Keep Australia Beautiful NSW

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AWARDS




# 2026
# SUSTAINABLE CITIES AWARDS

THANK YOU TO OUR 2026 AWARDS AND EVENT SUPPORTERS

HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL

nsw GOV

snowy hydro

red energy

**Keep Australia Beautiful NSW**
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**Disclaimer**
The information in this booklet has been provided by the Award nominees and referees chosen by them. Every effort has been made to present all the information contained in this booklet as accurately as possible.

Cover image: 2026 Sustainable Cities Awards Recipients

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# About Sustainable Cities

SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AWARDS

Since 1994, the Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Sustainable Cities Awards have recognised and celebrated environmental initiatives, sustainability projects, and community leadership across metropolitan councils and urban communities.

The program highlights projects that deliver positive environmental outcomes in areas such as litter prevention, waste management, recycling, resource recovery, environmental education, and community engagement.

The Sustainable Cities Awards encourage councils, communities, schools, businesses, and organisations to showcase the innovative and impactful work taking place within their local areas while inspiring others to create more sustainable, connected, and liveable communities. Entrants have the opportunity to be recognised through individual category awards as well as the coveted Overall NSW Sustainable City Award.

In 2026, the Awards event will be hosted by Hornsby following its success as the 2025 Overall Winner.

# About KAB NSW

Keep Australia Beautiful NSW

Keep Australia Beautiful NSW is the premier non-profit organisation leading behaviour change by engaging the community to continually improve our local environment.

Over our 50-year history we have built a state-wide network of dedicated businesses, community groups, councils, schools and individuals assisting our causes.

We deliver many programs throughout the state to promote sustainability and reduce litter:

- Tidy Towns Sustainability Awards (regional)
- Sustainable Cities Awards (metropolitan)
- EnviroMentors® environmental education program
- Annual Conference





# Message from the CEO

Since 1994, the Sustainable Cities Awards have recognised the councils, communities, organisations, schools, businesses and individuals making metropolitan NSW more sustainable and liveable. The 2026 entries show how practical ideas and strong partnerships can improve our environment and strengthen the communities we share.

This winners book highlights projects across a wide range of areas, from waste reduction and recycling to environmental education and community engagement. Each demonstrates the commitment, creativity and collaboration needed to turn good ideas into lasting results. By sharing their work, we hope to encourage others to adapt these approaches and develop ideas of their own.

On behalf of Keep Australia Beautiful NSW, I thank our partners, judges and on-the-ground assessor for their support, and everyone who entered for the time and care invested in their projects. Congratulations to the 2026 winners and finalists. Your achievements give us much to celebrate and much to learn from.



Warm regards,



Val Southam
Chief Executive and Executive Director
Keep Australia Beautiful NSW

## Thank you to our 2026 Sustainable Cities Awards Partners and Sponsors

HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL

nsw EPA

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# AWARDS CATEGORIES



## Biodiversity Conservation

The Biodiversity Conservation Award recognises outstanding projects that protect, restore or enhance native ecosystems, threatened species habitat, biodiversity corridors and ecological resilience.



## Circular Economy

*Sponsored by*

The Circular Economy Award recognises projects that redesign systems, products, or processes to keep materials, products, fluids, or energy circulating in the economy for as long as possible. These projects go beyond recycling to create long-term circular solutions that reduce waste and maximise the value of resources.



## Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation

*Sponsored by*

The Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation Award recognises projects that strengthen community resilience, reduce emissions, or sequester carbon.



## Communication & Engagement

The Communication & Engagement Award recognises programs and projects that inspire and enable environmental action through effective communication and community engagement.



## Local Heroes

The Local Heroes Award recognises individuals who demonstrate leadership and outstanding commitment in their community. This award celebrates those who stand out through action, inspiration, and measurable impact across environmental, sustainability, or broader community initiatives.



## Plastic-Free Communities

The Plastic-Free Communities Award recognises individuals, groups, schools, or communities showing innovation and leadership in reducing single-use plastics and encouraging more sustainable choices.



## Resource Recovery

The Resource Recovery Award recognises projects and programs that recover, recycle, or safely manage materials that have already become waste, diverting them from landfill and supporting better waste management outcomes.



## Waste Avoidance

The Waste Avoidance Award recognises projects and programs that prevent waste from being created in the first place through education, behaviour change, and practical alternatives.

# AWARDS CATEGORIES



## Community Spirit & Inclusion

The Community Spirit and Inclusion Award recognises projects, programs, or initiatives that strengthen social connection, inclusion, participation, and community resilience. These projects celebrate communities that come together to support one another and foster a strong sense of belonging.



## Heritage & Culture

The Heritage and Culture Award recognises community projects that enhance and protect built heritage, natural heritage, or Indigenous cultural heritage.



## Litter Prevention

*Sponsored by*

The Litter Prevention Award recognises projects or programs that reduce or prevent litter through innovative approaches with measurable outcomes.



