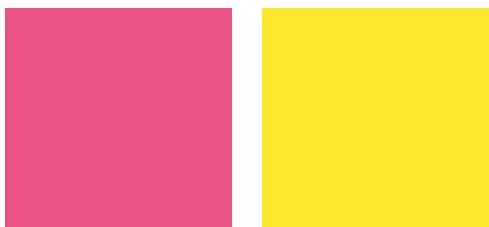
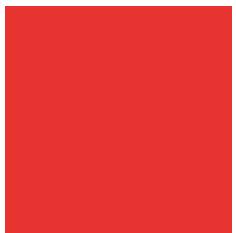


Annual Report

July 2019–June 2020



2019/2020 figures

178,769kg

diverted from landfill

52,000

customers served

19,146

participants reached by
education programs

16,945km

Travelled to collected donations
and deliver reuse resources

\$980,600

to run Reverse Garbage

Board report

Yvette Andrews, Chairperson

Even with the significant impact of COVID-19 in the last four months of the 2019/2020 financial year, Reverse Garbage is holding strong.



Reverse Garbage has weathered the pandemic well as a result of clear and sensible decision-making, all while managing the needs of employees and our community with kindness and a deep sense of responsibility.

The generous and creative spirit of Reverse Garbage is summed up by the extraordinary efforts of staff and volunteers to design and make 2100 face shields in the early weeks of the pandemic in Australia. I'm sure everyone involved in Reverse Garbage was immensely proud; I know I was.

As our lease here at Addison Road Community Centre ends in January 2022, we have a busy year ahead looking for a new location within reach of our current customers, but with room to grow to attract new customers.

We have been in conversation with Inner West Council since October 2019 about the possibility of converting their Summer Hill depot into a sustainability hub.

Moving from our home of 45 years will require serious planning from the Board and management team to ensure a strong and enduring future for Reverse Garbage. Our plan is to support a resourceful, community-minded and inspiring organisation in the strategic direction areas of financial and organisational growth, program development and expanding reach.

The organisation is in good financial shape with strong governance, a high level of community trust and a skilled and stable workforce and board.

I would like to thank the excellent staff - Kirsten, Louise, Brett, Leah, Fiona, Lisa, Amy, Ella, Sarah, Mia, Con, Emma, Evan, Roger and Naomi who have soldiered on magnificently through an incredibly difficult period for everyone; our amazing board members who continue to provide thoughtful and inspiring direction; and our volunteers, suppliers, shoppers and supporters who are the heart and soul of Reverse Garbage.

CEO report

Naomi Brennan, CEO

Reverse Garbage thrived during the first three quarters of this financial year. We were hitting our targets in all areas of the business until...



Everything changed in March 2020 when COVID-19 hit Australia. When the whole world shifted, we adapted in true Reverse Garbage style, and by working closely with our community we kept our doors open through the pandemic.

We had to make a few changes. Our opening hours reduced to five hours, six days a week (which we've slowly increased). Our team members worked reduced hours and accessed JobKeeper payments. All of our unpaid contributors who come to us via government programs were no longer allowed to help.

With these reduced resources, we still managed to meet our customers' changing needs.

In the initial stage, understandably many of our customers were focused on health and hygiene. Others were sourcing materials to complete home projects and some were purchasing materials with plans to set up an income source as they adjusted to new personal circumstances. Reverse Garbage remained a trusted community resource through this period.

There are many people who came together to keep us going. Our customers who kept coming and our suppliers who continued to donate. Our board of directors who helped navigate our path in totally unchartered waters. To all, we are grateful.

I want to particularly thank my staff, who dug deep, overcame significant anxieties and stood together to ensure Reverse Garbage succeeded. I am indebted to each staff member for adapting to and accepting change, protecting Reverse Garbage and continuing their contribution in these challenging times.

At the beginning of COVID-19, when Personal Protective Equipment was limited, we coordinated over 80 volunteers to make over 2100 face shields for frontline medical professionals from reuse resources (more on page 20).

