EVALUATION REPORT

Sustainable Futures Festival

04 June – 11 September 2022

REPORT DATE: 19 OCTOBER 2022

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This evaluation was undertaken by Dr Alison Rogers (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alison-Rogers) in collaboration with The University of Newcastle on behalf of EcoNetwork Port Stephens.

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Executive summary

EcoNetwork Port Stephens is a conservation, sustainability and natural heritage network. We are a not-for-profit, non-party political and 100% volunteer-run conservation organisation. Our vision is for ecologically sustainable communities existing in harmony with the natural environment. We acknowledge the Worimi People as the traditional owners and custodians of this land and water where we live, work and learn.

The Sustainable Futures Festival aimed to create positive change, with innovative and practical solutions for a sustainable and regenerative world, working in partnership with local communities, business and government. We held the festival between June and September 2022. It culminated with a festival day on 11 September that involved displays, speakers and a marketplace for innovative technologies that are sustainable and environmentally sound.

This summary focuses on the evaluation results from the festival day. The internal evaluation, conducted in collaboration with The University of Newcastle, was undertaken for the purposes of accountability, validation, learning and advocacy. Data collection tools included monitoring of attendance, a confidential survey, feedback from children, internet data, communication logs, a waste audit and facilitated discussions.

What were the main benefits of the festival?

With over 1000 people attending the festival and with the 94% people surveyed indicating they had a positive experience, the top three benefits cited were:

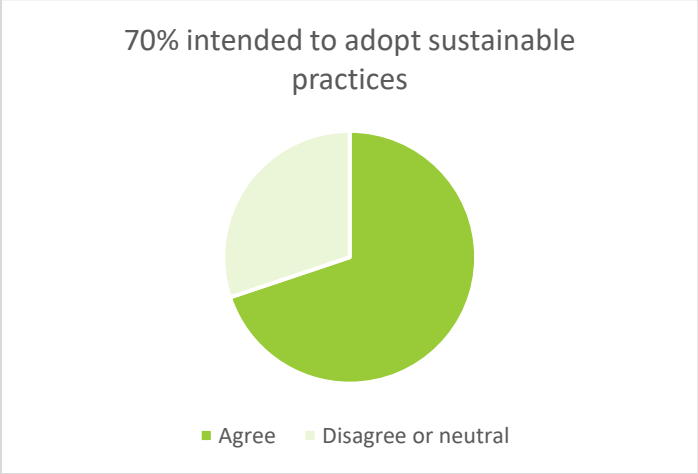
1. **Creating a positive atmosphere for learning about sustainability**
   The experience of interacting as a likeminded community, talking about practical sustainability, finding entertaining ways of learning and showcasing alternative ways of thinking and doing.

2. **Supporting the progression of St Philip's Christian College and Tomaree High School towards sustainability**
   EcoNetwork was proud to learn that St Philip's Christian College has strengthened their recycling program and that Tomaree High School's sustainability and environment program has been revitalised as a result of the festival.

3. **Connecting local community groups and businesses with research and innovation expertise**
   EcoNetwork is aware that new technologies developed in research settings may have practical applications locally, in collaboration with community groups as a result of introductions that occurred at the festival.

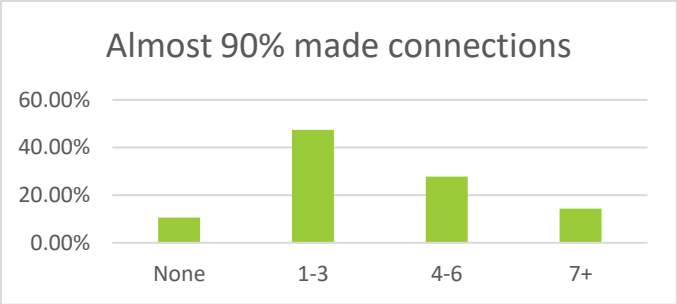
Did attendees engage with, learn about and plan to adopt practical technologies?

Survey respondent: 'Professor Veena made us more aware of the huge potential of recycled goods and more aware of our own recycling'.



Did businesses, affiliates and attendees form networks?

Almost half of the respondents made at least 1 new connection and over 40% made between 4 and 7 connections.



How could the festival improve?

Many survey respondents did not provide any response to the question about improvements or replied with statements such as, 'Couldn't fault them'; 'Keep up the good work'; 'Great festival'; 'Don't think they could; 'Location was great; 'Great as is'; 'It was excellent overall'; 'It was a great day'.

Reponses from the children also included: 'Everything that was here'; 'Everything and more friends here'; 'More of the same'; 'Same as what it is today'; 'The kids activities here were great'; 'Everything'; 'It was awesome'.

The top four suggested improvements were:

1. Increase the quality and quantity of food options
2. Increase the reach and variety of advertising and marketing
3. Improve the layout to enhance accessibility and interactions between attendees and stallholders
4. Increase the entertainment options and activities targeted at older children and young adults

Recommendations

- Hold another Sustainable Futures Festival as soon as possible to capitalise on the momentum generated at this successful inaugural event
- Follow up on ways that EcoNetwork can continue to connect local community groups and businesses with research and innovation expertise
- Consider how to further promote the objectives of EcoNetwork Port Stephens by capitalising on increased awareness following the festival, particularly in light of the upcoming 30-year anniversary celebrations.

Rob McCann, South Pacific Sustainability, said:

Just wanted to give you and the rest of Eco Network PS a wrap. That was one of the best sustainability events I have been to (and I've been to a lot). To my delight there was no corporate PR, no green washing, no 'empty suits'. Just great people, grass roots innovations and a very high level of expertise and knowledge. Exactly what an event like this should be. Talks were all excellent and the whole event ran really smoothly.

Overview

EcoNetwork Port Stephens is a conservation, sustainability and natural heritage network. We are a not-for-profit, non-party political and 100% volunteer-run conservation organisation dedicated to promoting sustainability and to protecting the natural environment in the beautiful and biodiverse Port Stephens region. Operating in Port Stephens since 1993, EcoNetwork works in partnership with over 30 local community groups and businesses, as well as with individual members.

Our vision is for ecologically sustainable communities existing in harmony with the natural environment. Our focus is on eco-living to develop sustainable neighbourhoods toward a sustainable future. We acknowledge the Worimi People as the traditional owners and custodians of this land and water where we live, work and learn.

The Sustainable Futures Festival aimed to create positive change, with innovative and practical solutions for a sustainable and regenerative world, working in partnership with local communities, business and government. We held the festival between June and September 2022. It culminated with a festival day that involved displays, speakers and a marketplace for innovative technologies that are sustainable and environmentally sound. We provided opportunities for local business, schools and volunteer community groups to present their progress towards more sustainable practices.

The purpose of the festival was to:

- Showcase innovative practical technologies
- Promote networking
- Engage the community in learning about sustainability
- Raise the profile of EcoNetwork Port Stephens
- Demonstrate the level of public interest in sustainability.

Our four themes were:

- Land: Wildlife Friendly Gardens
- Water: Value Water – Value Life
- Energy: Renew our Energy
- Community: Shaping our Future.

EcoNetwork incorporated the philosophy of sustainability into the festival as much as possible. The five key areas we endeavoured to uphold during organising and implementing the festival include: Rethink, reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle (Appendix A).

Purpose of the evaluation

EcoNetwork evaluated the festival for the following reasons:

1. Accountability: Reporting to major sponsors
2. Validation: Demonstrate the value of EcoNetwork and determine if the festival has worth
3. Learning: Determine lessons learnt and how can we improve
4. Advocacy: Use the lessons learnt to promote our vision.

Although rapid reviews were undertaken for all key festival events, this evaluation report highlights how EcoNetwork monitored, evaluated and reported on the festival day. We intended for the evaluation to be inclusive, respectful, ethical, appropriate and useful. We acknowledged and accepted responsibility for ensuring ethical principles were upheld in this small-scale evaluation by being transparent and open to continuous improvement. We designed the framework in accordance with the Australian Evaluation Society's Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of Evaluations and Code of Ethics. EcoNetwork attempted to ensure the findings are useful by adopting a mixed methods and participatory approach.

Data collection methods included:

- monitoring attendance
- a confidential survey (online and in person) developed and administered in collaboration with the University of Newcastle
- observations from the University of Newcastle Marketing and Tourism Discipline
- a feedback form tailored for children
- website traffic monitoring
- social media data
- a communication log of emails collated from key stakeholders
- a brief observational waste audit conducted by waste education officer from Port Stephens Council
- a facilitated discussion with the organising committee and the EcoNetwork Executive.

The evaluation framework can be found in Appendix B and data collection methods and results in Appendix C.

Evaluation questions

The following key evaluation questions guided the evaluation:

1. To what extent did the festival achieve the immediate outcomes?
    - Attendees engage with, learn about and plan to adopt practical technologies.
    - Businesses / affiliates / attendees form networks.
    - Community awareness increases about the EcoNetwork.
2. To what extent was the festival outputs delivered as intended?
3. What were the main benefits of the festival?
4. How could the festival improve?

