



WSROC
Advocating for the people of Western Sydney



ANNUAL REPORT

WESTERN SYDNEY
REGIONAL ORGANISATION
OF COUNCILS

2019/2020



FROM THE PRESIDENT



While this year may be characterised by its challenges, Western Sydney councils have met adversity with ingenuity and resilience.

The national bushfire disaster impacted every Western Sydney council, with Lithgow, the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury cities most directly affected, and neighbouring councils - Blacktown, Fairfield, Cumberland, Liverpool, Parramatta - generously giving support.

Local government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have been similarly swift, in providing continuity and support for communities and vulnerable people, amidst an evolving response at national and state levels of government. I commend our councils for this.

Throughout this year, WSROC has strived to support its members with continuing advocacy and key collaborative projects that advance the region's liveability, sustainability and collective resilience.

WSROC energy initiatives continue toward goals of reducing regional emissions and energy costs. Over time, the multi-stakeholder Western Sydney Energy Program aims to reduce the region's emission savings with an additional 200,000 tonnes of CO₂e each year.

Importantly, WSROC's waste team advocacy this year has informed critical waste policies. Projects in litter management, sustainability and recycling have made a real difference in supporting residents to preserve the beauty of our shared green spaces.

I am pleased to reflect on the progression of WSROC projects and collaborations this year. As Western Sydney continues to be the centre for Greater Sydney's growth and investment, WSROC remains focused on key priority areas that will inform the region's brightest future.

Councillor Barry Calvert

2019-2020 HIGHLIGHTS



WSROC Board hosts RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, in February 2020, to review management of the 2019-2020 bushfire disaster and examine impacts on councils and their communities.

Western Sydney Energy Program launched in January 2020. WSROC President Cllr Barry Calvert pictured with WSEP Project Coordinator, Judith Bruinsma, and Project Consultant, Ankit Kamra, of Ironbark Sustainability.



Great West Walk launched with Minister Rob Stokes MP in Parramatta Park, October 2019. Mapped by community group the Walking Volunteers, and delivered via a partnership of councils and local land managers, the 65km route creates new links in Sydney's Green Grid.

Research tour of Spain looking at waste innovation and international best practice. CEO Charles Casuscelli pictured with members of the Spain-Australia Council Foundation.



Digital Operating Environment WSROC progressed development of a digital common operating environment for local government with a successful motion for its inclusion in future planning at the 2019 Local Government NSW Annual Conference.

Green Caffein swap-and-go coffee cup program launched in Western Sydney, March 2020. Pictured: Mayor of Blacktown, Cllr Tony Bleasdale, centre, with the Green Caffein and WSROC teams.



ADVOCACY AND POLICY OUTCOMES

In 2019-2020, WSROC:

Over \$1.2 million

in grant funding secured to implement projects that support councils and communities

WSROC waste team and executive advocacy informs development of the NSW Government 20 Year Waste Strategy

Successfully advocated for support for refugees during COVID-19, resulting in \$4 million NSW Government funding

95% LITTER REDUCTION



in parks and public spaces

Waste education programs improve community disposal behaviour across six LGAs

Western Sydney Energy Program saves participating councils \$15.8m to date and more than 320,000 tonnes of greenhouse emissions across the life of the assets

 **\$15.8m SAVED**

Ongoing advocacy saw **heatwaves and resilience included** as one of four themes in **Housing for NSW** Discussion Paper: A Housing Strategy for NSW 2020

"Resilient systems cut across silos and connect different domains: community, governments, industry and academia. This is what I have observed WSROC doing."

- Rod Simpson, Environment Commissioner, Greater Sydney Commission

Hosted 48 forums on issues requiring regional collaboration

13 submissions to state and federal government, 12 Ministerial meetings and 20 Ministerial letters

82 media articles generated, equating to over 30 million potential impressions

FROM THE CEO

This year, while councils have fought to maintain business as usual in the face of unprecedented challenges, we have also managed to turn it around; applying those experiences to inform and shape the paths we take into the future.

The WSROC Board meeting in February, with RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, was a sobering review of what occurred during the national bushfire emergency. Insight from councils' experiences adds a significant voice to the conversation around emergency management and WSROC's agenda for its reform - not just for bushfire preparedness and response, but also for pandemic, heatwave, storms and floods.

WSROC's enduring value is in responding to fast-changing priorities with effective strategies. Our leadership in key areas of heat, energy and waste this year has culminated in policy outcomes that will positively impact many aspects of life, in our region's future.

The Western Sydney Energy Program is already saving councils money, to the tune of \$15.8 million since 2016, with emissions savings of 320,000 tonnes across the life of the assets.

As we look to the future, opportunities in EV infrastructure, and innovative power generation and distribution models will be game changers for Western Sydney.

Urban heat was again brought to the fore, as WSROC's advocacy with state Ministries saw heat included as one of four key planning issues for NSW Housing. Projects such as Cool Suburbs, Planning Review and Heat Smart continue to work on improved heat resilience and mitigation of its effects.

