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# Newsletter

No.2 Spring 2004

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL COUNCIL



Telephone : 9286 5025

Facsimile: 9384 3694

Email: [anthea@townofmosmanpark.wa.gov.au](mailto:anthea@townofmosmanpark.wa.gov.au)

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## Editorial

Earth Carers has seen a number of “comings and goings” over the past few months. Firstly I took over from Amanda Wilson as the new Earth Carer Coordinator. While Amanda was coordinator of the program she achieved a number of major successes, notably establishing the Mosman Park Earth Carers group and relationship with Graylands Primary School. Amanda has expressed interest in maintaining her ties with Earth Carers as a volunteer, so hopefully we will still see her around and benefit from her enthusiasm and experience.

Over the past few months I have had the privilege of meeting some amazingly dedicated volunteers. For those of you I haven't had the chance of getting to know - a little bit about myself. After completing my studies in Environmental Science at Edith Cowan University I worked for a year as a graduate trainee with Agriculture Western Australia and then as a projects officer for the Blackwood Environment Society in Bridgetown. The country life was not for me and I returned to the city where I began work at the Western Australian Museum as Coordinator of Alcoa Frog Watch. Over the next three years I developed the Frog Watch education and marketing programs for a variety of school and community groups. Although there was huge support and interest from the community in the program, the coordinator role was not funded beyond 2003. I branched off into waste management and worked for six months with the Waste Wise schools program at the Department of Environment before coming to Earth Carers, where I hope to use my skills and experience to help others better manage their waste.

Some of our Earth Carer volunteers have been with us a long time and unfortunately though understandably have decided to move on. A special thank you to Jan Walker and Liz Buckley from the Cottesloe Earth Carer group for all their hard work and dedication over the years. Jan and Liz were with Earth Carers when it was first trialed in the Town of Cottesloe in 1998. It is the unfortunate nature of volunteer groups to go through such highs and lows and I will be looking at ways of recruiting new people and generating interest in Cottesloe and Claremont Earth Carers groups in the near future.

To plan for the future, an Earth Carers focus group planning workshop was held in August. Thank you to the fifteen volunteers who attended the meeting and contributed to the future planning of Earth Carers. The facilitator for the evening, Allan Bandt, commented on the ease with which the Earth Carer volunteers offered their ideas and shared their visions for the future. Results of the workshop will feed into the Western Metropolitan Region Future Directions strategic plan and can be viewed in this newsletter. Libby Eustance, who attended the focus group workshop, kindly volunteered to participate on behalf of Earth Carers at the WMRC future directions planning workshop. A follow up Earth Carers meeting will be held early next year to flesh out the results of the Earth Carers focus group workshop and develop a business plan for the program. It is hoped that with clear directions we will secure greater support for Earth Carers and see it continue to grow from strength to strength.

Anthea Paino  
Earth Carer Coordinator

# EARTH CARERS

## Focus Group Workshop

An Earth Carers Focus Group planning workshop was held at the Town of Mosman Park on the 18 August 2004. The fifteen people who participated in the workshop were divided into two groups to discuss Earth Carers in relation to critical issues, past achievements and improvements and to determine our role in supporting the Western Metropolitan Regional Council. Thank you to Jan James and Jan Walker who did a wonderful job at facilitating the groups. The following are the priority issues identified at the workshop. As you can see, a number of similar issues were identified between the two groups.

### Group A

**Increase community exposure of Earth Carers.** This was seen as important so that volunteers could “reach” a large number of people not already practising waste minimisation behaviours. Some suggestions for increasing Earth Carers exposure to the community include a website, video and presence at events with a diverse audience. It was also felt that in order to increase Earth Carers profile in the community and help others with waste minimisation, it is important to have greater access to the public through initiatives such as an Earth Carers hotline or email forum.

**Establish better relationships with local councils and waste management professionals.** This would enable increased access to technical knowledge on waste minimisation issues. Volunteers want to be seen as dynamic, informative and knowledgeable (a noisy little bunch!). They also feel that at present, they are not being taken seriously enough and want more credibility for the group. By being “kept” informed and knowledgeable, Earth Carers feel they would have a greater sense of credibility and potential to influence peoples behaviour toward waste minimisation.