Program logic

PROGRAM LOGIC FOR THE FESTIVAL	
Long term goal	Our vision is for ecologically sustainable communities existing in harmony with the natural environment
Medium term aims	- Communities and neighbourhoods are more sustainable - Residents are engaged and learning about sustainability - Residents, community groups and business are jointly responding to environmental issues
Immediate outcomes	- Attendees engage with, learn about and plan to adopt practical technologies - Businesses, affiliates and attendees form networks - Community awareness increases about the EcoNetwork
Outputs	- A large cross section of the community attend in high numbers - Attendees have an entertaining positive experience - Stallholders display practical sustainable technologies - Guest speakers are positive, educational and inspirational - Quality food and products are available for sale in sufficient quantity - Facilities are functional - Festival operations incorporate 5-star sustainability principles - Festival is financially viable
Inputs	- Sufficient finances from fundraising, sponsors and grants - Risk and COVID management plans approved and implemented - Health and safety plans approved and implemented - Facilities are identified (power, water, toilets, parking, audio-visual, IT, shelter, parking, transport, waste) - Advertising is widely distributed (Eg. Newspaper, radio, social media) - Program and multi-media promotional materials are developed and distributed (Eg. program and flyers)

Key festival events

This table summarises the festival events. Appendix D lists stakeholders involved on festival day.

EVENT	DATE	SUMMARY
Gala dinner	04 June 2022	The gala dinner was the official opening of the festival. Councillor Leah Anderson was the master of ceremonies, Jude and the Dudes provided music for entertainment, and Refit Fashion delivered a fashion show. Peter Masters from Artisan Collective Port Stephens also launched the aRRRRRt Awards and drew a raffle with prizes valued at over $1500. Over 120 people attended.
Oceans movie night	29 June 2022	This was a free showing of short films about the ocean with discussions about the sustainability of our sea and future of our magnificent marine park. Partners included Marine Parks Association, the Australian Marine Conservation Society, National Parks Association, Nature Conservation Council and EcoNetwork Sustainable Futures Festival.
River movie night	28 July 2022	The internationally renowned film, RIVER – a cinematic and musical odyssey – explores the remarkable relationship between humans and rivers. Marine Parks Association introduced the film to over 88 attendees and provided some local context about the Karuah River and Myall Lakes and their links to the Port. Lucky door prize included a visit to Irukandji Shark and Ray Encounters for the whole class of a primary school aged child.
Tomaree winter wildflower walks	August 2022	Tomaree National Park boasts a wonderland of winter wildflowers, especially along its sandy heathland areas. The Friends of Tomaree National Park, as part EcoNetwork's Sustainable Futures Festival, hosted and led the walks. The three walks were booked out with a total of approximately 60 attendees.
aRRRRRt award	June - September 2022	The aRRRRRt awards recognised artists' creativity to put the R into aRt: Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle. These inaugural awards were a special collaboration between EcoNetwork Port Stephens and Artisan Collective Port Stephens. The finalists were on display in August at Jetty Gelato at Shoal Bay, the Tomaree Library and Community Centre, The Greenhouse Eatery at Pacific Dunes, and at Artisan Collective Port Stephens. The winners shared $1000 in prize money, were announced on festival day with thanks to Boomerang Bags Raymond Terrace, Hunter Region Landcare Network and Jetty Gelato.
Festival day	11 September 2022	Over 1000 people attended and enjoyed the opportunity to engage with 45 stalls, several performances, 3 speakers and several workshops. Electric cars, enormous whales, dance and water performances, roaming giant puppets and local musical groups ensured there was something for everyone. The headline speaker was Eureka prize winner, Professor Veena Sahajwalla, from the SMART Institute at the University of NSW. Participants from a wide range of community groups, conservation organisations, universities, government agencies and eco-businesses created a wonderful atmosphere – engaging with festival goers and entertaining families of all ages.

Findings

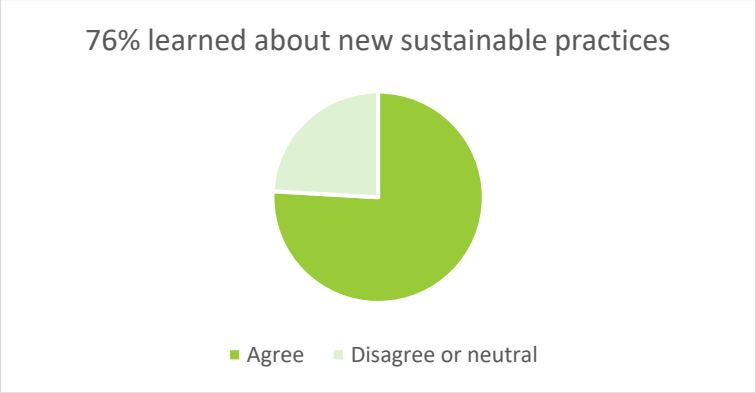
EcoNetwork Port Stephens' ultimate vision is for ecologically sustainable communities existing in harmony with the natural environment. We want to see communities and neighbourhoods more sustainable, residents are engaged and learning about sustainability and residents, community groups and business are jointly responding to environmental and natural and cultural heritage issues. Assessing the degree to which this festival has contributed towards the outcomes and the outputs provides us with findings that we can use to determine whether we are progressing towards long-term ambitions.

To what extent did the festival achieve the immediate outcomes?

Did attendees engage with, learn about and plan to adopt practical technologies?

When survey respondents were asked 'what new sustainable technologies or practices did they learn about?', recycling and making new materials from waste were the most popular topics. One person said, 'Professor Veena made us more aware of the huge potential of recycled goods and more aware of our own recycling'. Learning about native bees and how to support native animals in backyards were also popular topics. Strong themes also included gardening, electric vehicles and motors, solar ovens, solar technology and reducing food waste.

In response to the question 'I learned about new sustainable technologies or practices at the Sustainable Futures Festival', 76% somewhat agreed, agreed or strongly agreed.

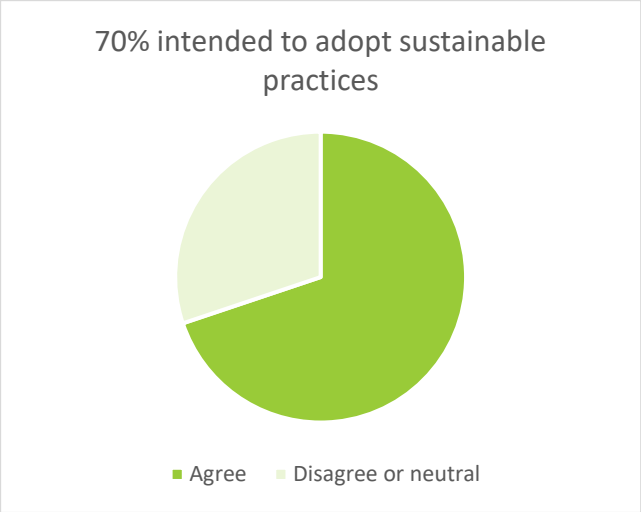


On the children's feedback form, some wrote general comments about what they had learned: 'How to be kind to the earth', 'That we need to do better at looking after the environment' and 'Save the earth'. However, most of the feedback could be grouped into three main themes:

1. Birds, bees, animals
    - 'About a blue banded bee'
    - 'Koalas need bats to survive'
    - 'Look out for eggs of shorebirds when walking at the beach. Walk closer to the water to avoid them'
    - 'About frog hotels'
2. Water
    - 'Save water because it is precious'
    - 'Lots of science at the water show'
    - 'To sing a song in the shower and turn it off when finished'
3. Recycling
    - 'You can make bags from newspapers, be sustainable and reduce plastic usage'
    - 'We need to recycle more'
    - 'I learnt that you can create artwork with rubbish'

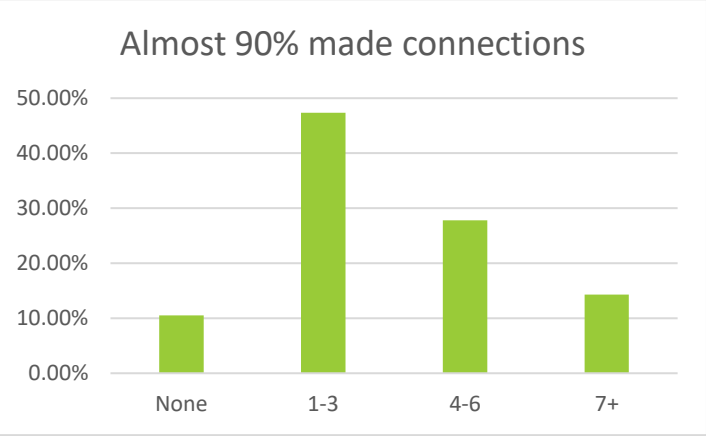
When survey respondents were asked 'What new sustainable technologies or practices do you intend to adopt?' many suggested that they would try to adopt the things they had learned about and therefore the themes that emerged were similar to above. Gardening and supporting native wildlife were the most strongly represented topics. One person said they were going to, 'Use native log with holes drilled for native bees. Houses for frog for plumbing pipes to hide from domestic animals.' This was followed by recycling, 'adopting better methods for recycling I.e., where to recycle lids and how so that they can be reused sustainably.' Five people said they were looking to purchase an electric vehicle and others were going to investigate solar technologies.

In response to the question, 'I intend to adopt at least one of the new sustainable technologies or practices that I learned about at the Sustainable Futures Festival', 70% somewhat agreed, agreed or strongly agreed.



