

M E D I A R E L E A S E

RENEW NSW networking to the max!

With the shared goal of providing solutions in waste management throughout regional and rural NSW, eight Voluntary Waste Groups discovered the benefits of successful networking and formed **RENEW NSW**. With a view to achieve greater results of their shared goals, the Voluntary Regional Waste Groups alignment together resulted in an extension of their out reach and they are now able to influence a wider range of people, suppliers and regulators.

United as one voice under the banner of **RENEW NSW**, the eight groups include –

- North East Waste Forum
- Northern Inland Regional Waste
- Midwaste
- NetWaste
- RIVROC Voluntary Waste Group
- REROC Waste Forum
- MURRAYROC Voluntary Waste Group
- SERRROC.

By joining together **RENEW NSW** has a combined membership of over 96 rural councils in NSW and has a stronger framework to influence waste reduction and resource recovery in rural and regional areas across the whole of NSW. Through **RENEW NSW** the work and efforts of the groups can be experienced and seen across the state whilst owned and appreciated at a local level.

RENEW NSW was developed through collaboration and cooperation – not because of regulation. This collaborative approach allows for the implementation of waste avoidance and resource recovery programs of which regions would not be able to deliver alone. The groups within **RENEW NSW** have found that by working together, pooling resources, sharing skills and knowledge, significant gains can be made in waste management and resource recovery in rural and regional NSW. The groups recognise the effectiveness of working together to achieve the best results for regional NSW as a whole.

RENEW NSW has been able to achieve outstanding results through their many innovative projects. This shared contracting has led to expanded services and better prices for contacts including scrap metal collections, greenwaste processing and hazardous material collection and disposal, of which the scrap metal and greenwaste have been rolled out across the regions.

In one year, 187,686 tonnes of domestic waste was recycled by rural regional councils, which equates to a greenhouse saving of over 94,000 tonnes (CO₂ equivalent) or taking more than 22,500 cars off the road. Since reporting their achievements in the last 2 years, **RENEW NSW** has been able to divert over 19,622.33 tonnes of scrap metal from landfill for recycling. This equates to over 15 Olympic sized swimming pools of scrap metal diverted from landfills. Over 130,756.33m³ of greenwaste (food scraps, paper and wood) has been diverted from landfill and recycled into mulch for parks and gardens. This figure equals over 67 Olympic sized swimming pools filled with greenwaste diverted from landfill.

The collaborative approach taken on by the Voluntary Regional Waste groups has in addition resulted in educational programs such as @ Your Library and Waste to Art competitions rolled out across the 8 groups. In partnership with the NSW Public Library Network, **RENEW NSW** launched the @ Your Library 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle' educational campaign which was successful educating a diverse cross section of the community about the recycling principles.

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The Waste to Art Competition is another successful initiative. Through these competitions **RENEW NSW** aims to challenge people's perceptions on rubbish and encourages schools, community groups and individuals to get crafty with recycled rubbish. Since the first Waste to Art Competition in NetWaste, and REROC regions participant numbers have been steadily increasing and have doubled since 2004. In 2007 over 160 art works were submitted in the NetWaste and NIRW competitions and over 50 schools participated in the REROC and Midwaste competitions, with Midwaste holding its first competition this year.

How did RENEW NSW form?

Stephen Sykes, Chair of RENEW NSW explains, "It was through discourse undertaken by the eight Voluntary Regional Waste Groups that resulted in the formation of **RENEW NSW**. The groups built on their relationships, trust, commitment and goodwill which in turn generated strong ownership and empowerment of the members. From this the groups recognised that the same learning was possible across the Voluntary Regional Waste Groups and began a process of meeting. As the collaboration matured, the groups focused on addressing the more challenging issues which included how the groups could work and communicate between each other more effectively and how they could communicate to key stakeholders."

From this questioning the regional waste groups grew more determined to review where they could go and how they could get there within a collaborative approach. The groups resolved to utilise a consultancy to develop a communications strategy. This process challenged the voluntary waste groups as they determined what their role was and who its customers are.

An action plan followed which allowed the group to agree upon priorities, allocate tasks to each group and to have management responsibility for and on behalf of the groups. Resourcing this has only been possible due to the funding support from the NSW State Government through the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

A review of who the voluntary waste groups customers might be, why and how they could better communicate with them was summed up in the basis of the Bow-Tie Commentary which formed a creative brief. A marketing group was approached and a marketing strategy was formed based on the bow-tie analysis.

From this **RENEW NSW** was born with a tag of "Regional Networks for Effective Waste Management – turning waste into a resource." The communications strategy assists in building the status of projects undertaken by the groups within **RENEW NSW** facilitates presentations to seminars and conferences; provides access to both industry and government and assists with building communication skills of the regional waste groups.

"Collaboration that coalesces networks is complex and requires a process that draws in a range of skills. The collaboration in the eight regional waste groups between their stakeholders and councils spiralled into **RENEW NSW** ensuring ownership, empowerment and inter-organisational learning and capacity building," says Stephen Sykes.

RENEW NSW is a living demonstration of what competent networking can achieve. Through **RENEW NSW** the Voluntary Regional Waste Groups have more resources available to help reach their shared goals, continue to develop innovative waste management solutions and achieve further success in providing waste management solutions for rural and regional NSW.

Further information on **RENEW NSW** can be found on their website: www.renewnsw.com.au.

Interviews are available with – Stephen Sykes – Chair **RENEW NSW** - 0419 415 110

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For further media enquiries, interviews or photo opportunities, please contact Amy Reiha at Niche Product Marketing on (02) 9331 6662 or amy@nichepm.com.au