**Develop a greater sense of community and cohesiveness between groups.** Regular joint meetings, where individuals from different groups could get together and share ideas was seen as a way of achieving greater cohesion amongst volunteers. A regular newsletter, joint activities and projects such as a combined waste calendar were also viewed as important in installing a shared vision and sense of community.

**Set up mechanisms to measure achievements and outcomes of Earth Carer activities.** It is important for volunteers to measure their achievements and receive regular “feed back,” so they can assess whether their efforts are achieving a positive change in the community’s behaviour toward waste. This would rely heavily on Earth Carers having greater access to statistical information from local councils in the WMRC and professionals in the waste management industry.

**Expand the Earth Carers program to encompass wider sustainability issues.** This could include issues such as energy consumption, biodiversity and storm water drainage.

**Provide a public voice on political issues such as the packaging industry.** To have some influence on political issues, Earth Carers felt the program needs to gain more credibility so volunteers can “reach the masses”. Ways to achieve this could include increased community exposure to the program, greater access to technical knowledge and developing better relationships with local government authorities and waste management professionals.

### Group B

**Increase number of volunteers engaged in Earth Carers.** In order to attract more people to the program and maintain existing numbers, Earth Carers believe that more emphasis needs to be placed on ongoing training and education. A need to recruit volunteers from a larger sector of the community, especially younger people was also identified as important.

Increase community exposure of Earth Carers. Developing relationships with a greater number of community groups, clubs and education centres was seen as a possible way of attracting younger volunteers and increasing opportunity for educating the “non-converted”. Increased media coverage, an Earth Carers video focusing on worm farming and composting, displays in local libraries and presence at “bigger” events with a diverse audience were also seen as important in increasing community exposure to the program.

Develop a greater sense of community and cohesion between groups. Earth Carers want to maintain the non-competitive nature that currently exists between groups. They also want to build on this to develop a “bigger body” with greater sense of community. Regular meetings with guest speakers and joint projects were identified as possible ways of achieving this.

Provide effective education to the public on waste management issues. Earth Carers see their role as providing valuable education to the public on waste minimisation. To achieve this, it is important that the public have greater access to Earth Carers information and increased exposure to the program. There is also a need to evaluate the effectiveness of the program through regular feedback and access to statistical information. Earth Carers recognise the importance of school based projects and wish to develop existing relationship with local schools.

Develop the resource centre at Graylands Primary School. The need for a “home base” information/resource centre was recognised as an important means of educating the public and developing a greater sense of community amongst Earth Carer groups.

Develop an Earth Carers website. It was suggested that an Earth Carers website may increase community exposure to Earth Carers and provide an effective means of relaying information to the public.

## PRIORITY ISSUES

### Identified across both groups

Increase community exposure of Earth Carers and number of volunteers engaged in the program.

Establish better relationships with local councils and waste management professionals.

Develop a greater sense of community and cohesion between Earth Carer groups.

Set up mechanisms to measure achievements.

Provide effective education to the public.

Expand Earth Carers to encompass wider sustainability issues.

Provide public advocacy.

Develop the resource centre at Graylands Primary School.

Develop an Earth Carers website.

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*One of a series of posters focusing on energy efficiency, designed by Cottesloe Earth Carers and D'Alton Designs and Advertising*



# Earth Carers

## VISIT TO

### ORT

Grace Patorniti  
Earth Carer Volunteer

A tour was held on the 5th of August at the Organic Resource Technology Centre pilot plant in Jandakot. A number of Earth Carer volunteers braved the stormy weather to hear Sean Sciberras from ORT talk about the secondary resource recovery process proposed by the Western Metropolitan Regional Council. Earth Carers volunteer Grace Patorniti kindly provided the following article about the tour.

There were four of us present and the one hour tour was given by the engineer, Sean. The facility in Jandakot is still continuing ongoing research on the 'Dicom' process. First Stage (one tank) shall be commissioned at Brockway Transfer station in Feb 2005, as a trial basis for the WMRC. It shall be conducting 6 trials and processing 30% of the region's waste. If all is successful the facility will be completed (three tanks in total) and 100% of waste shall be processed. WMRC shall still be running the two bins, whereas most of the recyclables (eg paper, cans) shall be separate from waste to be treated.