## Liveable Cities

The Liveable Cities Award recognises projects that enhance the liveability, functionality, and appeal of a town, suburb, or local area. These projects help create places that are accessible, sustainable, resilient, and enjoyable for people to live, work, and visit.



## Water Conservation & Protection

The Water Conservation and Protection Award recognises leadership and innovation in water conservation and management for the future.



## Young Legends (≤ 25)

The Young Legend's Award celebrates individuals, school groups, or youth teams aged 25 and under who show outstanding leadership in environmental action.



## Overall Award

The Overall KAB NSW Sustainable Cities Award recognises a metropolitan council's achievements in environmental sustainability and social inclusion across at least four categories..

# AWARDS JUDGES AND ASSESSORS



## Tasneem Rangwala

Senior Environmental Planner | JEP Environment and Planning

Tasneem is an environmental and engineering professional with over 25 years' experience in waste, water and sustainability. She specialises in environmental impact assessment, regulatory compliance and approvals for industrial and recycling developments. Her work spans regional waste initiatives, industry resource efficiency programs and advice to major recycling operators.

She holds qualifications in engineering, environmental management, integrated water management and business administration, and is currently a PhD candidate. Her research has influenced water governance in NSW, and she received a 2020 Australia Day Award for Women, Water and Leadership.



## Paula Clasby

Senior Manager, Business Development | TerraCycle ANZ

Paula is a creative, marketing, and business development professional with extensive experience supporting businesses to advance positive environmental and social change. She has worked in various sectors including health, marketing, design, print, hospitality, and over 10 years within sustainability and the built environment. Prior to TerraCycle, Paula worked with GECA (Good Environmental Choice Australia), helping individuals and businesses to advance the circular economy.

Paula prioritises purpose in all her work, drawing on her passion to drive TerraCycle's mission in Eliminating the Idea of Waste®.



## Ana Corpuz

Senior Project Officer | Murray-Darling Basin Authority

Ana has over 25 years' experience in the NSW public sector, specialising in environmental and sustainability policy, project management and scientific analysis.

She currently works in the Murray–Darling Basin Authority's Basin Plan Implementation Branch and volunteers on Bayside Council's Floodplain Risk Management Committee.

Her expertise spans water and catchment management, governance, compliance and process improvement, complemented by extensive communication, stakeholder engagement, public speaking and mentoring experience.



## Jeanne-Vida Douglas

Head of Innovation | Property Industry Foundation

JV is an award-winning marketer, business journalist, and author working at the intersection of sustainability, innovation, and impact.

After early roles championing sustainable solutions across start-ups, media, and professional services, she pivoted following the 2019–20 bushfires to support renewable-energy and circular-economy leaders including Nectr, 5B, and TerraCycle.

Now, as Head of Innovation at the Property Industry Foundation, she advances social sustainability and reimagines solutions to youth homelessness.



## Angela Dunnett

Stormwater Compliance & Education Officer | Parramatta River Catchment Group

Angela Dunnett is an environmental education and compliance professional with experience in delivering school programs, internal change management initiatives, and community-focused sustainability programs. Angela currently works for the Parramatta River Catchment Group on education and compliance programs to improve stormwater management, such as Get the Site Right, which addresses erosion and sediment control on building sites, as well as on project management of programs to address litter prevention and improve the operation and management of water-sensitive urban design.

Angela has also worked with Sydney Water and the NSW Department of Education, designing and evaluating grants and behaviour programs around sustainability and water literacy.

# AWARDS JUDGES AND ASSESSORS



## Chris Jones

Design & Operations Manager | AAD Design Studio

Chris Jones is a design professional and former design business owner with experience in residential design, master planning, and project delivery. He holds a Master of Architecture and qualifications in residential energy efficiency assessment, reflecting his commitment to sustainable, climate responsive, and passive design.

Chris is passionate about creating buildings and places that are practical, accessible, and enjoyable for people to live, work, and visit. He believes the best architecture invites people to pause, explore, ask questions, and discover a deeper connection with place.



## Anna Lei

PR & Communications Manager | TerraCycle ANZ

Anna Lei is a public relations professional with experience across a range of industries.

She began her career at award-winning agency Ogilvy, specialising in consumer PR and influencer marketing, working with global clients such as Netflix, Xbox, eBay and American Express.

In 2023, Anna joined the TerraCycle marketing team hoping to incorporate purpose in her work and combine her passion for environmental advocacy with her professional expertise to champion sustainability and inspire positive change. Anna drives media relations, publicity, and community outreach to inspire and educate on sustainable practices at TerraCycle.

