

Northcott Community Sharps Management Project

COUNCIL NAME

City of Sydney

WEB ADDRESS

cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

27 square kilometres

POPULATION

151,920

Overview

Under the SAVE (Sustainable Action Values Everyone) program, City of Sydney, Housing NSW, NSW Land and Housing Corporation and South Eastern Sydney Local Health District worked together with residents on a pilot project to trial sharps waste management in the Northcott social housing community, in inner city Sydney.

Community sharps are needles, syringes and lancets used by people living with diabetes and other medical conditions requiring self-injection in the home as well as needles and syringes used by injecting drug users in the home or in public places, as defined in the NSW Health and the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW (2005) Community Sharps Guidelines for NSW Councils.

Background

Inappropriately discarded needles and syringes in the public domain is an issue across many locations in the inner City of Sydney, including the publicly accessible areas of the Northcott Housing Precinct in Surry Hills. The safe and appropriate disposal of needles and syringes (sharps) generated by people managing medical conditions at home is an issue for all of the community, particularly for people working in the waste management industry collecting and sorting domestic waste and recycling streams.

The City of Sydney and Housing NSW have conducted a successful recycling program at Northcott for three years. For this reason, the Northcott housing precinct was chosen by the SAVE Project to pilot a sharps management project.

Implementation

The pilot project partners recognised safe sharps disposal as both a health issue and waste management issue. For these reasons, the project was delivered within a health promotion and waste education framework to the Northcott residents, staff and contractors. This approach recognised that community sharps are generated as a by-product of resident health management.

Implementation and success of the project pilot relied upon the residents' support and sense of ownership of the new system. Project partners achieved this support by holding information, education and consultation sessions with residents, staff, contractors and service providers.

To assist residents make an informed decision as to whether the project should proceed, the consultation sessions covered a range of issues, including:

- Harm minimisation and the NSW Needle and Syringe Program.
- Safe collection and disposal of community sharps.
- Understanding the risks associated with community sharps.

The consultation sessions focussed on discussing the health and safe disposal issues of sharps waste and the proposed community sharps waste system. The sessions with residents revealed that the preferred waste system was sharps collection bins to accommodate portable sharps containers. The planning and consultation process resulted in the installation of two 240 litre community sharps collection bins with regular council servicing arrangements. Effective utilisation was ensured through the provision of resident resources, education and promotion.

REFERENCES

The toolkit for the community sharps project is at:

save-program.org/projects/community-sharps-management/

Housing NSW staff and contractors were given safe disposal training and invited to participate in monitoring any impacts of the new sharps management system proposed for the precinct.

The sharps bins were monitored for a 12 month trial period from July 2011 to June 2012, and the evaluation indicates that residents are effectively using the sharps bins.

Outcomes

The Project has successfully decreased reports of discarded sharps in the public areas around Northcott and the use of the 240L bins is evidenced by the consistent collection of sharps.

The Project has resulted in the successful diversion of 10,710 sharps over 12 months, with over 60% of these being the result of managing medical conditions at home such as diabetes and hepatitis.

The SAVE partnership had the project independently evaluated and recently council staff have surveyed local residents to assess awareness and support of the system and whether residents believe it to be effective.

The Project produced a toolkit for other Housing areas, both public and private, so that the lessons learnt at Northcott can inform the establishment of sharps management at any location.

Future

The next steps for this project is to take the success of this model to other areas where sharps management is a challenge. The City is currently working with Housing NSW, the Sydney Local Health District and residents to develop a sharps management plan in Redfern and Waterloo.

In addition to the online toolkit, the City is providing advice to other councils on how to establish a community sharps bin network for other local government areas.

Projects under the SAVE partnership are now complete, however the resources from all SAVE projects are available at saveprogram.org

Contact

Name: Rebecca Martin

Position: A/Manager Safe City

Phone: 02 9265 9477

Email: remartin@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au