

# CHALLENGING BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICE IN THE NSW CARAVAN & CAMPING INDUSTRY

## overview of the project

In this project, the Caravan and Camping Industry Association (CCIA) developed a valuable educational strategy for its members. The material helped encourage park managers to join the industry's sustainability improvement scheme, the Gumnut Program, for their parks. To do this, the CCIA created a set of case studies of parks already engaged with the Program, showing how the adoption of sound environmental practices can be within easy reach of park managers. The Gumnut Program is a series of awards that park managers work through to promote continual improvement. The parks are assessed on ten categories of operation such as landscape, energy efficiency, biodiversity, local community and air and noise pollution.



Wildlife sensitive caravan park

The CCIA found some barriers that were discouraging park managers from joining the Gumnut Program. Based on their research, they developed the educational materials to encourage members to enter the program and to help those already engaged to achieve more in their sustainability practices. Nearly half of all member parks now belong to the Gumnut program as a result of this project.

## how the project was carried out

The first part of the project was a two part survey. One was for members not yet in the Gumnut scheme and one was for those already enrolled. Non-participating members were asked about any reasons preventing them from joining and their thoughts on the scheme. Enrolled members were asked to identify areas of the awards program where they were finding difficulty.

After analysing the survey responses, the CCIA determined the main barriers to joining the program and identified the two award categories that managers found most difficult. They used this information to develop an educational strategy based on electronic resources. They conducted workshops to develop the case studies focussing on the concerns of park owners. The park owners had a major role in designing the case studies, using a template of set criteria. This ensured that the materials were realistically addressing the needs of most CCIA members and were pitched at a suitable technical level for most park managers.

## outcomes now and in the future

An important outcome of this project is that the number of CCIA parks participating in the Gumnut program has increased from 30 to 48 per cent, an impressive figure by world standards.

The research led to the development of an electronic resource including 15 case studies. The case studies encouraged park owners to join the scheme and showed practical methods of improving their businesses in sustainable ways. They

were also designed to address the three main barriers to participation: lack of understanding about the Gumnut concept, a perceived lack of time and the idea that participation would not help business. The CCIA intends to continue developing the case studies with the help of the University of Western Sydney, to increase the scope of this resource. The project was part of an ongoing process and will continue to improve the sustainability of park practices.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The project provided some useful research findings on the reasons why some member parks were not joining the Gumnut scheme. It also gained information on areas of strength and weakness in park practices. The findings were used to develop a valuable educational strategy that has created interest in the program and increased membership. This will lead to better sustainability practice in parks across New South Wales.

A major challenge has been in the collection of information from parks about their performance for use in the case studies. Many park operators were reluctant to share their experiences, usually because of the pressures of time. Family-run operations have very few, if any, staff, and managers who work seven days a week. Future work will need to find ways of helping busy park managers to allocate time for analysing their business practices.