

Case study
July 2016
to
May 2017



Photography: Clean-up at the Medowie Skate Park, with Hey Tosser! skateboards as prizes; Hunter Councils

Hunter Councils recreational parks project



To address litter at busy recreational parks, Hunter Councils developed relationships with parks' key user groups to understand littering behaviour, and use local knowledge to tackle it at target sites. Our approach led to marked reductions in littering.

What was the problem?

Litter, especially takeaway packing and beverage containers, is a problem at the Hunters' busy recreational parks. Using council and community feedback, this project selected three highly-littered sites:

- Mount View Park, Cessnock City Council, where contributing factors were insufficient bins and littering by high school students
- Wallsend Park, Newcastle City Council, used by the Wallsend Touch Football Association, where litter was a problem after games, often blowing into a nearby waterway
- Medowie Skate Park, Port Stephens Council, a highly-littered park that had just one bin, inconveniently located 20 metres from the skate ramp.

What did we do?

Hunter councils identified litter hotspots in the region's recreational parks, and met key stakeholders to understand littering behaviours. They provided infrastructure and signage to guide behavioural change. Hunter Councils also developed relationships with the following key user groups, to use local knowledge to tackle littering.

Mount View High School, Cessnock:

- held planning days with student leaders
- with year-nine students, held two clean-ups of the park and carpark
- held a bin launch with school leaders and representatives.

Cessnock Minor Rugby League Club:

- sponsorship agreement, including an oval sign
- provided the club with 'Hey Tosser!' branded goal post pads and rugby balls.

Wallsend Touch Football Club, Newcastle:

- provided clean-up kits, bin stickers, signs and flags
- required all players, when registering, to pledge to keep fields clean
- hosted a BBQ for all registered players, to raise awareness of the Hey Tosser! campaign.

Medowie Primary School, Port Stephens:

- with student leaders, cleaned up the skate park
- held a skate-boarding demonstration to raise awareness of the Hey Tosser! campaign
- gave a presentation to stage 1 students about plastic litter's negative effect on the oceans.

What did we achieve?

At Mount View Park:

- reduced litter volume by 13%
- sent 'Report a Tosser' postcards to 44% of households
- held two park clean-ups with 240 school students
- exposed 1,100 Mount View High School students and 380 Cessnock Minor Rugby League players to the Hey Tosser! campaign
- ensured litter prevention initiatives will continue at this park, through a strategic relationship forged with Mount View High School and Cessnock Minor Rugby league Club.

At Wallsend Park:

- reduced litter volume by 100%
- 250 touch football players pledged to keep the fields clean by not littering
- ensured litter prevention initiatives will continue through a strategic relationship forged with the Wallsend Touch Football Association.

At Medowie Skate Park

- reduced litter volume by 98%
- sent Report a Tosser postcards to 33% of all households



Goal post pads and flags for the Cessnock Rugby League Club.



240-litre bin installed at Mount View Park litter hotspot.



Medowie Skate Park: pre-project litter.

The project sowed the seeds of behavioural change with school students and young people active in recreational parks.

Cost

Grant:
\$50,185

In-kind:
\$30,130

Total cost:
\$80,315

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- 12 representatives from local organisations and schools participated in a clean-up of Medowie Skate Park
- established a strategic relationship with Medowie Public School, to ensure litter prevention initiatives continue at the skate park.

What did we learn?

- Hunter Councils are best positioned to manage projects that focus on governance, baseline data or policy. They add value to strategic outcomes of on-ground projects run by individual councils.
- Participating in this project gave Hunter Councils the opportunity to connect with local sporting associations, organisations and schools. These strategic relationships and partnerships are a very successful aspect of the project, which, ideally, each participating local council will continue.
- The concurrent roll-out of the Litter – Regional Implementation Program, and the Waste Less Recycle More Illegal Dumping and Round 3 Council litter prevention grants made it challenging to gain council buy-in and commitment.
- Member councils found that the Local Litter Check, as a key indicator, provides only a limited measure of project success. Projects should evaluate other qualitative factors.

How we evaluated our project

- Councils conducted Local Litter Checks at all sites, before and after the project.
- We measured community engagement through community events, park users and registered club members.

Legacy

Early indications are that the project has already prevented littering at these parks, an impact we expect to continue.

Photos: Hunter Councils

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