This community effort attracted a lot of media and public attention and resulted in several generous donations: \$30,000 from a family trust; \$10,000 from a corporate foundation; \$1,000 from the community foundation and \$13,615 through a GiveNow fundraising campaign.

On top of the day to day challenges presented by our warehouse, we had a small fire in September 2019 which was caused by rain penetrating our roof. This short circuited the wiring, leaving our Tool Room, Book Room and Paper Room in the dark for a few weeks. We replaced the impacted area with external lighting – somewhat unusual in an internal area but we needed to be sure it was waterproof to keep the area safe.



It was a pleasure to have NSW Environment Minister, Matt Kean MP and our local member, Jo Haylen MP visit Reverse Garbage.

At Reverse Garbage we are very fortunate to have regular assistance from a large number of wonderful volunteers who unpack, sort and price goods, or pack kits for orders. Some choose to 'adopt' particular areas of the warehouse to tidy each time they visit. They are generally happy to work in a warehouse that can be very hot, very cold and not particularly waterproof, all because they love the cause. We deeply appreciate their help.

This was the first full year for our small paper and cardboard collection service. Small businesses use Reverse Garbage's Paper Round service to dispose of confidential papers safely, as well as general paper and cardboard recycling.

I'm pleased to say that at the end of the financial year that included four months of a pandemic, Reverse Garbage achieved a modest surplus of \$65,761.

This was possible primarily because we had been doing very well for the first eight months. We finished February around \$100,000 ahead of budget. That buffer proved very handy in keeping us afloat during the last four months of the year when education bookings halted and retail drastically slowed.

We are very grateful for the Government programs like JobKeeper that provided support when we need it most.

Like every business, Reverse Garbage has fixed operations costs – even during a pandemic. My team are often questioned about our pricing of items given all of our goods are donated to us, so I thought it timely to highlight some of our unavoidable annual costs this financial year.

- \$76,540 occupancy costs (rent, water, electricity and special maintenance levies)
- \$30,927 vehicles (parking, fuel, repairs, maintenance, tolls and depreciation).
- \$21,089 various insurances.

And that's just the beginning really – we also need to pay our team to continue to deliver the magic.

This year, the staff again took time out to set our strategic direction for the organisation. While we did not plan for everything that eventuated (who could?!), it was a valuable opportunity to discuss new ideas, thrash out solutions to recurring problems and set new goals for the organisation.

It has been another year of achievement for Reverse Garbage, a 45-year-old, cherished institution.

I'm proud of what we achieved and grateful for the wonderful community that surrounds and supports us.

Retail report

Kirsten Junor, Creative Director

If ever there was a year that demonstrated the value of 'garbage', this has got to be it.



With a warehouse packed to the brim with weird and wonderful, practical and purposeful, we can usually come up with a creative reuse solution for any challenge. And we have certainly been challenged this year.

First with the devastating bush fires. Customers were searching for cotton fabric to make animal rescue pouches and timber offcuts to make animal nesting boxes.

Then came the pandemic. And we rode the COVID-19 wave with our customers.

Necessity is the mother of invention...and creativity. Our reuse resources have been used to make face shields for medical professionals (see page 20 for the full story), help distribute hand sanitiser to those without, and make face masks. Budget friendly acrylic offcuts have been used for screens at shops and school canteens. Barrels have been blinged to make fancy hand sanitising stations.

When homes became the catchall for work, school, leisure, entertainment, we provided innovative and affordable reuse solutions for workstations, stationery, soundproofing, and decoration.

When the backyard became the playground, we curated Barrels of Fun and Barrels of STEM to keep the kids interested, busy and entertained.

Once the community had their homefronts sorted, we then noticed the crafting wave hit. Those who weren't caught up in the resurgence of baking fresh bread, were looking for creative inspiration on a budget.