WSROC continues to drive the agenda on the key issue of waste, in industry-leading project and policy work. In September 2019, I attended a research tour with the Spain-Australia Council Foundation to review the latest waste technologies and best-practice approaches. This has instigated a household packaging initiative which, in collaboration with industry and government stakeholders, seeks to improve recycling rates.

On reflection, it may be that the buzzword for 2019-2020 is 'resilience'; there are worse qualities to carry into the future. We adapt, we evolve, we continue to aspire and deliver for Western Sydney.

Charles Casuscelli RFD



TURN DOWN THE HEAT

In 2019/2020 Western Sydney experienced its hottest day on record at 48.9 degrees Celsius. Western Sydney is becoming hotter, with serious implications for our health, infrastructure, economies and environment.

In its second year, WSROC's Turn Down the Heat Strategy (2018) has put urban heat on the state policy agenda and secured \$413,000 in funding for project delivery.

How we work:

WSROC continues to work closely with member councils and key stakeholders in a multi-sector, collaborative approach to heat mitigation and adaptation - delivering region-scale projects that will drive a cooler, more resilient future.

Five key themes:



Design and plan to cool the built environment



Build a community that is healthy and prepared



Cool with greenspace and water



Innovative and responsive infrastructure



Take action together



Dr Sebastian Pfautsch, from Western Sydney University's School of Social Sciences, left, onsite with Cllr Steve Christou, Mayor of Cumberland City Council.

"Tracking the microclimates of specific suburbs reveals they are exposed to far more extreme heat than the Bureau of Meteorology recorded."

– Dr Sebastian Pfautsch, Western Sydney University

Funded projects

- **Cool Suburbs 2019 - 2021** a voluntary rating tool to support heat mitigating urban design. With Resilient Sydney and the Greater Sydney Commission.*
- **Local planning review** the first cohesive effort to integrate urban heat controls into the NSW planning system.*
- **Heat Smart Western Sydney** improving heatwave preparedness and adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities via improved emergency management. With councils and NSW Health.**

Cool council projects

- **Cool Playgrounds pilot** trialling new materials and designs for cooler, sun-safe spaces. Cumberland City Council, Cancer Council, Kidsafe Australia, Western Sydney University and WSROC.
- **Cool Seal pilot** is trialling new coatings to reduce heat generated by roads. Blacktown City, Campbelltown City and City of Parramatta.
- **Heat refuge pilot** is looking at how councils can better support communities during heatwaves. Blacktown City Council.

Turning Down the Heat 2019-2020

180
stakeholders from
55
organisations

Secured
\$413,000
in grant funding
to deliver on Strategy
priorities

82%
of residents surveyed
want councils to
provide cool places
for the community
(Heat Smart)

500
sensors deployed
across Western Sydney
councils in partnership
with Western Sydney
University

*This project has been assisted by the New South Wales Government and supported by Local Government NSW.

**Funded under the State Government National Disaster Resilience Program.



WESTERN SYDNEY ENERGY PROGRAM

In 2020, WSROC launched the Western Sydney Energy Strategy. A collaboration between nine Western Sydney councils, the goal is to reduce Western Sydney's emissions by 200,000 tonnes of CO²e per year.

"It seems clear the single most important thing we can do to stop climate change is reduce emissions."

– Blue Mountains Mayor, Cllr Mark Greenhill

What we achieved

SAVED \$15.8M

Council savings pool of more than \$15.8m since 2016

SAVED 320,000 TONNES OF CO²e

More than 320,000 tonnes of greenhouse savings across the life of the assets. This is equivalent to taking 74,419 cars off the road

The Western Sydney Energy Program Strategy seeks opportunities for energy, cost, and emission savings across four key areas:



Transport

- ✓ Gap-analysis for innovative infrastructure that enables a low emissions future.



Renewable energy

- ✓ 950 kwh behind the meter solar installed.
- ✓ Working towards a Regional Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) Tranche 1.



Community

- ✓ Launched the Business Energy Advice Program (BEAP) in Western Sydney with Business Australia. This Commonwealth-funded program helps eligible small businesses save costs and emissions.



Facilities and precincts

- ✓ Ecologically Sustainable Design (ESD): Working with councils to develop policies which maximise social, environmental, and financial outcomes.
- ✓ Street lighting round two: 36,000 Western Sydney streetlights will be converted to energy efficient LEDs, building on the 15,000 lights replaced in round one.

REGIONAL WASTE STRATEGY

WSROC has continued to support councils through significant industry challenges and is leading conversations on a strategic approach to essential waste infrastructure and service delivery.

"The Refill Don't Landfill campaign is a turning point for Western Sydney consumers and businesses, in navigating a whole new approach to waste."