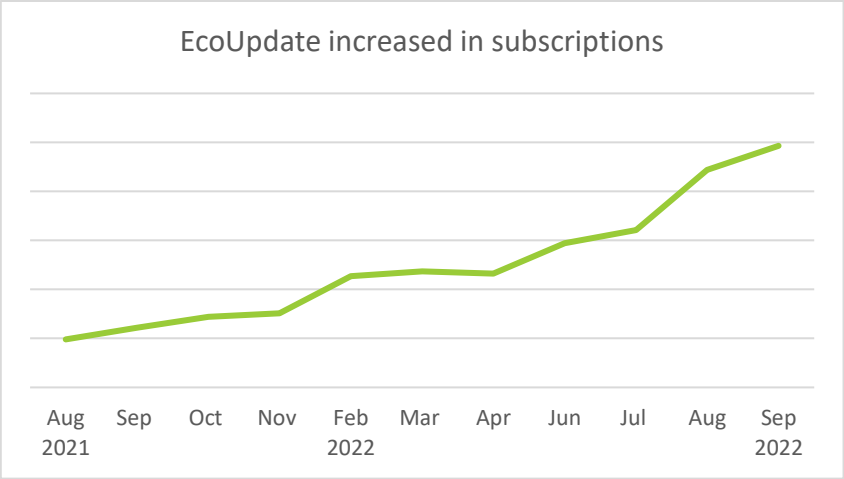
Did businesses, affiliates and attendees form networks?

A survey question asked, 'How many groups or businesses did you connect with at the Sustainable Futures Festival that were previously unknown to you?' Almost half of the respondents made at least 1 new connection and over 40% made between 4 and 7 connections.

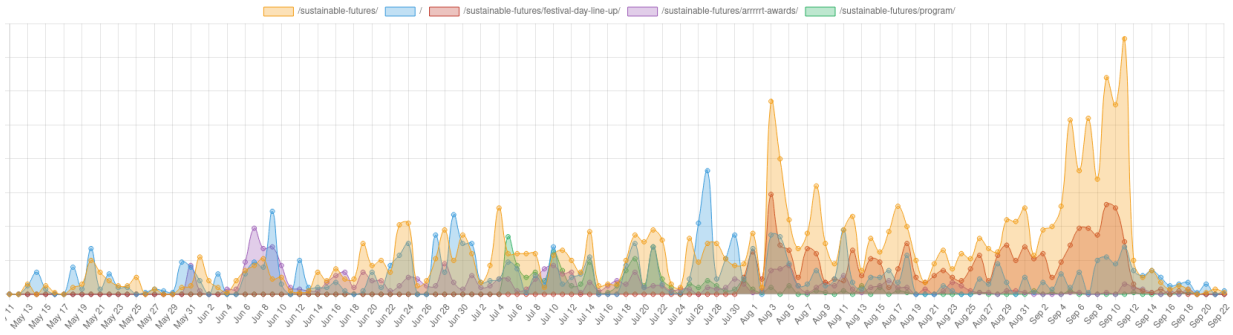


Did community awareness increase about the EcoNetwork Port Stephens?

The number of individuals subscribed to EcoUpdate, the e-publication issued by EcoNetwork, significantly increased. EcoUpdate went out weekly for 2 months prior to festival and they were appropriately themed with latest news and used as media releases.

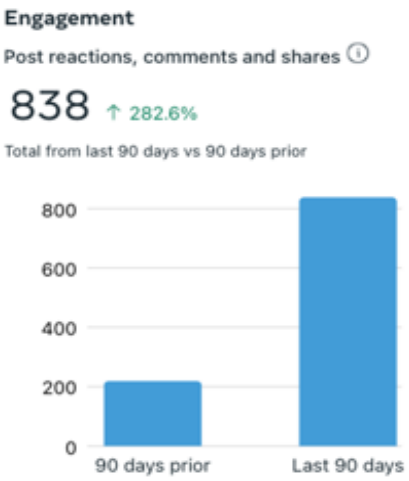


EcoNetwork's web page: Analysis of traffic on EcoNetwork's web page from May until September also revealed a steady increase in hits that peaked on the day of the festival. The pre-registration system for speakers also proved useful for gauging interest and assisting with planning.



Social media:

To increase our reach and social media profile, EcoNetwork partnered with the University of Newcastle. Three students from a digital marketing course assisted with creating social media posts. An Instagram account was created just over 4 weeks prior to the festival, achieved 15 posts and 101 followers. EcoNetwork's Facebook page, 'EcoNetwork PS Community', achieved a post reach of approximately 11,100 in the 90 days prior to the festival day, representing an increase of nearly 200%. Over the same period, the page achieved 838 reactions, comments, shares and saves, which was an increase of nearly 300%. In the 30 days leading up to the festival day, Facebook shares increased by 171% to 16,346. Additional paid advertisements reached 7,857, and page visits of 307, representing an increase of 180%.



The EcoNetwork PS Community page, created just 10 months ago, has 206 follows and 183 likes.
EcoNetworkPS Group, created 6 years ago, now with 453 members, of which 200 joined in the last 12 months.

Of the Facebook audience, derived from the likes, women hugely exceed men, 86% compared with 14%. Nearly 60% of the women are 45-64yrs, with 35-44yrs (18%) exceeding 65+ (14%).

Of the Facebook Group participation over last 60 days prior to the festival, by city/town:

Name	Value	%
Sydney, NSW, Australia	79	18.2%
Nelson Bay, NSW, Australia	66	15.2%
Newcastle, NSW, Australia	42	9.7%
Anna Bay, NSW, Australia	40	9.2%
Salamander Bay, NSW, Australia	37	8.5%
Soldiers Point, NSW, Australia	14	3.2%
Corlette, NSW, Australia	13	3.0%
Shoal Bay, NSW, Australia	12	2.8%
Fingal Bay, NSW, Australia	9	2.1%
Medowie, NSW, Australia	9	2.1%
Lemon Tree Passage, NSW, Australia	7	1.6%
Melbourne, VIC, Australia	6	1.4%
Boat Harbour, NSW, Australia	5	1.1%
Salt Ash, NSW, Australia	5	1.1%
Seaham, NSW, Australia	4	0.9%
Tanilba Bay, NSW, Australia	4	0.9%
Canberra, ACT, Australia	4	0.9%
Bobs Farm, NSW, Australia	4	0.9%
One Mile, NSW, Australia	4	0.9%
Raymond Terrace, NSW, Australia	3	0.7%
Karuah, NSW, Australia	3	0.7%

To what extent did the festival deliver on the outputs?

OUTPUT	SUMMARY
A large cross section of the community attend in high numbers	Over 1000 people attended the festival. This was made up of: - More than 850 people counted at the entrance on the tally counter - More than 50 volunteers - 108 registered stall holders - Performers of the various bands, dances and other entertainment acts. Attendees were predominantly from Port Stephens. However, there was some evidence that people also came from Newcastle, the Hunter Region, Sydney and from as far away as Byron Bay. Based on the survey data, 79% of the attendees were female. The highest proportion of attendees were in the over 65 age group at 32%. Almost 4% of the survey respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. 56 children completed the feedback form and we thereby estimate at least 100 children made up the total attendees. Visual observation revealed that teenagers were under represented and many of those in attendance were connected to activities involving art, music or school initiatives. More details about demographics from the survey data can be found in Appendix C.
Attendees have an entertaining positive experience	On a scale of 0-10, with 10 being excellent, 94% of people placed themselves between 7-10. The majority of respondents indicated they had a positive experience, they liked what was offered and they found the festival interesting. When asked, on a scale of 0-10, how likely they were to attend the next Sustainable Futures Festival, the average answer was 9. Following discussions with Worimi Aboriginal Land Council and traditional owner and founding member of EcoNetwork, Carol Ridgeway, we worked to ensure Worimi Culture was shared throughout the event. We encouraged attendees to visit the Worimi Aboriginal Land Council stall, take part in the traditional weaving and ochre face painting activities and enjoy the Aboriginal contemporary dance performance. Evidence from the survey and children's feedback form indicated that increasing the opportunities to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture would be welcomed.
Stallholders display practical sustainable technologies	100% of stallholders aligned to the sustainability philosophy, and could be linked to land, water, energy or community themes. 75% of survey respondents said the exhibits were of very good to excellent quality. Many stallholders were self-sufficient for energy demands such as Lulu's Gelato using solar panels for power. Other stalls were encouraged to choose local suppliers such as Port Stephens Packaging for recycled napkins. For another example, the Marine Rescue BBQ offered vegetarian sausages as a meat free alternative.
Guest speakers are positive, educational and inspirational	Nearly 80% of the survey respondents indicated that the speakers were of very good or excellent quality. Similarly, the workshops and practical demonstrations also rated highly with nearly 70% indicating they were of very good or excellent quality.
Quality food and products are available for sale in sufficient quantity	Almost 50% of the survey respondents indicated that the quality and quantity of food available was only average or good. Although there was sufficient quantity, as there were only three food vendors, at peak times the service was slow and the quality was not at the vendors usual standard.
Facilities are functional	Over 70% of people in the survey said the amenities were of very good or excellent quality. Nearly all respondents rated the parking as good, very good or excellent. However, some attendees did have problems finding the toilets, and the speaker and workshop venues, due to lack of signage.
Festival operations incorporate 5-star	All stallholders agreed to implement EcoNetwork's 5-star system incorporating rethink, reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle. At the EcoNetwork stall the

sustainability principles	community cookbook 'Port to Plate' was on sale and Plastic Free Port Stephens were promoting their message and selling water bottles that could be recycled. As a result of hosting this event, St Philip's Christian College engaged with Port Stephens Council to incorporate recycling bins into their waste management system for the event and ongoing. Although this was a significant step, the Port Stephens Council waste officer conducted an audit of the bins during the day and found contamination of coffee cups in the recycling. Event programs were also found in the bins. More details of the audit can be found in Appendix C.
Festival is financially viable	Thanks to financial support from sponsors in combination with fundraising efforts, the festival was financially viable. The most lucrative fundraising activities included the gala dinner and the raffle tickets. Changes in customers purchasing patterns means that our fundraising efforts could have raised more money if we had a way of collecting money by a portable device for electronic transfer.

What were the main benefits of the festival?