During some periods, Cong, our Sendle driver, was our most frequent visitor, collecting trolley loads of parcels to be delivered across the country.

We provided many resources for sewing, home décor, upcycling... and even a spectacular wedding!

When schools reopened after lockdown, restrictions still didn't allow us to run excursions or incursions in some places, so we adapted and found other ways we could support our wonderful educators. We curated resources into class kits, compiled online shopping lists and issued STEM Challenges.

While we enjoyed meeting many new customers during COVID-19, we are missing our customers and communities like Mardi Gras, VIVID and Sydney Festival, and the many festivals, theatres and film crews that prop shop here. We miss the artists and creatives who have no exhibitions, religious and community groups who have no events, and students and educators who are not able to run excursions. We look forward to welcoming you all back.

Reverse Garbage has an extraordinary community and a wonderful team who helps them. In any one day our retail team could help anyone from artist to actors, educators to electricians, collectors to charities, painters to puppeteers, students to sewists, vets to visual merchandisers.



Fiona, Lisa, Amy, Ella, Sarah and Mia have to be on the ball to keep up with the interesting characters that walk through our door.

Together, we've made 45,409 sales this year, with an average of 4.5 items per sale. That's about 130 sales a day!

Behind the scenes, we have our Communications Manager, Leah, who manages all of our communication tools, including our social media platform. This year, we have witnessed the power of our strong social media presence. When the Bower was evicted, our community gathered around in the hundreds of thousands. Similarly when we put a call out for help making face shields at the beginning of COVID-19.

I think we earned an A+ for this past year. We have helped each other, our community and the environment



in so many ways - all the time with reuse at the forefront of the philosophy of Reverse Garbage and its original team from over 45 years ago.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE? THIS YEAR WE SOLD:

5,388 zippers	289 rolls of paper
4,353 coffee sacks	15,000m of fabric
1,514 fill-a-bags	948 knitting needles



Education report

Brett Lyon, Manager, Education Programs and Professional Development

Just when things were looking good, in swoops a pandemic to keep us on our toes. We've had to refocus some of our energy, readdress our community's needs, and reimagine ourselves.



Our people

Through it all, it's the talented, creative, interesting team of educators and volunteers who make it all work. With the limited paid resources of a part-time manager and part-time admin assistant, the education program relies on volunteers and the unpaid service of those who come to us through Government programs (page 14) who sort and prepare materials for the kits that go to schools, festivals, vacation care and various other activities. Daryl added a lot of value – he cut, drilled, sorted, organised, painted, repaired and repurposed for 14 hours per week.

Leslie, a high school student, volunteered over 200 hours, most within school holidays, assisting with administration tasks and workshops. And Eliza volunteered on days off from university.

From January to March 2020, final year university students, Rekha and Issac undertook a voluntary internship developing and implementing the education

marketing plan using Google Adwords and free social media. Both chose to stay on as volunteers maintaining these systems.

The casual staffing model introduced in 2018/2019 is working well. It offers flexibility for the team and Reverse Garbage, and allows educators to play to their strengths.

Our public programs for adults came into their own with the recruitment of two talented crafters, Ffrances (proddy rug workshops) and Deanne (button jewellery).

Nikki (admin officer) left in early March. Due to COVID-19 this role was not replaced so her tasks were split between Naomi and I.

