

Environment Day 2019

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Wednesday 5 June, World Environment Day, is a great opportunity to reflect on what council has done in the last year to improve its environmental footprint.

Here are some highlights from our last 12 months:

Solar power

We recently installed a 32.4kW solar photovoltaic system on Kiama Library, which has so far generated 4.2MWh. We expect the system will reduce the library's energy consumption by 20 per cent, and export about 5 per cent of the generated electricity to the grid. Photovoltaic power is also part of the design of the new Gerringong Library and Museum and our Blue Haven Bonaira facility.

Lighting

Council is helping fund the upgrade of public lights to LEDs. Our municipality has 2,099 public lights, with 754 eligible for replacement. The program will see 50W and 80W lights replaced with 17W LEDs. The money has been provided from Council's Revolving Energy Fund. It's estimated the investment will be recouped within four years and put back into the Fund.

Waste management

Already an area we can all be proud of, our waste management has made great strides in the last year. Council has audited our five holiday parks to find out how much waste they produce. We've also installed new bins as well as signs and information for guests on how to reduce their waste while staying in our parks.

We have implemented our OK Organics system in our council buildings such as The Pavilion, Administration Building, Kiama Library, Leisure Centre, Family History Centre, Kiama Community College, Stores Depot, Waste Depot as well as Blue Haven. While this has taken a while to roll out, we do have some initial results which are encouraging. The Pavilion has managed to recover an amazing 95 per cent of its waste, only outdone by the Administration Building staff with 96 per cent.

This shouldn't be surprising as our community is already very waste wise. Since 1 July 2018 more than 3,900 vehicles have visited our Community Recycling Centre at Minnamurra to drop off household problem waste such as gas bottles, fire extinguishers, paint, motor and other oils, fluoro

globes and tubes, household and car batteries, etc.

Water

Council has installed water bubblers at Ricketts Reserve, Blowhole Point, Werri Beach, Gainsborough skate park, and is in the process of installing more at James Oates Reserve, Kendalls Beach, North Bombo and Jones Beach.

So far people have re-filled the equivalent of 2,220 plastic bottles, saving around 28 kilos of plastic.

Coastal management

It is very exciting to have made a start on developing a Kiama Coastal Management Plan. For the unfamiliar, this project is about identifying and quantifying the risks and hazards to our coastline, so we can develop ways to deal with them. We have appointed a consultant and the necessary photogrammetry is being done. The next step will be community consultation to feed into a scoping study.

Other work being done includes the bank stabilisation and replanting project at the entrance to the Minnamurra River. Approximately 40 metres of bank has been protected from future storm surge and flood scour, including a significant Aboriginal midden exposed after the storms of June 2016.

Paperwork

Several improvements to council processes have helped our customers as well as saved the amount of paper work (and paper) we consume.

The most significant is the ability for development applications to be lodged digitally. Given council has received around 100 applications so far this year, that's an estimated saving of 6,000 sheets of paper.

The reduction in paper rates notices is also improving, with nearly 15 per cent of ratepayers receiving their notices via email. That's on top of the ability to make payments online as well.

In fact anyone needing to make payments to council can manage this process via phone, email or online.

Even our adored Daisy the Cow, has gone paperless, with bookings for the Old Fire Station Art Gallery able to be made via the web.