



Judges' Report

CATEGORY:

Business Innovation

Oceania Healthcare – Marina Cove Worm Farm

INTERVIEWED

Michelle Campbell, Marina Cove Village Manager

DATE

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JUDGES

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INTRODUCTION

Oceania Healthcare specialises in retirement and aged care living and its focus is "reimagining retirement living so you can stay connected to what matters most". Its facility, Marina Cove Village, in Picton is a shining example of their focus on staying connected and is situated on the waters of the Picton marina. The village has 39 residents who choose to focus on sustainable practices and connecting with their external community. Residents live in apartments that all have a view of the water and marina surrounded by trees and vegetation.

Residents are extremely active with several groups focused on fitness and wellbeing and staying active and present in the community. Sustainable practices are high priority among residents and stay with well organised recycling programmes, efficient water and energy use and edible gardens and a large flourishing village garden allotment. Residents are meticulous in their approach to the garden and producing organic year-round crops and the joy it brings to them is obvious along with a little bit of rivalry for the title of 'best grower'.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Village residents have a number of choices on how they would like to live and what their key values will be. One of their top priorities is sustainable living including energy and water efficiency, nutritious food grown and sourced locally and wellbeing within the village and their contribution to the community. Residents worked together to create the 'Marine Cove Worm Farm' and use it as their primary method of converting food waste into compost to be returned onto gardens.

An old bathtub was converted into a worm farm and involved all the residents in a working bee. An electronic trap was purchased to ensure pests are not an issue and visual and odour were also mitigated with novel ideas from the group.

Accessibility to all residents is an important value and the way in which the gardens were arranged has ensured all residents can access the worm farm to feed their food scraps whenever they need to. The "worm tea" is also available whenever it's required and has proved to be the secret weapon in garden and vegetable growing competitions.

Feedback from residents has been overwhelmingly positive with benefits emerging from a number of fronts. For example, the worm farm produces valuable "tea" that is diluted and added back to gardens as a highly nutritious additive. School children and grandchildren visit the village and learn from residents about their worm farm and circularity in food systems. Several children and schools have been inspired to start their worm farms.

Solid waste in the form of council rubbish has reduced by 50% since the inception of the worm farm which is almost entirely attributable to the reduction on food scraps going to landfill waste streams. Residents believe they can reduce landfill even further when a planned composting area is built near the worm farm.



THEE FUTURE

Worm farms aren't new but the way in which Marina Cove Village has embraced their farm into everyday life, made it accessible to all residents, and made it part of their circular waste system is new to the residents.

Due to the worm farm project residents have reduced landfill waste by 50% and another unexpected result was the effect it had on wellbeing through increased daily interaction between residents, staff and community members.

The future is to expand the farm size to cater for all relevant food waste and to share the resulting worm tea beyond what is needed for the village to others in the community.

Continuing to share their story and to interact with grandchildren and school children is also vitally important to the village who are focused on sharing knowledge to help the wider community reduce their food wastage.

Residents would like to start a market to sell tigerworm and encourage others to start worm farming and sell or gift produce from their gardens.

The worm farm is one of several initiatives' residents have going or plan to start that including:

- native tree planting to encourage natives and bees into the area.
- building a designated composting area near the worm farm catering for food waste unsuitable for worms.

CHALLENGES

- The greatest challenge was getting all residents and staff to buy into the project which relied on at least 90% participation to be viable. Education was the key to successful engagement and once people were aware of the benefits to waste reduction and better-quality gardens and produce the project gained momentum. It is now managed by a garden committee.
- Deciding on what can and can't be added to a worm farm was initially challenging and has given rise to a secondary project to develop a composting area to take food waste unsuitable for worms.



SUMMARY

Marina Cove is a beautiful village situated on the water's edge and residents value their environment and community. The worm farm is an exciting project that has led to many unexpected benefits and new projects. The key to the project and its ongoing success is due to buy-in by all residents and staff.

THE JUDGES WERE IMPRESSED BY

- The values and ethics of the company and its residents.
- Moving quickly from idea to implementation.
- Gaining buy-in from all residents and staff.
- Inclusion of schools, school pupils and wider community.
- Demonstrating circular management and the flow-on effect to related projects.
- The wonderful individual vegetable beds that are managed the individual residents
- The findings that individual vegetable beds are more stimulating than shared beds - residents can grow what they like and do a 'crop-swap' on Thursday mornings!

JUDGES RECOMMENDATIONS

- The benefits of this project to all participants has been extensive including waste management, quality nutrition, wellbeing and community involvement. The judges recommend Marina Cove Village to share its positive experiences with other healthcare centres and educate other healthcare centres about the positive outcomes for the residents and the environment.
- The project is highly recommended and still requires more time to fully prove out the benefits of the worm farm and to establish the composting area. The judges recommend getting expert advice for the composting area.
- The judges also recommend Marina Cove Village to connect with Hortus to share their experiences and perhaps develop a plan to support each other on this journey of reducing food waste to the landfill and developing new strategies for its residents.

