

Catching On

Local government and small automotive workplaces act together to reduce pollution in the Merri Creek catchment.

**Final report
July 2001**



Incorporated Association
No A0018144A

2 Lee Street
East Brunswick VIC 3057
Ph: (03) 9380 8199
Fax: (03) 9380 6989
angela@mcmc.comcen.com.au





Acknowledgments

The following organisations are gratefully acknowledged for their support and contribution to the 2001 Catching On Project.

Myer Foundation	Kangan Batman TAFE
Darebin City Council	Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce
Hume City Council	Northern Regional Waste Management Group
Moreland City Council	Bankstown City Council
Whittlesea City Council	Least waste
Yarra City Council	Statewide Automotive, Northcote

The automotive businesses that participated in the project (see Appendix A) are acknowledged for their notable goodwill and willingness to take the time to share information about their businesses with us.

Merri Creek Management Committee Project Team

Angela Foley, Catchment Projects Office

Natasha van Velzen, Automotive Project Officer

Simon Fell, Manager, Catchment Management Team

Author

Angela Foley, Catchment Projects Officer
Merri Creek Management Committee



CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
BACKGROUND.....	2
<i>RECRUITMENT.....</i>	<i>3</i>
RESOURCES	4
<i>RESOURCES USED IN THE PROJECT.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MATERIALS</i>	<i>4</i>
CREEK WALKS	6
PROMOTION.....	7
OUTCOMES	8
CONCLUSIONS	8
APPENDIX A:	Automotive workplaces and visits
APPENDIX B:	Introduction sheet - Meeting with automotive workers
APPENDIX C:	Example of satellite photograph of Merri Creek
APPENDIX D:	Example of a workshop report sheet
APPENDIX E:	Brochure - Clean Workshop....Cleaner Environment
APPENDIX F:	Clean Automotive Workshop....Cleaner Environment
APPENDIX G:	Helpful business contacts
APPENDIX H:	Invitation to plant and picnic at Merri Creek
APPENDIX I:	Letter from Diver Consolidated
APPENDIX J:	Media release
APPENDIX K:	VACC auto update article
APPENDIX L:	Merri News

Summary

The Catching On project enabled 32 automotive workplaces in Melbourne's northern suburbs to be approached in a systematic way. Thirty of these automotive workshops were then visited two or three times more over a four-month period (see Appendix A). Important targeted materials were developed to circulate to these and many other automotive businesses (refer to Appendices E, F & G).

The project has enabled discussions between MCMC's project officers and workers in automotive workshops about the environmental context and potential ramifications of their work practices. We have established relationships, shared information and identified some solutions to pollution. We have used the opportunity to:

- highlight the proximity of businesses to Merri Creek,
- point out some legal implications of pollution,
- discuss stormwater pollution,
- learn about automotive businesses needs and practices, and
- build knowledge about the importance of striving towards cleaner workshops.



Sample of automotive workshops visited. Some workshops strive to be clean in practice and this is evident from the neat appearance of the forecourt. Many others use their forecourt for sanding, panel beating and even spray painting and rust removal, all of which have the capacity to easily pollute stormwater.

Background

Merri Creek runs for 70 kilometres from the Great Dividing Range through Melbourne's northern suburbs and into the Yarra River close to the CBD. Merri Creek Management Committee has worked towards the conservation and restoration of Merri Creek for over ten years. In 1998 MCMC and its member councils began to examine potentially polluting industries in the catchment.

In 2000 the Automotive, Construction and Demolition Project (ACDIP) was established to work towards specific goals, especially the development of a Face to Face strategy for meeting workers in automotive workplaces. In 2001 the Face to Face strategy and pilot project was implemented as the Catching On project with funding from the Myer Foundation.



Merri Creek is sometimes littered with dumped vehicles and other automotive parts like old bumper bars. Although this may be the result of individual behaviour as opposed to business behaviour, in the Catching On Project we discussed opportunities with small automotive business operators to connect with appropriate contractors who offer recycling.

Methodology

Recruitment

WORKSHOPS

The Catching On project focussed on small-scale smash repair and service workshops, i.e. with usually less than ten employees including sole owner/operator businesses. This was due to:

- the perceived need for information at this level based on scoping research undertaken through ACDIP 2000
- our view that this 'end' of the automotive sector was virtually out of the information and initiative loop due to their small scale
- a lack of connection to major initiatives such as those at Ford Australia which generates a trickle down effect of environmental information and compliance through ISO 14000 accreditation.

Catchment focus for the Catching On project was maintained by selecting workshops in each of the five local government areas through which Merri Creek flows. Advice was also sought from council officers about areas to visit.