The top three benefits cited were:

1. **Creating a positive atmosphere for learning about sustainability**
   The experience of interacting as a likeminded community, talking about practical sustainability, finding entertaining ways of learning and showcasing alternative ways of thinking and doing.

   The festival showed that its normal to care for the environment and to want to develop better ways of doing things for the planet. Meeting friendly people to talk about sustainability was key for many to feel supported and to be validated about what they are doing to help save the environment. Many stallholders collected valuable contacts to involve and extend the reach of their programs.

   Promoting sustainability in any small way was a take home message; taking a native tree home to plant, putting ideas on the agendas of respective community groups and learning about what others are doing were considered to be important positive benefits.

2. **Supporting the progression of St Philip's Christian College and Tomaree High School towards sustainability**
   EcoNetwork Port Stephens was proud to learn that St Philip's Christian College has strengthened their recycling program and that Tomaree High School's sustainability and environment program has been revitalised as a result of the festival. Tomaree High School has expressed interest in working with EcoNetwork more closely for future Festivals. The festival also resulted in stronger links between the schools and the waste management area of Port Stephens Council.

3. **Connecting local community groups and businesses with research and innovation expertise**
   Facilitating connections between industry leaders, businesses, governments and community groups was a beneficial outcome of the festival. EcoNetwork is aware that new technologies developed in research settings may have practical applications locally, in collaboration with community groups as a result of introductions that occurred at the festival.

How could the festival improve?

Many survey respondents did not provide any response to the question about improvements or replied with statements such as, 'Couldn't fault them'; 'Keep up the good work'; 'Great festival'; 'Don't think they could'; 'Location was great'; 'Great as is'; 'It was excellent overall'; 'It was a great day'.

Reponses from the children also included: 'Everything that was here'; 'Everything and more friends here'; 'More of the same'; 'Same as what it is today'; 'The kids activities here were great'; 'Everything'; 'It was awesome'.

Drawn from the communication log, survey results, children's feedback forms and facilitated discussion among the EcoNetwork Executive and organising committee, the top four suggested improvements were:

1. **Increase the quality and quantity of food options**
   More food stalls and options for coffee were strong suggestions. This person suggested, 'More food options! Farmers market style food stall —> local produce cooked or a class to make our own food'. Another person suggested that as well as food stalls,

   > *It would be great if there were: local famers and sustainable small farming practices to learn, lots of stalls with organic produce for sale, different and interesting sustainable clothing and other items for sale, petting zoos for kids with animal talks, stalls on herbal medicine and natural health, stalls on nutrition and how to grow food and feed your family, cooking classes instead of buying take away etc, how to make things instead of buying things, stalls with recycled clothing and goods ie Vinnies and Lifeline, more choice in suppliers ie only one solar person., Would like to see water filters and water tanks etc. I was hoping for very relatable information that I can apply to my every day world. It was very spread out with small stalls so it did feel a little empty. But I think its a fabulous concept and I hope to see it bigger and better next year. I would say do it twice a year, educate everyone. Thank you! :)*

2. **Increase the reach and variety of advertising and marketing**
   Although the marketing campaign included print, radio and social media strategy, as well as articles and paid advertisements in the Port Stephens Examiner, The Newcastle Weekly, InTouch Magazine, Port Stephens FM, ABC Newcastle, 2NUR, The University of Newcastle, posters in shop windows, and Google Ads, the survey respondents clearly recommended that the level of marketing and promotion be increased. This person said,

   > *Very well done for an inaugural festival ... more publicity next time might be useful. I have spoken to some who were disappointed they hadn't heard about it in advance. The page in the PS Examiner was good, however, I suspect not everyone gets that publication these days.*

   See Appendix E for media samples and Appendix F for promotion materials, program and photos.

3. **Improve the layout to enhance accessibility and interactions between attendees and stallholders**
   Increasing the number of signs, modifying the layout of the stallholders and announcing events throughout the day through a loudspeaker, would have made it easier for attendees to find their activities and interact with stallholders.

4. **Increase the entertainment options and activities targeted at older children and young adults**
   A number of feedback forms suggested increasing the number of workshops, demonstrations and experiments aimed at secondary school students.

Recommendations

1. **Hold another Sustainable Futures Festival as soon as possible to capitalise on the momentum generated at this successful inaugural event**
   Consider a partnership approach with an organisation that holds similar values so that expertise and event management capability can be shared to achieve mutual goals. Repeating or scaling up this event will require event management skills. EcoNetwork can bring grassroots community support, possibly funding from a variety of sponsors and experience in facilitating community events. A partnership approach would enable professional event management expertise to enhance the operational aspects. Next steps may include:
   - Identifying potential partners

- Exploring major event grant opportunities
- Identifying different models of festivals (1 day, 2-day, series of events, linking with theme)
- Initiating discussions with potential partner organisations and clarifying benefits, risks and terms of engagement
- Identify how a potential partnership could assist with addressing improvements required in this report in relation to accessing food and entertainment, marketing support and the issues related to the choice of venue.

2. **Follow up on ways that EcoNetwork can continue to connect local community groups and businesses with research and innovation expertise**
   The benefits arising from the festival will need additional support if they are to come to fruition. Further conversations between research, governments, business and community groups will need to be facilitated to continue to support local community-based circular economy initiatives.

3. **Consider how to further promote the objectives of EcoNetwork Port Stephens by capitalising on increased awareness following the festival, particularly in light of the upcoming 30-year anniversary celebrations**
   With an increased subscription base for the EcoUpdate, significantly increased social media presence and connections, and high level of community, and affiliate support, and potentially sponsor interest, EcoNetwork is in a position to strategically position itself to advocate for objectives identified in the organisation's constitution. Celebrating 30 years in 2023 is an ideal opportunity to build upon current momentum and further extend the network to achieve common goals. Planning events with these goals in mind will provide a strong base upon which to ensure the organisation is functioning efficiently into the future.

Appendix A - 5-star sustainability strategy

EcoNetwork attempted to deliver a lower environmental impact festival. We used this 5-star strategy to plan the event. We shared this strategy with stallholders so they could plan their sustainability strategy.

★ Rethink

We will consider what we use, what we buy and how we act, as each has an environmental cost

- Aim to use green transport: electric/hybrid car, car pool, walk, ride, or bus
- Aim to use only recycled paper-based promotion and prioritise digital promotion strategies
- Aim for no plastic bottles or plastic straws
- Encourage stallholders to have a connection to the sustainability theme

★ Reduce

We will aim to reduce our consumption of goods and energy and use lower impact forms of energy

- Aim to use lower-impact power from solar power generators, renewable sources, or incorporate an energy saving mechanisms or offset mechanism
- Aim to offset power used for sound, stage and entertainment
- Aim to measure our ecological footprint (carbon emissions)

★ Reuse

We will encourage goods that are reuseable, if possible

- Offer prizes and freebies such as reusable tote bags, reusable water bottles, herbs / plants / seed packets, local produce baskets and include sustainability messages
- Provide water stations for refillable bottles
- Encourage stallholders to participate in local reuse schemes (e.g. Green Caffeine or other)

★ Repurpose

We will encourage goods that have been repurposed or are reuseable, if possible

- Encourage stallholders to choose local suppliers, seasonal produce Australian made, fair-trade, vegetarian options, environmentally-friendly products, incorporate repurposed items
- Request stall holders to offer discounts for BYO containers and use no plastic bags or single use items
- Encourage stallholders to promote their strategies to customers (e.g. incorporate signs)
- Repurpose existing EcoNetwork promotional banners and borrow equipment from other organisations
- Focus our competitions on repurposing (e.g. Children's Art competition using recovered items)

★ Recycle

We will recycle as much as we can, but only after we've tried the strategies above

- Encourage stallholders to use recycled or eco-friendly packaging, cutlery, materials, reusable serve ware
- Separate refuse into plastic, cans, glass, compost and waste bins
- Monitor bins and ground litter

Appendix B - Monitoring and evaluation framework

Evaluation questions	Indicators	Data sources	Examples of reporting
1. To what extent did the festival achieve the immediate outcomes? - Attendees engage with, learn about and intend to adopt practical technologies - Businesses / affiliates / attendees form networks - Community awareness increases about the EcoNetwork	- Percentage of respondents indicating knowledge increase and intention to adopt technology - Percentage of respondents increasing their networks - Number of new members and subscribers to EcoUpdate newsletter	- Survey - Interviews - Game with children - Media reports including social media - Photos - Key quotes	- X% of respondents reported they increased their knowledge - X% of respondents adopted a practical technology - X% of children reported they learnt something new - X% of respondents connected with a community group or business previously unknown to them - EcoNetwork increased the membership base and EcoUpdate subscriptions by X%
2. To what extent did the festival deliver on the outputs?	- Numbers of attendees - Percentage of respondents rating their experience - Percentage of stalls aligned to sustainability - Number of stall holders aligned with 5-stars for sustainability - Measures taken to align with 5-stars for sustainability - Applause meter on guest speakers - Feedback from respondents on guest speakers - Feedback from respondents on food / products - Description of issues with facilities - Financial report (+/-) against budget	- Registration numbers - Door entry data - Survey - Interviews - Description of environmental measures - Expenditure report	- Number of festival attendees - X% of respondents reported an entertaining positive experience - X% of stall holders aligned with the sustainability theme - X% of stall holders who aligned with 5-stars and to what degree - The guest speaker who was the most well received was X - The feedback overall on the food / facilities was X, Y, and Z. - The festival made a profit/loss of $X and the most lucrative fundraising activities were X, Y, and Z.
3. What are the main benefits of the festival?	- Description of the benefits by category of attendee (Committee, funder, sponsor, attendee, stall holder)	- Survey - Key quotations	- The top three benefits were X, Y, Z.
4. How could the festival improve?	- Reported improvements / gaps / adaptations	- Survey - Committee and executive facilitated discussion	- The top three suggested improvements were: X, Y, Z.

