

# INSPIRING AND INTEGRATING CHANGE

## overview of the project

*Inspiring and Integrating Change* was a \$2 million sustainability program by the Bathurst Orange Dubbo Alliance of Councils designed to address key conservation issues such as biodiversity, water and energy use. The program was achieved through on-ground works at priority sites, by engaging the community in sustainability initiatives, and through building the capacity and environmental performance of the Alliance councils.

The knowledge and experience gained through the project has been brought together in the *Inspiring and Integrating Change Local Government Toolkit* which is designed to assist fellow councils to establish similar sustainability projects (available from participating Council websites).

*Inspiring and Integrating Change Local Government Toolkit*



## how the project was carried out

The program consisted of six core projects, including major on-ground works by each council. All three councils completed a **Greenhouse Gas Inventory** to identify emission sources and provide a baseline for assessing the impacts of on-ground works. They also completed **Distributed Energy Plans** which pave the way for each council to substitute existing coal-fired energy sources with renewable, lower carbon energy sources.

Dubbo City Council installed solar systems at four Council facilities as part of the **Victoria Park Precinct Renewable Energy Project**. A 70kW photovoltaic system was installed at the Western Plains Cultural Centre, and is a demonstration site to engage the community in energy conservation initiatives.

Bathurst City Council focussed on improving biodiversity by preparing a **Biodiversity Management Plan**. Rehabilitation work was completed at Blayney Road Common, a high priority site that contains endangered box gum woodland. A further project sought to improve aquatic habitat, riparian vegetation and water quality in **Urban Drainage Reserves** in Bathurst. A revegetation plan was developed for 11 drainage reserves and revegetation work was completed at five priority sites.

The **Somerset Park Wetland** by Orange City Council is one of four linked basins that create vibrant wetland habitats while storing and filtering stormwater for use in new residential areas. Hydrologic modelling, environmental impact assessment, and community and stakeholder consultation were completed prior to the start of construction in May 2010.

## outcomes now and in the future

By the end of the renewable energy project almost 100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> were saved across the four council facilities over the first year, and Council's over-all energy use has been reduced by 14%.

The two biodiversity projects in Bathurst have improved multiple sites across urban drainage reserves, including endangered

woodland, and created 1,000,000m<sup>2</sup> of new riparian habitat through revegetation. A *Backyards for Wildlife* booklet available from Bathurst Council website complements the initiative.

Contractors and volunteers planted over 28,000 native tubestock at the Somerset Park Wetland, officially opened in November 2012. The new wetlands help the community learn about water quality and wetland habitats, and are an attractive area for outdoor recreation.

Finally, as an indirect result of the project more than one-quarter of Dubbo households have installed small solar systems on their rooftops.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The Urban Drainage Reserve project highlighted a number of challenges, including plant loss from vandalism, frosts, and inadequate watering during drought. Council increased maintenance and continued its community engagement activities in response, and modified some planted areas to allow for better mowing access.

Protracted wet weather in 2011 caused significant delays to the construction of the Somerset Park Wetland. An underground spring at the base of one of the ponds needed to be diverted and capped causing additional delays.

An overall weakness in the design of the Integrating and Inspiring Change project was the lack of a formal project-wide monitoring process. Minimal data was collected at the start of the project to form a baseline for community attitudes, knowledge and behaviour. This made assessing the effectiveness of the project's activities difficult. Engaging an evaluation consultant to develop an integrated monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework at the planning stage, rather than later in the project, would ensure continual improvement and measurement for a project of this size.