



## Community Sharps Management in NSW Councils

Results of a survey to identify the level of engagement by NSW Councils in the management of community sharps

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## Community Sharps Management in NSW Councils

**Background:** In late July 2013, an online survey was developed to identify councils in NSW that have plans and processes for managing and disposing of community sharps in NSW, and those who may require assistance from the Community Sharps Management Program to develop effective strategies. The survey link was sent via yahoo groups to the waste educators' network and the sustainability network. A week later, LG NSW circulated the link in two newsletters: *Sustainability Snippets* that is circulated to the environmental contacts within councils and *LG Weekly* that is circulated to all councils. The Environmental Protection Agency also circulated the survey link through their council waste networks. The survey closed on 30<sup>th</sup> August.

The survey asked 4 questions – the first two were designed to identify whether a council has Community Sharps Management plans and policies. The third question was designed to identify the provision of publically accessible disposal bins. If the response was yes, councils could provide additional details on the sizes and numbers of bins. The fourth question asked if the council had partnerships with local pharmacies or health services.

Of the 152 councils in NSW, 58 councils completed the survey with rural, regional and metropolitan councils responding.

### Survey introduction

The Community Sharps Management Program (CSMP) is a state-wide program funded by the NSW Ministry of Health, aimed at advocating for, and promoting, a coordinated response to community sharps management. The project applies a partnership approach and supports councils and other stakeholders to implement best practice community sharps management practices across NSW via a Grants Program, by facilitating planning processes and through the provision of information and resources.

This brief survey will help us identify which councils have effective Community Sharps Management Plans and processes and councils that may require assistance and support to improve the management and disposal of community sharps.

## Survey results

A total of 58 councils completed the survey.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Glen Innes Severn Council</li> <li>▪ Inverell Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Liverpool Plains Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Urana Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Tamworth Regional Council</li> <li>▪ Bellingen Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Holroyd City Council</li> <li>▪ Queanbeyan</li> <li>▪ Greater Taree City</li> <li>▪ Holroyd City</li> <li>▪ Uralla Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Tumut Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Maitland City Council</li> <li>▪ Bankstown City Council</li> <li>▪ Willoughby City Council</li> <li>▪ Coffs Harbour</li> <li>▪ Marrickville Council</li> <li>▪ Hawkesbury City Council</li> <li>▪ Parramatta City Council</li> <li>▪ Hornsby Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Camden</li> <li>▪ Blacktown City Council</li> <li>▪ Wollongong City Council</li> <li>▪ Cessnock City Council</li> <li>▪ Deniliquin NSW</li> <li>▪ Junee Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Wakool</li> <li>▪ Tumut Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Murrumbidgee shire</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Albury City Council</li> <li>▪ Walgett shire Council</li> <li>▪ Lismore City Council</li> <li>▪ Mosman Council</li> <li>▪ Guyra</li> <li>▪ Port Macquarie-Hastings Council</li> <li>▪ Oberon Council</li> <li>▪ Great Lakes Council</li> <li>▪ Orange City</li> <li>▪ Cobar Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Narromine Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Armidale Dumaresq</li> <li>▪ Murray Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Penrith City Council</li> <li>▪ North Sydney Council</li> <li>▪ Marrickville</li> <li>▪ Liverpool</li> <li>▪ Shoalhaven City Council</li> <li>▪ Cooma Monaro shire council</li> <li>▪ Tenterfield Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Urana Shire Council</li> <li>▪ City of Sydney</li> <li>▪ Mosman Municipal Council</li> <li>▪ Lockhart Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Temora Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Cabonne Council</li> <li>▪ Coolamon Shire Council</li> <li>▪ Temora Shire Council</li> </ul> |  |
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### 1. Does your Council have a Community Sharps /Syringe Management Plan?

75% (44) of respondents reported their Council did not have a Management Plan for Community Sharps. While a few councils responded that sharps were not an issue, or that there was not a designated staff member responsible for sharps management policy, many others identified existing infrastructure and partnerships with health services to manage community sharps.

Councils with plans included Sydney, Willoughby, Holroyd, Shoalhaven, Marrickville, Armidale Dumaresq, Tumut, Carbonne Shire Council and Cooma.

