

Ashfield Council

Project Title: Water Sensitive Urban Design Demonstration Sites in the Lower Parramatta River catchment – Summer Hill Community Garden

Project Summary:

Ashfield Council is part of the Lower Parramatta River (LPR) catchment. Councils within the LPR were interested in providing residents and visitors with a range of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) options to reduce and improve the quality of stormwater runoff from their properties entering the Parramatta River. Four of the seven councils in the LPR are involved in this project to install WSUD demonstration sites in their LGA.

The Ashfield Council demonstration site experienced some major delays and is still awaiting completion the proposed WSUD demonstration site is the Summer Hill Community Garden and will include the following aspects of WSUD:

- 3000 litre slim line rainwater tank
- drip irrigation
- water wise gardening tips – interpretive signage
- water wise gardening accessories
- low water utilising plant species.

The other sites within the LPR Catchment are:

- ❑ Annandale Public School, Leichhardt. (originally proposed was the Bones Café, Hawthorne Canal)
- ❑ Gladesville Road Community Centre, 44 Gladesville Road, Hunters Hill
- ❑ Rhodes Park Reserve, Concord Road, Rhodes.

Project Objectives:

The Project aimed to change the way the Lower Parramatta River community perceives and utilises water in urban areas. The project will have a wide reach across the Lower Parramatta River catchment and beyond, with reporting planned for local newspapers, Council meetings, Council web sites, Council's various committee meetings, community and library notice boards and community newsletters.

Objective 1: Increase the number of rainwater tanks and other rain harvesting utilities installed in the LPR catchment that utilise harvested rain water ie. for toilet flushing, gardening, car washing, swimming pools and landscaping feature purposes.

Objective 2: Reduce the use of reticulated water at the sites and record the results ie. data gathering.

Objective 3: Increase the awareness of community members of water sensitive gardening and encourage commitment to change behaviours ie. encourage the LPR catchment community to:

- Plant local native flora and native gardens;
- Compost and use of mulch where possible;
- Reduce the use of pesticide, herbicides, and fertiliser etc.

Objective 4: To install a demonstration site with associated education materials to allow uptake of rainwater tanks in the broader community. Use the demonstration site as a tool to raise awareness of water sensitive urban design, water conservation and stormwater education.

Project Outcomes:

Organisational

The LPR Stormwater Coordinator was responsible for coordinating the four demonstration sites across the Lower Parramatta Council. The four councils formed a sub committee to discuss issues with the WSUD Project. Each council was responsible for their site and as such Ashfield formed a small working group of staff from various Departments. This working group was formed to discuss the various roles and responsibilities that each Department had in relation to the WSUD site. The Team included Council's Parks and Trees Coordinator, Property Manager, Community Services Staff, Community groups in particular the Mary McKillop Outreach Group and Council's Environmental Officer and Waste Projects Officer. This team was beneficial since all the stakeholders for this site gathered together to discuss any issues that might arise with the WSUD site.

Environmental

There are many long-term environmental benefits that arise from the LPR Water Sensitive Urban Design project and demonstration sites, particularly as the project focuses on raising awareness as well as being a practical education tool.

The nature of the positive environmental benefits anticipated to be gained include:

- increase in the level of water conservation ethics among the community
- increase in the understanding of the quantity of stormwater runoff on private property
- provide both literature and practical examples to the community via demonstration sites, on how to source and install water sensitive urban design features.

Council plans to monitor the outcomes by recording the number and capacity (L) of rainwater tanks installed via DA process and rainwater tank supplier records. This includes keeping a record at Council of inquiries of rainwater tanks.

Council intends on recording the changes in reticulated water usage via water bills before and after installation at the Summer Hill Community Garden demonstration site. Council will also record the number and capacity (L) of rainwater tanks installed via DA process and rainwater tank supplier records and number of inquiries.

Technical

Ashfield Council is proposing to install a 3000 litre slim line corrugated iron rainwater tank in the Summer Hill Community Garden. The tank will be complemented by a water wise garden that includes features such as drip irrigation, low water utilising plant species and interpretive signage. Water from the rain water tank will be used to irrigate the Community Garden.

Transferable

In Ashfield Council's case we learned that all stakeholders should be considered and consulted before a site is chosen. This includes discovering what other Departments might be planning for the same site and also that everyone should be able to consider how the proposal and design may effect their roles and responsibilities before the final proposal is submitted.

Difficulties Encountered

Ashfield Council encountered several difficulties throughout this process, which has meant that works are yet to start on our site.

The Original proposal was to install a 22,000 L rainwater tank in Darrell Jackson Gardens (a park adjacent to the Community Centre and Garden at Summer Hill). This tank was to collect rainwater from a nearby existing Council building (the SHARE Building). This site was chosen before the current Environmental Officer was employed at Ashfield Council and was also chosen before investigations were made into other activities that might be occurring at the same site. The main delay was that Council had planned a major upgrade to the SHARE Building, which meant the site was inaccessible. The redevelopment of this site was originally scheduled to be completed by January 2003 but actually finished in April 2003. The delay in completing the works at the SHARE Building also led to a delay in upgrading the Community Garden where works are yet to commence.

Another issue not considered is the planned installation of an equal access path from the Community Garden to Darrell Jackson Gardens. This path will interfere with the placement of the 22,000 L rainwater tank as the proposed tank would now have to be located approximately 6 metres from the building where the rainwater would have been collected. This move has made the connections to the tank much harder as the plumbing needs to be moved underground. In order to connect the building to the tank we will also have to put a hole through an existing raised concrete stairwell to connect the down pipe from the SHARE building to the tank.

We have now sought an extension to the grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, which has recently been given subject to some conditions. We have changed our proposal quite substantially from the original grant, however we feel that our changes are still consistent with WSUD and may achieve better outcomes than the original proposal.

Team Members:

Janene Harris – Environmental Officer
Heather Fagan – Waste Projects Officer
John Delohery – Supervising Engineer
Robert Burke - Parks & Trees Coordinator
Kim Burns - Coordinator, Summer Hill Centre
Janine Fullin Community Worker, Aged & Disabled

Involved in some meetings and discussions

Gabrielle Rennard Community Development Worker
Daniel Long Property Maintenance Coordinator

Summer Hill Community Garden Committee, including the Garden Aid and Mary McKillop Community Outreach Group, have also been involved and were consulted as approval was sought to install the rainwater tank in the garden.

Team Leader details:

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