

Case study
April 2016 -
May 2017



Seaside Scavenge helped to launch the program with a community clean-up

The clean-ups during the project yielded great results and the areas were subsequently clear of litter for longer than expected.

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council litter blitz

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council delivered new bins along the foreshore, together with a community education and enforcement campaign, to reduce the volume of litter by 86%.

What was the problem?

- Before the project, litter was a low priority for the council. Only 17 litter offences were recorded in 2016, and no litter-specific education campaigns were completed in over 10 years. Rangers also had little capacity for successful litter enforcement.
- No waste bins had signage or stickers, and there were limited collaborative partnerships with other agencies to work on litter campaigns.
- Several sites along the foreshore had no bins, or bins were old and unsightly with no consistent system in place.
- A mix of litter items was spread across each site. Small litter items predominated: cigarette butts, tiny pieces of foil and plastic such as soy

sauce packets, bottles, cups and lids, and takeaway items such as straws and wrappers.

Cost

Grant:
\$117,200

In-kind:
\$52,500

Total cost:
\$169,700

What did we do?

- The project aimed to reduce litter volume by 40%, improve infrastructure, improve awareness of littering, and engage more with business and the community on the issue of litter. **Clean-up:** We worked in partnership with Seaside Scavenge to kick-start the campaign with a community clean-up.
- **Education:** Twelve poster frames with localised 'Hey Tosser!' signage were added to bins on the project sites, along with educational stickers.
- **Infrastructure:** We installed five new red litter bins, and a recycling bin next to each litter bin, along the foreshore.
- **Enforcement:** Council rangers carried out 41 undercover surveillance patrols on and around the litter sites, catching 118 litterers, mostly during the statewide March-April 2017 enforcement campaign.
- **Community engagement:** Council customer service staff asked the community for local media stories, and advertisements were placed in newspapers and on social media. Council staff talked to 300 residents about litter and handed out surveys (over 200 were completed) and 125 'Report a Tosser' cards. We also asked for litter pledges, with 282 residents committing to these.
- **Partnerships:** We worked in partnership with a range of not-for-profit, community, business and educational groups to promote campaign messages to the community.



Litter damages our waterways, bushland and affects local wildlife.
Don't be a tosser, put it in the bin.



Localised images were used to drive home the litter prevention message

Rangers had great success with undercover litter surveillance.

What did we achieve?

- The council achieved an 86% reduction in litter volume and 41% reduction in litter items.
- New community groups focused on preventing litter have started in Port Macquarie. Membership in the Responsible Cafes group has also increased recently, with more cafes providing reusable cups.
- Rangers had great success with undercover litter surveillance, catching 118 litterers during the project, over 16 times more than during the whole of 2015–16.
- Several businesses also advertised and sponsored the Seaside Scavenge clean-up. They displayed posters in their premises and allowed their logos to be used on promotional material, including media advertisements.
- The project's clean-ups yielded great results and the areas were subsequently clear of litter for longer than expected.



Before: Foreshore bins were old, ugly and not connected with each other



After: On Town Green, new bins were installed along the foreshore, with Hey Tosser! messaging

How we evaluated our program

- A Local Litter Check tracked litter volume and items.
- Rangers' litter incident reports provided data on litter offences. The council now has data on litter locations, dates and times, and some details on litterers themselves.
- Customer service staff collected data on media, litter pledges and public interactions.

What did we learn?

- **Infrastructure and clean ups:** Although it rained on the Seaside Scavenge clean-up day, the community still attended this event to kick off the campaign.
- We had assumed in some areas that litter volumes increased more quickly than they actually did. Clean-ups in the past did not deal with small-scale litter such as cigarette butts and did not cover some of the most heavily littered areas. A lot of small-scale litter had been building up for years, meaning ongoing cleaning regimes will focus more on small-scale litter collection.

Rangers patrolling the central business district to catch litterers during the day were unsuccessful.

We switched to out-of-hours or overtime surveillance from an unmarked vehicle.

- **Cigarette butts:** Better solutions for cigarette butts are needed. Butt bins are often vandalised in the central business district and need a separate collection service. Some bins are quite dirty, with cigarettes being put out on the steel exterior and in some instances, cigarettes accumulate around the base of the bin.
- **Enforcement:** Rangers patrolling the central business district to catch litterers during the day were unsuccessful. We switched to out-of-hours or overtime surveillance from an unmarked vehicle. We had continued success, with most patrols catching one to five litterers in action. Data on the times most litterers were caught helped develop an efficient ongoing surveillance roster. However, with rangers less visible, residents are still not aware we have been carrying out litter patrols. A combination of nighttime and daytime patrols may be required.
- **Partnerships:** We had success with our partners, connecting with many of the businesses around our litter sites. There is potential for more future engagement; some businesses were willing to assist more but were limited by time.
- **Engagement:** Community engagement using campaign material was successful to a point, but some people still did not notice the campaign. There was a lot of value in face-to-face interaction through surveys and litter pledges.
- Litter needs to be an ongoing focus for the council. We had trouble drawing information from the surveys and should have been more strategic in collecting data.

Legacy

- Additional bins and new signage encourage the community to 'do the right thing'.
- Council staff have gained new experience with litter management and surveillance. We plan to develop an ongoing litter management program for Port Macquarie using project data. Options include small-scale litter clean-ups, regular ranger surveillance in highly littered areas, and ranger patrols to engage with the community and be visible as a litter deterrent.
- Lessons learnt will be applied to other towns in the local government area.

Photos: Port Macquarie-Hastings Council

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ISBN 978 1 925790 81 8 | EPA 2018P1162
October 2018



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