

BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE INSTITUTE

'The BMWHI is an independent not-for-profit organisation which supports the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area by engaging environmental management with interdisciplinary, policy-oriented research.'

The Lawson Project

For the past year in conjunction with the Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC), the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute (BMWHI) has been working on an ambitious project to improve the environmental standards and amenities in Lawson. Lawson, of all the areas in the Blue Mountains, was chosen due to the planned changes to the township associated with the upgrading of the Great Western Highway.

Located in the mid mountains, Lawson is characteristic of many small townships that make up the Blue Mountains region, with its balance of commercial, residential and industrial areas. It was therefore decided that if the vision of the Council's City Sustainability strategy was to be realised, then Lawson was a good place to start.

After an initial review carried out by the Institute in 2004, three key issues were identified as areas where significant improvements could be made:

1. Energy use
2. Water Management
3. Waste Management

Throughout 2005, a BMWHI team have explored how improvements in each of the three areas could be achieved. In conjunction with the BMCC, the Lawson Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the wider Lawson community, a staged approach was developed for introducing some changes in these areas beginning in October 2005. The first initiative involves greater energy efficiency.

Electricity - With support from Integral Energy via a \$50,000 partnership, the Institute will undertake an audit of the Lawson community centre, the public school and a selected number of businesses in the Industrial estate, to see what electricity savings can be achieved by fairly inexpensive improvements in efficiency. Also, all households on the southern side of the highway will receive a free package of compact florescent light bulbs (see map). These bulbs use significantly less electricity than the standard bulbs, and through the electrical substation that supports this area, Integral Energy will monitor the electrical usage to monitor changes over time. This small-scale experiment in energy efficiency is however part of what we hope will be a much larger project involving the whole of Lawson. More significantly, if the Western Sydney bid to be part of the Federal Government's Solar Cities program is successful, Lawson next year will be the focus of a very significant public investment in solar and other major energy efficiency systems.

Water - In terms of water use, the Institute will, in conjunction with BMCC, over the next six months be developing a strategy to address stormwater and wastewater usage across the township. As with energy, it is hoped that by applying better systems of public, industrial and domestic usage, it will be possible to make significant savings, and for Lawson to be a showcase of sustainable water usage in the region.

Waste - While waste management is predominantly a problem for the commercial and industrial sectors of the community, a study produced by the Institute has shown that costs which many businesses now carry in terms of shipping out waste could be significantly reduced through new modes of recycling and waste management. This will be addressed in the third phase of the project.

As greater efficiencies in terms of electricity, water and waste management are demonstrated in Lawson, it is hoped they will be applied to reduce the costs for both households and businesses throughout the wider Blue Mountains region.

Project Co-ordinators: John Merson & Michael Kachka.

Project Funding Partners: Blue Mountains City Council, Integral Energy

Project Support Partner: General Electric.

**For more information about BMWHI and current research programs go to:
www.bmwhi.org.au**