

Australian Tidy Towns 2010 Program Report

Town/Community: BEECHWORTH VIC ... **Date judged:** 19 & 20 November 2009

Population: approx 3 300

Organisers: BEECHWORTH Tidy Towns Committee (BTTC) in partnership with the Indigo Shire and general community

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COMMUNITY ACTION/ PARTNERSHIPS

BEECHWORTH is situated in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range in north eastern Victoria.

BEECHWORTH's diverse range of projects make up the community's longstanding commitment to Tidy Towns and other related environmental and beautification programs.

The community has a strong sense of commitment and pride and are involved in a broad range of initiatives to ensure a sustainable future.

BEECHWORTH's residents and Sustainability groups participate in broad alliances to implement *Living Sustainable* programs as part of the Indigo Shire's Environment Strategy.

Along with BEECHWORTH's Tidy Town committee and Indigo Shire, the community is committed to a strategic approach to the principles of sustainability.

BEECHWORTH has a rich and varied history with a desire to retain its heritage, and a community that is friendly, enthusiastic and dedicated to caring for their unique environment while encouraging business to develop and thrive in a sustainable manner.

The community is committed to ensuring that homes and private gardens are tidy and maintained. Residents and the Shire ensure that approaches to the town, including signs and features, public parks, and sporting areas and median strips are well tendered.

Notable partnership example is between the Lake Sambell Management Committee and the Indigo Shire to undertake the task of beautifying an old mining site and turning it into a lake. Outcome was that it is now one of BEECHWORTH's major attractions, with locals and visitors enjoying walks, swimming or feeding local wildlife.

LITTER PREVENTION

Positive litter control strategies and the community's commitment to keeping BEECHWORTH litter free are more than evident.

Various litter reduction approaches are in place throughout the town, in particular within the town's education systems together with a strong community commitment to clean up activities.

BEECHWORTH's residents, in partnership with the Indigo Shire, are committed to preventing litter and have initiated a program of education and prevention. It aims to:

- Use resources efficiently - Reduce what we take.
- Protect and enhance natural and municipal assets - Protect what we have.
- Regulate for liveability - Grow sustainably.
- Support and resource the community - Share what we learn.

Heritage designed litter and recycling bins are positioned outside high traffic retail areas with cigarette butt bins in place throughout the town.

ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION & PROTECTION

Numerous voluntary environmental community groups work in partnership with the Shire and effectively contribute to enhancing and protecting BEECHWORTH's well managed environment.

BEECHWORTH and Indigo Shire Council have been recognised for commitment to reducing the impact of global warming by participating in the Cities for Climate Protection Program, a unique program that helps local governments and their communities cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The BEECHWORTH Sustainability Group holds regular workshops on new and innovative ways to conserve energy by educating residents on how to reduce home energy use, save water, and encourages local food production. The voluntary group provides information, has introduced a website and builds relationships and networks with their primary aim to ensure positive environmental outcomes.

Vision Splendid, an Eco-Lodge effectively demonstrates how innovative energy, water and waste systems can be integrated into a guesthouse which aims at low environmental impact.

BEECHWORTH Secondary College's sustainability features include passive solar design, thermal chimneys, skylights to reduce lighting needs, cross flow ventilation to assist cooling, double glazed windows, solar pump for hot water service and rainwater tanks for use in toilets.

Wooragee Landcare Group's "Where are the Barkers?" program highlights the problems facing the magnificent Barking Owls. The aim of the community initiative is to increase interest and understanding of these unique birds and their habitat needs.

WATER CONSERVATION & ENERGY INNOVATION

BEECHWORTH's innovative wetland projects assist in filtering stormwater run-off from new subdivisions prior to deposit into local creek and river systems.

The wetlands, a series of ponds, are designed to reduce levels of sediment and dissolved nutrients in the water. Stormwater runoff is collected and connected to the irrigation system to service community grounds and sporting facilities reducing the overall need for potable water use.

The town's trees, particularly the historic elms, have water tubes, a watering system designed to maximise the growth of plants and trees, save water, cut maintenance and replacement costs and inserted around the base for deep root watering.

Residents, Indigo Shire and staff have embraced the concept of energy conservation by changing light globes, switching off appliances, turning off lights, and installing timers on heating and cooling systems.

RESOURCE RECOVERY & WASTE MANAGEMENT

BEECHWORTH's recycling and resource recovery initiatives divert extensive tonnes of waste from landfill each year.

Resource recovery and waste management is a key element of many of BEECHWORTH's education sector, business and community sustainability strategies.

Information is available from Shire Offices that interpret waste and recycling strategies to visitors and residents. Posters promoting environmental tips are also available in local public amenities to assist with raising community awareness.

BEECHWORTH's recycling activities include:

- Phone recycle bin placed in BEECHWORTH Shire office as part of the Mobile Muster program.
- Printer cartridges recycling bin available within BEECHWORTH Post Office and Shire Office.
- Green waste bins are collected fortnightly.
- Office documents shredded and taken by staff and community and reused as mulch.
- Free green waste days available for residents at local landfill site.
- Free mulch available for BEECHWORTH residents

HERITAGE & CULTURE

Heritage restoration and preservation is on a large scale in BEECHWORTH with numerous buildings carefully restored to their former glory. Various private and public buildings are tastefully conserved providing a welcoming ambience which is inviting to locals and visitors alike.

Numerous community groups are involved in various historic restoration and interpretive programs. The BEECHWORTH Re-enactment Group is one such volunteer group that is a committed living history group which recreates the 1850 to 1880 period with a special focus on the events surrounding Ned Kelly's links to the town.

BEECHWORTH's Historic Precinct and its original buildings, historic town walk with its self-guided brochure and its innovative story-boards positioned throughout the town, effectively interpret the town's rich European and Chinese Gold Rush heritage.

YOUNG LEGENDS

Environmental awareness and education programs are an integral part of education in BEECHWORTH with students actively involved in numerous community activities and partnerships.

Notable example includes Wooragee Primary School's programs that focus on the environment and sustainability. Waste reduction, water conservation and sustainability approaches include activities embracing recycling, composting, growing produce and setting up worm farms.

Water conservation, in particular, has been integrated into all areas of the curriculum with students encouraged to conduct their own monitoring and on-ground action on a local creek.

A strong sense of responsibility to environmental care is encouraged with students demonstrating a keen sense of pride in their school and its surroundings.

BEECHWORTH Secondary College believes in creating a sustainable learning community where students develop strong environmental knowledge, awareness, student participation and a capacity for positive environmental change.

SUGGESTIONS

BEECHWORTH's Tidy Towns Award for Victoria is a great achievement for the community and could be promoted on local business and Shire letterheads, envelopes, etc. Promoting the community's great commitment to Tidy Towns may assist in encouraging involvement as well as developing positive economic benefits and marketing opportunities.

As already in place in BEECHWORTH, 'Adopt-a-'programs are an effective method of encouraging community 'ownership' of public facilities and sites around the town. Consideration may be given to installing small signs that promote the partnership between the Shire and community groups to encourage further participation by residents.

Lake Sambell is one of BEECHWORTH's major attractions. Consideration may be given to providing doggy-doo collection facilities around the area, as well as throughout the town to reduce impacts.

Good luck with opportunities for the community to take care and control of the previous BEECHWORTH Jail. A community-managed project would have major tourism and economic benefits for the town and region.

Congratulations to everyone involved in the BEECHWORTH's Tidy Towns and associated community action programs.

Good luck with future initiatives in helping to keep your part of Australia beautiful and sustainable.

*Dick Olesinski
National Tidy Towns judge*