



Case Study: Love Food Hate Waste in the Hills

Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities

Introduction

The Hills Shire Council's Love Food Hate Waste project reached out to the local Chinese community crossing cultural and language barriers.

Identifying the issue

The Hills LGA has one of the fastest growing Chinese communities in NSW. In some suburbs, such as Carlingford, over 13 per cent of the total population were born in China.

The Hills Shire Council's resource recovery officers found that due to cultural and language barriers, regular messaging regarding food waste and avoidance was not reaching this rapidly growing community, particularly among those with limited knowledge of English.

This demographic shift has coincided with a change in residential development type from stand-alone homes to multi-unit dwellings and high rise apartments.

Increased dwelling density can amplify existing waste management issues increasing the need for education about good waste practices.

Resource recovery officers at The Hills Shire Council needed a program to build the Chinese community's knowledge of local waste processes and guidelines before they developed bad waste habits.

Food waste makes up around 40 per cent of all household waste put into the red-lidded bin, making food waste avoidance a key priority for a CALD education program.

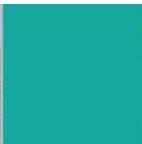
Food is also a very culturally specific experience; the way people cook and use food can vary significantly from culture to culture. Messages that resonate with one community may not work as well with others.

Funding was obtained through the Love Food Hate Waste grants program.

The solution

Resource recovery officers sought to develop a food waste education program for the Chinese CALD community that gave individuals the knowledge they needed to build positive waste habits, with the hope that participants would become food waste ambassadors within their own community.

In order to break down the cultural and linguistic barriers that had previously prevented this community engaging with Council's waste education programs, council officers decided to engage with participants in their own language and



ensure that all information was viewed in the context of Chinese cultural and food traditions.

Program objectives:

- Foster long-term behaviour change through peer-to-peer learning, discussion, collective learning and sharing experiences in a culturally sensitive setting.
- Increase number of actions taken by participants over a series of workshops.
- Motivate others in the community to reduce food waste in their homes.
- Evaluate response of participants.

A series of three, two-hour workshops were designed for a group of about 30 individuals.

The aim for these workshops was to help participants understand the environmental and social impacts of food wastage, enhance a positive attitude towards sustainable food practices and provide a practical guide on how to reduce and avoid food waste.

The workshop series was delivered over a number of in order to reinforce messages and more effectively foster behaviour change.

Program participants were engaged through an existing Chinese Community Group based in The Hills.

The group consisted of 30 female participants between the ages of 30 and 60. This included new migrants as well as more established residents who were able to assist those with limited English skills.

Implementing the program:

Prior to the first workshop, participants indicated minimal awareness of the social and environmental impacts of food waste.

The first two-hour session, focused on these social and environmental impacts, and received high levels of interest from the group.

The second and third sessions focused on practical ways to avoid food waste including meal planning, food storage, recipes and use of left-overs.

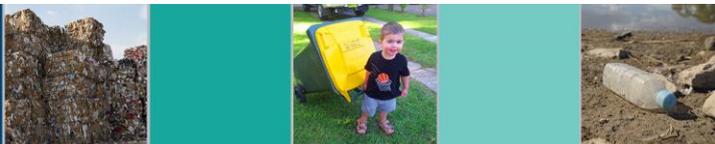
Workshop facilitators found that once participants were given the basic understanding of waste issues they enthusiastically offered their own tips on how to reduce food waste at home; triggering lively discussion within the group.

In order to capture the unique cultural influences that shaped discussion around food waste within the Chinese Community Group, Council commissioned local artist, Angelika Erbsland, to attend the workshops and create an artwork capturing the ideas discussed at the three workshops.

The resulting artwork was a strong reflection of the cultural influences that impact waste practices in the Chinese Community.

This artwork has since been useful for several presentations on the project. For example, the Chinese Community Group were asked to present to school children at Council's World Environment Day event.

The painting offered an impactful visual cue for the food waste issues discussed by the Chinese Community Group during their workshops, sharing not only important waste messages but cultural learning.



Artwork by Angelika Erbsland capturing the ideas discussed in the Love Food Hate Waste workshops.

Feedback

The workshops were an outstanding success, with council officers noting high levels of engagement and sharing amongst participants.

This was attributed to participants' ability to learn and ask questions in their own language.

High attendance was achieved across all three sessions, which was attributed to participant interest as well as council's decision to use of an existing community group that already met on a regular basis.

The highest levels of engagement were achieved when participants were asked to share their own food-saving tips and recipes with the group. Engagement was so high during these sessions that workshops often ran well overtime.

Workshop facilitators found that participants had a high level of knowledge regarding food preparation and storage as relevant to Chinese

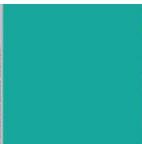
cuisine, and once given a basic understanding of local waste issues were able to adapt this knowledge to improve waste avoidance.

The tight-knit nature of the new-migrant community meant that participants also proved fantastic ambassadors for the 'Love Food Hate Waste' message within their own community, achieving a key objective of the program; motivate others in the community.

One participant, who worked for a local organisation called Community Care, requested that the food waste program be modified for the elderly clients at the centre.

Council has since been able to offer the program to several linguistically diverse groups within the Community Care organisation with great success.

During evaluation, participants indicated they were keen to learn more about waste and recycling in future. As a result The Hills Shire Council has since run two additional workshops in response overwhelming demand.



Learnings from the project

While the Love Food Hate Waste program was specifically targeted to the Chinese community, there were several key learnings that could be adapted to suit education programs for any CALD community.

Language can be a significant barrier to learning

Individuals with a limited understanding of English may not pick up on regular council messages and promotions. Additionally, those who feel self-conscious about their English may not actively seek out information.

When addressed in Cantonese, participants were confident and enthusiastic learners who actively sought to share their own experiences and interpret food waste messages in a culturally relevant way.

Throughout the project, The Hills Shire Council was fortunate to have a Cantonese-speaking staff member available to facilitate the workshops, however translation into other dialects such as Mandarin was facilitated through the Chinese Community Group.

Tap in to an existing community

This program was offered to an existing group who already met regularly. This made the program easier to deliver as:

- Participants already knew each other and felt comfortable sharing ideas;
- A regular time and meeting place was already established allowing council to run in-depth, recurring events with minimal risk of drop-outs.

Maintain flexibility

It is important to maintain flexibility and work with the existing cultural practices and level of knowledge in the group.

This also allowed two-way learning as council officers were able to learn a lot about the community, their attitudes to waste and how much they already knew.

Close knit communities share

The tight-knit nature of new-migrant communities can mean they are difficult to target through traditional messaging, however once engaged, participants of this program quickly became ambassadors for the 'Love Food Hate Waste' message and shared their knowledge with their friends and family.

Tap into local resources

The Hills' Chinese Community Group was able to assist with translation during this project, and many migrant resource centres offer similar services.

For more information, contact:

THE HILLS
Sydney's Garden Shire

Selina James
Resource Recovery Business Support Officer
The Hills Shire Council

PO Box 7064 BAULKHAM HILLS NSW
2153
Tel: 02 9843 0365
Fax: 02 29843 0409

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