

Category: Social Procurement
Finalist: Great Lakes Council

The Great Lakes Council (NSW) provides gainful employment to disadvantaged local job seekers through its contracts with Great Lakes Community Resources (Community Resources), a not-for-profit community development association. The Community Resources social enterprises that Great Lakes Council engages with provide employment opportunities to those most excluded from the labour market in the areas of waste management, cleaning and Aboriginal art programs. In contracting the services of Community Resources's long term, social enterprises, Great Lakes Council creates significant work opportunities for long term unemployed, women returning to work, the Indigenous community and ex-offender job seekers in the region.

Great Lakes Council commenced its social procurement operations in 1991 in its engagement with the Community Resources organisation, Resource Recovery. This waste management enterprise provides employment opportunities for disadvantaged job seekers, particularly local ex-prisoners and Indigenous people facing unemployment. Resource Recovery was contracted by Council to run the local tip in Tuncurry in 1991, which then expanded to include Council landfills in Tea Gardens and Bulahdelah. In 2012, Great Lakes Council signed off on a 25-year master plan at the now multi-award winning Resource Recovery site.

The Council also engages with the Community Resources enterprise, Helping Hands. Helping Hands provides a personal and domestic care and focuses on the employment of women returning to the workforce. The Great Lakes Council purchases 10-20 hours of services from Helping Hands employees per week.

Great Lakes Council has been a supporter of local Indigenous artists through Tobwabba Art, an Aboriginal design licencing program for local Aboriginal artists that was founded by Community Resources. The Great Lakes Council has purchased public art by resident artists including a bus terminal mural, a large turtle totem sculpture and a decorative wall across Forster waterfront.

Community Resources is currently the largest employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Great Lakes region. With 70 staff at Community Resources, 25% are from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. Through its social procurement policies, Great Lakes Council provides meaningful work to some of its most disadvantaged local job seekers.

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