



Warringah Council Local Community Climate Summit Snapshot

Abstract

In November 2008, 20 local residents (over 18 years old & carefully selected to represent the Warringah LGA demographic) attended a 2 ½ day forum hosted by Warringah Council and funded by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW through an Environmental Trust grant.

Through a structured deliberative democracy process, the panel of residents developed a series of recommendations for local government, state and federal government in response to the question “How can we work together to respond to climate change?”



Recruitment Methods for a Representative Sample

In order to ensure a representative sample of the community took part in the Local Forum, a careful recruitment method was undertaken. Warringah Council posted an invitation to a list of 1000 randomly selected residents using a personalised letter. The letter was posted in a Council envelope but using coloured paper to make it look ‘special’. The process of obtaining 1000 random names was complicated. Council’s IT team used a GPS database to generate a list of every Warringah lot address. The 58,000 names & addresses were sorted into alphabetical order, then a random number generator was used to select a number between 1 and 58,000.

As each person was selected their name was copied to another list, forming the list of 1000 names.

As interest grew in the community a spreadsheet was used to capture the details of interested residents - particularly age, gender and region of birth. These were the three criteria on which the final 20 participants were selected.

Despite a strong response from the community, several participants originally selected pulled out of the program two weeks before the forum. In order to fill these places, Council staff, other participants and the local Chamber of Commerce were all contacted to source other interested parties. These complications aside, a close to representative sample was still obtained. As can be seen in Table 1, the final participants involved in the local forum matched gender and age requirements very closely, with

only some discrepancy in the ‘55-64’ age category and also a lack of representation of Asia and the America’s in the region of birth. Participants at the Warringah workshop represented a wide range of life experience ranging from bush regenerators to company executives and from retirees to young students.

Characteristic	Residents %	Preferred 20	Profile 20
Gender	Total		
Male	48.9%	10	8
Female	51.1%	10	12
Total	100%	20	20
Region of Birth	Total		
Oceania	71.1%	14	12
Asia	5.1%	1	0
Americas	1.7%	1	0
Africa/Middle East	1.8%	1	1
Europe	14.1%	3	7
Total	93.8%	20	20
Age	>15		
15-24 years	13.9%	3	2
25-54 years	54.2%	11	9
55-64 years	13.2%	3	6
65 + years	18.7%	3	3
Total	100%	20	20

Table 1: Warringah Participant Representation based on 2006 ABS Census of Population and Housing



Warringah Council



The Deliberative Process: Workshop Design & Recommendations

The Warringah Local Forum embraced the deliberative process by allowing significant time for participants to debate, enquire, reflect and take on new knowledge. The 2½ day forum agenda is as shown below.

Thursday 30 October 2008

- 7.00pm - Arrive
- 7.30pm - Introductions & project information
- 7.55pm - Survey
- 8.05pm - What will make our group most effective?
- 8.15pm - Group discussion – An Inconvenient Truth
- 8.35pm - Group discussion – what are you already doing to help reduce climate change?
- 8.55pm - Questions and reflection
- 9.00pm - Close

Saturday 1 November 2008

- 9.00am - Arrive and fun activity
- 9.30am - Housekeeping
- 9.35am - Speaker 1 Peter Mitchell (climate change expert)
- 10.20am - Speaker 2 David Bell (Warringah Council)
- 10.50am - Questions to speakers
- 11.30am - Morning tea
- 11.50am - More questions for speakers
- 12.00pm - Group activity – visualisation on the Impacts of climate change
- 12.30pm - Group activity – community values
- 12.50pm - Group discussion on two activities
- 1.00pm - Lunch
- 1.30pm - Group activity – community vision
- 2.00pm - Reflection, questions, discussion
- 3.30pm - Close

Across the three sessions, the 20 Local Forum participant's used a variety of methods to distil their key recommendations for how the community, local, state and federal government should respond to climate change.

These recommendations covered areas such as storm water management, provision of more 'park & ride' facilities, construction of more bike paths & provision of bike racks at central points in the community, increased community education on the effects of sea level rise, tips for sustainable living, and increased pressure on the state government to improve public transport in the local area.

