ENGAGING A COMMUNITY THAT DOESN'T EXIST

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Aquarevo, Water Recycling Plant, Engagement, No Existing Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The challenge of working with a community that does not yet exist faced South East Water when engaging on the Aquarevo Water Recycling Plant (WRP). The WRP is just one of the sustainable initiatives of the Aquarevo, on track to be Australia's most water efficient urban housing development. The WRP, which looks like a greenhouse, will also be a first in Australia.

The purpose of the engagement was to use a range of methodology and tools, including virtual reality, to achieve successful engagement outcomes to fully inform potential purchasers and other stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION
Aquarevo is a unique collaboration between South East Water (SEW) and Villawood Properties to create one of Australia's most water efficient urban housing development. The development of 460 lots, features a combination of water and energy sustainability solutions, aims to be carbon neutral and will deliver community and environmental benefits through reducing drinking water demand by up to 70 percent.

It is proposed that a greenhouse water recycling plant, the first of its kind within Australia, will be constructed within Aquarevo, to treat wastewater and return Class A recycled water to each home for use by washing machines, toilet flushing and irrigation.

YEAR CASE STUDY WAS IMPLEMENTED
2017 to 2018

CASE STUDY SUMMARY
Developing and implementing an engagement strategy with a community that does not yet exist regarding a proposed water recycling plant (WRP), within the Aquarevo Development. The goal was to ensure engagement is robust to support to fully inform potential purchasers and other stakeholders.

Objectives to inform potential and actual purchasers, community groups, stakeholders and the surrounding community; encourage and facilitate dialogue; and generate support/acceptance for the WRP were achieved using a mixture of engagement methodologies.

Throughout the entire process, those engaged had very few concerns regarding the placement of a WRP within the Aquarevo development.

CASE STUDY DETAIL
SEW engaged PLUM Communications to assist in the delivery of engagement for the Aquarevo WRP.

From the outset, a number of engagement and communication challenges presented themselves including:

- Wastewater is not the most exciting topic for the general public
- The WRP will only be used by residents living at Aquarevo
- The WRP is an Australian first, making it a ground breaking project for SEW
- Overcoming perceived health issues around recycled water
The biggest challenge for engagement on this project however has been **engaging with a community that doesn’t yet exist.** House lots are being sold progressively at Aquarevo, with the first houses due to commence construction later this year. So actual house purchasers were not available at the time of the project.

The engagement approach was tailored to three phases.

**Phase 1. Engage before we engage.**

This allowed the project team to start discussions with local stakeholders and commence investigating what broader issues, questions and impacts could be and, therefore, tap into insights not previously heard or identified during preliminary desktop investigations. This included engaging with several community groups and other stakeholders whose feedback helped inform the engagement process for the wider community.

**Phase 2. Setting the foundations**

Engagement and communication activities were scheduled. An online hub was developed and set up, all templates and collateral information developed, and events and activities locked in. Collateral information included an FAQ with a comprehensive infographic, detailing the workings of the WRP in a pictorial format. The online hub was an integral part of the engagement and communications strategy as it provided a portal to visit for information, ask questions in real time and view project collateral information. Villawood and the sales team at Aquarevo Discovery Centre were briefed and collateral provided so they could engage potential purchasers.

**Phase 3. Implementing engagement**

Engagement and communication activities with the broader community were implemented, including the launch of the online hub, a pop-up booth at the local shopping centre, a community information session and an extensive number of project briefings and presentations.

**Outcomes**

The project team implemented a robust communications and engagement strategy over four months, including a mix of face to face engagement, online and social media, written and hard copy communications and events. This broad range of activities provided ample opportunity to local residents adjacent to Aquarevo, purchasers and potential purchasers, and those interested in the development or the WRP itself, to be engaged at one stage or another through the process.

Throughout the engagement process, the public did not raise any negative concerns regarding the WRP, and the team perceived that the engagement program had addressed any questions and concerns amongst stakeholders and the community.

As part of our ongoing engagement for the WRP, we commissioned Spiire to build a 3D virtual reality model. This has been used to engage purchasers at a ‘Builders Expo’ with positive feedback. SEW has also uploaded a [video](#) showing the internals and externals of the WRP (taken from the virtual reality model) to our [website](#), the Aquarevo website and the online hub.
Water recycling plant
Aquarevo water recycling plant

HOW IT WORKS

Adding oxygen facilitates the process and reduces the smell significantly.

Fully enclosed plant prevents odour release.

Mechanical process

Class A Plant

CHLORINE TREATMENT

ULTRA VIOLET TREATMENT

ULTRA FILTRATION

FILTER (EXTERNAL TANK)

Process Chemicals

High quality water

Class A recycled water uses:
- watering the garden
- washing machine
- toilets
- washing your car

Waste feeding microorganisms clinging to nylon strings

Start

Household wastewater pipe

Biological process

Public sewer

Underground storage tank

Class A recycled water is pumped from underground storage tank

Finish