



Media release

28 July 2010

The little town that could: WA's Walpole is Australia's favourite Tidy Town

Small town's Goliath effort to win the People's Choice Award pays off

A small town in Western Australia has proven size doesn't matter after taking out top honours in the first Tidy Towns People's Choice Award. With a population of just 321, Walpole located on the WA coast attracted more votes per capita than any town in the new national competition and the prize of a \$10,000 grant towards a community project.

Over 5,000 votes have poured into the site www.navmanpeopleschoice.com.au since Australia's favourite GPS brand Navman launched the competition with Keep Australia Beautiful's Tidy Towns. The competition complements the official Tidy Towns awards that have been running in Australia for over 40 years and asked people to say why others should visit the town. Other towns in the top five of 'Australia's most loved' were Dartmoor, in Victoria; Hastings Point, NSW; Lockhart, NSW and Bicheno in Tasmania.

Walpole has also been successful in the official Tidy Towns competition, having taken out the state title in 2007.

When asked how a little town of 321 people managed to get a whopping 1,026 votes, Dave Tapley, councilor and chair of Tidy Towns Committee, Walpole said, "That's Walpole, mate. Something like this just pulled everyone together. Everyone in the town voted and we tapped into our network of friends and families in other areas."

Extremely town proud and no strangers to extraordinary feats of effort – town volunteers clean 104 kilometres of highway weekly – the town went the extra mile to win the competition. Volunteers created a "how to vote" form and stood in rain and sunshine at popular local tourist sites asking people to vote, averaging about 30 votes a day. An obstacle they had to overcome was that not everyone had computers or internet access, so the town turned to its computer expert, 86 year old Geordie Whitwell. Geordie set up a computer on site where people could register their votes.

"We really wanted to win to put our town on the map, so the community got organised and we gave it our all. It was almost like a military operation - we were even monitoring the votes of other towns in the competition," said Michael Filby, community volunteer, winner of the individual award at the Australian Tidy Towns Awards.

Walpole will put the \$10,000 prize money towards building a fish cleaning station as the town is surrounded by fishing grounds and is popular with recreational fishers.

Wendy Hammond, marketing director, Navman, who was responsible for setting up the competition with Keep Australia Beautiful said, "We really wanted to give towns all over the country –both large and small – the chance to put themselves on the map, and to encourage people to get out on the road and discover more of our country and put valuable tourism dollars into the local economy.

"Even though only one town could win, the Navman People's Choice award has demonstrated the amazing community spirit in our country. Thousands of Australians including councils, tourism bodies, Tidy Towns committees and everyday punters showed strong support for their most loved town by submitting incredible images, fascinating facts and insider secrets about their favourite town. We were extremely pleased with how successful and well received the competition was," she said.

Scott Lyall, Executive Officer of Keep Australia Beautiful added, "We are thrilled with the results of the first Navman People's Choice promotion. So many towns and individuals from around the country took part and helped remind us of why we should visit their special part of Australia. It was good to see some familiar, and not so familiar, names take part. But there can only be one winner and we congratulate Walpole, WA."

Walpole, located 420 km South of Perth on the coast of Western Australia, only has a tiny population but was the clear winner out of the 200 towns nominated for the award. The town offers the impressive 'valley of the giants' tree top walk amongst massive tingle and karri trees as well as amazing rivers, beaches and incredible views of Mount Frankland. More importantly Walpole has a very passionate and dedicated local community.

Now that the award is over Navman also want to remind Australians they can continue supporting regional Australia by getting in the car and visiting these wonderful towns.

Over 200 towns were nominated in this year's competition and images and descriptions can be found on the website.

The winner of the People's Choice Award was calculated based on per head of population. Unlike the official and iconic Tidy Towns Award which is chosen by judges who visit certain regions, the Navman People's Choice Award, allowed everyone to pick their favourite town. Ten people who voted in the competition will also soon be receiving a brand new Navman GPS.

**** For great photo, filming and interview opportunities, the town of Walpole is holding celebrations all day on Saturday 31 July, 2010. For assistance on the day, please contact: Dave Tapley 0400 968 251 or The Walpole Tourist Bureau on 08 9840 1111 ****

-ends-

About Keep Australia Beautiful

Keep Australia Beautiful is a community based environment group whose mission is 'to lead, challenge and inspire all Australians to strive for a sustainable and litter free environment'. There are programs in

each state and territory and Keep Australia Beautiful has been encouraging people all around Australia to care for their local environment since 1968. The Sustainable Communities Awards include the Tidy Towns, Sustainable Cities and Clean Beaches awards which all target litter, recycling, packaging waste and graffiti. The National Litter Index is Australia's only national, annual, quantitative report on litter by type, by location and by volume. Keep Australia Beautiful Week coincides with the first week of spring and is a time for all Australians to be active in caring for their local environment. These are just some of the activities that involve millions of Australians each year.

About Navman:

Navman, a world leader in the design, manufacture and marketing of global positioning system (GPS) products, has more than 20 years experience in GPS, and as such is now widely recognised as a pioneer in portable, in-car satellite devices. Navman began life in New Zealand, specialising in marine electronics and even today software design and development is still undertaken there. Today the Navman brand is owned by MiTAC International, a leading worldwide maker of wireless communications products and one of Business Week's top 100 Global IT companies. For more information, visit www.navman.com.au.

For further information please contact:

The D'Arcy Partnership

Georgina Policarpou or Michelle Tan

Phone: 02 9281 2230

Email: georgina@darcypr.com