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ACT A STRONG CONTENDER FOR TOP HONOUR IN MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS.

Keep Australia Beautiful says the ACT’s Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water is now a strong contender to carry off top honours in the massive 2010 Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards.

As pressures continue on all cities (cities now make up 2% of the earth’s surface and produce 80% of the world’s emissions*) the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water is the ACT’s finalist in the highly prestigious awards.

Keep Australia Beautiful’s National Sustainable Cities judge, Sean Rooney, will visit the ACT on 9th September to meet representatives and discuss their remarkable project.

The Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water was chosen as the ACT finalist for its AuSSI Schools Program (Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative) that involves 114 out of 127 schools in the ACT. Nine waste wise schools achieved a 58% reduction in waste to landfill and 22 water wise schools reduced water costs by 37% per annum.

The result was welcomed by ACT Environment Minister Simon Corbell who said the ACT was a leader when it comes to sustainable practices. He said, “The awards received by DECCEW range across practical projects like the innovative inner north wetland projects, to sustainable policy development and school educational materials and curriculums.”

The ACT’s Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water (DECCEW) is a strong contender to win top honours in the massive 2010 Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards.

The awards recognise initiatives around the nation making a big difference to our pressurised environment.

Keep Australia Beautiful's Sustainable Cities Awards judge, Sean Rooney, will visit Canberra on 9th September to closely inspect the DECCEW's Sustainable Schools project before a final decision is made about whether it will win the national honour.

The Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water is very proud of its sustainability initiatives spearheaded by a successful schools program. The Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative is a program funded by the Commonwealth, brokered by State/Territory Governments and delivered by schools. In the case of the ACT, DECCEW is the responsible agency.

The program involves the school community in developing and adopting energy, water, waste and biodiversity initiatives that are considered as a priority for that community. Presently 114 of the 127 schools in the ACT have signed up on the program involving 23,000 students. Their programs range from water, waste and energy audits, environmental centres, organic gardens and participation in conferences and special events such as Earth Hour and environmental expos.

Keep Australia Beautiful Executive Officer Scott Lyall said, "The Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water is remarkable and pioneering. It is working on so many levels to ensure more sustainable use of water and energy and to protect the ACT's natural environment and ensure security of supply of water and energy."

"These Awards are very prestigious and the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water is already the ACT winner. It may now carry off the top honour too – and Sean's visit is all about getting an absolute in-depth understanding of how DECCEW has pulled off such outstanding results."

"One of the remarkable projects DECCEW has undertaken is the rejuvenation of the Banksia Street wetlands where the Government and the community have worked incredibly successfully together to achieve an amazing outcome. The wetland has improved urban biodiversity and water quality as well as providing an outstanding community resource for relaxation, volunteering or education. After construction of the wetland in February 2010, monthly Community Planting Days were organised by DECCEW and the newly formed Banksia Street Parkcare Group."

"The Department liaised with a local wholesale native plant grower who assisted over 100 residents over 4 days to plant up the wetlands. DECCEW also ran planting sessions with local primary school children and Indigenous at risk youth."

"23,500 people attended Tropfest in Canberra in 2010. The Department saw this as a great opportunity to raise awareness of GreenPower and to promote recycling. No public waste collection bins were used at the event. Instead the public were directed to take their rubbish to a centrally located waste sorting area. As part of its waste initiative, DECCEW provided waste collection services for the event (including litter pickers and compost/recycling/general waste bins) and waste sorting station equipment. The initiative resulted in more than one tonne (50%) of total event waste being redirected to composting or recycling depots rather than landfill."

The Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water has also:

- Launched the ACTSmart Business and Office programs that have helped the commercial and industrial sector to improve its waste management. The program assists businesses in putting more efficient recycling and waste management into action. To date more than 150 organisations have signed up and 25 have received accreditation.

- Launched the ToiletSmart program that assists ACT residential property owners replace single flush toilets with four-star water efficient 4.5/3 litres dual flush toilets.
- During Seniors Week 2010, DECCEW ran a special promotion advising senior citizens of the help available to make their homes more water efficient through the ToiletSmart program. As a result of the promotion, 165 visits were booked in to replace toilets for senior citizens.
- To help residents make a long-term commitment to sustainable water use habits, the ACT Government offers a free GardenSmart service. A horticulturist visits the home and assesses the garden, then demonstrates practical ways to use less water in the garden. There are also various web-based tools to help residents choose plants suitable for a sustainable garden.

