



# Community Recycling Centres

## CASE STUDY: Awaba Community Recycling Centre

Opened to great fanfare on 10 April 2014 by the NSW Minister for Environment, the Awaba Community Recycling Centre (CRC) at Lake Macquarie was the first of its kind for New South Wales.

Work was undertaken on an existing shed at the Awaba Waste Management Facility, converting it to a Community Recycling Centre. It took approximately 11 months to complete the upgrade. The centre was developed as a demonstration model for other councils considering establishing a CRC.

Lake Macquarie City Council's Senior Waste Officer, Stefanie King, oversaw the project from conception through to completion. Lake Macquarie City Council share their experience.

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## Getting started – allocation of resources

“From the onset everyone in Council was on board with this project. We were able to identify a shed on the landfill site that was suitable.

“The Waste Less Recycle More funding administered by the NSW EPA provided Council with an opportunity for a facility that we would have otherwise not been able to afford.”

The proposed CRC bridged three areas of Council expertise: City Projects, Sustainability and Waste, Environment Rangers. This required regular communication and updates by the Project Manager to ensure everyone was aligned with the project requirements and initial vision.

During the early stages, Lake Macquarie City Council needed to determine who would be responsible for the ongoing management of the facility. Waste and environment ranger staff who already operate the landfill and the reuse centre were the best placed department to operate the facility.

“Knowing who the internal stakeholders were from the onset and meeting with all of them regularly was essential to keeping everyone up to date.”



## Planning – trial and error

In June 2013 the NSW EPA advised that \$250,000 in funding had been approved to establish an early start Community Recycling Centre. Council commenced the required modifications to the existing shed.

The Council's City Projects Department, which is responsible for contract management of construction and building works, was assigned this task, while the Sustainability department was responsible for the CRC's signage, community engagement, education and communication about the centre.

The EPA design and operating standards for CRCs required ventilation for gas bottles, dry undercover areas, storage receptacles to be placed in one row, and sufficient storage for extra receptacles and by-catch cabinets. These requirements were incorporated into initial drawings, which were then submitted to the EPA for approval. As this was the first project of its kind, Stefanie acknowledges there was some 'trial and error' involved to create the most effective design.

During the planning stage, Lake Macquarie City Council also spoke to the EPA's contractor about the height of the storage receptacles and the number of bins they would be allocated.

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**"This information was really useful as it helped us plan our layout by putting the lightest drop off items, such as smoke detectors, at the back of the shed and the high frequency, heavier items at the front where they could be picked up easily."**

**"We also needed to consider small things such as whether our lifting equipment, specifically our forklift, would accommodate the weight of the storage receptacles, which when full weigh approximately 400 kilograms."**

There were also issues retrofitting an awning to the existing shed to provide all weather access to drop off materials. In the end, the design accommodated a compromise between the awning width and the height required for collection equipment.

The Council believes there is merit in locating the CRC on the public side of the weighbridge if the CRC is being established on a landfill site. This simplified issues regarding the waste levy and provided an incentive for residents to sort and recycle as many items as possible from their load. However, at Awaba, this wasn't possible due to site constraints.

## Design and construction – making the most of internal expertise

Lake Macquarie City Council had the internal capacity via its City Projects Department to manage the necessary modifications to the existing facility as part of the design process. The department was also able to assist the project team in defining what they needed to include in the project specification for construction. The successful contractor needed to demonstrate experience in steel structural work.

Custom features included cantilevered awnings that were fitted to the existing shed and an annex. The awning is essentially an extension of the roof supported by the roof structure that provided rain cover for people taking the materials from their boot to deposit in the storage receptacles.

The Council used weldmesh instead of windows or glass louvers because the shed had roofed areas on each side of it. This removed the need for additional protection from the outside elements and also provided additional cross ventilation and security.

Project Manager, Stefanie King, said the design and construction phases were helped by having a good schedule that identified what had to be done, by when and by whom.

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## Operation and logistics – steady flow

As the CRC was located on an existing landfill site, Lake Macquarie City Council only needed an amendment to its Environment Protection Licence to receive liquid waste, which was a straight forward process.

Opening hours for the CRC are from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm every day of the year except for Christmas Day.

Since opening in April 2014, there has been a steady flow of residents visiting the CRC – with up to two to three cars at the facility at any one time. The CRC is most frequented on the weekend.

There are no residents living in close proximity to the site and traffic, noise or illegal dumping have not been an issue. There are always two Waste Environment Rangers on duty and when they are not servicing residents they have other functions such as preparing recyclables and the maintenance and servicing of machinery for the landfill site.

**Since opening in April, there has been a steady flow of residents visiting the CRC**

To promote the service, the Council distributes flyers to every car that visits the landfill. This is supported by radio advertisements and print media, which have received positive feedback. Joint promotion has also been undertaken with the other early start CRC in the region, located in Port Stephens Shire.

Lake Macquarie City Council integrated the promotion of the new CRC facility with its annual Chemical CleanOut service. As a result Stefanie says Council is expecting to see a significant decrease in the amount of low toxicity fluids such as paints dropped at this annual event as residents increasingly become aware of the CRC service.

## Key learnings

- Don't underestimate planning and construction times.
- Check licensing requirements.
- Have clarity around staff responsibility for planning, project management, operation and reporting.
- Allow sufficient space for spare storage receptacles.
- From a cost perspective, do not over engineer your shed.
- Check what neighbouring councils are doing – there may be an opportunity to take a regional approach to implementing a CRC if you don't have a large enough population catchment area.

## CRC features

- Existing shed that was modified.
- Awning added to provide rain cover in unloading area.
- Roof extractors and mesh louvers added for ventilation.
- Second under cover area for storage.

## Contact Lake Macquarie CRC

**Awaba Waste Management Facility** 367 Wilton Road, Awaba

This facility is managed by Lake Macquarie City Council.

Visit [www.lakemac.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lakemac.nsw.gov.au) or call Council's Customer Service Centre on **4921 0333**.

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