With the process, the inputs are Oxygen, pH, Temp, Pressure, Microbial Population (tap water and biosolids to produce anaerobic liquid) and moisture. The waste goes through various stages with both separate stages of anaerobic and aerobic conditions. The two final by-products are:

**Biogas** - which is 50% methane gas shall be used to produce electricity for the running of the facility; apparently it is not worth selling the electricity to the main grid (Western Power).

**Compost**- compost is being trialled at various farms. They had an example of the compost produced by Atlas for Stirling Council. ORT compost had less paper mixed through producing a darker and richer compost and a system shall be in place to remove glass by a process of: washing out the glass (majority removed) then grinding any remaining glass. The compost is dried into little pellets to make a lighter product for transportation and an easier (not easily wind blown) product to be spread.

If anyone wants more information I was given a website: [www.ort.com.au](http://www.ort.com.au)  
A very interesting process, I hope it all works well in the trials.



*Picture supplied by Organic  
Resource Technologies*

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## Spring presentations & field trips

The following presentations and field trips have been planned for spring. Feedback on whether you find these topic of interest would be appreciated. We would also be happy to hear about any topics or guest speakers you would like to hear from in the future. Please RSVP myself or Anne ASAP if you are interested in attending either the tour at City Farm or the talk on hazardous household waste.

### Monday 25th October

A presentation on Household hazardous waste will be given at 7pm at the Tom Dadour Centre, 363 Bagot Rd, Subiaco by Raymond York, from the Department of Environment. Ray York specialises in HHW and will provide Earth Carers with information about HHW in WA. He will also provide an overview of the State Strategic Directions for Waste Management as documented in the newly released Waste management Board Publication.

### Thursday 18 November

A field trip to City Farm has been planned for 11am to 12pm at City Farm at 184 Brown St East Perth. City farm is a sustainable education community centre in the heart of the CBD that has been running for over a decade. Jasmin from City farm will give a tour of the centre and talk to us about the compost system they have in place at the centre.

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## Interesting websites

The SEDO website at <http://sedonewsbyemail.vivid-design.com.au/subscribe.asp> offers a load of interesting information on sustainable energy. You can also subscribe to the Sustainable Energy Matters newsletter.

For information on what's happening at a state level, check our the Waste Management Board website on <http://www.wastewa.com/index.asp>

For all sorts of publications on waste management strategies, programs and initiatives, check out Waste Net at <http://www.wastenet.net.au/>. Make sure you sign up for the WasteNet's free newsletter while your there.

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## Earth Carers Shopping Centre Displays

Cottesloe Earth Carers held a display at the Grove Shopping Centre in July. The focus of the display was to encourage artwork for the Cottesloe Earth Carers 2005 Waste Calendar Art Competition. Unfortunately we received few entries for the competition on the day. The display was a success however, due to the donation of 200 green shopping bags by Woolworth's acting store manager Damien Manucci.

The donation by Woolworth's enabled volunteers to hand out the free bags to shoppers while discussing the merits of saying no to plastic bags. Thank you to Kerry, Jan, Liz, Lorna and Angela for organising the display and helping out at the event.

Claremont Earth Carers also held a display at the Coles Shopping centre in Claremont. The display entitled "room by room recycling" was designed by Anne Goodall and Soozie Ross and focused on smart shopping and recycling in the home. Anne who was the driving force behind the Earth Carers "Waste Not Wear It" competition has decided to move on after many of years of dedication as an Earth Carer volunteer. She will be greatly missed and we wish her all the best for the future. A special thank you to all those who helped out at the display.



*Cottesloe Earth Carer Angela Christensen  
with Woolworth's staff Gina Paino*

## What has Subiaco and Nedlands Earth Carers been up to?

The combined Subiaco and Nedlands Earth Carer groups have been very busy with several events and activities in the past few months.

A painting competition for children at Rosalie and Jolimont primary schools was held in August. Prizes were provided by Farmer Jack's and the winning entries were showcased at an Earth Carers display held over two weeks at Farmer Jacks supermarket in Subiaco. Earth Carers are very appreciative of the support received from Farmer Jacks over the years.

