

Regional capacity building for council sharps management and Bourke Shire community sharps action

COUNCIL NAME

Bourke Shire
Council

WEB ADDRESS

bourke.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

41,652 square
kilometres

POPULATION

2,996

Overview

This strategic sharps project included a three tiered approach to tackling the sharps issue within the Bourke community. It was born out of the collaborative work by the Bourke Community Sharps group and following the release of the Bourke Community Sharps Management Plan.

The first part of the project included installation of additional safe disposal facilities for the community. The second part saw wide-ranging education and awareness-raising actions carried out, including face-to-face training for over 280 council staff. Finally, the project included auditing and updating of facility mapping for the public.

Background

Bourke Shire Council has been an active member of the Bourke Community Sharps Interagency group since its inception in 2013. The Bourke Community Sharps Management Plan was produced with the collaboration of all significant agencies/organisations within the working group. The group identified three priority areas involving the sustainable management of community generated sharps:

1. Safe Disposal - Increase in Facilities
2. Community Awareness/Education
3. Appropriate Location of Dispensing and Disposal Facilities.

This project responded directly to these three priority areas which are also reflected in Bourke Shire's Delivery Programme and Operational Plan.

Implementation

This project was carried out in line with the Bourke Community Sharps Management Plan's three priority areas:

Priority 1: Safe Disposal - Increase in Facilities

To fulfil this priority Bourke arranged the purchase, freight and installation of three 120 litre disposal bins and their casings. These bins were placed at locations within the Bourke township and within the village of North Bourke, targeting local residents and the travelling public. The total cost for these facilities was \$5,244 which was supported by the NSW Health programme.



REFERENCES

Community Sharps
Management
Program
www.communitysharps.org.au

Priority 2: Community Awareness Education and Safe Disposal Education

For priority 2, Bourke Shire Council coordinated a regional education rollout, across western NSW. This included an accredited TAFE *Safe Collection and Disposal of Community Sharps* course being undertaken by 15 western NSW Councils, over 19 courses and involving 285 Council staff from a wide range of council roles. This initiative was supported by a \$30,000 NSW Health Community Sharps Management Grant.

Bourke Shire also increased community awareness by distributing printed Community Sharps safe disposal messages via letterbox drop and stickers, including details of the telephone hotline. They continue to working in partnership with the Bourke Community Sharps Action Group and the Bourke Alcohol and Other Drugs Working Group members to further increase awareness via media and other campaigns.

Priority 3: Appropriate Location of Dispensing and Disposal Facilities

An audit was carried out to determine the location of all current disposal sites. Following this, the council carried out community consultation to determine the optimal locations for new facilities. From this consultation two areas were identified; the town of Bourke and within Bourke Shire. Once the installation had occurred, Bourke Shire Council re-printed and distributed its publically available sharps disposal location maps.

Outcomes

Major outcomes achieved through this project included:

- Increased number of safe disposal units within the Bourke community.
- Increased easy and discrete public access to information regarding disposal facilities.
- Improved disposal behaviour amongst the community.
- Positive media and public health messaging.
- Increased awareness about safe behaviour and handling practices for sharps.

Key Learnings

The key learnings from the Bourke project included the following:

- Sharps exposure incidents are not isolated to outdoor staff, incidents can occur in the daily routine of almost any staff member.
- A multi-faceted approach to the sharps issue is most effective, incorporating education, awareness and infrastructure actions in parallel.
- Strong community partnerships are essential in tackling the sharps issue.

Contact

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This project was the 2015 winner of the Community Sharps Management Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.