Comments:

- *The City established its Syringe Management Plan in 2005, with a focus on community sharps bins and community education. City of Sydney*
- *Such rare occurrence does not justify a plan to be constructed. Murrumbidgee*
- *There is no staff member currently responsible for a sharps management plan or policy. Port Macquarie Hastings*

- We have place sharps bins in many locations within town as well as at the Waste transfer facility. Armidale Dumaresq
- Penrith City Council has a policy for safe sharps disposal for staff, and also liaises with the local representatives of the NSW Health Needle and Syringe Program regarding hotspot locations for discarded syringes. Training and proper collection equipment (containers and tongs) is also provided for Council staff to ensure safe collection. In conjunction with NSW Health Needle and Syringe Program, Council has also developed a brochure for the community to assist in safe sharps disposal, including the location of NSW Health collection bins in the Penrith LGA. Penrith
- Council has procedures and work method statements for the safe collection/disposal for the operational staff. North Sydney
- We have a Sharps Handling Policy (for staff) that guides how Council resolves to manage syringes within the community. Holroyd
- Sharp management forms part of Council's overall waste management plan. Parramatta

2. **Does Council have Guidelines for managing community sharps?**

57% (33) of respondents indicated their council did not have Guidelines for managing sharps.

3. **Does Council provide publically accessible disposal bins?**

78% (45) of respondents indicated their councils provide publically accessible disposal bins. The numbers of bins per council ranged from 1(Marrickville, North Sydney) to 120 (Bankstown) and bin sizes from 1.4 litre to 240L were provided.

4. **Do you have any partnerships with health or pharmacies re community sharps?**

56% (30) of respondents identified various partnerships including paying contractors to manage bins in pharmacies, provision of free 1.4L "home –use bins" for diabetics, and partnerships with NSP services.

Comments:

- We have about 10 pharmacies that provide the bins and council pays for the disposal. Hornsby
- Council partners with the local AMCAL chemist who accepts any syringes bought to the pharmacy. Council pays for the servicing and disposal of the bins. Queanbeyan
- We offer a free drop off service to residents. There are 7 local pharmacies currently involved in the program as collection points. Holroyd
- Council works closely with the local representatives from NSW Health Needle and Syringe Program who provides community sharps bins at suitable locations in the Penrith LGA. NSW Health have also provided training for the safe disposal of community sharps to Council staff in recent years, and also work with Council on developing community education resources. NSW Health Needle and Syringe Program also have a representative on Council's Penrith Community Safety Partnership. Penrith
- Supply free of charge "Home -Use" 1.4 litre sharps containers to Pharmacies for diabetic clients. Also pay for hire & servicing of locked 240 litre contaminated waste bins at pharmacies that store the filled Home-Use containers. Orange
- Bins are located at Community Health building at Moulamein, and chemist shop at Barham. Council meets the cost of servicing these bins. Wakool

## Summary

This is the first time NSW councils have been surveyed about community sharps management, with over one third responding. The information gathered shows that in most council areas, publically accessible disposal bins are available to residents. The size, location and numbers varied across councils. Just over half the respondents indicated partnerships with pharmacies or local health services. Only a quarter of respondents have a sharps management plan and only half have Guidelines for managing sharps. This does not necessarily indicate that sharps management is not effectively addressed, as councils may address the issues through WHS policies or other mechanisms.

The survey results highlight a number of areas where the Community Sharps Management Program can assist councils to strategically manage community sharps. These include:

1. Compiling a collection of Community Sharps Management Plans, Guidelines and other documents that will be accessible via the Community Sharps Management Program website ( [www.communitysharps.org.au](http://www.communitysharps.org.au)). This resource will assist councils wanting to develop or update their policies/plans.
2. Providing councils with links to their local health and pharmacy networks to assist them to strategically develop and implement community sharps management policies and practices.
3. Promoting the CSMP and Grants Program to councils who want to develop or expand their sharps management via local government and waste networks and the CSMP website.
4. Posting this survey on the CSMP website and reporting the results to key stakeholders including harm minimisation and council networks, Pharmacy Guild, Diabetes Australia and the NSW Ministry of Health.