Sean Rooney – who is the Sustainability Program Manager at Sinclair Knight Merz (a leading international engineering, sciences and project management firm) and is also an Adjunct Associate Professor at Griffith University in Queensland – said, “A huge range of massive reports all point to one place. The cities we need for the future have to be sustainable. The twenty-first century is already a century of cities. This big awards program from Keep Australia Beautiful is simply designed to recognise huge efforts from people, community groups, businesses and government agencies that are doing something hugely meaningful about sustainability.”

A range of top organisations is supporting the Keep Australia Beautiful Australian Sustainable Cities Awards including Packaging Stewardship Forum; Sinclair Knight Merz; Grundfos Pumps and ToysRUs. Once this final visit takes place to Darwin City Council, key personnel will fly to Sydney for the prestigious National Awards ceremony to be held on November 1st. All states and territories will be competing for the national title.

There will be a photo opportunity for media held at 1:15pm at Evatt Primary School, Heydon Cres, Evatt ACT 2617.

**Media enquiries to: Ross Woodward on 03 9769 6488
Sean Rooney and Scott Lyall are available for media interviews**

* Daily Telegraph – 14.12.09

EXTRA BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

About the Judge - Sean Rooney:

Sean Rooney is a thought and practice leader working at the forefront of the 'cross-sector partnering' and 'sustainability' agendas in Australia.

Currently the Sustainability Program Manager at leading international engineering, sciences and project management firm, Sinclair Knight Merz, Sean is also an Adjunct Associate Professor at Griffith Business School (QLD), focusing on sustainability and organisational strategy. Sean's previous roles include Founder and Director of CSIRO's Sustainable Communities Initiative and a faculty member of Cambridge University's World Bank Sustainable Development Leadership Program.

In addition, Sean regularly contributes articles to national publications and is frequently invited to speak at both domestic and international conferences. Sean is also an active participant in several influential bodies supporting debate and action regarding sustainability issues in Australia.

In recognition of his expertise and impact in sustainability thought and practice leadership Sean was awarded a 2007 CSIRO Achievement Award and was a recipient in 2006 of a Future Summit Leadership Award for leadership in the sustainable development domain in Australia.

About the Australian Sustainable Cities Awards:

The Australian Sustainable Cities Awards recognise efforts by residents, community groups, businesses and government agencies to protect and enhance their local urban environment to ensure its long term sustainability at all levels.

The program is part of the Keep Australia Beautiful 'Australian Sustainable Communities' Awards, which also includes the Australian Tidy Towns and Australian Clean Beaches Awards. The Australian Sustainable Cities Awards are sponsored by the Packaging Stewardship Forum of the Australian Food and Grocery Council, Grundfos Pumps, Sinclair Knight Merz and ToysRUs.

About the Supporters

The Australian Sustainable Cities Awards are sponsored by:

'Do the Right Thing' Program of the Packaging Stewardship Forum, Australian Food and Grocery Council

The Packaging Stewardship Forum of the Australian Food and Grocery Council, works with partners to deliver industry recycling, litter reduction and education programs on behalf of its members, who consist of Australia's major beverage companies and their packaging suppliers. The Forum's highly successful *Do the Right Thing* anti-litter campaign has proven to be a strong litter prevention message, with more than 80% of people recognising that *Do the Right Thing* means put your waste in the bin and more than 300 towns and cities around Australia taking the *Do the Right Thing* message to their communities
Contact: Jenny Pickles 0418 558 311

Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM)

SKM is a leading engineering, sciences and project delivery firm. Its purpose is to deliver a positive and enduring impact on the world. They work in close partnership with key clients in the public and private sectors, providing independent technical, strategic and commercial advice to deliver a wide range of projects globally.

Contact: Jessica Hyams, 03 9248 3036

Grundfos Pumps

As a world leading pump and pumping systems manufacturer, Grundfos Pumps has joined with Keep Australia Beautiful to help all Australians achieve improvements in water conservation.

Contact Anna Thyssen, 08 8461 4611

ToysRUs

A leading retailer of toys and educational items for young Australians. They recognise the need to reduce their environmental footprint and are taking steps to reduce plastic bag usage by customers. They have chosen to partner with the Young Legends category of the Sustainable Cities Awards to help acknowledge the environmental achievements of young Australians and to use these case studies as an inspiration to others.

Contact Katarina Wos or Kristen Pelletier, 02 9794 8999