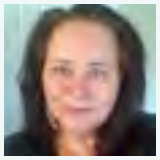


## Sarah Lynch

Project and Systems Officer | Blacktown City Council

Sarah is a dedicated Project and Systems Officer within Blacktown City Council's waste services team, experienced in leading administration teams, coordinating projects, and driving process and system improvements. My work focuses on improving operational efficiency, strengthening customer service delivery, and supporting teams through structured planning and collaborative problem solving. I'm particularly interested in initiatives that foster community wellbeing through sustainable practices and thoughtful resource management.

Beyond my professional role, I'm a passionate gardener and advocate for native gardening, committed to growing plants that belong here and welcoming the wildlife that follows.



## Layla McNeil

Strategic Business Manager | Thesium

Layla has experience in environmental strategic policy development, project and contract management, program delivery, EMS auditing, stakeholder facilitation.

She has knowledge and expertise in developing and delivering strategic environmental and communication plans, cooperative agreements and contracts with multi stakeholders; educational and behaviour change campaigns; environmental auditing, waste and resource management planning; to creating, implementing, reporting and evaluating a variety of sustainability programs.



## Luciano Mesiti

CEO | Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia

Luciano is the CEO of Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia, whose aim is to promote food and fibre education in schools nationally. Prior to his appointment he was a high school teacher, teaching agriculture and technology.

Luciano has extensive experience in curriculum development in agriculture and technology and is a very passionate advocate of Landcare and sustainable land manage curriculum in schools. He has been a Tidy Towns judge and assessor for over 15 years and a great supporter of Keep Australia Beautiful.

# AWARDS JUDGES AND ASSESSORS



## Jesscynda Montalbetti

Project and Systems Officer | Blacktown City Council

Jesscynda is a Project and Systems Officer committed to environmental sustainability and community engagement. She has supported operational improvements and compliance initiatives, contributing to programs that promote responsible waste management.

She is passionate about encouraging behaviour change and equitable access to resources within communities. Her focus on continuous improvement supports initiatives that keep local environments clean and safe for future generations.



## Lynda Newnam

Principal | Citizen Science Partnerships

Lynda is passionate about bringing volunteered knowledge, ideas and expertise into planning and regulatory processes to address environmental challenges within a framework that champions honesty, accountability and transparency and encourages collaborative stewardship. She has extensive project management experience, particularly in the environment and higher education, as well as 30 years in volunteering. Her formal qualifications are in primary school teaching and carbon management, with undergraduate degrees specialising in structural linguistics, anthropology and government as well as a Master in Environmental Management.



## Paul Pirie

Principal Consultant | Elementri

Paul Pirie is a Wollongong-based environmental scientist, sustainability professional and community leader with experience across ESG advisory, climate reporting, governance, education and stakeholder engagement. He spent more than 15 years working with global investment banks, leading governance, risk and complex program delivery in regulated environments.

Paul also lectures MBA students in sustainable business practice, social entrepreneurship and organisational change, helping translate complex ideas into practical, real-world application. He brings a practical, evidence-based approach to assessing sustainability initiatives, with a strong interest in leadership, community impact, resilience and clear communication.

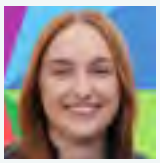


## Mike Ritchie

Managing Director | MRA Consulting Group

Mike has over 35 years' experience in the waste management and recycling industry. He has worked with all levels of government and the private sector.

Mike's roles have included Managing Director of MRA Consulting Group, Group General Manager SUEZ Australia, General Manager WSN Environmental Solutions and State Manager of VISY Recycling. He was also a director of a local government and Senior Advisor to the Mayor of Brisbane.



## Jessica Speechley

Senior Coordinator Environmental Health | Blacktown City Council

Jessica leads a team of 17 Environmental Health Officers across three teams.

Jessica has been instrumental in implementing and advancing environmental health programs that enhance the well-being of Blacktown's residents.

Her dedication to creating a healthier and more sustainable community is reflected in her successful prosecution record.

# AWARDS JUDGES AND ASSESSORS



## Fiona Stock

Manager of Business and Technical Waste Services | Sutherland Shire Council

Fiona Stock has over 20 years' experience in Local Government, delivering innovative and high-performing waste services. As Manager of Business and Technical Waste Services at Sutherland Shire Council, she leads strategic initiatives that optimise operations and future-proof waste collection systems for a growing community.

Fiona is recognised for her expertise in complex contract negotiation and delivery, successfully implementing major waste collection and processing services. She is passionate about driving practical, forward-thinking solutions that achieve strong environmental and community outcomes.

Her work has earned industry recognition, including the prestigious International LiveCom Awards for excellence in local government service delivery.



## Matt Taylor

Owner/Director | Heart HR

As a former CEO of Keep Australia Beautiful NSW. Matthew brings over 7 years' experience from his time managing the organisation, including the Tidy Towns program.

Since leaving KAB, Matthew held a number of roles but his passion for the environment has remained.

Currently, Matt runs his own HR consultancy to support small to medium sized businesses - including many not-for-profit organisations.



