

## Case Study

# Assessing Awareness of and Sentiment towards Environmental Sustainability

## Northern Health (Australia)

### GGHH Agenda Goals appreciate

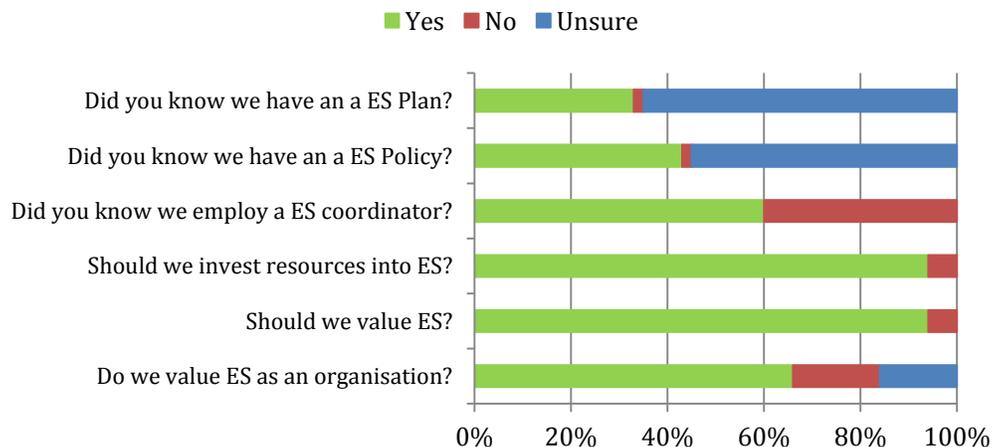
- Leadership

### Hospital Goal

- To increase awareness that Northern Health (NH) monitors environmental impacts in the areas of energy and water consumption, Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and waste production.
- To increase awareness that NH has resources invested in Environmental Sustainability (a Coordinator and a Steering Committee), and frameworks to support these (a Policy and a Plan).
- To demonstrate leadership by engaging staff and the community in conversations about the interactions between health and the environment.

### Progress Achieved

- Leadership benefit: directly engaged over 14% of staff and collected their ideas about what they would like to see achieved in the Environmental Sustainability (ES) space.
- Leadership benefit: increased staff awareness of resources and frameworks around ES at NH
- Environmental benefit: project suggestions from staff resulted in two projects being launched that will reduce waste production and increase recycling. These initiatives had buy in from the outset as staff told us this was what they wanted.



**The Issue**

ES is not the core business of a hospital, meaning it can be a low priority for staff. In an over stretched, under resourced sector such as healthcare, there is little room for asking staff to change their behavior for environmental reasons. Research shows however that if the changes align with their personal values and they feel a sense of control over the outcomes, people are more likely to make those changes.

To determine sentiment towards ES at NH, and thereby design projects that would align with this, we surveyed staff. Their responses gave us the evidence to also gain support and resources from Executive levels of the organisation.

**Sustainability Strategy Implemented**

Ask NH staff what they know about ES in the workplace. Are they aware of any initiatives going on? What would they like to see in this space? Do they think it is important? Would they be proud to work for an organization that valued ES and actively sought to decrease it’s environmental impact?

**Implementation process**

Survey questions were compiled by the ES Coordinator and approved by the Director. A web-based survey was then emailed to all staff in May 2014. The survey was open for two weeks and the ES Coordinator collated and analysed the results. 352 responses were received - over 14% of staff. A summary of the findings was written up and published on the organisation’s intranet.

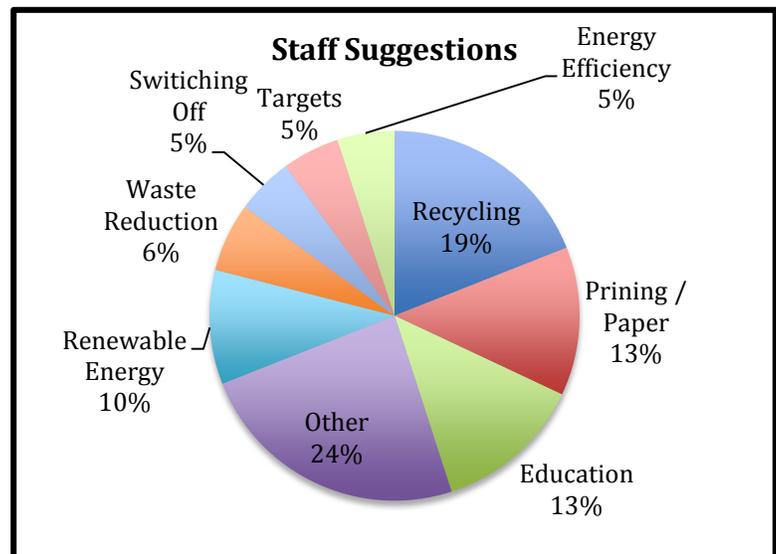
Staff suggestions from this survey were utilized as evidence of staff buy-in (and thereby increased likelihood of successful outcomes) when seeking approval and resources from upper Management for projects. Hyperlinks to the survey summary were also included in project launches to publicise the fact that these projects were initiated by staff suggestions.

**Tracking Progress**

The survey will be re-issued in 2015 to assess whether there is an increase in awareness and participation of the initiatives taking place, the resources available to staff, and the frameworks supporting ES at Northern Health.

**Challenges and lessons learned**

This method was very useful for the newly-appointed ES Coordinator to get a snapshot of staff interest in ES. Over 40% of staff completing the survey also had suggestions for



initiatives that they would like to see introduced. These could then be divided into short, middle and long term projects that could inform future Environmental Management Plans. Obtaining support from Executive was made easier by this evidence-based approach.

The need for better collaboration between departments was underscored where suggestions were not within the sphere of influence the ES Coordinator. For instance installing solar panels on hospital assets, would sit with the Engineering Department, not the ES Coordinator’s Department.

**Next Steps**

Initiatives identified in this survey are being implemented; a 12-month campaign to reduce paper consumption by 10% and an improved waste management system (The Green Office) being rolled out. In addition, longer-term plans are being drafted to address some of the more complex suggestions.

A follow up survey will be circulated to measure whether staff awareness and interest in ES has increased. It is anticipated that increased staff awareness and desire for ES initiatives at work will assist with resourcing these initiatives going forward.

**Demographic information**

Northern Health is one of Victoria’s busiest public health services, with 5 campuses. Our



largest campus – Epping is a 300-bed acute treatment center. Our acute and sub-acute health services cover a local community of approximately 728,000 people and our emergency department treats almost 70,000 patients each year. The northern community is located in one of Melbourne’s most significant growth corridors and our local population is

expected to grow by 64% or an additional 128,569 people by 2031.

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**Quotes:**

- “All staff need to be involved and take ownership and be included if you want them to contribute.”*
- “Set simple targets (low hanging fruit) and have fun awards and promotion for the winners.”*
- “Initiate a project / competition for units and departments to reduce paper printing”*
- “Make recycling bins more readily available”*
- “Recycling; we do this at home we should be more proactive at work”*
- “More information available about correct disposal of items such as batteries.”*

Keywords / topics: Stakeholder engagement, staff survey, environmental sustainability awareness,

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