Sunday 2 November 2008

- 9.00am - Arrive and fun activity
- 9.30am - Housekeeping
- 9.35am - Speaker 3 Amanda McKenzie
Australian Youth Climate Coalition
- 10.10am - Questions for Amanda
- 10.30am - Morning Tea
- 10.50am - Options for responding to climate change
- 12.30pm - Lunch
- 1.00pm - Collation, presentation and discussion of options
- 2.30pm - What do we need to make it happen?
- 3.00pm - Where to from here?
- 3.15pm - Evaluation
- 3.30pm - Close

Communicating Outcomes

The recommendations generated as a result of the Local Forum were distributed to the Councillors by the General Manager on Dec 23, 2008.

Warringah Council has committed to feeding the Local Forum results into:

- The revision of Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy;
- The 2008-09 State of the Environment Report;
- The 2009-10 Warringah Council Natural Environment Unit business plan.

Warringah Council is also currently reviewing its bike strategy and the Strategy and Policy Division is examining the deliberative democracy model utilised in a review of their community engagement models.

Reflections from Local Forum participants also show the benefits, positive outcomes and sustainability education aspects of this process for the community:

"I've realised the importance of acting NOW, not in a few years."

"I had been considering switching to renewable energy at home- after the Summit I immediately did it."

***"Besides voting at the elections,
this gives an even better
opportunity to influence policy."***

- Warringah Local Forum participant

Follow Up and Continued Engagement

Since the Local Forum, participants have received ongoing engagement by Warringah's Environmental Education Officer through informal updates and information on the progress of their recommendations. For example, forum participants were contacted after Warringah Council announced their first ever community garden (a recommendation from the Local Forum) and also in consultation on a proposed environmental education shopfront facility.

Furthermore, 7 of the 20 Local Forum participants went on to take part in the NSW Community Climate Summit in February of 2009 - a further extension of their commitment to this process and project.

Warringah Council has also recently established a database of community members who wish to be included in ongoing community consultation and engagement. 16 of the 20 Local Forum participants have asked to be included on this list.

Additionally, community feedback was obtained using deliberative democracy (facilitated by Warringah's Environmental Education Officer Michelle Johnston) at the recent Shore Regional Organisation of Councils (SHOROC) meeting, to feed into the regions State of the Environment report.

Beyond Council, a local Climate Action Group formed at around the same time as the end of the deliberations which several forum participants joined. Other participants became involved in other community and Council run programs including the Warringah Climate Challenge (completed in June 2009) and have taken significant actions in their homes and workplaces.



Challenges and Opportunities

Undertaking a project of this scale brought both challenges, and opportunities to Warringah Council. Some of the challenges identified in the project included:

- Trying to arrange the Local Forum to be held on the same weekend as neighbouring council, Pittwater. It proved too difficult however given the different workloads of the two organizers and so two separate forums were planned;
- Ensuring the results of the Local Forum are incorporated into Council planning;
- Garnering media interest.

Many opportunities and benefits were identified however:

- Promotion of climate change to the Warringah community;
- Provision of opportunity to seek and hear opinions of people not normally heard;
- Partnership and cooperation between a number of Council units;
- Facilitation and workshop delivery training provided to Council staff by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW proved highly valuable.

Council Reflections

Those involved with the project feel it has been a fabulous way to consult the community with a reasonable assumption that they are talking to a representative cross section of the local population.

The deliberative democracy process has been widely acclaimed within Warringah Council and will be utilised again in future. There is significant commitment to ensuring the Local Forum recommendations are incorporated into future planning.

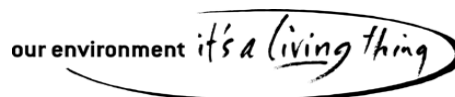
Find Out More

For more information on this project or to learn more about the NSW Community Climate Summit held in February 2009, please visit www.nccnsw.org.au/nswclimatesummit or contact the Nature Conservation Council of NSW on +612 9279 2466.

“This project allowed us to engage with a selection of the Warringah community who may not have been engaged otherwise”

***- Michelle Johnston,
Environmental Education
Officer,
Warringah Council***

This project is an initiative of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and is assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust



Local Council partners: Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Armidale, Uralla, Guyra, Lake Macquarie, Wyong, Gosford, Pittwater, Warringah, Blacktown, Holroyd, Penrith and Tumut