To maximise potential networking between automotive workplaces in the future automotive workshops were selected where they were clustered within industrial estates near Merri Creek or its tributaries

WORKERS

Contact with automotive workers was made after identifying automotive workshops clustered in industrial estates. This style of approach was informed by a review of relevant projects throughout Australia (Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria). (Notably, Leastwaste's Old Joe's Creek project in the City of Knox sought participation through a very large mail out of about 1,000 letters and received less than 10 replies.) As a result, we 'recruited' workers by visiting workshops 'cold'; no phone calls, letters or surveys.



Small automotive workplaces have busy, unpredictable working days. It is important to be ready to talk and to be brief. To win confidence and the opportunity to develop a relationship be prepared to talk on their turf, sometimes this means even when they're under the bonnet.

During visits, MCMC's representative wore an identification name badge and an MCMC shirt. Business cards were collected and photographs taken widely through the catchment.



Natasha outside Queens Parade Automotive with the introductory sheet used in initial visits (see Appendix B).

Resources

Resources used in the project

Materials used include the introductory sheet (Appendix B: Introduction sheet - *Meeting with automotive workers*), Least waste Waste Wise guidelines, MCMC's satellite photographs of the catchment (Appendix C), VACC's environmental management system pamphlet (Clean Green Tick) and workshop report sheet (Appendix D).

Development of new materials

Materials have been developed which have specific practical use in automotive workshops in the Merri Creek catchment. New materials are based on research undertaken through ACDIP, the Face to Face pilot and the Catching On workshop visit experiences.

The pamphlet *Clean workshop...cleaner environment* (see Appendix E) is derived from a draft developed during ACDIP 2000. It was reworked and redesigned with final comments contributed from Statewide Automotive, the ACDIP steering committee, Yarra Valley Water, Northern Regional Waste Management Group and environmental consultants Wastemin P/L (who undertook a similar project in 2000). Kangan Batman TAFE were invited to make comments but were unable to.

The pamphlet includes a case study revealing valuable waste management practices in a small automotive business in Northcote, *Statewide Automotive*.

This case study ensures that our goal to promote a local Merri Creek focus is met since other available relevant case studies are outside the northern region.

In addition, the good relationship developed with the manager Mr Tsiaras led to his allowing us to photograph his workplace and to use these images to illustrate the pamphlet.



Manager Paul Tsiaras of Statewide Automotive Northcote, took an active part in Catching On and is now exploring WasteWise accreditation and VACC's Clean Green Tick.

The guidelines proposed in our initial Catching On submission have been produced as two separate items:

- *Cleaner Automotive Workshop Checklist* (Appendix F), and
- *Helpful business contacts* (Appendix G).

This design is based on familiarity with real workshop usage. This means that the information about business contacts is separated and designed for easy reference in the office by the manager. Information about best workshop practice is designed so that it can be placed where all people who work in the workshop slow down such as where they might wash their hands or have tea breaks.



Action to achieve best workshop practice is sorely needed. While some workplaces have triple interceptors to stop pollutants from entering the stormwater. This stormwater drain outside an automotive workshop is stained and likely to receive additional oil. Not all workshop managers are aware of the difference between their stormwater and their sewage drains. Some consider spills like this to be a normal part of doing business and of no likely environmental impact.

Creek walks

Invitations to visit Merri Creek were extended to all project participants in person and then followed up with a phone call close to the day (Appendix H: *Merri Creek Management Committee invites automotive workers and their families to a picnic and planting day at Merri Creek*). Given the financial gamble that extending this invitation might have had, we created the invitation to coincide with another pre-existing MCMC community planting day.

Although no-one from the automotive industry attended the free family picnic, the invitation sparked interest and led to questions from automotive workers about MCMC and community activities to restore Merri Creek. For many people this appeared to be the first time such activities had been heard of.

Invitations to attend a small barbeque lunch in each industrial estate followed by a short creek walk were also uniformly declined.

In an effort to be more relevant at this stage of our relationship we explored the possibility of having a short morning tea and pollution spill kit demonstration at their own workplaces. There was little interest in this proposal as well due to the structure of working days and the perception that this would be unnecessary. Again there was a positive result from this invitation as it raised the issue of spill management and candid discussions about current spill management practices.

Thus, through this invitation we learned about the high use of mops and buckets and the variations in disposal practices of this waste. For example, in some shops this was regarded as an insignificant amount of oil and okay to pour down the drain. However, research for this particular proposal (spill management) will be developed and utilised in a further project.

Although we were unable to achieve creek walks with workers in small automotive workplaces during this Catching On project we are confident of achieving this in later projects.