## Dr Trevor Thornton

Senior Lecturer – Hazardous  Materials Management | Deakin University

Trevor is currently employed as a Senior Lecturer at Deakin University and also consults widely on processes to develop and implement programs to reduce environmental impacts for a broad range of industry sectors.

Trevor has a wealth of experience, particularly in areas associated with waste management.

Trevor has been working in various aspects of the waste management industry for over 30 years as a regulator and consultant.



## Chris Tola

Consultant  | Tola Advisory

Chris has had an active involvement with many organisations including Surfrider Foundation, Take 3, the Australian Coastal Society, ARPANSA, National Parks and Wildlife, and the EPA.

Since 2002, Chris has  been KAB's Clean Beach Challenge Assessor and State Judge, Tidy Towns Assessor, and was the Program Manager for Clean Beach Challenge and the Tidy Towns Program (2002 – 2005).



## Kevin Turner

Manager Environment | Blacktown City Council

Kevin Turner, Manager Environment at Blacktown City Council, leverages 30 years experience in environmental management to drive sustainable initiatives within the community.

Kevin's natural aptitude for identifying emergent risks, trends, and opportunities has been instrumental in moulding Blacktown's dedication to safeguarding environmental health.

# 2026 Overall Sustainable Cities Winner



# Hawkesbury City Council

Hawkesbury City Council's achievement is grounded in a shared commitment to sustainability across its leadership, staff and community partnerships. Serving a region of historic towns, farming communities, growing suburbs and significant natural areas, Council brings a collaborative approach to its environmental responsibilities.

Strong internal engagement underpins this work. Directors, managers and project officers understand how their activities contribute to Council's broader priorities. Senior leaders recognise staff expertise and achievements, supporting a culture of participation and shared responsibility.

Sustainability increasingly informs work beyond Council's environmental teams, including asset management, planning and everyday service delivery. This approach connects individual initiatives and encourages teams to consider environmental outcomes across their responsibilities.

Collaboration extends beyond the organisation. Council works with neighbouring councils to address difficult-to-recycle materials and engages with First Nations peoples in developing programs and projects. Education and practical information help residents participate, while climate adaptation and resilience initiatives respond to regional challenges.

Litter prevention combines operational improvements, education and community partnerships, while sustainable events guidance helps organisers incorporate environmental considerations into local activities.

Through engaged staff, supportive leadership and practical collaboration, Hawkesbury is making sustainability a shared priority and building a strong foundation for continued improvement - earning recognition as the 2026 Overall Sustainable Cities Award winner.



**OVERALL**
**RUNNER UP**

# Sutherland Shire Council

Sutherland Shire Council's achievement reflects thoughtful environmental management, strong working relationships and a clear commitment to community benefit. Council teams, volunteer groups and external partners bring shared knowledge, active participation and considerable care to the delivery of local initiatives.

Greening the Shire is a particular strength. Council's approach connects locally collected seed and native plant propagation with habitat restoration and carefully planned street planting. Volunteers contribute expertise and effort, while Council considers local conditions, infrastructure and ongoing maintenance to give plantings the best opportunity to succeed. This attention to long-term outcomes demonstrates an understanding of trees and bushland as valuable community assets.

Collaboration extends into education and inclusion. Partnerships with NSW Education connect environmental learning with practical experience and employment opportunities for young people with additional needs, showing how environmental work can also support wider social outcomes.

Staff and partners demonstrate a detailed understanding of their work and a strong willingness to contribute. By combining practical expertise with thoughtful planning and inclusive partnerships, Sutherland Shire Council delivers an approach to sustainability that benefits both its natural environment and its community, earning recognition as the 2026 Overall Sustainable Cities Award runner-up.



OVERALL FINALIST

## Bayside Council

Bayside Council connects environmental action with community wellbeing, inclusion and local identity. Across its diverse communities, Council creates opportunities for residents to learn, share skills and take part in practical activities.

Initiatives such as the Bayside Backyard Bee Network and Fix It Sisters Shed bring biodiversity, creativity and reuse into everyday life. Community events and local storytelling also help people connect with their neighbourhoods and each other.

Bayside's approach demonstrates the value of making sustainability accessible and inviting, with opportunities for people of different ages and backgrounds to contribute in ways that reflect their interests and skills.



OVERALL FINALIST

## Campbelltown City Council

Campbelltown City Council's sustainability work reflects the commitment of staff who care deeply about their community and local environment.

The assessor highlighted their enthusiasm, involvement and pride in the places they manage, particularly the bushland at Smiths Creek Reserve. Council combines conservation with practical improvements to public spaces and education that helps residents make sustainable choices.

Activities for children, families and the wider community connect environmental learning with everyday habits. Collaboration and cultural learning also inform Council's work. Together, these efforts demonstrate an approach grounded in practical action, community participation and care for the natural areas of this growing city.



OVERALL FINALIST

## Liverpool City Council

Liverpool City Council brings together research, practical infrastructure and environmental education to address the needs of a rapidly growing community.