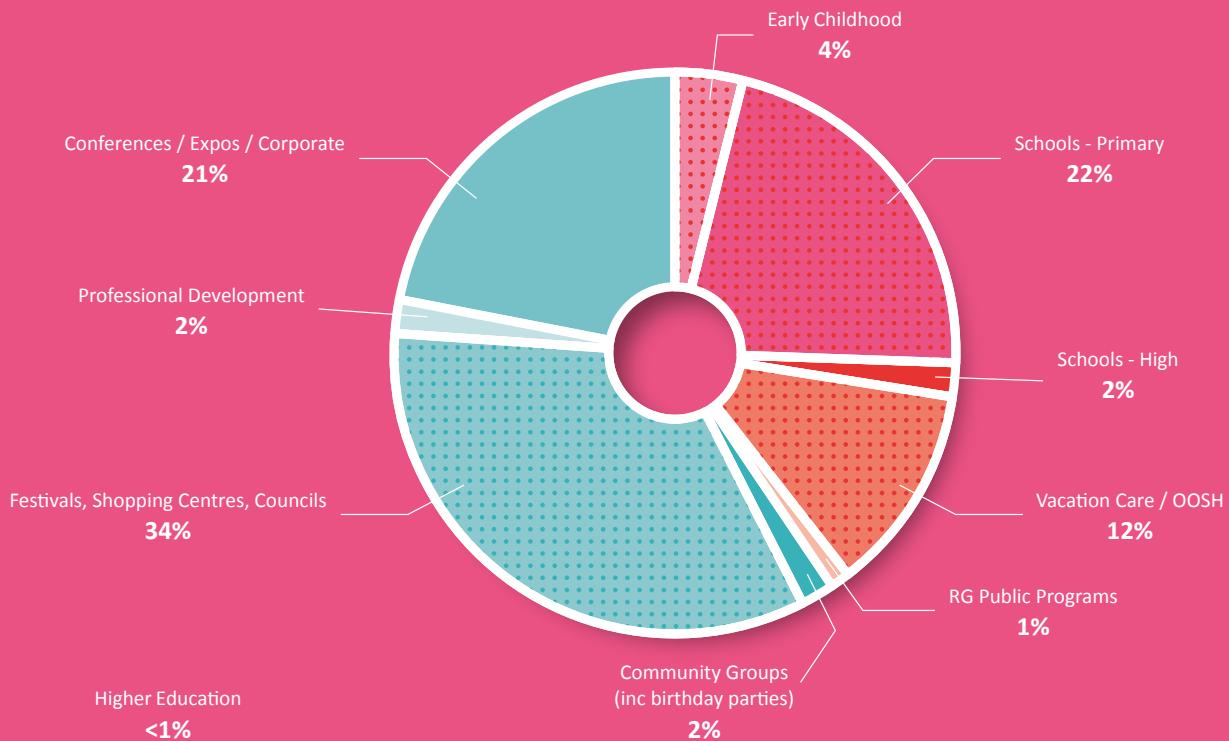
Best laid plans

When the management team met in November to plan for the 2020 calendar year, education's priorities included:

- promotion of our services to high schools
- promotion to councils that were not engaging with Reverse Garbage
- increasing our geographic delivery zone (achievable with our new vehicle 'Ed the van').

The bookings for March, April and May were very strong, reflecting a targeted campaign ... and then COVID-19 hit and the cancellations started to roll in. We convinced most customers to postpone rather than cancel, and these postponements rolled on throughout the year.

WORKSHOPS BY TYPE



Given the restrictions prohibited us from delivering any kind of face-to-face programs, we had a rethink about how we could stay relevant. I created a 30-day STEM challenge using a barrel of curated resources that could be used at home or school. We added to our online shopping resources to make it easier for teachers as children returned to school. We offered online birthday parties and workshops.

Focus on the positive

Before COVID-19 changed the lay of the land, we were doing very well in all areas of our education program.

Between our 170 workshops, and festivals and events we reached 19,146 people with our choose to reuse messaging.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS BY MONTH



Education highlights

Shopping centre activations

Our very successful January school holiday workshop at Westfield Hornsby gained the attention of their national leadership and we met to discuss future possibilities. COVID-19 restrictions have had shopping centre programs on hold since March.

Replay

Reverse Garbage's biannual professional development for early childhood educators was very successful with over 100 attendees during the week.

