



Media release

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Northern Rivers project picks up national award

A local government project that has delivered more than \$4.5 million to the Northern Rivers economy has won a national award in the challenging field of sustainability initiatives.

The Northern Rivers Food Links project – led by Clarence Valley Council – took out the ENVIRO Innovation in Sustainable award in Adelaide on 25 July. Council's Environmental Services Coordinator, Rodney Wright, accepted the award on behalf of CVC, the project management team and partners.

CVC mayor Richie Williamson said the inaugural award highlighted the work Northern Rivers councils are doing under the umbrella of sustainability.

"The Food Links project has provided significant economic, social and environmental benefits to the Northern Rivers community," the mayor said. "The NSW Environmental Trust provided just over \$2 million dollars in funding, but the value of the project has been measured at more than \$4.5 million dollars to the Northern Rivers economy.

"The award again demonstrates that local government is leading the way in sustainability initiatives."

The mayor congratulated staff from Clarence Valley Council and other Northern Rives councils, the project management team of Sam Muller, Jane Laverty, Rachel Summers and Kim Potter, all the project partners and the NSW Environmental Trust.

"This inaugural award is designed to celebrate and reward innovative activity undertaken by individuals, community groups, organisations or businesses that have undertaken a project or initiative resulting in significant sustainable environmental, social and economic outcomes," he said.

The award attracted 14 applications from across the nation. The chair of the judging panel, Dr David Moy, said all of the entries were of a high standard, and after considerable difficulty, three finalists were selected.

"Australia is very fortunate to have such a large number of individuals and organisations demonstrably capable of taking innovative ideas from inception to-'on-the-ground' implementation for a more sustainable future for all Australians," Dr Moy said.

The Northern Rivers Foodlinks project – which began in 2009 – was a co-operative venture involving seven local councils and Rous Water. It addressed climate change impacts associated with food production, distribution and consumption by reducing the reliance on food sourced outside the region and increasing more sustainable food production practices.

The Northern Rivers Foodlinks project outcomes include:

- 17 community gardens established, along with seven new school gardens.
- 1700 attendees at project events, workshops and field days.
- 100 retailers using source identification.
- Food training involving 400 adults and 300 children.
- Website hits 3000 unique visitors per month (54,000 people).
- 200 restaurants took part.
- 47 farming trials involving sustainable agriculture.
- 250 farmers attended sustainable agriculture workshop.
- Two new farmers markets started.
- Four distribution models tested.
- 91 project teams engaged.
- 524 partnerships formed.

Council's Environmental Services Coordinator, Rodney Wright, acknowledged the other award entries and expressed appreciation to Sulo who sponsored the award and to the Australian Waste Management Association which hosted the ceremony.

"It was an extremely proud moment when I accepted the award on behalf of Clarence Valley Council from Sulo's John Kernahan," Mr Wright said. "There were a number of outstanding projects from around the nation and for Northern Rivers Foodlinks to be named as the winner was further recognition for what a very dedicated group of people across the Northern Rivers has been able to achieve over the past three years.

For more about the project visit www.northernriversfoodlinks.com.au or the local food marketing and education website www.sustainfood.com.au.

Release ends.

Photo attached:

CAPTION:

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Rodney Wright from Clarence Valley Council accepts the winning trophy on behalf of the Foodlinks team from Sulos John Kernahan. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED by Tania Pile Photoplay Studios.

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Rodney Wright from Clarence Valley Council accepts the winning trophy on behalf of the Foodlinks team from Sulos John Kernahan. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED by Tania Pile Photoplay Studios.