Earth Carers also held displays at Subiaco Library, Nedlands Library and the Subiaco and Nedlands council offices. The displays were well received by the public who were interested in learning more about managing their waste.

The Subiaco/Nedlands Earth Carers have started participating in the promotion of the Subiaco Sustainable Demonstration Home through a monthly 2-hour Sunday afternoon presence at the home. This involves talking to the public about simple ways to live more sustainably through better recycling, composting and worm farming, and to make the link between sustainable building design and everyday habits.

Recently, the Subiaco/Nedlands Earth Carers group was involved in the Earthwise Community Association Day in Subiaco. The Earth Carers display was set up next to the Waste Wise trailer, which was also manned by community volunteers. The Subiaco/Nedlands volunteers made up batches of worm liquid to give away to interested members of the public who visited the stall.

*Subiaco/Nedlands Earth Carer Patricia Spuall with Captain Cleanup (Quintin George) at the Earth Wise Community Open Day in Subiaco*



## Did you know ?

AMCOR in Spearwood has agreements in place to recycle soft plastics with the Coles Myer Group, Officeworks, Action Supermarkets and a few owner operated supermarkets. The bins at the front of the stores are for customers' shopping bags and similar soft plastics (sometimes marked Code 4) and there is also collection of film plastics and other miscellaneous plastic within the stores. A small proportion is recycled in Australia, though the majority is exported overseas, mainly to China. The products that are currently made from recycled film plastics include outdoor benches, childrens play equipment, inserts for shoes and wadding for jackets.

A Melbourne company, My Planet Recycling, has begun recycling soiled disposable nappies. The company supplies wheelie bins to participating residents. High quality wood pulp and plastic are obtained through the recycling process. Environment Victoria said the new facility undermined the best green choice - using reusable cloth nappies. In a lifecycle analysis cloth nappies came out more 'green' than recycled disposables. Website: [www.myplanet.com.au](http://www.myplanet.com.au)

The Nike store in Hay Street, Subiaco, is now collecting old sports shoes in their Re-Use-a-Shoe recycling bin. The shoes are shipped to the US and the recyclable material is ground into cushioning that can be used for flooring for running tracks, playground floors, basketball and tennis courts.

# Upcoming Earth Carer Events

A priority identified at the Earth Carer Focus Group Workshop was to provide a greater sense of community between Earth Carer groups. Therefore we encourage Earth Carers from any group to participate in the following events if interested. Even if you can spare a couple of hours to help out at the event, we would love to hear from you. Please call me on 9286 5025 if you would like more details on how to become involved in any of these events.

## Mosman Park School Event Day

Mosman Park Earth Carers are in the process of planning an Earth Carers Education Day at Mosman Park Primary School on Friday 5th November. The group will need the support from other Earth Carers volunteers in order to pull this particular event off.

## Mosman Park Christmas Picnic

A display will be held by the Mosman Park Earth Carers at the Christmas picnic in Mosman Park on Sunday 5th December. The display will have a Christmas theme to tie in with the event.

## Great Gardens Workshop

Cottesloe Earth Carers will be holding a worm farming and composting display at the Great Gardens Workshop at the Cottesloe Civic Centre in Broome Street, Cottesloe on Sunday 31st October.

## Cottesloe Waste Calendar Art Competition

Finalists for the Waste Calendar Art Competition have been selected. The Cottesloe Earth Carers Group is working with Carolyn Ryder from the Town of Cottesloe to finalise the calendar and acknowledge the winners and schools who participated in the event.

## Royal Show

Earth Carers have a one hour time slot each day to present information in the landcare pavilion to the public on composting and worm farming.

## End of Year Sundowner

An end of Year Earth Carers Sundowner is planned for Wednesday the 8th December between 5.30 and 8.30pm at the Town of Mosman Park. Invitations will be sent out in the mail closer to the date. Interested Earth Carers can RSVP any time before Friday 26th November.

## Subiaco Street Party

Subiaco Earth Carers will be holding an interactive display and activity station at the Subiaco Street Party, Rokeby Road, on the 28th November.

