

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

Water: Let's make It Last - Bathurst Regional Council's successful water conservation campaign which is underpinned by community education, engagement and enforcement.

Alison Thompson, Bathurst Regional Council

Abstract

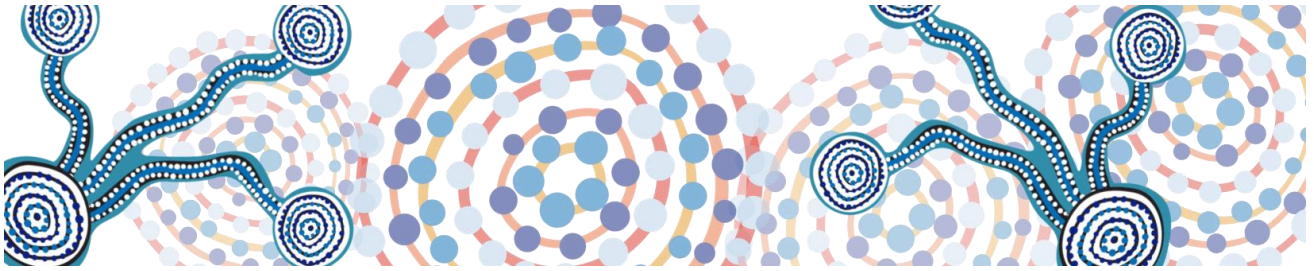
The Water: Let's Make It Last program is a comprehensive community engagement program designed and delivered by Bathurst Regional Council staff in order to support the implementation of water restrictions in response to the region's worst drought on record over the period of 2017 – 2020. Despite rainfall in late 2020 the program and accompanying water restrictions remain in place as a first step in ensuring long term water conservation.

The key objectives of this innovative program were to:

- Rapidly generate community-wide awareness and ensure ongoing access to information about water availability and water restrictions
- Build the capacity of the community to respond to water shortages through community engagement activities
- Achieve high level compliance with water restrictions; and
- Drive positive behavioural change that would result in a significant and sustainable decrease in water consumption across residential commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses, therefore achieving the cornerstone of any water demand management strategy.

The program has seen the implementation of diverse communication and capacity building activities rolled out alongside compliance measures, to support Council's introduction of water restrictions.

The Water: Let's Make It Last program's relevance to other communities lies in its ability to integrate compliance, communication, education, and engagement to generate positive responses from water industry stakeholders and consumers. The program brought into focus the interdependence of water industry stakeholders and consumers, and the value of collaboration across all levels of Government to effect positive short and long-term outcomes that considered the interests of all parties and conserved water. Council's challenges in this regard reflect those of



many other communities located within the Murray-Darling Basin and foreshadow the challenges set to come with potential future changes to climate and weather patterns across the region.

Acknowledgement

Bathurst Regional Council with special mention – the Water and Waste Section and Bathurst Regional Councils Children’s Services Department.

Speaker Profile

Alison Thompson has been the Environmental Programs Officer with Bathurst Regional Council for over 10 years and worked in NSW Local Government for close to 20 years. She has extensive experience in strategic planning, project management, community engagement, as well as social research. Alison holds an Arts Degree majoring in Anthropology and a Master’s Degree in Applied Anthropology as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Science (Environment and Sustainability).

She is a member of the Australian Water Association, the International Association of Public Participation and is a committee member for the Western Rivers Environmental Education Network in NSW.

Website links

