

2011 Winner: Alpine Shire Council Seizing every opportunity to purchase green

Award for Excellence in Green Product Procurement – Regional Council

This award recognises the regional local government with the largest investment in green products and services (as a percentage of available expenditure).

The Alpine Shire Council continues to go from strength to strength in its green purchasing performance, winning the ECO-Buy Excellence in Green Purchasing Regional Council Award for the second year in a row.

Alpine is a small rural council with 62 staff in the Shire offices in Bright, where purchasing responsibilities are shared across the team. Waste Management Officer and ECO-Buy Co-ordinator Sandra Light has been a committed and passionate advocate for green purchasing since she joined the council in 2006, and her positive attitude and can-do approach to buying green has motivated the rest of the team.



Alpine Shire has purchased KeepCups to defeat 'Cuppy' the disposable cup monster. Photo courtesy of Alpine Shire Council

Compared with the previous financial year, Alpine Shire increased its green product spend by 24 percent to achieve an outstanding 10 percent green spend as a percentage of total available expenditure in 2009-2010. Particularly impressive considering the small size and budget of Alpine Shire, this result is slightly more than

double the average of the 37 councils who submitted data for this award.

Alpine Shire has demonstrated on a number of occasions that it is prepared to invest significant sums relative to its budget on products proven to deliver environmental as well as functional and financial benefits now or over the long term.



One example is the investment in a second Mack Trident tipper truck, following the success of the first one bought in 2008-2009. As Sandra points out, "There are cheaper trucks on the market, but we are already starting to see savings in the maintenance and fuel costs from our first Mack Trident purchase, so we know that when the whole of life cost is considered the lighter, faster and more fuel efficient option is definitely worth the extra up-front cost." In addition, the truck can use Alpine Shire's 5% bio diesel blend without voiding the warranty.



Another significant investment was the Toro Ground Master Wide Mower which cuts up to 3 times faster and has better fuel economy than the mower it replaced. It complies with US Tier 3 emissions standards for non diesel engines and can also run on biodiesel. Photo courtesy of Alpine Shire Council.

Embedding green purchasing practice into every day operations at Alpine Shire requires continued effort and persistence by the team, supported by Sandra who translates the Alpine Shire Green Purchasing Policy into practical action by consistently communicating the standards expected of both staff and suppliers. This includes educating contract painters to use non toxic paint; electricians to use energy efficient

globes; plumbers to use low water consumption and/or 4 Star-rated energy efficient products; caterers to use reusable trays and plates; and printers to use 100 percent recycled paper on all orders of brochures, magazines and flyers. These efforts are paying off, as demonstrated when some of the environmental benefits are calculated – for example, recycled content mobile garbage bins purchased by Alpine Shire during 2009-2010 saved 5.9 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

Sandra has found that both a 'carrot and stick' approach has been most effective in changing the culture and behaviour of the organisation, as is communicating the benefits of green purchases. For example the Waste Watchers team highlighted the wastefulness of about 350 disposable coffee cups produced by staff every month by building a monster with these cups and asking staff to guess the number of cups. The purchase of reusable KeepCups was strongly encouraged. Using a KeepCup instead of disposable cups reduces greenhouse gas emissions by over 40% and water use by 65%. These benefits, calculated over the life cycle of a Keep Cup (including manufacture, washing and disposal) were widely publicised by the team.

Another example is the trial of a *Replas* recycled plastic picnic set in the staff courtyard which reassured those who were skeptical about the appearance and standards of a non-timber setting. An additional benefit of the picnic set is that it hardly requires any maintenance compared to timber settings which need regular upkeep such as painting. Based on the positive trial results, additional picnic sets were ordered for Alpine Shires parks and gardens.

SNAPSHOT - GREEN PURCHASING BY ALPINE SHIRE

- Fuel efficient, biodiesel-compatible vehicles to replace aging equipment
- Downsized and hybrid vehicles
- Recycled content playground equipment, picnic settings, outdoor tables and walkways
- Recycled content mobile garbage bins
- 4 star air conditioners and water tanks for main office
- Computers and monitors with green features
- Indigenous, drought resistant plants
- 100% recycled content paper products such as copy paper, envelopes, and brochures