



MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Victoria’s Shire of Melton is 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 Shire of Melton is the Victorian finalist in the prestigious awards.

Keep Australia Beautiful’s National Sustainable Cities judge, Sean Rooney, will fly to Victoria on Monday August 9th to meet representatives and discuss their remarkable project.

The Shire of Melton extensively supports the local environment and landcare groups. Eynesbury is the first Victorian town to be fully connected to recycled water and the Council purchased a 48 hectare volcanic cone to carefully protect nationally significant flora and fauna.

A 2009 report found 13% of households in the Shire of Melton have a professionally installed grey water recycling system (more than double the metropolitan average), 38% of households have rainwater tanks (well above Melbourne’s average of 26%) and 6% of homes now have solar hot water (much higher than the metropolitan average of 2%).

Incredibly the population of the Melton Shire Council is exploding at a remarkable rate. Each week 41 babies are born in the Shire. Each week sees 52 news families and 154 people. 70% of the population is currently under the age of 45. It is one of Australia’s fastest growing municipalities.

Victoria’s Shire of Melton – 70% of the population is currently under 45 – is a strong contender to win top honours in the massive 2010 Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards.

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

Keep Australia Beautiful's Sustainable Cities Awards judge, Sean Rooney, will fly into Victoria on Monday August 9th to closely inspect the Shire of Melton's project before a final decision is made about whether the Shire of Melton will win the national honour.

The Shire of Melton has already highlighted it is deeply concerned about protecting its precious environment and creating a sustainable city. The Shire of Melton is literally booming and includes Caroline Springs (19 kms from the CBD) and Melton (35 kms from the CBD).

The Council is very proud of its sustainability policies which include extensive work with the local environment and landcare groups.

Eynesbury is actually the first Victorian town to be fully connected to recycled water. The Toolern development will also use recycled water.

The Council purchased the 48 hectare Mount Cottrell volcanic cone so it could protect state and nationally significant flora and fauna.

Keep Australia Beautiful Executive Officer Scott Lyall said, "The Shire of Melton is remarkable. Sustainability is a critical issue for all cities as the world becomes more and more urbanised. We all know there are massive pressures on our cities. Cities make up just 2% of the earth's surface but now actually account for 80% of greenhouse gas emissions."

"These Awards are very prestigious and the Shire of Melton is already the Victorian winner. They may now carry off the top honour too – and Sean's visit is all about getting an absolutely in-depth understanding of how the Shire of Melton has pulled off such remarkable results."

The Shire of Melton also:

- Has an extensive educational program for teachers and students to learn about recycling in the area which includes tours of the recycling facilities.
- An environmental educator carries out initiatives with schools on recycling. It is based on the Australian Sustainable Schools' Initiative.
- The Council provides free recycling services for schools that become part of "Waste Wise".
- They are creating wildflower grasslands at schools.
- They are protecting endangered bird species.
- They have trialed a hard waste service for every householder in the Shire, which in just the first month resulted in 50% of material collected then being either reused or recycled. (Contractors are using a purpose built collection vehicle, with materials collected in separate compartments.)
- Since establishing the resale centre at the Melton recycling facility, over 21,000 items have been re-sold.
- The Pinkerton Landcare and Environmental Group is protecting endangered grassland and woodlands in the area including protecting endangered white-breasted sea eagles.
- One of the Melton residents – Gavin – has created an enormous blog which has had 110,000 page views and he's established the Melton Sustainable Living Group with 15 members.
- The Shire of Melton's Melton Waves Leisure Centre has worked with managers to slash water usage by more than 50% since 2007. Annual water usage has now dropped from 6.1 million litres to 2.6 million litres.

- The massive Festival of Flight brings the entire Shire together including work on reserves and parks and a special monument to celebrate 100 years of Australia's first powered sustained flight by Harry Houdini.
- The Friends of Melton Botanic Garden has more than 130 members developing and protecting the garden.
- The Melton Shire Council has won numerous awards for its environmental work in the Dame Phyllis Frost Award, the Victorian Community Pride Award and the Victorian Bio-diversity and Conservation Award.
- A survey carried out in 2009 discovered 13% of households in the Shire of Melton now have a professionally installed grey water recycling system, which is more than twice the metropolitan average and 38% of households have rainwater tanks (Melbourne's average is 26%) and 6% of homes in the Shire now have solar hot water systems (the metropolitan average is 2%).
- The report also found 72% of homes in the Shire were using compact fluorescent light globes (the metropolitan average is 64%).
- The Council offers a permanent detox for your home centre where people can drop hazardous items to make their home safer, such as car batteries, household batteries, paint, motor oil and bbq gas cylinders.
- Through the Sustainable Suburbs project, all 7 councils of the Western Alliance for greenhouse action aim to make 18,000 households more energy efficient within just a year and they are offering free home assessments to some residents.

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 the Shire of Melton, 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.

Sean Rooney said, “The power of this project is that everyone's a winner. The Shire of Melton is a state winner, residents benefit from the actions taken and the future benefits. At a local level this project has made a mammoth difference for future generations. The Shire has taken real action. We don't want reports. We need action and implementation. They've certainly been doing that. They are a very very impressive contender.”

“The Shire of Melton has put countless hours into activity. They can see the big picture. Generations ahead of us deserve nothing less than sustainable cities and as the debate rages about what kind of Australia we all want for the future, we all know that we simply have to reduce the enormous environmental pressures being placed on our cities.”

“Sustainability is about everything from good air quality, dealing with waste, food and water supplies, housing issues, transport issues and making sure vulnerable people don’t fall through the cracks. It’s about safety, jobs and the environment.”

“These Awards all focus on saluting heroes. People who are doing something to facilitate change. This is a great project, a state winner and a very impressive contender. We are always hearing stories about how liveable Australia’s cities are. We’ve got to be hearing more about why all our cities should be sustainable.”

Media enquiries to: Ross Woodward on 03 9769 6488
Sean Rooney and Scott Lyall are available for media interviews
Melton Shire Council contact: Linda Bradburn, Environmental Education Officer at
Melton Shire Council on 03 9747 7137

* 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