Appendix C - Data collection methods and additional results

Survey

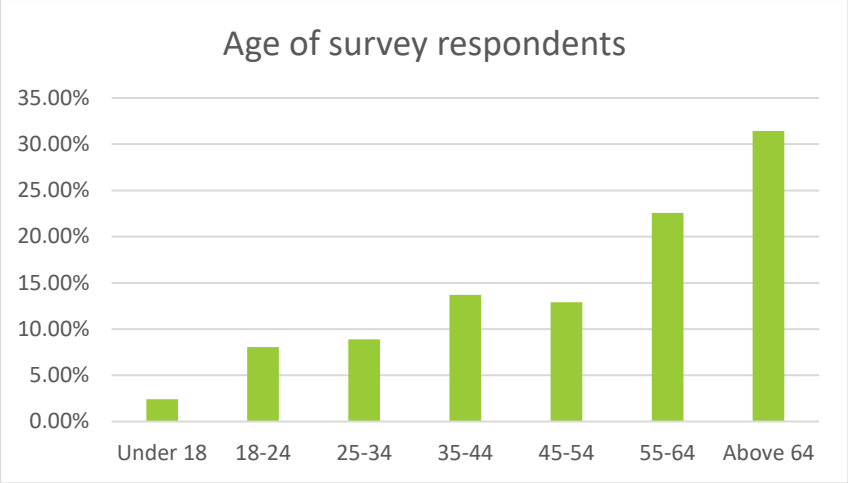
You are invited to participate in our Sustainable Futures Festival evaluation survey. In this survey, attendees (including the public, stall holders, and sponsors) will be asked to complete a survey that asks questions about their experience at the Sustainable Futures Festival.

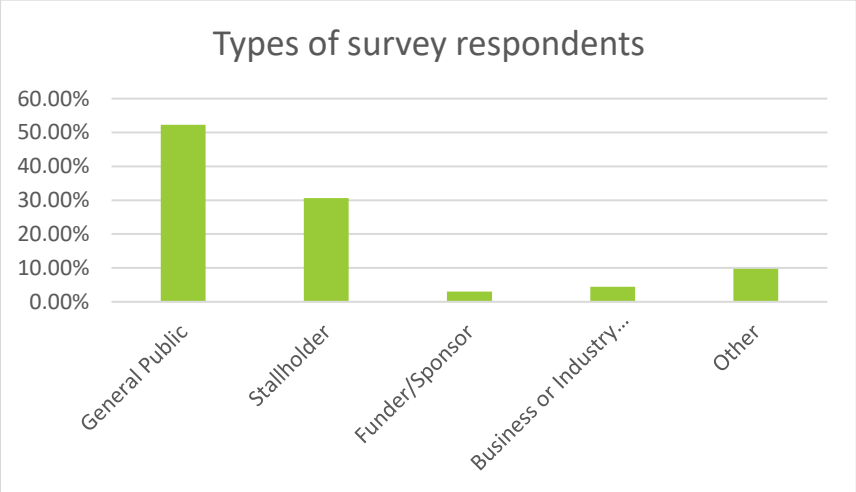
It will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this survey. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point. We would like your opinions to determine what things to improve for the next festival. Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. Thank you very much for your time and support. Do you agree to participate?

- On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate your overall experience at the Sustainable Futures Festival?
- On a scale of 0-10, how likely are you to attend the next Sustainable Futures Festival?
- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements concerning sustainable technologies and practices: (Bad/Good) (Dislike/Like) (Uninteresting/Interesting)
- What new sustainable technologies or practices did you learn about?
- What new sustainable technologies or practices do you intend to adopt?
- Please evaluate your experience with the following Sustainable Futures Festival activities and facilities (please select N/A if you did not experience an activity): Live entertainment, talks, exhibits, workshops and practical demonstrations, guest speaker, food, amenities, parking
- How many groups or businesses did you connect with at the Sustainable Futures Festival that were previously unknown to you? (None / 1-3 / 4-6 / 7+)
- On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate the volunteers at the Sustainable Futures Festival?
- Regarding the brand EcoNetwork, are you: (Unfamiliar/Familiar) (Inexperienced/Experienced) (Not Knowledgeable/Knowledgeable)
- How could EcoNetwork improve the next Sustainable Futures Festival?
- How did you hear about the Sustainable Futures Festival? (tick all that apply) (Newspaper/Radio/Social Media/Website/Friend or Colleague/ Other)
- How old are you?
- How do you identify?
- Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (select all that apply)?
- What is your post code? *[Technological issue prevented analysis]*
- How would you categorise your attendance today? (General Public/ Stallholder/ Funder/Sponsor/ Business or Industry representative with an interest in sustainability / Other)

Survey respondents

The number of people who took the survey was 147. This exceeded the target of 100 or 10% of the attendees. Nearly 80% of the respondents were female and more than 30% were over 65 years of age which was indicative of the observed demographics. Almost 4% of the survey respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Over 50% of the respondents identified as being members of the general public and 30% as stallholders.





Observations from the University of Newcastle Marketing and Tourism Discipline

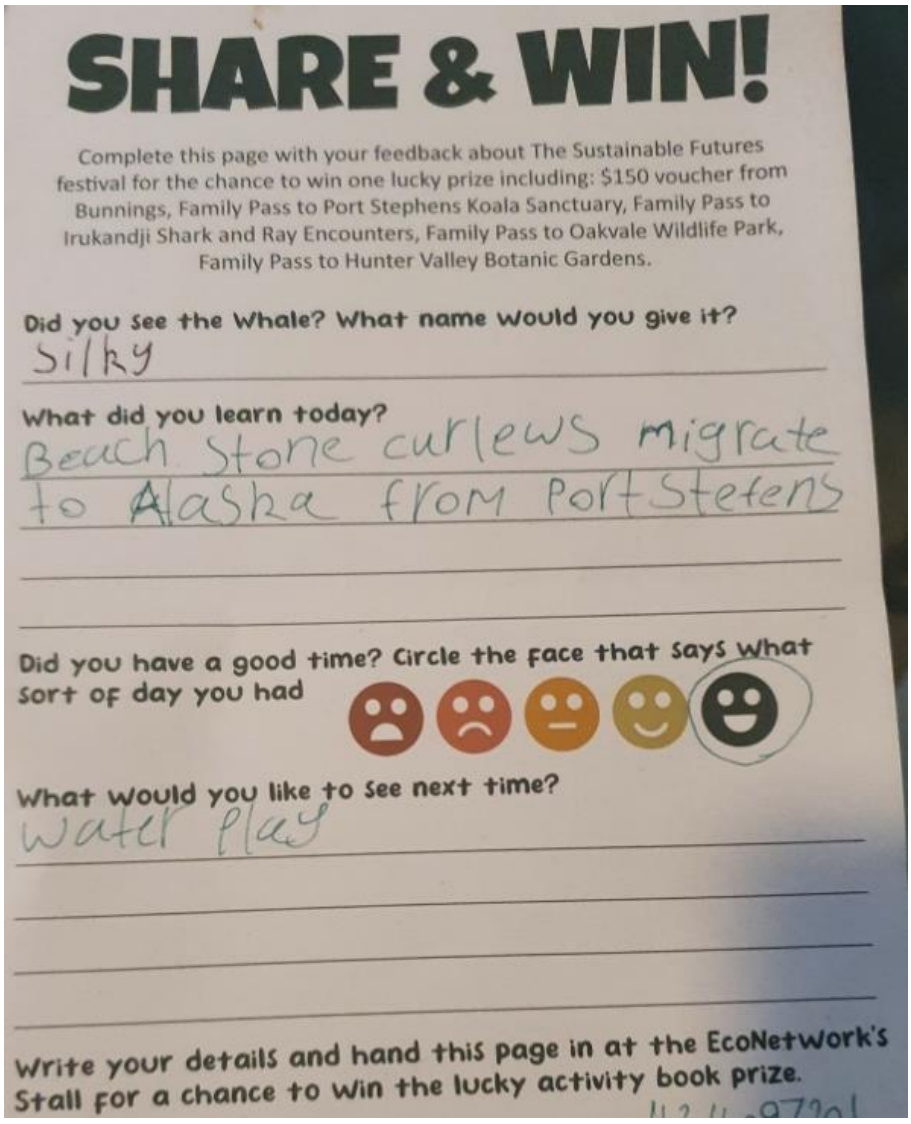
- Some attendees had trouble reading the timetable, so a clearer format could help improve moving between exhibitions
- Some attendees felt that the marketing of the event could be improved
- Signage was also a common theme, both TO the event and AT the event
- There was multiple feedback about the food available, some attendees would welcome more variety and food trucks, other attendees also thought that food collaborations with local producers would be a good addition
- Interactivity and diversity in workshops
- Better layout, some attendees thought using the oval would be good
- Transport for the elderly, some older attendees commented on having to pay for taxi etc. and that it was hard for them to get to the event, some sort of bus/shuttle bus would help here
- The last comment from students related to offering an incentive for participation in the evaluation survey, go in the draw to win something at the end of the day e.g., donated hamper, experience etc. This would also make people want to stay for the duration of the festival.

Children's feedback form

56 children completed the feedback form that asked these questions:

- Did you see the whale? What name would you give it?
- What did you learn today?
- Did you have a good time? Circle the face that says what sort of a day you had (Options)
- What would you like to see next time?

