

Glen Eira City Council Embedding green into corporate culture

Award for Excellence in Green Purchasing — Metropolitan Council

This award recognises the metropolitan council with the largest investment in green products as a percentage of available expenditure.

Local Government Water Saving Champion

This award recognises the local government with the largest investment in water efficient and water saving products as a percentage of available expenditure.

Green purchasing is now embedded in Glen Eira City Council's corporate culture. But it has been a gradual process over seven years – requiring the support and leadership of staff at all levels of the organisation.

Since joining the ECO-Buy program in 2002-03, the Council has increased its green expenditure from \$112,000 to more than \$4.5 million in 2008-09.

While the increase alone is impressive, it's the range of environmentally preferable products purchased that makes Glen Eira City Council's investment unique.

From simple inclusions such as recycled paper for in-house printing and publications to using recycled rock in road base construction, Council staff have investigated and adopted products from suppliers across the ECO-Find supplier database.

The decision to integrate green purchasing started slowly. Council was willing to take green products on board, but needed to be convinced that ratepayers' dollars were being spent wisely, efficiently, and with longevity in mind. Scepticism about green products and their perceived value for money is a necessary consideration for Council, given public funds are used.

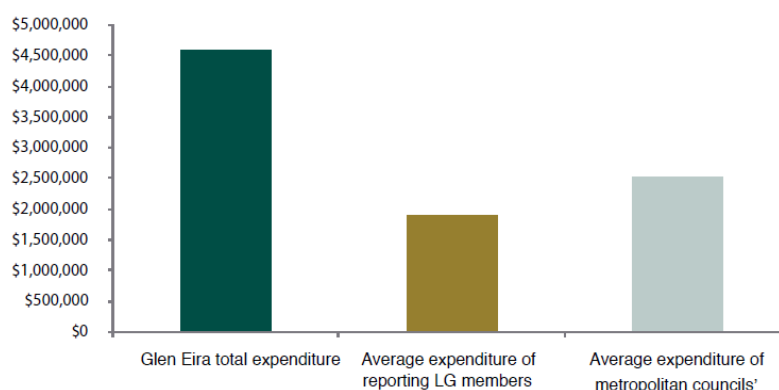
Championed by the Manager of Purchasing and Fleet, Aubrey Jansen, an in-house ECO-Buy Committee was established, with an invitation to key staff from those areas with the most potential for green purchasing to participate.

A green purchasing policy was developed which didn't over commit Council but had a distinctively green leaning — recognising that it can be difficult to go from nothing to a full-commitment green spend in a short time.

Easy pickings, such as copy paper, printer cartridges and mobile garbage bins, were the starting point for Glen Eira. Energy audits were conducted to identify other areas and changeover lighting and upgrade to aerated taps and high-efficiency/ low-flow toilets and showers.

Jansen then scaled up the options, using the ECO-Buy reporting template as a tool to alert purchasers to the items they could potentially buy green. As procurement in Council is decentralised, he looked at each business area for green potential and, using the ECO-Buy reporting template, identified and researched products and suppliers that could be of use to each area. It was a business efficiency model that was being introduced, not just a green procurement concept.

GLEN EIRA GREEN PURCHASING COMPARED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AVERAGE EXPENDITURE



Products such as recycled rock and concrete for road base materials were researched and trialled to overcome any scepticism of their practicality and usability. Trials proved conclusively that the products were better and they're now used almost exclusively in Council works.

The pattern was similar when additional water saving measures were presented. Trials of drought-resistant grasses for ovals achieved fantastic, and award winning, results. Since then Council has invested significant funds and resources into water saving products including drought resistant plants, trees and turf for the City's parks and gardens, and water tanks and soil wetting agents to maximise moisture retention in sportsgrounds.

Electronic central control, moisture sensors and drip line irrigation upgrades on sports ovals were also added to the mix. The program overall has resulted in Council managing to irrigate a greater number of ovals - an increase in area of approximately 15% - with the same allocation of water.



Green purchases for Glen Eira included drought resistant grass for sporting grounds

Attitudes towards green products, and the need to purchase products that are less damaging to the environment, have changed over time. More than ever, the community expects the Council to take the lead in environmental sustainability.

It is a change now avidly supported by Councillors and senior management - and this support has accelerated green purchasing within the organisation (a 46.1% increase in green spending was achieved from 2007-08 to 2008-09 alone).

Glen Eira's green purchasing program has proven to be so successful that Jansen is regularly asked to provide advice and present on panels.

PURCHASES MADE THROUGH THE ECO-BUY PROGRAM HAVE INCLUDED:

- Energy efficient (4 star or better) heating and cooling system upgrades in key buildings
- Recycled concrete and rock for road making, backfilling and road trenches
- Emissions controlled Euro 4 tractors to replace ageing plant and equipment
- Recycled rubber for speed cushions
- Recycled content mobile garbage bins
- Energy efficient computer monitors
- Organic fertilisers, drought-resistant plants and recycled tree pruning mulch
- Green energy allocations
- Fuel-efficient vehicles

Making the program easy for people to be involved, and to make greener purchasing decisions, has been the key. Regular communication and input from inside the organisation, as well as externally to residents to help them understand the need and benefits of purchasing green products, have been integral to the program's acceptance.

Council receives community feedback and pressure to increase its green spending and commitment to reducing its environmental footprint. Glen Eira City Council is now about to launch its Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2009-12 which will further obligate the Council to purchase efficiently, effectively and greenly.