



Perth Region NRM Wins Outstanding Sustainability Partnership Award

Perth Region NRM was awarded the 'Outstanding Sustainability Partnership Award' in Melbourne last week at the Environs Australia Sustainability Awards.

The award was presented by Environs Australia President, David Keenan at The Sebel Albert Park in Melbourne to Peter Male, Industry Project Coordinator at Perth Region NRM.

Perth Region NRM has worked in close partnership with over 10 Local Government Authorities (LGAs) both regionally and in the Perth region, since 2006, to develop and implement a range of initiatives to improve the environmental performance and sustainability of light industrial small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

"Working in partnership with Local Government, along with input from business and industry associations, is key to making this project work", Tony Soteriou, Sustainable Production Program Manager, Perth Region NRM.

Four sub-projects were developed within the project, using various approaches to meet the specific needs and dynamics of small businesses, with over 4,500 on-site business assessments completed by the end of June 2009.

On-ground achievements within light industrial areas have included:

- significantly improved skills and knowledge for business operators to adopt better environmental practices,
- a reduction in the discharge of pollutants from businesses into the environment,
- higher rates of waste recycling,
- more efficient use of resources, particularly energy.

The aim of this project has been to foster behaviour change within SMEs to improve their sustainability through better environmental performance, with a focus on the areas of pollution control, waste management and the efficient use of resources, such as energy and water.

Successfully engaging the light industrial SME sector was a key factor that attributed to the success of this project.

"While business owners are generally willing to do the right thing for the environment, they are time and resource poor and unaware of where to access appropriate assistance, and this limits their capacity to make positive change" said Janice Redmond, Edith Cowan University.

This barrier was overcome through a range of strategies, including research, one-on-one advice and improving skills and knowledge of SME operators.

The successful implementation of this project was achieved through effective partnership with Local Government. Capacity building to enable LGAs adopt and use these initiatives within their own service delivery programs was a critical factor which was achieved through one-on-one LG officer training, technical support, supply of educational material and regular group meetings to monitor progress and resolve issues.

A major achievement of this project has been the development of a comprehensive light industry improvement 'model' that accurately assesses a businesses' environmental performance, from pollution control and waste management to the use of resources (particularly energy and water), and provides a range of practical strategies that are individually tailored to assist businesses make real cost efficient improvements.

"The beauty of this model is that it can be replicated, with consideration for resourcing and local dynamics, through LGAs nationally" says Mr Soteriou. .

This Light Industry Project was initiated due to a significant lack of knowledge and programs available to assist light industrial businesses improve their environmental performance. It was made possible through funding from the Australian Government. It has demonstrated leadership through its achievements in research, development and implementation of on-ground projects with valuable input from a broad range of stakeholders.

Ends.

For more information please contact Perth Region NRM (08) 9374 3333