To incentivise participation, completing the feedback form enabled the chance to win prizes donated by Bunnings, Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary, Irukandji Shark and Ray Encounters, Oakvale Wildlife Park and Hunter Valley Botanic Gardens.



SHARE & WIN!

Complete this page with your feedback about The Sustainable Futures festival for the chance to win one lucky prize including: $150 voucher from Bunnings, Family Pass to Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary, Family Pass to Irukandji Shark and Ray Encounters, Family Pass to Oakvale Wildlife Park, Family Pass to Hunter Valley Botanic Gardens.

Did you see the Whale? What name would you give it?
Silky

What did you learn today?
Beach stone curlews migrate to Alaska from Port Stefens

Did you have a good time? Circle the face that says what sort of day you had

What would you like to see next time?
Water Play

Write your details and hand this page in at the EcoNetwork's Stall for a chance to win the lucky activity book prize.

Communication log

EcoNetwork recorded quotations from email correspondence. This list provides a sample:

Rob McCann, South Pacific Sustainability, said:

Just wanted to give you and the rest of Eco Network PS a wrap. That was one of the best sustainability events I have been to (and I've been to a lot). To my delight there was no corporate PR, no green washing, no 'empty suits'. Just great people, grass roots innovations and a very high level of expertise and knowledge. Exactly what an event like this should be. Talks were all excellent and the whole event ran really smoothly.

Port Stephens FM radio:

It is really lovely to hear your message is getting out to the community…. It was great to support such an important event.

Drew Coxon, Waste Services Project Officer:

Thank you very much for the invitation to assist the community with their waste needs by educating them on what Council are currently doing, and proposing to do to reduce waste and enhance the environment. I particularly enjoyed sharing the stage with Professor Veena Sahajwalla, as well as seeing all the innovative ideas of sustainability across the various fields. Congratulations on running such a successful inaugural event.

Marianne Newton:

I love the concept and would like to be involved in this type of creative art in Port Stephens.

Dr Mary E. Greenwood, Worimi Aboriginal Land Council

Thanks for the thanks, it was a good day all round and made even better by the lovely weather. As far as feedback: Good variety of stalls and activities. The only things I would mention is that: There could have been at least one additional food outlet - the coffee van was under the pump all day and his coffee was (understandably) not as good as he normally is. The feedback data produced by the University will be questionable at best – it was taken much too early, around 10am, and from mostly stallholders. Therefore biased in its answers – not representative of festival crowd – many questions not relative (e.g. have you watched a performance?). Hope this helps in planning the next one.

Eliane Beveridge, Hunter Water:

Just wanted to send you a quick email and say congratulations on a wonderful event! It was a really great day and I could tell the community thoroughly enjoyed it. Hunter Water was very happy to be involved and hopefully working together again!

Kassia Klinger:

Bloody Brilliant! Congratulations to all involved...

Melinda Anderson, DPI Fisheries:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the festival. It was evident that an immense amount of work went in behind the scenes to prepare for the day and deliver it so successfully. Congratulations to every one and hope to see you next year.

Hedda Askland (Speaker):

Thank you for the invitation to speak at the festival and for organising what was a truly wonderful and inspiring day.

Sally Fitzgerald (Volunteer):

I want to say a huge Thank You to all of you lovely people who volunteered to help on our Landcare Stall at such short notice. It was gratifying that the large number of people who came forward to

volunteer meant that none of us were stuck on the stall all day and that we all had ample opportunity to enjoy the information and joys that the other stalls and speakers offered. Everyone was so enthusiastic, willing and friendly that I personally think our stall was an outstanding success (even if we didn't manage to attract any new members but I like to think a few seeds were sown). I personally feel very lucky to be part of this caring and supportive group.

Mitchell Reese, Curious Legends:

We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Melissa, Corethics:

Thank you for including us in a memorable event - we are very grateful. Congratulations again, what a wonderful event. I met with a man who travelled from the Byron shire! So, well done :)

Vegan Ninja (Facebook Post): 11 September at 20:05

We're two Gymea Lillies, three xanthorrhoea Minors, a bottle of dishwashing liquid and a stack of inspiration richer, thanks to a sustainable futures festival at Salamander Bay. From people developing companies to turn old waste motor vehicle tyres into steel to families out with their children for a carnival day in the sun. Today was great, thank you - vegan ninja (paul).

Lisa Burton, Head Teacher Science, Tomaree High School

Firstly, I had such a great time there. It was wonderful to see so many and varied stalls and activities from our local community organisations and those from further afield. I made lots of valuable connections with groups, sustainable businesses and government agencies that will support my work as an environmental educator and teacher at the local high school.

Secondly, I got some fantastic ideas and advice about how to make my own home, garden and lifestyle more sustainable and reduce our carbon footprint into the future. I also purchased a range of products which I would have found more difficult to source without the festival bringing everyone together.

Thirdly, I was part of a team from Tomaree HS who had a stall displaying the work of our student environmental group and our Support Unit to improve our local environment and make our school more sustainable in terms of waste management and resource use. While we felt our stall was quite successful in promoting all of this, its location right near the entrance, tucked around a corner and away from the bulk of the other stalls meant a lot of people walked past us looking straight ahead towards where most of the action was happening. It was also unfortunate that there were no other schools present. It would be great for future festivals to provide more interactive experiences that could draw in more younger people.

Social media metrics

EcoNetwork Port Stephens has three social media channels, newly created Instagram account, fairly new Facebook Page EcoNetwork PS community and a Facebook Group EcoNetwork PS of several years.

- EcoNetwork has 2 facebook channels
    - EcoNetwork PS community, created nearly 12 months ago as a business page
        - Purpose is to profile EcoNetwork PS activity enabling posting with our logo and specifically about EcoNetwork activity
        - 183 likes, 206 follows
        - Open to anyone to view and follow and can be the access point for bookings
        - Create conversation around EcoNetwork activity
        - More EcoUpdate article should be posted here and shared
    - EcoNetworkPS Group, created about 6 years ago
        - Purpose is to

- enable conversation around environmental areas of interest to which any individual admitted to the group can post.
- profile EcoNetwork PS activity (though without a Page, posts cannot have EcoNetwork logo and are those of the individual who posts them).

- 453 members, of which nearly 200 joined in the last 12 months
- Increased social media activity reflects probably EcoNetwork's increased activity in the community, on and off line, commencement of EcoUpdate and EcoNetwork PS community Page

Visual waste audit

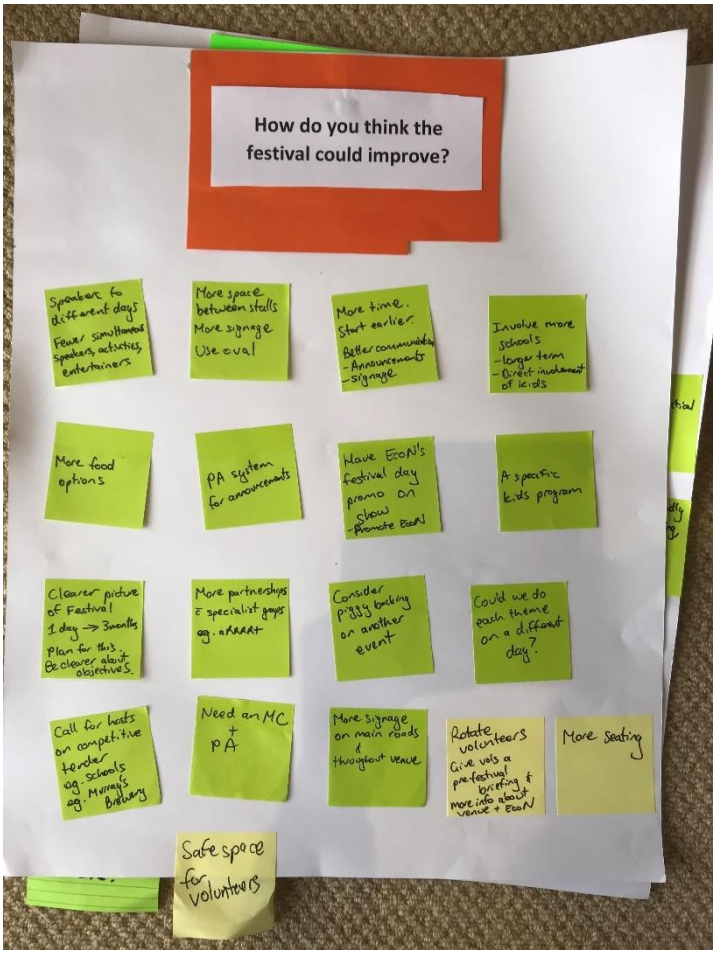
Summary of results from Waste Education Officer with the Port Stephens Council:

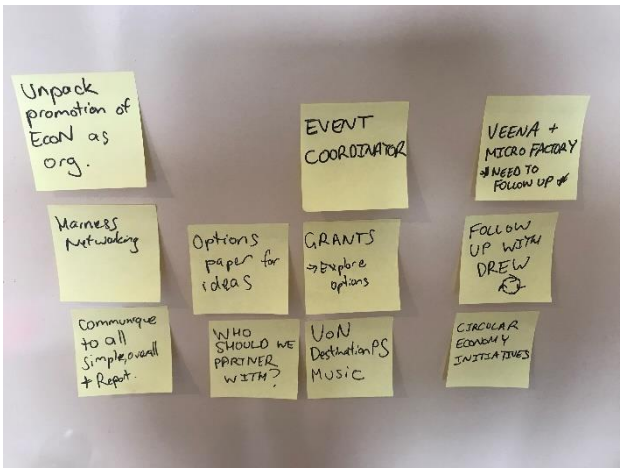
- *All but 1 bin was contaminated with coffee cups, napkins or other items like the Maccas plastic cups. Which I was expecting given public place recycling is difficult.*
- *None of the bins were over half full with the majority under a quarter full.*
- *1st image is recycling bin and second is garbage. These images are fairly consistent with the other bins. There were some cross over in items that could be recycled ending up in the garbage but this wasn't as bad as the recycling contamination.*

There were 5 bins (3 recycling, 2 garbage) that were found to have promotional material from the day in the bins.

Facilitated discussion EcoNetwork Executive and organising committee

Examples of workshop outcomes derived from confidential survey and facilitated discussion.





Appendix D - Stakeholders

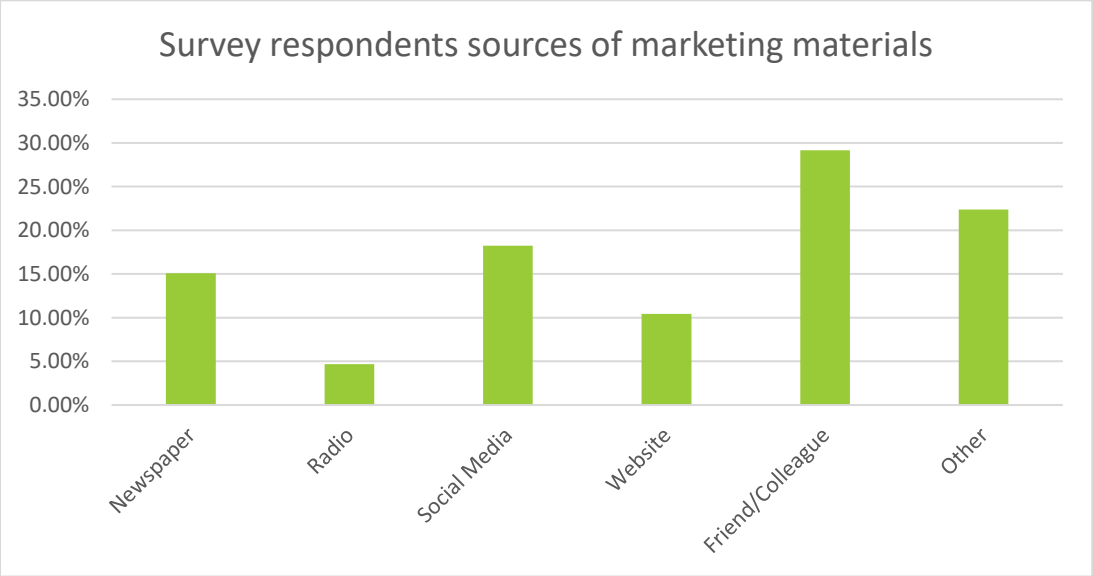
These are the stakeholders that were involved in the festival:

TYPE	TITLE
Organisers	EcoNetwork Port Stephens: Festival Organising Committee
EcoNetwork affiliates	- Friends of Tomaree National Park & NPA Port Stephens Walking Group - Mambo Wanda Wetlands Landcare and Conservation group - Salamander Bay and Soldiers Point Landcare Group - Climate Action Port Stephens - Salamander Bay Recycling - Rainbird Farm - Marine Parks Association - Hunter Region Botanic Gardens - Destination Port Stephens - Renew Hunter Branch - Resourceful Living - EcoPollinators, EcoNetwork Port Stephens
Partners	- St Philip's Christian College - Artisan Collective Port Stephens - University of Newcastle
Sponsors	- Port Stephens Council - Hunter Water - Hunter Region Landcare Network *(supported by Local Land Services Hunter through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program)* - Salamander Bay Recycling - Boomerang Bags Raymond Terrace - Marine Parks Association - The Wollotuka Institute - Boomerang Park Preservation Group
Organisations who donated prizes for the Festival day	- Ingenia Holidays - Koala Eco - Bunnings - Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary - Irukandji Shark and Ray Encounters - Oakvale Wildlife Park - Hunter Valley Botanic Gardens
Other organisations	- Business Port Stephens - Port Stephens Examiner - Port Stephens News of the Area
Speakers and workshop presenters	- Professor Veena Sahajwalla A smart vision for a sustainable future – creating sustainable materials and products from waste - Dr Hedda Askland Living in a non-place: mining, solastalgia and the loss of home - Dr Jarra Hicks Stories of community power - Tree Frog Permaculture Working with nature - an introduction to sustainable gardening - Dr John Shiel, Christine Rogers and Brian Tehan Saving money and energy at home – living sustainably in comfort all year round - Jessica Hodge Recycled plastic - a new raw material - Nadine Samwell

	Renovate, decorate or design your home using sustainable and healthy materials
Performances	- Let's Love Water – Hunter Water - With One Voice Port Stephens Choir - Police Citizens Youth Club Community Band - Tomaree Ukestra - St Philip's Middle School Travelling Troupe - Curious Legends – Bush Puppet Street Theatre - Midnight Dreaming – Contemporary Aboriginal Dance
Stallholders	- Port Stephens Council - Hunter Water - Hunter Region Landcare Network - Salamander Bay Recycling - Boomerang Bags Raymond Terrace - Friends of Tomaree National Park & NPA Port Stephens Walking Group - Mambo Wanda Wetlands Landcare and Conservation group - Salamander Bay and Soldiers Point Landcare Group - Climate Action Port Stephens - Renew – Hunter Region Branch - Plastic Free Port Stephens - Port to Plate - CLEANaS - OzHarvest - Trash Pixie Collective - Tomaree High School - St Johns Ambulance - Lions Club of Raymond Terrace - Resourceful Living - EcoEdition - Department of Primary Industries NSW - Totally Independent Solar Consultants - The Wilderness Society - Worimi Aboriginal Land Council - Midnight Dreaming (face painting and weaving) - National Parks and Wildlife Service - Hunter Jobs Alliance - Hunter Region Botanic Gardens - Wildlife in Need of Care - Oz Tukka - Tree Frog Permaculture - Rainbird Farm - Wonders of Nature Solar Ovens - Corethics - Ausave Energy - E Class Outboards - Sea Shelter - Port Stephens Koala Hospital - Fixer Electrical - Marine Parks Association - Wildlife in Need of Care
Food and beverages	- Natural Tucker - Lulu's Gelato Company - Marine Rescue Port Stephens
The University of Newcastle – Marketing and Tourism Discipline	- Dr Alicia Kulczynski (Associate Professor of Marketing) - Georgia Catoni - Samantha Laidler

	- Sophie Ella - Olivia Dent - Madeleine Fenning - Layla Kurdi - Isaac Cox
The University of Newcastle – Digital and Social Media	- Dr Alex Taylor (Lecturer and Marketing Technology Lab Manager) - Kate Robinson - Tracy Lea Meyer - Santiago Reyes

Appendix E - Media samples



Survey respondents indicated that a recommendation from a friend or colleague was the major way they found out about the festival. The Port Stephens Examiner was the newspaper most highly indicated and Facebook was the social media platform that was most common. Some of the other sources included the gala dinner, Resourceful Living Facebook page, the sign at the school and through Port Stephens council.

Social media posts

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/EcoNetworkPScommunity/

Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/EconetworkPortStephens/

Instagram: www.instagram.com/econetworkps

Social media posts shared to Facebook Page and Group, as well as Instagram, included:

- Individual event posts
- Several carousel of tiles introducing each theme and children's activities as part of the community theme
- Weekly count down tiles for the last 4 weeks pre festival day
- Tik Tok reels of presenters posted to social media channels
- Instagram stories posted throughout the festival day.
- After the Festival, an mp4 of tile collages posted to social media channels and website.

sustainable
futures
festival
SUN 11 SEPT | 10am
St Philip's Christian Col
Speaker: Hedda Askland
1 Week to go!!!
sustainable
futures
festival
SUN 11 SEPT | 10am - 4pm
St Philip's Christian College
inspiration | innovation | conversation
econetwork
port stephens
3 Weeks to go...
sustainable
futures
festival
SUN 11 SEPT | 10am - 4pm
St Philip's Christian College
inspiration | innovation | conversation
econetwork
port stephens
BETTER ECOSYSTEMS
econetwork
CURIOUS LEGENDS
CHILDREN &
INTERACTIVE
ACTIVITIES
& PERFORMANCES
Lachlan Storrie
Hunter Region Landcare - Shorebirds in our local area!

News and magazines

- Port Stephens Council Newsletter - Your Environment Edition 1, July 2022
  Port Stephens Council Your Environment newsletter August 2022

- CLEANaS Newsletter 11 July 2022
- https://mailchi.mp/366a6652ddae/cleanas-newslettercompany-or-co-operative-for-gundy-solar-farm?e=473ff373ac

- The Newcastle Weekly
  https://newcastleweekly.com.au/arrrrrt-awards-a-feature-of-port-stephens-first-sustainability-festival/

- Business Port Stephens
  https://us16.campaign-archive.com/?u=df30ffd066e54098ac6212f05&id=b4e369f4b9

2022 NSW Australian of the Year at the Sustainable Futures Festival

EcoNetwork's Sustainable Futures Festival is excited to announce their special guest speaker, the 2022 NSW Australian of the Year – Professor Veena Sahajwalla.

Professor Veena Sahajwalla, 'Eco Alchemist', is one of the world's leading innovators in the field of sustainable materials use, especially as it relates to carbon, and an international award-winning scientist and engineer. She is an engaging speaker and passionate about mining the mountains of rubbish and waste materials produced by modern society and re-using them in industrial processes or to create new goods.

There's family activities, workshops and stalls. For more information on the **EcoNetwork's Sustainable Futures Festival** taking place on **Sunday 11 September 2022 at St Philip's Christian College, Salamander Bay,**

- Hunter and Coastal Lifestyle
  https://hunterlifestyle.com.au/category/hunter-happenings/upcoming-events/
  The Festival appeared in the hardcopy and digital magazines, enewsletter and on their Facebook and Instagram pages.

Hunter & Coastal LIFESTYLE

Sustainable Futures Festival

EcoNetwork Port Stephens are holding their inaugural festival on 11 September with a jam-packed program on environmental innovation and sustainable living. With expert speakers, displays and stalls from landcare, marine groups and eco-entrepreneurs, gardening advice and solar cooking demos, the festival promises to be a happy place with positive vibes for the entire family.
Sunday, 11 September at St Philips Christian College in Salamander Bay, entry by gold coin donation.
For more info visit Ecops.au/sff

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES FESTIVAL
econetwork port stephens

- What's on in our backyard
  https://www.whatsoninourbackyard.com.au/spring-issue-2022/

- BY JOANNA ATHERFOLD FINN -

IF YOU ASK locals and visitors what they love about Port Stephens, most will mention the striking coastscape or beautiful bushland. We are proud of our local environment, so it makes sense to protect it. What's On In Our Backyard chatted to Ewa Meyer from EcoNetwork Port Stephens about how we can make a difference.

With so many dire messages about the environment, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Any advice?

I remember quotes from decades ago like 'Think Global, Act Local' and 'The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it' (Robert Swan).

It's time that the messaging focused more on personal responsibility instead of looking at who to blame. It's only natural to feel disconnected from the global challenges that we face, but practical action needs to happen at all levels of society. Highlighting these issues through personal or community discussions helps to empower individuals to believe that they can make a difference. Nothing is more frustrating and depressing than feeling helpless in a situation where you perceive you have no influence.

So why is it taking us so long to accept this approach? Maybe perceptions are beginning to change as we now experience the climate crisis first hand. It's clear that fires, floods, storms and other natural disasters are becoming more frequent and more intense as was predicted decades ago.

More of us have acknowledged that we need to change the way we live. It's up to all of us, and we will have a stronger voice when we combine as an influential force for change where it's needed, or as a safeguard when it's not.

What is EcoNetwork Port Stephens and how do people become involved?

EcoNetwork Port Stephens works in partnership with over 30 local community groups and businesses, as well as with individual members, to protect the biodiversity of our beautiful region. Most members are involved with individual groups and run diverse initiatives such as restoring the dunes, protecting the wetlands or contributing to local planning policies. Everyone, whether working or retired, is a volunteer. We don't have an office or shared resources; we do what we do because we are passionate about the natural environment.

My own involvement started last year. I read about a forum EcoNetwork Port Stephens were hosting. I was so impressed by just how much environmental action and advocacy was undertaken locally by members and affiliated groups. To help share information, my husband and I created the e-newsletter EcoUpdate. Signing up to this gives access to the experience and expertise of members and local experts.

If there was one thing that would make a difference to our local environment that we could implement today, what would that be?

Think twice and look around before you do anything that might affect the trees, the water or the wild animals. Instead of: 'That tree in my backyard is getting too big; I'll get someone to chop it down,' consider that it may be home for a family of possums or sugar gliders living in its hollow branches. Or it's likely that birds use it as a lookout or to escape predators. It also provides pollen, insects and leaves as natural food for wildlife. Your garden matters more than you realise – it's a stepping stone for wildlife moving between larger patches of woodland.

Then, consider the alternatives – perhaps you could get a qualified arborist to remove overhanging branches with care. Or better still, leave it as it is, if safe to do so. Also, chat with others about taking care of wildlife habitat on private or public property. Maybe your local councillor can provide assistance with planting trees or nature strips. Most importantly, believe that you on your own CAN make a difference in your neighbourhood, one street at a time.

- August 2022 issue of the Hunter Business Review.
  http://www.hbrmag.com.au/assets/Uploads/HBR-August-2022-issue-online.pdf

Sustainable Futures Festival

In the Hunter, as in the rest of Australia and overseas, there is ever-increasing pressure on governments, business and community to understand and embrace the implications for how we operate now and into the future. To this end, EcoNetwork Port Stephens are bringing together sustainability experts, business owners and the local community at the inaugural Sustainable Futures Festival on 11 September on the Tomaree Peninsula.

Professor Veena Sahajwalla is the founding Director of the Sustainable Materials Research & Technology Centre at UNSW. Her industry-integrated research program has resulted in a world-first, patented process called Polymer Injection Technology for recycling end-of-life plastics and rubber in electric arc furnace steelmaking, resulting in the production of 'Green Steel'.

The Polymer Injection Technology process has shown that researchers and industry can successfully collaborate to make a valuable contribution to enhance the efficiency of manufacturing, whilst simultaneously diverting end-of-life materials from landfill.

Professor Sahajwalla has delivered keynote and invited addresses at some of the most prestigious research gatherings and conferences in the world and has lectured in Argentina, Canada, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa, Sweden, UK and USA. She has also published more than 250 refereed papers in leading journals and conference proceedings in her field.

Professor Veena Sahajwalla is heading up the impressive program of speakers and presenters at the Sustainable Futures Festival including:

- Dr Hedda Askland from the University of Newcastle's Centre for Social Research and Regional Futures who studies the issues of displacement and resettlement within mining-affected communities in rural Australia including the Upper Hunter. She is also working on a 'sustainable energy futures' project for NSW.
- Dr Jarra Hicks, founding director of the Community Power Agency, a worker's cooperative that supports communities to participate in and benefit from the transition to renewable energy.

The Sustainable Futures Festival in Port Stephens aims to showcase leading solutions to the ecological and social changes we face. Adapting to new technologies can be a challenge. Scientists such as Professor Veena Sahajwalla are showing us there are practical solutions to the problems we face.

For more details and to keep up to date, visit ecops.au/pvs

Appendix F - Promotion materials, program and photos

Sustainable Futures Festival Program

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Time	Speakers (Auditorium)	Workshops (Seniors Building)	Performances (Stage)	Stall Talks	All Day Activities
10:00	GATES OPEN - GOLD COIN DONATION APPRECIATED				
10:00			Tomaree Ukestra	10:15am Planting for our amazing native bees and tiny pollinators EcoPollinators, EcoNetwork PS	Curious Legends Bush Puppet Street Theatre
10:30	Welcome Mayor Palmer Port Stephens Council	Working with nature - an introduction to sustainable gardening By Tree Frog Permaculture (outdoors)		Community recycling opportunities Salamander Bay Recycling	Meet and name the whale and save our oceans Marine Parks Association
11:00			St Philip's Middle School Travelling Troupe	Use it Up Oz Harvest	aRRRRRt Award Artisan Collective
11:30	A smart vision for a sustainable future - creating sustainable materials and products from waste Professor Veena Sahajwalla		Let's Love Water Show, an interactive children's show, Hunter Water (Basketball court)	Electric boats explained E Class Outboards	Andrea Barnett, singer songwriter Climate Action Port Stephens
12:00			One Voice Choir	Shorebirds of Port Stephens, ultra marathon flyers, need our help HRLN	Make a bin liner Boomerang Bags
12:30		Saving money and energy at home - living sustainably in comfort all year round Dr John Shiel, Christine Rogers and Brian Tehan		Little Aussie Battlers Port Stephens Council	Make a trash card Trash Pixies
1:00			PCYC Port Stephens Community Band	Koala care, rehabilitation and their future Port Stephens Koala Hospital	My little ecosystem: 10:30am Native plants and pollinators 11:30am Native insect hotel 1:00pm Frog hotel 2:00pm Worm farm and composting Port Stephens Council
1:30	Living in a non-place: mining, solastalgia and the loss of home Dr Hedda Askland	Recycled plastic - a new raw material Jessica Hodge, Resourceful Living	Let's Love Water Show, an interactive children's show, Hunter Water (Basketball court)	Electric vehicle charging made easy Fixer Electrical	Port Stephens shorebirds, ultra marathon flyers, need our help 11:00am and 2:00pm Hunter Region Landcare Network
2:00				Water-based energy storage devices Allegro Energy	
2:30	Stories of community power Dr Jarra Hicks	Choosing sustainable and healthy materials for your home Nadine Samwell, Eco Edition	Midnight Dreaming Contemporary Aboriginal Dance Performance. Sponsored Wollotuka Institute	Working with nature - an introduction to sustainable gardening By Tree Frog Permaculture	Solar cooking technologies 12:00noon Wonders of Natural Solar Oven
3:00		Festival Close - Kate Washington MP, announcement of - - aRRRRRt prize (Open, Secondary, Primary, People's Choice) - Raffle draw - Port Stephens Council My little ecosystem workshop winner - Children's Activities Passport		Community working together to improve our biodiversity Friends of Tomaree National Park, National Parks Association	Introduction to Australian native edible flora 12:00noon Oz Tukka
4:00		DEPARTURE			Meet the Friends of: Sea Shelter Mambo Wanda Wetlands

had a great arvo at the @econetworkps Sustainable Futures Festival
SUSTAINABLE FUTURES FESTIVAL
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WOW
What a day!
sustainable futures festival
SUN 11 SEPT | 10am - 4pm
St Phillip's Christian College
Salamander Bay | Worimi Country

Oz Tukka
NATURAL TUCKER LOCATED AT SALAMANDER SQUARE