However, through Catching On we successfully negotiated with Diver Consolidated (who manufacture automotive parts and neighbour Edgars Creek) for MCMC's WaterWatch officer Jessica Miller to visit their workers at their workplace.

She discussed stormwater and, since they couldn't allocate time to go to the creek, she literally brought the creek to them. Their response was very good (see Appendix I) and this exercise acts as a model for further introducing creek life education to industry.



Waterwatch Officer Jessica Miller can bring the creek to you. Here she loads up with nets and waders to collect water samples and macroinvertebrates from Edgars Creek to show Diver Consolidated's staff.

Diver Consolidated's staff were amazed to inspect damselflies, water beetles and water snails indicating their nearby stream was moderately healthy. Staff realised the importance of keeping stormwater clean.

Promotion

Media

A media release was distributed to all local papers (Leader Press) in the northern region during early June (Appendix J). Paul Tsiaras from Statewide Automotive contributed comments to it. Photographers from four papers have visited local automotive businesses who agreed to be photographed with an MCMC representative. Most stories are expected to be published in July.

Articles and journals

An article has been submitted to VACC's *Auto Update* which is produced monthly and distributed to all VACC members (Appendix K). The Catching On project was featured in the July newsletter of the Merri Creek Management Committee which has a distribution of 1,000 (see Appendix L).

Other opportunities for promoting the project which have been explored are:

- EcoRecycle Victoria's *EcoVoice*
- EPA Victoria's magazine *Making a Difference*
- Waste Management Association of Australia's magazine *WMAA News*
- Waste Management and Environment magazine
- Council newsletters

Outcomes

- MCMC has developed communicative relationships with automotive workers in 32 small workshops throughout the Merri Creek catchment.
- Workers at 32 workshops are familiar with the location of their business in relation to the local waterway through the use of satellite images.
- Workers at 32 workshops learnt about the potential to improve workshop practices. Discussions included ways to improve those practices that are potentially polluting to waterways.
- Networking relationships have been developed between participating workshops such as sharing waste management contractors.
- Information has been shared about how to prevent catchment pollution.
- An overview of specifically relevant fines has been pointed out.
- Key issues and problematic work practices have been identified for ongoing educational needs.
- Continued liaison with Kangan Batman TAFE about educational possibilities was explored further.
- Promotional stories in progress in local press and relevant industry newsletters.
- Brochure designed and 2,000 copies published for councils to distribute within their own LGA's.
- Guidelines distributed to the 32 participating automotive workshops.

Conclusions

The Catching On project has met the majority of its goals and exceeded expectations related to establishing communicative and ongoing relationships. The approach of going in 'cold' (no letters, phone calls etc) has been extremely successful. Discussions between project officers and automotive workers were typically very frank, fair and open. The response to initial visits generally ranged between curious and very high need for assistance. This confirms feedback from related projects elsewhere that there is a demand for information and healthy interest in environmental protection especially in the context of good business management. Only two workshops were hostile or suspicious to the extent that this jeopardised the opportunity for return visits.

Later visits focused on information related to specific queries (e.g. better tyre recycling contractor contacts), workshop practices that have the potential to pollute stormwater and spill management. In exploring interest in free spill kit demonstrations there were only four workshops willing to make time on their own premises. Work pressures and small automotive business style severely limits the possibility of workers leaving their premises to attend creek walks or to allocate time

for planting, picnics or spills kit demonstrations. It is intended that as the relationship further develops initiatives to draw automotive workers out of their workplaces will be addressed through future projects so that they learn more about the natural local environment.

Most importantly, the on-ground activity enabled by the Myer Foundation funding significantly raised the profile of the project. This in turn has resulted in the project attracting an additional \$22,960 of joint funding from the City of Darebin and the Victorian Stormwater Action Committee (VSAC) announced by Sheryl Garbutt, Minister of Environment and Conservation on May 29 2001. Funding from the other local governments in the area is expected with the announcement of budgets for the 2001/2002 financial year. Preparations are also being made to develop a further catchment-wide project to build on experiences achieved through the Myer Foundation in the next round of VSAC grant applications.

Appendix A:

Automotive workplaces and visits

Appendix B:

Introduction sheet - Meeting with automotive workers

Appendix C:

Example of satellite photograph of Merri Creek

Appendix D:

Example of a Workshop Report Sheet

Appendix E:

Brochure -

Clean workshop...cleaner environment

Appendix F:

Clean automotive workshop....Cleaner Environment

Appendix G:

Helpful business contacts

Appendix H:

Invitation to Plant and Picnic at Merri Creek

Appendix I:

Letter from Diver Consolidated

Appendix J:

Media Release

Appendix K:

VACC Auto Update Article

Appendix L:

Merri News (see page 3)