Partnerships with researchers and education providers help Council explore new uses for discarded materials and connect residents with waste reduction and waterway protection. Its waste education centre illustrates this approach, incorporating tiles produced through trials using waste glass and other materials. Improvements to recycling facilities and public spaces provide further opportunities to put environmental ideas into practice.

Liverpool's approach demonstrates how collaboration and a willingness to trial new solutions can support better services and useful outcomes for the community.



OVERALL FINALIST

## Northern Beaches Council

Northern Beaches Council's sustainability work reflects the breadth of responsibility involved in caring for a region of coastline, bushland and established urban communities. Supported by environmentally engaged residents, Council combines waste services with initiatives addressing biodiversity, water use and infrastructure.

The assessor particularly highlighted strong community recycling practices and efforts to recover timber from kerbside collections. Partnerships with local businesses are also helping Council respond to litter issues. Across these activities, community participation supports practical environmental action.

Council continues to maintain effective everyday services while exploring further opportunities to protect natural areas and reduce the environmental impact of its operations.

# Biodiversity Conservation



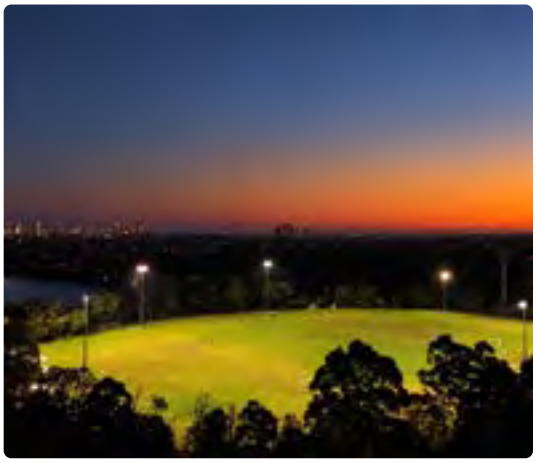
WINNER

## Gumbramorra Re-creation Project

### Inner West Council

Inner West Council re-created wetland habitat at Mackey Park, restoring part of the Gumbramorra wetlands, which once spanned 220 hectares and held cultural significance for Wangal and Gadigal communities.

Completed in June 2026 with matched funding through the NSW Government's Metropolitan Greenspace Program, the project features four wetland ponds, riverfront saltmarsh, nature play, gathering spaces, a viewing platform, pathways, signage and artworks, returning important habitats lost through urbanisation.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Protecting Biodiversity After Dark

### Northern Beaches Council

Northern Beaches Council developed practical approaches to wildlife-sensitive lighting after identifying artificial light at night as an emerging biodiversity threat. Environmental assessments, collaboration with ecologists and engagement with the Australasian Dark Sky Alliance and University of Melbourne researchers informed the work.

The project connects environmental policy with lighting design, operational controls and planning, demonstrating how councils can protect wildlife while maintaining community safety and the functionality of public infrastructure.

# Circular Economy

*Award category sponsored by:* nsw epa



**WINNER**

## Hornsby Shire: Driving the Circular Economy

### Hornsby Shire Council Waste Branch

Following REDcycle's collapse, Hornsby Shire Council partnered with iQRenew to restore household soft plastics recycling.

Plastics collected at Thornleigh Community Recycling Centre are processed within NSW into products such as pavers and buckets, which residents can purchase.

By connecting collection with local demand for recycled products, Council is supporting a circular market. It plans to extend this approach in late 2026 by offering bagged compost made from domestic garden organics.




**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

## High-rise, High Reuse: Circular Textiles

### Penrith City Council

Penrith City Council partnered with the Diabetes Innovation Impact Foundation to trial clothing collection bins in six residential flat buildings, giving apartment residents a convenient way to pass on unwanted textiles.

Building managers and residents supported the collections, with clothing entering Savers Australia's retail network for reuse.

In its first three months, the trial collected 2.6 tonnes at no cost to residents or Council, demonstrating demand for accessible textile reuse services.

# Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation

*Award category sponsored by:*

snowy hydro | red energy




**WINNER**

## $CO_2$ Concrete

### Western Sydney University

Western Sydney University's $CO_2$ Concrete permanently mineralises injected carbon dioxide in recycled concrete aggregate, reducing demand for newly quarried materials.

Working with construction and transport partners, the university tested the technology in three commercial demonstrations, using recycled aggregate replacement levels of 40%, 50% and 60%.

Results indicated improved material quality and lower embodied-carbon potential under assessed conditions, while identifying the production standards, quality controls and specification guidance needed for wider adoption.



**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

## Urban Forest Strategic Framework

### Willoughby City Council

Willoughby City Council's Urban Forest Strategic Framework responds to declining tree canopy on private land and increasing exposure to urban heat.

