment Councils were asked to consider the ongoing employment of audit/education officers, which was a requirement of the grant funding. While there was a genuine attempt on the part of some Councils to seriously address the issue, in many cases it was dependant on resources being made available.

The recent proposal to establish a Cooks River Catchment Management Trust to manage the planning and implementation of the Cooks River Stormwater Management Plan on behalf of the Association of Councils is supported and perhaps is the only way to seriously address the problems facing the Cooks River catchment. The proposal has been supported by Canterbury City Council and is being considered by other Catchment Councils.

The social research indicates the project has increased community awareness in relation to stormwater issues and that behaviour is changing albeit slowly. However statistics tell us that these issues need to be revisited and reinforced with the community over time. Having raised awareness a 'maintenance community education program' will need to be considered, otherwise the gains made could well be short lived. This however is part of the challenge when dealing with a community that is perceived in the large part to have become detached from the ownership and understanding of the natural systems supporting their environment.

Central to the success of the community education strategy was the training and involvement of bilingual educators. In such a culturally diverse catchment as the Cooks the benefits of this process in the ECC program should not be understated. As change agents the bilingual educators have been successful in performing a challenging role in their respective communities. Future programs should include this model as a component when seeking to reach people from NESB communities.

It is essential that the gains made through this project are not lost, the tools have been developed for councils and it is now up to them, the ball is clearly in their court and I look forward to following the progress of the catchment councils as they move forward with the process.

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As a result of this program and the effort that has been put in by all the team the Cooks River is now clearly on the community agenda. The project has not only forged strong relationships between member councils and their communities, including the media, but has passed on a legacy of partnerships and collaborative relationships between diverse groups transcending difference through a focus on common interests. It is now up to the Cooks River Association of Councils to work effectively with all stakeholder groups to maintain the momentum in what has been a remarkable project.

We have certainly come a long way in bringing the Cooks River to life, but if we are to make some genuine long term gains we all need to remain involved, committed and keen.

**The Cooks River Association of Councils:**

- Ashfield • Auburn • Bankstown City • Botany Bay City • Burwood • Canterbury City • Hurstville City • Kogarah
- Marrickville • Randwick City • Rockdale City • South Sydney City • Strathfield