## Green Picnic

Subiaco Earth Carers will hold a "Green picnic" in conjunction with the City of Subiaco Sunday Concert series at the Subiaco Theatre Centre in early December. The picnic will include a group of stalls organised by Earth Carers and will focus on "green living".

## Sustainable Nedlands Home Open Day

Nedlands Earth Carers are collaborating with the Sustainable Nedlands committee on the open garden program. This will involve Earth Carers holding a display and composting demonstration during the Home Open Day event in November (date to be confirmed).

# Worm farm facts

from *SoilLife*

**Will the worm population increase in the system?** Yes, the worm population in a well run system will double about every four months.

**How much will my worms eat?** The weight of material processed each day will be approximately one fifth of the weight of the population of worms in the system. This will improve during the warmer periods and decrease during the colder periods.

**Can I feed my worms too much?** Yes. The most effective way to feed is to feed at the same rate as the feed is consumed. Too much feed for the consumption rate is the cause of many problems: souring, white worm, and foreign insect infestation.

**Can I feed my worms too little?** Yes, but it is unlikely. Most people have a problem with too much feed. Worms will decrease in size and reduce or stop breeding as the feed rate decreases before they will die. Worms can live for months in their own castings without the addition of new feed.

**What if I want to go away on holidays?** No problem. In the cooler months worms could be left for up to two weeks without attention. If it is warm, arrange for a friend to lightly water every few days. For periods longer than two weeks, a feeding would be beneficial. Feed and water normally just prior to leaving. Do not add more feed or water than normal, as this will cause problems.

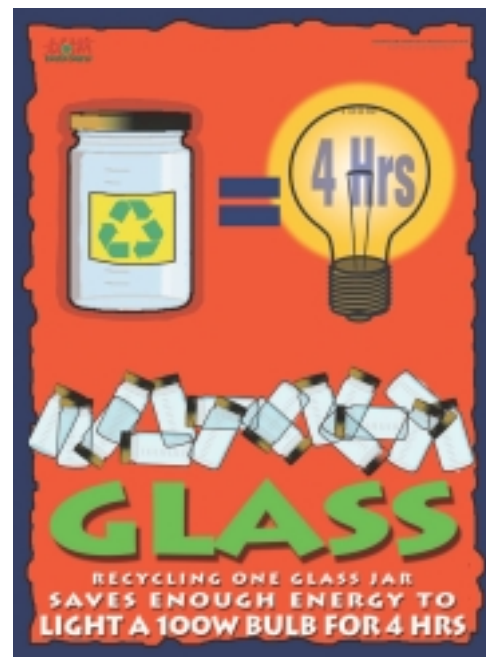
**White worms are present. What should I do?** White worms are not baby worms. They are not detrimental to the process, in fact they may be beneficial as long as they are not in plague proportions. However their existence indicates possible acidity. Slightly increase the dolomite lime additions. Another less likely reason for white worm is a slightly dry bed. Before adding water however, lime addition should be seen as the most likely solution. White worm often appear after feeding grain products.

**Free** workshops about worms, beneficial microbes and mineral rock dust are held at the Environmental Technology Centre at Murdoch University from 9am to 12noon on the second Saturday of each month. Great information for Earth Carers! The next one is on 9th October. For more information and registration contact *SoilLife* on 9397 5716.

## Training Worms

Earth Carers now have a 'training' worm farm. This is a great way to become familiar with keeping worms and is available for any Earth Carer to adopt for a month or so. The Year 4's at Loretto Primary School now also have their own classroom worm farm, thanks to the enthusiasm of their trainee teacher Arahah Kirk. Earth Carers officer, Anne Pettit, visited the classroom to talk to the children and help set up the worm farm at the school. The children were very attentive and asked some great questions.

Thank you to all those who have participated in the Graylands worm farm and composting roster. The Worm farms are thriving well at Graylands Primary School and there is now enough worm castings in the worm farm bath tubs to harvest. Earth Carers will be invited to be involved in this activity with the Year 7's early in Term 4.



If you come across any useful information, hints or suggestions for the next Earth Carers newsletter, be sure to bring them along to a meeting or send them to Anthea or Anne.