LOCAL GOVERNMENT NSW

A clean and green future for the administration building: procurement of a green cleaning contractor

COUNCIL NAME
Wollongong City Council

WEB ADDRESS
www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au

SIZE
684 square kilometres

POPULATION
205,231

Overview

Wollongong City Council has incorporated stringent green cleaning requirements in the latest contract for the provision of cleaning services for the Administration Building. Due to the lack of recognised green cleaning standards and limited examples to draw on, the project team developed a bespoke specification along with supporting explanatory and assessment documentation. The requirements embedded in the specification were designed to achieve a high degree of building cleanliness with minimal environmental impact. The specification promoted cultural change within the cleaning services industry with respect to green cleaning and training of staff to achieve a green cleaning outcome. The contract also included clauses which required the retention of existing staff under the new contract ensuring that they remained gainfully employed irrespective of the successful tenderer. Significantly, the resultant specification exceeds the requirements of the Green Building Council of Australia Green Star Performance cleaning credits and green cleaning innovation challenge.

Background

There were two main environmental objectives associated with this project.

- The project aimed to deliver a cleaning service which minimised the use of chemicals, water and energy usage through the design and integration of best practice cleaning initiatives.
- Ensuring the cleanliness of the building without impacting on the indoor environment quality.

The development of the green cleaning tender package was underpinned by Council's sustainability commitments and builds on the actions identified in Wollongong 2022: Community Strategic Plan. The procurement was completed in accordance with Council's Sustainable Procurement Policy and Social Procurement Policy. As the building holds a 5 Star Green Star Performance rating the specification incorporated the requirements of the green cleaning credit to ensure that certification in this area was maintained.

Council's green cleaning specification for the Administration Building included economic, environmental and social objectives such as:

- Minimise resources required by monitoring chemical, water and energy usage through the design and integration of best practice cleaning initiatives.
- The provision of a green and clean building which minimises anthropogenic impacts through the provision of high quality indoor environment.
- Motivate and encourage cultural change within the cleaning services industry with respect to green cleaning and training of staff to achieve a green cleaning outcome.
- Support the local economy by incorporating social value/procurement practices into the contract.
- Achieve value for money for Council.

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Economically, the revised contract specification delivered:

- A cost effective solution without compromising on the quality and cleanliness of the building.
- Assisted in achieving reduced waste disposal costs through improved waste diversion.
- Promoted and rewarded the use of local staff and suppliers to deliver the service, supporting the local economy.

Implementation

The Facility Controller worked closely with Council's Technical Sustainability Officer to develop a comprehensive green cleaning specification and supporting explanatory documentation for inclusion in the tender package.

Extensive research was undertaken to identify cleaning standards, products, techniques and examples of other Councils/businesses who had implemented cleaning contracts which incorporated green cleaning practices. Based on the available information and strategies implemented over the life of the previous contract, the project team developed a bespoke specification and supporting documentation targeting best practice with respect to green cleaning and encouraging cultural change within the cleaning services industry (inclusive of staff training standards).

Outcomes

The well-researched green cleaning specifications, incorporating social procurement considerations, has yielded a significant number of ongoing economic, environmental and social benefits which are aligned with the key objectives of the project. Some of the achievements are detailed below.

- The successful tender value was within the lower end of the expected range at $2.25 million over 10 years.
- The contractor has provided access to lower cost green certified consumables such as toilet paper and paper towels achieving an unexpected saving.
- As the contractor uses local suppliers and staff the economic benefits are realised more broadly.
- The utilisation of GECA certified chemicals, bulk procurement, use of reusable microfiber cloths and heap filtration assist in providing a high standard of cleanliness while minimising the environmental impact of the cleaning operation.
- The contract also includes waste audits and the introduction of a sorting table and organic collection which is increasing resource recovery.

The contract incorporates strategies which yield social benefits for building occupants and cleaning staff. For example, the utilisation GECA chemicals improves indoor environment quality through a reduction in toxins applied to surfaces and in the air.

Key Learnings

The lack of a defined standard for green cleaning posed the greatest challenge faced by the team. Without a defined standard and examples the project team had to develop documentation which clearly articulated the expected outcomes, establish KPI's and define the various terms used. The developed documentation and specifications can now be used to inform specifications for other Council-owned buildings.

Council has embedded checks and balances to ensure that the objectives of the green cleaning contract are achieved on an ongoing basis. For example, the contract includes monthly quality assurance assessments and ATP (hygiene) testing. The contractor will be completing waste audits to establish the degree of waste separation achieved. Based on the outcome of these audits targeted education programs will be implemented with a view to improve resource recovery rates. The education program successes will be evaluated through the completion of follow up waste audits.

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This project was the 2015 winner of the Sustainable Procurement Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.