Its four goals and eight strategic directions guide Council's planning, operations, advocacy and compliance, supporting tree protection, planting, habitat connections and ongoing management.

Community, business and agency engagement complements this work, building understanding of the urban forest's benefits and encouraging shared responsibility for protecting it as the climate changes.

# Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation

*Award category sponsored by:*

snowy hydro | red energy



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Caravan Park Preparedness Project

### Penrith City Council

Penrith City Council's Caravan Park Preparedness Project supported older permanent residents on the Nepean River floodplain following significant floods.

Council worked with emergency services, health and community organisations and park managers to deliver sessions using the Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness model.

More than 60 residents participated across two parks; all reported increased disaster risk awareness and 85% developed new preparedness connections. Trusted partnerships and repeated engagement were central to the program's success.

# Communication & Engagement




**WINNER**

## The Secret Life of Powerful Owls

### Georgia Cameron & Michael Bianchino

Georgia Cameron and Michael Bianchino created The Secret Life of Powerful Owls to protect habitat for the threatened Powerful Owl in Byles Creek Valley.

What began as a Facebook page grew into a campaign centred on Mikey the Powerful Owlet, engaging thousands of people and connecting community groups.

The project has built community support for protecting the valley, where the habitat remains undeveloped, with the owl becoming a symbol of environmental sustainability.



**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

## Our Energy Future

### City of Parramatta

City of Parramatta's Our Energy Future program helps homeowners, renters and apartment residents make informed decisions about energy costs, home comfort and electrification.

Free home assessments and a co-designed ZapCat digital support journey translate complex choices into practical steps, providing tailored recommendations, estimates, expert guidance and vetted suppliers.

This support helps households consider efficiency upgrades, solar, batteries and electric appliances, with evaluation showing increased confidence, behaviour change, installations and emissions reductions.

# Communication & Engagement




HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Hawkesbury Litter Education & Engagement

### Hawkesbury City Council

Hawkesbury City Council combined face-to-face education and digital communication to improve awareness of litter impacts and reporting options. Activities at the Hawkesbury Show, Youth Fest, School Leadership Program and Senior Expo promoted Report a Tosser, Return and Earn and responsible load covering. Social media reels extended these messages beyond the events, reinforcing opportunities for residents to act.

Together, the activities generated strong online engagement and secured 189 Report a Tosser sign-ups.

# Heritage & Culture




WINNER

## Stories on Parade: Bringing History to Life

### Bayside Council

Bayside Council's Stories on Parade celebrated Carlton Parade's heritage and revitalisation as the culmination of its Community Improvement District Pilot Project. Businesses, cultural organisations, historians, artists and volunteers helped deliver historical tours, performances, markets, exhibitions and storytelling, attracting more than 5,700 attendees.

By sharing the precinct's history, the event increased visitation and strengthened community pride. Evaluation identified opportunities to build on this response through expanded programming, promotion and stakeholder participation.

# Community Spirit & Inclusion



WINNER

## Creating a Sustainable Hospital

### The Auburn Hospital Sustainability Team

For 20 years, a multicultural group of cleaners has led Auburn Hospital workers in improving sustainability and challenging accepted waste practices.

Beginning before sustainability became a widespread healthcare priority, the team demonstrated that everyday operations could better serve the environment, community and hospital.

Despite obstacles, their work has grown into a broader staff movement, helping establish a lasting culture of environmental responsibility and showing how staff at every level can lead change.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Project Planet

### Bayside Council

Bayside Council's Project Planet brought more than 6,000 people together for a free, inclusive sustainability festival.

Responding to demand for accessible environmental education, Council expanded smaller workshops into an event featuring more than 30 partners, practical activities, cultural experiences and expert presentations.

The festival connected residents with local organisations and volunteers, strengthened participation and celebrated diversity. It established an annual platform for environmental learning, community connection and resilience across Bayside.

# Liveable Cities



WINNER

## Trees as Assets: Transforming Urban Canopy

### Sutherland Shire Council

With more than $1 million in investment and community backing, Sutherland Shire Council introduced a data-driven framework to manage urban trees as assets.

A new removal register allows Council to track planting against losses, recording 1,301 plantings and 824 removals in 2025-26 - a net gain of 477 trees.

This clearer picture supports planning for biodiversity and shade, guiding progress towards no net canopy loss by 2035 and 40% canopy cover by 2050.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Canterbury Road Underpass Mural

### Place Improvement Team CBCity

The Canterbury Road Underpass Mural transformed an uninviting section of the Cooks River Cycleway into a welcoming gateway celebrating community, culture and environmental stewardship.

Under the theme Our River, Our Future, artists, Council, environmental groups and residents developed artwork reflecting the river's ecology and shared history.

Community workshops and storytelling shaped the design, improving the visitor experience, strengthening local ownership and creating a distinctive identity along an important active transport corridor.

