

City embraces alter eco

By EMMA SHAW

Lessons in green living keep on giving

A PROJECT aimed at encouraging green living will leave behind a legacy of eco-friendly skills and knowledge for the region.

Sustainable Illawarra, a three-year initiative launched by Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama councils with support from the NSW Government Environmental Trust, came to a close last week after providing a packed program of events for residents.

More than 8000 people took part in workshops and activities on topics such as keeping backyard chickens,

creating frog ponds and recycling more household waste, project manager Alison Mellor said.

"We were always aware this was a limited project, so we were conscious of being able to achieve as much as we could, but also to be leaving that legacy once the project had finished," Ms Mellor said. "We're now looking forward to the councils and the community going forward with the skills and knowledge they gained

from the project."

Many of the events carried out by Sustainable Illawarra will now be continued by the three councils.

Shellharbour City Council is planning a solar expo for September, after the success of a similar event in February, and Kiama Council will continue to run second-hand Saturday events, which have been likened to giant community garage sales. The Super Challenge pro-

gram had also made a lasting impact, Ms Mellor said.

"We engaged with 150 households and they all set their own sustainability goals and we supported them to achieve those goals, whether it was installing solar hot water or reducing waste that leaves the household," she said. "The most popular goal was to create a veggie garden."

Through Sustainable Illawarra, the three councils also created a "road map" to

embed sustainability in council policies and internal processes.

The move is a step in the right direction, after Wollongong was named Australia's least "resilient" city - the most likely to falter under major environmental stress - in the Australian Conservation Foundation's Sustainable Cities Index earlier this month.

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MS MELLOR

ILLAWARRA
MERCURY

EDITORIAL

Initiative has improved our knowledge

LIKE all good things, Sustainable Illawarra had to come to an end.

But instead of lamenting its demise, we should celebrate the wealth of knowledge that has been gained during the three years the project has been in operation.

This joint initiative from Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama Councils is not something every region has been lucky enough to experience.

It was an innovative approach to tackling a global problem and the take-up rate of residents keen to participate shows the public swell of support for adopting a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

The project provided both inspiration and know-how through workshops and expos, and extra hands-on support for the "super challengers".

Earlier this month, a national report ranked Wollongong among the worst Australian cities when it came to coping with emerging environmental pressures such as climate change.

Yet with ventures such as Sustainable Illawarra, we are leading the way.

The education and experience we have gained in the past three years will help ensure the Illawarra forges ahead in this area and makes going green a part of everyday life for us all.