

What's happening at your health service

REDHS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

REDHS has a significant impact on the environment through the provision of its services. These services make an important contribution to the wellbeing of the community but, like all human activity, result in energy and water usage as well as the generation of waste. REDHS has many structural features and programs in place to minimise its environmental impact.

In accordance with its Strategic Plan, REDHS aims to reduce its environmental impact through the responsible use of sustainable resources, recycling and education and become leaders in the healthcare industry.

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ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

Some years ago, REDHS joined the "Grow Me The Money" program, a joint initiative of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI). The program provided support and information that organisations could use to assist with their environmental sustainability programs. REDHS quickly moved from Bronze through Silver to Gold membership status as its efforts were documented and recognised. At the time, REDHS was one of only three gold level members in Victoria. REDHS' case study can be found at www.growmethemoney.com.au/SuccessStories.

As one of three finalists in the Premier's Sustainability Award (Public Sector) in 2008, REDHS' environmental achievements were again recognised state-wide (see www.sustainabilityawards.vic.gov.au). The health service has maintained a very high accreditation rating in Waste and Environmental management with the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards for the past two years.

REDHS has recently joined the ResourceSmart Healthcare program developed by Sustainability Victoria, the Department of Health and the Department of Sustainability and Environment. This program was designed to support government requirements for the expansion of environmental management systems to public healthcare agencies.

WHAT IS ALREADY IN PLACE AT REDHS?

ENERGY

The three-year redevelopment program has increased the floor area of the facility considerably, but the new infrastructure has built-in features to increase building heating, cooling and lighting efficiencies.

- The Building Management System controls the air temperature and automatic lighting. A pre-programmed air temperature is achieved throughout communal areas in the facility by moving air from hotter areas (such as ensuites and the laundry) to cooler areas. (Bedrooms are independently controlled to suit individual needs).
- Skylights and window shades are in place.
- Solar panels on the Support Services building pre-warm cold water before it goes to the hot water services so that less energy is required to reach the desired temperature.
- When equipment and vehicles are to be purchased, consideration is given to energy and water requirements.
- Currently four of the fleet vehicles run on LPG and two on diesel.



Above: Solar panels assist with water heating. **Below:** Hot air from clothes driers is transferred to cooler areas in the facility.



WATER

- The installation of the rainwater harvesting system allows REDHS to maintain its grounds, providing both passive and active recreational areas for aged care residents, patients, clients and visitors. The grounds, courtyards and the community garden are watered with rain harvested from the health service roofs and roadways.

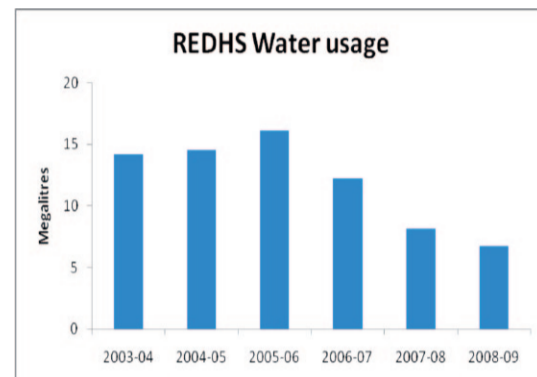
- The Ozone washing machines in use in the laundry use a lot less water than conventional ones.
- Steam cleaners are used where possible in place of mops and buckets, with a reduction in water for cleaning of 90% (approx 36,000L saving per month).



Right: Water savings are made by using Ozone washing machines in the laundry.



Above: Rainwater is being used to establish lawn around the new building



WASTE MANAGEMENT

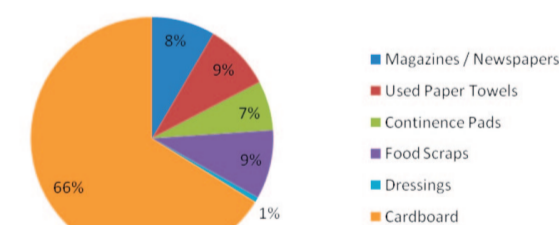
There is a comprehensive waste management system in place that makes provision for recycling and the correct disposal of waste. Improved recycling services have assisted in significant reductions in waste going to landfill. Improved monitoring and reporting processes have provided the health service with more comprehensive data.

- Waste disposal costs REDHS over \$13,000 per year.
- In 2006, approximately 2000 plastic bottles (milk only) were recycled. In 2009, over 17,500 plastic bottles were recycled that included milk, cordial, fruit juice and vegetable oil bottles.
- 65 tonnes of cardboard was sent for recycling in 2009.
- Recycling initiatives have considerably reduced the amount of waste going to landfill (312 tonnes in 2006 reduced to 126 tonnes in 2009).
- Green waste is converted to garden mulch, with 7 tonnes converted in 2007. At present, approximately 20 tonnes is ready to be mulched, which will be used in the health service grounds.
- Steam cleaners do not use any cleaning chemicals, thereby reducing chemical usage and disposal requirements.



Above: Recycling plays a major role in REDHS' waste management system

Waste audit - one week January 2010



WHERE TO FROM HERE?

REDHS' environmental policies and action plans, its considerable achievements to date and the new infrastructure mean that the health service is well placed to further develop its environmental management strategy. This will cover water, energy, waste and recycling, transport, biodiversity, procurement, behaviour, operations and service delivery.

The REDHS Environment Committee will be encouraging staff to become involved and information will be circulated to further raise awareness of environmental issues amongst staff and the wider community.