# Litter Prevention

*Award category sponsored by:* NSW EPA



JOINT WINNER

## Hawkesbury Litter Prevention Program

### Hawkesbury City Council

Hawkesbury City Council used audits and local litter checks to move from reactive litter management towards targeted prevention.

Working with environmental organisations, businesses, community groups, WSROC and the NSW EPA, Council introduced a public bin audit, Pick Before You Mow operational changes and Bligh Park clean-ups. Engagement at major events secured 189 Report a Tosser sign-ups.

Together, these activities improved coordination and provided clearer evidence about the locations and behaviours requiring attention.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Working Towards a Litter Free Canada Bay

### City of Canada Bay

City of Canada Bay used audits of 78 litter infrastructure assets and baseline litter surveys to develop its Litter Management and Prevention Plan 2025-2030.

The findings informed bin upgrades, education, enforcement and community engagement, with Council staff, the NSW EPA and volunteers supporting delivery. Expanded volunteer clean-ups removed 4,758 kilograms of litter.

Ongoing monitoring and collaboration across Council teams help connect these activities, providing evidence to guide further improvements in public spaces.

# Litter Prevention

*Award category sponsored by:* nsw epa



JOINT WINNER

## Sydney By Kayak Conservation Fund

### Sydney By Kayak

Sydney By Kayak turns harbour tours into hands-on clean-ups, working with paddlers, the Sydney Institute of Marine Science and North Sydney Council to tackle plastic pollution. A Seabin and solar-powered clean-up boat complement the tours, extending the initiative's collection efforts.

Since 2018, it has removed 43,082 kilograms of rubbish and invested $103,130 in marine conservation.

Plans to expand free community clean-ups will give more people opportunities to participate regardless of cost.

# Local Heroes



**WINNER**

## Cameron Henery

### Northern Beaches Council

Cameron Henery has spent more than a decade advancing environmental innovation through local government infrastructure.

His leadership at Northern Beaches Council has supported low-carbon concrete as the default construction standard, Australia's first fully circular synthetic turf renewal, an alternative water network serving 30 sports fields and wildlife-sensitive lighting.

By translating environmental opportunities into practical projects, he has influenced Council specifications, procurement and industry capability across climate action, water conservation, biodiversity and circularity.



**SPECIAL COMMENDATION**

## Auburn Hospital Sustainability Team

### Auburn Hospital Sustainability Team

Auburn Hospital's multicultural sustainability team, led by cleaners, has spent 20 years reducing unnecessary waste and redirecting usable items from landfill to community causes.

Their contribution supports people locally and overseas while strengthening environmental responsibility within the hospital.

Working beyond their everyday duties, these staff demonstrate that leadership and education can come from any role. Their sustained efforts have helped build a workplace culture that values sustainability, practical action and service.

# Plastic Free Communities



WINNER

## Campbelltown is Brewing Change

### Resource Recovery and Waste Team, Campbelltown City Council

Campbelltown City Council began its Plastic Free July campaign by removing disposable coffee cups from workplaces and supporting staff to choose reusable alternatives.

This internal change gave Council a practical foundation for engaging the wider community through education, early learning programs, workshops and public events.

More than 65,000 disposable cups have since been avoided, showing how Council's own actions can support its messaging and encourage sustainable habits across workplaces and communities.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Leading the Way with Sustainable Events

### Hawkesbury City Council

Hawkesbury City Council updated its Sustainable Events Management Policy in 2025 to guide environmental practices at Council events and local events receiving Council sponsorship.

Building on a policy introduced in 2011, the update connects planning requirements with practical support for organisers.

Sustainable Events Guidelines and a Sustainability Self-Assessment are provided through the sponsorship process, helping organisers review their plans and incorporate sustainability actions into the way events are organised and delivered.

# Resource Recovery




**WINNER**

## Turning Food and Garden Waste into Compost

### Blacktown City Council

Blacktown City Council introduced food and garden waste collection to more than 130,000 households in 2025-26, transitioning to a three-bin service to meet NSW requirements and reduce landfill and emissions.

Three years of planning coordinated logistics, communication and customer support, with residents, staff and contractors helping deliver the change.

In its first 12 months, the service recovered more than 40,000 tonnes of material and prevented approximately 60,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.




**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

## Fighting Food Waste - One Bin at a Time

### Lane Cove Council

Lane Cove Council launched a dedicated food waste collection service for standalone houses in March 2026, using education and community engagement to help residents adjust.

Clear messaging across multiple channels and face-to-face activities explained the new service and supported changes to household routines.

This coordinated approach contributed to strong early participation, low contamination and community support, with minimal enquiries and complaints as residents began diverting food waste from landfill through the service.

# Resource Recovery



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Chilly Findings: Fridge & Freezer Recycling

### City of Ryde

City of Ryde introduced a 12-month fridge and freezer collection trial to prevent unsafe disposal, refrigerant leakage and loss of recyclable materials.

