

## Case Study Leadership Mater Health Services (Australia)

### GGHH agenda goals

- Leadership

### Mater's goal

- To engage staff in environmentally sustainable behaviours under the key themes of energy, water, waste and transport that staff could engage in at work. A commitment to these behaviours was made via the signing of a voluntary environmental sustainability pledge.

### Achievements

- A target of 2500 staff participants (33 per cent of all staff) was the target and this was achieved, in addition to 27 019 personal behaviours, and 30 per cent of those staff who took the pledge also committed to becoming sustainability supporters in their own work area.
- Financial benefits (cost effective use of resources) which links in with one of the organisation's overarching strategic map goals—be responsible stewards.
- Environmental benefit—increased recycling and waste segregation/reduction, decrease in energy use, reduced water usage, reduced car usage.
- Human health benefit (physical fitness improvement).

### The issue

The pledge was launched on World Environment Day in June 2012 via an access point on the front page of Mater's intranet.

A paper-based pledge was introduced approximately one year after the initial launch and this proved very successful with clinical staff (nursing and medical) and some support

#### Environmental Sustainability Pledge



93%

2323 / 2500 pledges by staff to date  
([click here](#) to view)

To make your sustainability pledge - [click here](#)

services (hotel services, trades and ward persons).

The clinical uptake significantly improved after the invitation to take part in the pledge was incorporated into 15 minute face-to-face Environmental Sustainability (ES)

presentations within various clinical areas. These presentations also increased staff awareness of Mater's environmental platform during this period. The pledge focused on 17 behaviours used to increase awareness of options available within the work environment and it was aimed to attract employees from all categories (both staff and volunteers).

### Sustainability strategy implemented

Engaging staff through awareness raising campaigns has been a key component in supporting the integration of sustainable practises at Mater. These campaigns complement a wide variety of initiatives (133 to date) that have been implemented as part of the wider ES strategy. These initiatives are aligned with Mater’s ES Vision Plan, Communication Plan and Policy and have covered key themes of Energy, Water, Waste, Procurement, Facilities Design, Transport and Staff Engagement.

### Implementation process

A pre-launch research collaboration with Griffith University and The University of Queensland enabled Mater to identify and overcome a number of barriers. By implementing suggestions for improvement that arose from the research along with other enhancements, the pledge campaign has reached the target of 2500 staff pledges (33 per cent of all staff). Complementing this number of participants is the actual number of behaviours (27 019) that support the promotion of one of the key messages for ES at Mater—that ‘Individual behaviours can make a difference’. The behaviours also linked to other campaigns including initiatives to reduce printing, reduce disposable cup usage in cafes, improve energy efficiency behaviour, and improve recycling and clinical waste segregation.

### Tracking progress

The pledge campaign reached the target of 2500 staff (33per cent of all staff). The pledge continues as a component of corporate orientation for all new employees.

<i>Staff category</i>	<i>Pledges</i>
<i>Nursing</i>	1082
<i>Administrative</i>	724
<i>Allied</i>	328
<i>Health Practitioners</i>	97
<i>Medical</i>	90
<i>Volunteers</i>	55
<i>Hotel Services</i>	47
<i>Ancillary</i>	32
<i>Trades</i>	27
<i>Wards persons</i>	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>2500</b>

### Challenges and lessons learned

A current research project asked “why pledge?” and staff indicated that it helped them engage and support the initiative, and made them accountable and responsible for their behaviour. There was also a desire to participate as it aligned with their own personal beliefs and values, and 30 per cent of all who took the pledge also identified they wanted to be a leader in their own department or area, and the pledge was a prompt for them to do so.

The pledge also attracted other ideas from staff, predominantly on waste, but also across the other themes. It also encouraged environmentally sustainable behaviours both at work and home. ‘Greening the office space’ and ‘physical activities to support a healthier lifestyle’ were also behaviours that were identified in the pledge.

This campaign highlighted that Top management support is critical for success, as is having support activities in place for staff to engage in the new behaviour. It has also shown that individual contributions do make a difference and that participation in these behaviours

leads to consumption reduction and associated dollar savings that can be reinvested into patient care.

### **Next steps**

Behaviours identified through this campaign are now being included as personal action items in every employee's professional development plan as behaviours to reduce financial costs to Mater.

Further research from this campaign will be developed in conjunction with university researchers with the view of utilizing key findings to assist in increasing participation in sustainable behaviours.

### **Demographic information**

Mater Health Services is a Catholic not-for-profit ministry with 7500 staff and volunteers. In addition to seven hospitals, and a medical research institute, Mater provides pathology, pharmacy and health and wellness services throughout South-East Queensland.

### **Main contact person information**

Christopher Hill, Director Environmental Sustainability, Mater Health Services Brisbane.  
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### **Quotes:**

#### **Why take the pledge?**

"I signed because the planet is everyone's and you have got to try and do your bit."

"Just to get on board with what is happening. I think it is a great idea and I can either sit there and whinge about it or jump on board with it."

"It's something that I value and it is a part of my decision making in life as well."

#### **Did it make a difference?**

*"The more momentum we could get with people signing up it might encourage other people to do it and I really think it was the way to get the individual to buy into the environmental sustainability state."*

*"A good idea for Mater to get that commitment statement from its people rather than relying on backroom conversations which don't necessarily mobilise in the same direction."*

### **Keywords/topics**

Environmental Sustainability, pledge, engagement