

Case study
July 2016
to
May 2017



Photography: Pop-up event at a local shopping centre to engage with the community to reduce roadside litter; North East Waste.

Busting roadside littering on the North Coast

North East Waste (NE Waste) works for cost-effective waste management solutions with seven North Coast councils. Our project tackled littering of beverage containers and takeaway packaging on roadsides, the region's most littered locations. We achieved a reduction in littering at hotspots, and markedly increased registrations to report littering online.

What was the problem?

Across the NE Waste region (encompassing Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and the Tweed Shire), roadsides are the region's most littered locations, council surveys show.

Food and drink takeaway containers were the main littered items we identified at six roadside hotspots.

What did we do?

The project aimed to increase by 20% the number of local residents who register and participate in reporting litter online (via the 'Report to EPA' program), and reduce by 40% the volume of litter at hotspots. To achieve these goals, NE Waste:

- partnered with Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) to identify, monitor and clean up litter at six Pacific Highway hotspots near roadside services and retail hubs
- identified 14 monitoring sites for Local Litter Checks and clean-ups
- partnered with highway service centres and all seven NE Waste member councils and, with assistance from Service NSW and RMS, ran litter awareness campaigns targeting motorists using 'Hey Tosser!' materials
- promoted our message using variable messaging signs, radio advertising, community service announcements and live interviews; local print media ads and editorial; social media posts, and online calls to action
- held three pop-up events to engage the community about reducing litter and reporting to the EPA, and to collect feedback
- distributed 'Report to EPA' car kits to council outdoor staff, and held an information session on reporting littering for council enforcement staff
- delivered key messages about litter's impact, and about fines and penalties, emphasising that 'anyone can report litter from vehicles'
- conducted surveillance and observation sessions at highway service centres, and surveyed centre users.

What did we achieve?

- Registrations to the Report to EPA program increased by 149% (269 new registrations), far exceeding our 20% target.
- Litter volumes decreased by 75% and 84% at the two Chinderah (Tweed Shire) hotspots, and by 84% at Ballina. The three Grafton (Clarence Valley) hotspots reported reductions of 10%, 31% and 33%, with the targeted 40% reduction expected by 2018.
- The community indicated significant support for reducing roadside littering, including a 29% increase in the number prepared to report littering from a vehicle.
- We achieved a similar increase in the number of people who could recall the recent Hey Tosser! litter campaign.

What did we learn?

- Work to gain commitment and support of project partners as early as possible, because their head office approval can take time.
- Incentivise the community to register to report littering from vehicles, but don't expect them to register at a pop-up event (unless they are IT savvy).
- Inject humour and fun into community engagement events, and be prepared for questions on false reporting.



Large roadside banners displayed at heavy vehicle inspection stations.

Eighteen businesses, three Service NSW offices and two RMS heavy vehicle inspection stations participated in the promotional campaign.

Cost

Grant:
\$80,000

In-kind:
\$17,500

Total cost:
\$97,500



Re-useable in-car litter bags

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- Start social media early in your campaign, to reach and encourage new registrations.
- Data collection is key; with the help of RMS, the large quantity of litter count data we collected over six to seven months across our project sites allowed us to show changes in roadside littering and the impact of campaigns.

Legacy

- We expect higher numbers of registered litter reporters to lead to more fines, increasing the perception that those who litter will be caught, and reduce littering over time.
- Educational resources we developed will be used for the next stage of 'Busting roadside littering on the North Coast', to focus on main east-west arterial roads. The NE Waste network will use ongoing promotion to keep the issue in focus across the region.
- The methodology we developed with the RMS to collate roadside litter data is being rolled out across other regions; it will allow us to continue monitoring and evaluating roadside litter at North Coast hotspots, so we can evaluate changes and inform future strategies.

Photos: NE Waste.

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