Local operators and certified technicians delivered collection, degassing and recycling, supported by online bookings and resident education.

In four months, 14.2 tonnes of metal were recycled. With 95% of collected fridges requiring degassing, the results demonstrated the need for controlled collection and highlighted opportunities to extend the service.

# Waste Avoidance




**JOINT WINNER**

## Towards Zero Waste Events

### Blue Mountains City Council

Blue Mountains City Council worked with event organisers, stallholders and the NSW EPA to replace disposable serving ware with reusable alternatives at local markets and community events.

Towards Zero Waste Events provided a mobile wash trailer, return points and clear waste stations, making reuse practical for markets and community events.

Across four public pilots, 2,227 disposable items were avoided and return rates reached 94%-98.7%, with participating markets reducing landfill waste by more than half.



**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

## Angle Park Remediation Waste Avoidance

### Liverpool City Council

Liverpool City Council used an improved capping strategy at Angle Park to safely contain asbestos-impacted soil on site, avoiding disposal of more than 1,500 tonnes to landfill.

The remediation also enabled upgrades including accessible foreshore access, picnic areas, landscaping and solar lighting.

By integrating soil containment with park improvements, Council reduced waste while providing facilities that better serve residents, First Nations groups and disability service users, demonstrating the benefits of coordinated remediation planning.

# Waste Avoidance




**JOINT WINNER**

## Clothing, Toy and Book Swap Events

### Ku-ring-gai Council

Ku-ring-gai Council and the Net Zero Champions deliver free clothing, toy and book swaps, helping residents extend the life of quality items and reduce unnecessary purchases.

Held six times annually, the events make reuse accessible while supporting families and building community connections.

Since launching in 2023, the program has engaged thousands of residents, demonstrating how partnerships between councils and community volunteers can encourage circular economy behaviours and deliver ongoing waste avoidance.

# Water Conservation & Protection



**WINNER**

## Kookie's Konservationists

### Miranda Public School

Miranda Public School's Kookie's Konservationists engaged students in water experiments, audits and community education, supported by staff and council sustainability officers.

Students applied their findings by identifying leaks, reactivating water tanks, improving garden infrastructure and creating signage promoting sustainable water use.

These activities strengthened students' knowledge, encouraged prompt leak reporting and raised community awareness. Future activities will involve the wider community earlier and track water savings more closely to measure long-term benefits.



**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

## Water Sensitive Wollondilly

### Wollondilly Shire Council

Wollondilly Shire Council partnered with WaterNSW to develop Water Sensitive Urban Design Standard Drawings in response to increasing development pressures on local waterways and Sydney's drinking water catchment.

Building on Council's integrated water management policy, strategy and guidelines, the drawings clarify design requirements for new developments.

They support waterway protection and conservation while helping create cooler neighbourhoods, improve liveability, protect biodiversity and strengthen climate resilience as the shire continues to grow.

# Water Conservation & Protection



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Adopt a Beach Program

### Surfrider Foundation Northern Beaches

Supported by Northern Beaches Council, local businesses and the community, Surfrider Foundation Northern Beaches runs monthly clean-ups across nine beaches through its Adopt a Beach Program.

Now in its second year, the program has engaged 1,800 volunteers and removed 1.6 tonnes of waste.

Volunteers also identify litter hotspots and collect data, connecting hands-on beach care with information that can guide future environmental action and build wider awareness of coastal pollution.

# Young Legends



WINNER

## Young Eco-Warriors: Leading Change

### Blacktown North Public School

Blacktown North Public School's Eco-Warriors bring together 21 K-6 volunteers to improve waste sorting and environmental learning.

With support from families, staff, Council and environmental educators, students collect paper, Return and Earn containers and compost, alongside Bin Guardian duties, gardening, Nude Food and clean-ups.

These activities reduced waste and composted 760 kilograms. Regular monitoring, clear collection systems and student recruitment help sustain participation, with future efforts focused on more consistent waste sorting.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Waste to Worth

### Caddies Creek Public School

Caddies Creek Public School's Eco Crusaders developed Waste to Worth to address textile waste while supporting people experiencing hardship and homelessness.

Students researched, planned and promoted a collection of quality pre-loved clothing, blankets and household items for Parramatta Mission, involving families, staff and the wider community.

By connecting reuse with community support, the project diverted textiles from landfill and raised awareness of their environmental impact. Future campaigns will begin earlier to encourage more donations.

# Young Legends



HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Green Team: Sustainability Team

### Lethbridge Park Public School

Lethbridge Park Public School's volunteer Green Team reduces landfill waste through student-led collection, reuse and recycling.

Students collect playground litter, soft plastics, paper, cardboard and used stationery, while composting food scraps and gathering leaves for garden mulch. A student-run op shop sells pre-loved clothing for $1 and provides free uniforms, with proceeds funding further sustainability activities.

These practical initiatives encourage students to take responsibility for waste reduction and care for their school environment.



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