

# Case Study: City of Parramatta R3 program - Resource Rescue and Reuse

## COUNCIL NAME

City of Parramatta Council

## WEB ADDRESS

[www.parracity.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parracity.nsw.gov.au)

## SIZE

61.4 square kilometres

## POPULATION

194,448

## Overview

The R3 program was initiated as a means to reduce waste from the relocation of the City of Parramatta's main administration building and library in late 2015. The program rescued redundant resources such as stationary and furniture, reused them internally where possible and offered remaining items to local schools and community organisations to provide social and environmental benefits. As a result, Council was able to divert approximately 70 ute loads of material from landfill, while at the same time providing much needed resources to 52 schools, charities and community organisations.

The engagement of staff through this process has helped to strengthen a culture whereby staff recognise the value of materials and seek opportunities for re-use rather than disposal. This is evident through the increased number of staff-led initiatives to recover and reuse resources made redundant through relocation, refurbishment or re-branding.

## Background

With the announcement in early 2015 that Council would be relocating their main administration building and library into new premises in preparation for the Parramatta Square redevelopment, Council was presented with an opportunity to lead by example. Council demonstrated how sustainable thinking could be applied to business as usual operations, while also respecting the value of materials often overlooked or discarded as they become redundant.

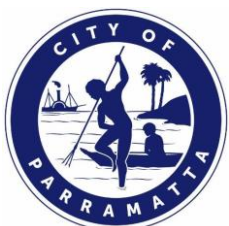
Reduced reliance on paper and the use of electronic records meant that there were large numbers of old binders, in-trays, magazine holders and general stationery items that were no longer being used. With close to 450 staff relocating, the move would also generate large amounts of redundant office furniture.

Council established the innovative R3 program to recognise that these items still had life in them and were too valuable to be sent to landfill or even recyclers.

## Implementation

With the endorsement of Council's management team, the Sustainability team commenced work with the relocation project team, as well as the Communications, and Property Development teams to establish the R3 program.

An engagement program was developed incorporating presentations at meetings, signage, articles in staff newsletters, regular emails to staff, and the sharing of information and updates through the designated 'move champions'. The 'move champions' were key in assisting with ongoing communications and engagement to ensure the cooperation of staff spread across 12 floors. Staff were asked to take their unwanted materials to a central point in the basement of the adjoining building for redistribution.



Both internal and external stakeholders were identified to assist connecting with local schools and community organisations, and news of the program was promoted via community newsletters and existing network connections with local schools and other community agencies.

Program communication aimed to always incorporate the following key messages.

- What: Stationery or furniture given away free to schools, community groups, charities, etc.
- Why: The importance of material reuse and avoiding waste to landfill and Council support for local communities.
- When / How: Dates, times, location, contact person and special instructions.

The program ran between May 2015 and September 2015 and was delivered without a capital budget but resourced by staff time of over 210 hours allocated to the planning, marketing, and delivery of the program.

## Outcomes

As a result of the combined efforts of staff and engagement of local schools and community groups, Council was able to divert 70 ute loads of materials (stationery and furniture) from landfill, while at the same time providing much needed resources to 33 schools and 19 charities and community organisations. The beneficiaries of these materials included both public and religious schools, as well as charities, social enterprises and community groups who focus on serving the needs of local youth, disadvantaged, multicultural groups, senior citizens and community.



Importantly, the engagement of staff throughout the R3 program has helped to create a culture whereby staff see the value in materials and look for opportunities for re-use rather than disposal. This has been evident in the number of staff led 'flow on' projects which have emerged following the R3 program.

This level of engagement from staff has exceeded original expectations, with staff contacting the sustainability team with projects which range in scale from the refurbishment of Guildford library (which saw 62% of materials redistributed to local schools and charities), through to small scale initiatives such as the donation of redundant paper stock to Council's childcare centres for art and craft activities following the renaming of Council. Re-use initiatives such as these also provide financial benefits to both Council and the beneficiaries by reducing waste disposal and recycling costs.

## Key Learnings

As owners of a large portfolio of assets with multiple refurbishments scheduled into the future, Council is looking to replicate the R3 program for future upgrades and refurbishments. In addition to this, the Sustainability team is also looking at establishing an 'easy reference' guide

---

to assist staff in identifying opportunities for re-use, and connect them with local charities or networks.

Two of the key challenges from the R3 program included tight timeframes and the need for a flexible approach in order to ensure that the program did not impact daily activities and services provided to the community. Council will seek to improve lead times for all future projects. Improvements will also be made to inventory and record management systems for future projects to enable an accurate record of the quantities of resources salvaged.

Beyond our own operations, it is hoped that other businesses as well as community organisations will either replicate the R3 program or seek their own innovative solutions to extend the life of materials and reduce waste to landfill.

Council is also currently exploring the possibility of facilitating a similar program for local businesses by encouraging waste exchange. This program would assist both Council and local businesses in resource recovery and waste diversion activities, facilitating a much more streamlined process for resource sharing, communication, and materials collections.

### Contact

**Name:** Kartik Madhira

**Position:** Sustainability Officer

**Phone:** 02 9806 8291

**Email:** [kmadhira@parracity.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kmadhira@parracity.nsw.gov.au)

**This project was the 2016 winner of the Waste Avoidance and Reuse Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards**