

# Clothing Exchange

**Case Study  
Hornsby Shire Council  
November 2008**



## Project Description

With its proven success in inner Melbourne and Sydney, trialling a clothing exchange in Hornsby Shire during National Recycling Week 2008 seemed like a great idea. By creating an event where clothing items are swapped for tokens and these tokens swapped for another participant's clothes, we aimed to create a place where our guests re-think unnecessary consumerism and reuse and recycle their clothing. The event was undertaken with the help of Anglicare, and a partnership formed enriching the event as we shared resources. On a Wednesday 12th November, guests were invited to check-in from 6:30pm - 7:30pm and received tokens for each clothing item accepted. Nibbles and drinks were also offered at this time whilst Hornsby Shire Council and Anglicare staff were accepting and hanging clothes, and welcoming guests. The exchange itself was between 7:30pm - 9:30pm, and when checking out, guests were asked to fill out a brief survey.

## Project Rationale

With the latest fashions often comes rejection of older clothing. In the Shire's relatively wealthy suburbs, with large malls, consumerism is a driving force that often results in waste of clothing items. We want to encourage residents to consider the environmental impact of purchasing new clothes before going shopping and to realise that swapping clothing is a viable option for updating their wardrobes.



## Project Stakeholders

- Hornsby Shire Council
- Female residents over the age of 18
- Anglicare
- Bethany Joy Monstead (local fashion designer)

## Partnerships

A partnership created with Anglicare in the initial planning stages was invaluable to the success of the evening. Council's Waste Educators were able to better understand and plan for some logistical challenges, additionally we borrowed clothing racks and 200 clothing items to kick start the event. This collaboration meant a variety of perspective, knowledge and ideas were shared throughout the planning process. We also drew on the expertise of Bethany Joy, a local up and coming fashion designer, who helped decorate the venue in a garden tea party theme, with four of her models showcasing fashion designs.

## Project outcomes arising from evaluation

Survey results from this first, trial event indicate that the exchange was a success. And with 95% of participants indicating they would attend similar events in the future, it seems we have a captive audience and the clothing exchange model, successful in inner city also seems to work in suburban Sydney. We estimate approximately 90 participants attended, the majority bringing the maximum 6 items of clothing to exchange. 96% of participants indicated they enjoyed the event, and when asked why, 12% of survey responses indicated it was

because it was a good way to recycle or reuse their clothes. One guest even indicated she found clothing she could use for her Higher School Certificate textiles major work.

## Lessons for future events

A post event meeting highlighted a number of lessons.

Up to four hours is required to set up on the day of the event and there could be a venue for participants to drop off their clothing a week prior to the event.

This first exchange event did not include any overt environmental message at the event, and this is an area the organisers think is crucial to include in future events. Waste educators will focus on delivering clear and effective Reduce, Reuse and Recycling messages as part of future events.

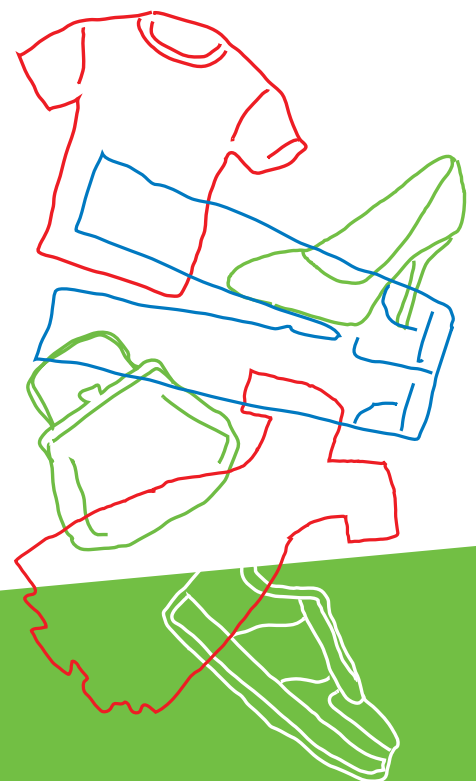
Before and throughout the event we encouraged 'Clothing exchange etiquette'. These included friendly conditions of entry, posted throughout the venue and read out in the welcome announcement.

We made it clear in advertisements and promotions that no more than 6 new or lightly used clothing items would be accepted per person. It turned out that most participants happily adhered to this etiquette and there were no major problems. We believe making these guidelines very clear before and during the event was essential in ensuring clothing was not dumped and only higher quality items were accepted.

Decorations, relaxing music and providing a complimentary glass of champagne and cheese and crackers helped to create a great atmosphere and a fun girls' night!

*Four main lessons learnt:*

- 1 Allow ample time to set up*
- 2 Plan a clear and effective message*
- 3 Set guidelines for the exchange event and aim to provide a relaxed environment*
- 4 Promote the event carefully and clearly*



## ADDEMDUM

### April 2009 Event

Hornsby Council hosted a further Clothing Exchange in April 2009. The event followed a similar format. Swappable items included women's clothes and accessories. Participants were invited to check in between 6:30 and 7:30 with the items Swapped between 7:30 and 9:30. The event was co-hosted developed in partnership with Anglicare. There were 139 participants.

### Educational additions

To increase the educational benefit of the events we have implemented a number of additional activities including:

- Printing recycling education facts and information on the tokens with a question on one side and the answer on the other and
- Putting butcher's paper around the walls and asking participants to write ways they reuse or recycle items on them.

### Event evaluation

The evaluation for the April event showed:

- guests indicated they enjoyed the event
- The majority of residents, nearly 80%, had not attended the previous event.
- When asked about the main message guests were taking home from the event, many indicated they were taking home reuse tips (29%) and positive messages about recycling (59%). These are significant responses and it seemed as though the reuse message got across to most guests.
- Also encouraging 97% of guests indicated they would share these recycling and reuse messages with family, friends and neighbours.

In terms of promotion, 71% of guests indicated that they heard about the Clothing Exchange in newspapers and 4% indicated they had heard via the flier.



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**This case study was developed by Hornsby Council to assist other councils participating in Planet Ark's Big Aussie Swap.**

**For details about the National Recycling Week or the Big Aussie Swap contact Brad Gray at Planet Ark on 02 8484 7206 or [brad@planetark.org](mailto:brad@planetark.org)**