– WSROC President,
Cllr Barry Calvert

OUR GOAL

Reduce waste and increase regional resource recovery

What we achieved:

\$804,866

total grant funding secured to deliver resource recovery initiatives

95% litter reduction in parks and public space across six LGAs

20,000+

disposable coffee cups avoided landfill in the first months of the region's swap-and-go reusable cup program

8% reduction of recyclable material going into kerbside garbage bins

9 submissions to inform waste policy, representing Western Sydney councils

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COUNCILS AND STATE GOVERNMENT, WSROC:

- ✓ **Drove prioritisation of waste in NSW policies** on land use, infrastructure development and strategic resource recovery
- ✓ **Promoted consistency in waste planning**, helping councils integrate waste, resource recovery and circular economy goals into Local Strategic Planning Statements and LEP review processes
- ✓ **Facilitated knowledge sharing and collaboration:** Delivered training to waste and planning staff across five Sydney ROCs, and hosted forums on issues including recycling contamination, recycled content in civil works and innovative waste education
- ✓ **Coordinated region-level programs** on common issues, increasing resource efficiencies and delivering value for money
- ✓ **Delivered projects to address regional waste challenges**, including: waste avoidance, recycling, problem waste, litter and illegal dumping.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION



Cllr Barry Calvert at the Refill Don't Landfill launch in Windsor.



Richmond Park: one of the litter hot spots targeted under the Regional Litter Program.



WSROC Regional Waste Coordinator Guada Lado, presenting at the national Waste 2019 Conference.

Green Caffein Refill Don't Landfill program

A regional first, WSROC partnered with industry pioneers Green Caffein, launching the Refill Don't Landfill swap-and-go program in Western Sydney. More than 40 cafes across seven participating councils have signed on.

Blacktown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith and The Hills

Regional Litter Program

Funded by the Environmental Protection Agency

The 2019/2020 Regional Litter Program targeted hotspots in six participating councils with an anti-litter campaign including new bins and signage, multilingual educators, and street performers.

Blacktown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith

REGIONAL COLLABORATION WORKING TOGETHER

WSROC's advocacy, projects and priorities are developed and delivered in collaboration with our members. Through project partnerships, professional networks, facilitated workshops and training, we set collective goals and work toward stronger regional outcomes.



HUMANITARIAN ENTRANTS

More than 70 per cent of NSW's humanitarian intake settles in Western Sydney, and many more seek asylum in the region. Our councils need additional resourcing to support these groups.

What we achieved:

- **April 2020:** WSROC meeting with Acting Minister for Multiculturalism, the Hon. Geoff Lee MP results in support for greater data access
- **May 2020:** WSROC Board is signatory to the Refugee Council of Australia's 'Nobody Left Behind' campaign, seeking COVID-19 support for asylum seekers and refugees from the Australian Government
- **May 2020:** WSROC Board adopts new policy position, supporting humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers
- **July 2020:** Minister Lee announces \$4 million program, supporting temporary visa holders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT REFORMS

The 2019 - 2020 Black Summer bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic have brought to light deficiencies in current emergency management. WSROC, together with member councils, has embarked on advocacy to develop better resourcing for councils in future emergency events.

WSROC met with RFS Commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons, in February 2020 to review the extent of councils' experiences of the Bushfire Emergency, which subsequently informed two submissions, to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, to help guide future responses that better support local communities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABLE SPENDING

WSROC's spending power was strengthened in 2019-2020, with member councils utilising a collaborative procurement model via Local Government Procurement for key regional contracts.

WSROC facilitated opportunities for innovation via new, environmentally sustainable contracts, such as LGP's recycled asphalt contract, and the Western Sydney Energy Program, through which expressions of interest for offsite renewable electricity supply were sought. This has led to negotiation for a Power Purchasing Agreement by participating councils, which will achieve more competitive pricing and further progress regional energy efficiency.



"Liverpool is currently home to 1251 people seeking asylum and while local service providers are doing their best to assist, increased demand for emergency relief and housing support is straining already stretched resources."

– Liverpool City Lord Mayor,
Cllr Wendy Waller

LITHGOW TRANSITION

Lithgow's Transition Working Party met with members of the WSROC Executive in 2019 to discuss advancing economic opportunities through newly-forged, inter-regional links with Western Sydney.

Proactively engaging with businesses and agencies, and maximising transport, freight and education infrastructure, is part of Lithgow's regional pathfinding strategy.



ADVOCATING FOR WESTERN SYDNEY



With a reputation for considered policy analysis and bipartisan advocacy, the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) brings a collective voice to those issues that are crucial for Western Sydney's growing population.

Established in 1973, WSROC represents eight local councils in the Greater Western Sydney region.

In addition to advocacy, WSROC is a forum that facilitates stronger partnerships, professional development, and opportunities for regional collaboration between Western Sydney councils and their stakeholders.

44%

of people speak a language other than English at home

\$121.95

billion GRP: Australia's third largest economy

70%

of NSW's humanitarian entrants make their home here

1.8%

of people are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent

8,872km² Area

917,915 Local Jobs

2,175,338 Population

35 Median age

WORKING FOR WESTERN SYDNEY

WSROC welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with any group or individual working towards the betterment of Western Sydney. To learn more, or to work with us, please get in touch.

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WSROC

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Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC)

