



Combined Councils' watch-dog project reduces dog waste

Benefits of environmental programs

- Reduced environmental impact of dog faeces
- Reduces complaints about dog faeces by members of the community
- Encourages responsible dog ownership



With evidence mounting about the fragile state of the environment, Australians are increasingly thinking about the consequences of their day to day activities. Teaching dog owners about the environmental impact of doggie-doo on our waterways is important in encouraging responsible ownership while promoting the wider community benefits of a cleaner environment.

It is estimated that 1000 tonnes of domestic animal waste is produced in Sydney alone each day. This not only triggers complaints about dogs from residents, but the waste can be washed into stormwater drains after rain, creating an environmental hazard.

This problem is avoided when dog owners take responsibility for their dog's waste and dispose of it properly.

The Community Watch-Dog Project was launched in 2002. It is managed by Warringah Council in partnership with the former NSW Stormwater Trust. Other Councils on board included Pittwater, Manly, Mosman, North Sydney, Willoughby and Ku-ring-gai.

The three objectives of the program are: to inform dog-owners of the harmful effects of uncontrolled dog faeces; to encourage behavioural change; and to provide tools to make disposing of dog faeces easy and safe.

The project uses a systemic education program to ensure dog owners understand the benefits of cleaning up after their pet. The Council recruits volunteers who are trained to raise the issues with dog owners in a non-confrontational manner and to encourage positive change and actions. Warringah Council, says it is important to recruit the right volunteers.

"A lot of our volunteers are dog owners. We're after people who are both passionate about their pet and doing the right thing."

Damien Thiele, Team Leader Regulatory Compliance, Warringah Council



Volunteers provide owners with a resource kit containing a POOch Pouch which attaches to the dog's lead, biodegradable bags and an educational brochure. The Council also sells bio-degradable dog litter bags.

As part of the program, the Council provides "POOch Pouches" to every owner who registers a dog. Other Council initiatives include placing dog litter bins in dog-walking areas. Awareness is spread through local media, and on pet-friendly days including the Council's annual "Dog's Day Out."

Since the program began, the number of droppings in these areas plummeted, in some cases by over 66 per cent.

"It has been very successful," Warringah Council said. "The majority of residents love their neighbourhood and do the right thing. Those who don't usually change with education, and the knowledge that others in the community expect pet owners to be responsible."

Such reshaping of the norms relating to acceptable behaviour demonstrates social capital in action.

The project won the inaugural NSW Companion Animals Management Award for Best Innovation in Companion Animal Management. It also won awards from Keep Australia Beautiful NSW and the Local Government and Shire's Association's Excellence in the Environment Awards.

Tips

- Recruit passionate volunteers and provide training
- Provide owners with educational resources, poo bags and a place to deposit these

Web Links

Warringah Council

- www.warringah.nsw.gov.au