Topics included loose parts play, frog habitats, worm farming and creative reuse. Thanks to our volunteer presenters Robyn Munro Miller from Play Australia, the team at Addison Road Early Learning Centre, Dr Shirley Wyver from Macquarie University, Neisha Pitt from Stepping Stones ELC, and the team at NSW Frog & Tadpoles.

Loose parts play

On 8 October 2019 ABC's Catalyst program aired a story on Risky Play and invited Reverse Garbage to set up an invitation to play for 6-9-year olds, actively encouraging them to take risks. This, along with an article in the Illawarra Mercury sparked an increased interest in loose parts play particularly in the Central Coast and Wollongong areas.

Science Week in the City (Australian Museum)

The Australian Museum invited us to participate in their Science Week expo which was an amazing opportunity to demonstrate our STEM-focussed programs to over 100 schools and 4,000 teachers, parents and students.

Sydney University International Exchange Students

In July we had a visit from international exchange architecture students from the University of Sydney who were here for a two-week program focussed on sustainability. With their itinerary packed with lectures, their hands on RG visit was a highlight and the USYD organisers indicated they would include Reverse Garbage in future programs.

Fringe Festival

We were excited to be involved with the 10th anniversary of the month-long Sydney Fringe Festival. Reuse Artist, Fiona created a spectacular installation 'Seven-thousand year chandeliers' that were displayed in The Rocks' Nurses Walk, and ran five Sunday workshops where the community crafted pieces to decorate the pink selfie stage in the centre of the Rocks.

Fusion Festival

Fiona and Sarah travelled to Wagga Wagga for the Fusion Festival weekend - the first major road trip for Ed the van. They took the 'Seven-thousand year chandeliers' and worked with locals who had collected materials to build their own similar community installation.



Rainbow Families at Mardi Gras

Reverse Garbage has a long association with Rainbow Families NSW supporting their kids' fun days and halloween discos. This year they approached us to join them in the Mardi Gras parade. We held a workshop for Rainbow Families to create the decorations and messaging that decked our old ute on the night.

I had a great time chauffeuring Fiona (our very own 78er) down Oxford Street with a DJ playing tunes on the back. People loved seeing Reverse Garbage in the parade - a celebration of our strong connection with artists and performers.



Sydney Biennale

Reverse Garbage partnered with the Biennale to present family workshops on Cockatoo Island for 12 weekends, and weekday workshops for schools. Despite only squeezing two weeks in before all face to face activities were cancelled, the exposure through the Biennale website and marketing campaigns was very valuable.

The Settlement Vacation Care: Indigenous Families

In January 2020 we sponsored workshops and a warehouse excursion for children from 'The Settlement Vacation Care Program'. This is a service for children aged 5-12 years from families of low socio-economic status predominantly of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. The majority live in community housing and are typically not able to afford mainstream childcare and/or access the experiences that we seek to provide.



Operations report

Louise McDonald

What a year! We've seen droughts, floods, fires and a pandemic. As the numbers show, it'll take more than that to disrupt the consistency of Reverse Garbage.



The blistering summer and fires that blanketed Sydney in smoke from late October through to January impacted our operations. On days of excessive smoke, strenuous dock work was impractical therefore minimal. In January, when temperatures reached 35 degrees, a fairly consistent figure at that time of year, the Community Service workers were sent home.

We had our own small fire in September 2019 which was caused by rain penetrating our roof. This short circuited the wiring, leaving our Tool Room, Book Room and Paper Room in the dark for a few weeks until we replaced the impacted area. We had to use external-grade lighting in these internal areas so we can be sure it is waterproof keeping our customers and team safe.

In hindsight, this now seems like the calm before the storm.

When COVID-19 hit Australia in mid-March, our loading dock closed temporarily and we ceased all pickups from our suppliers – with the exception of resources

required for the face shields (see page 20). Government departments directed all of our Community Service team to stay home.

From the beginning, we have stayed in contact with our main suppliers, firstly to wish them well during lockdown, then to make future plans as much as was possible during these unprecedented times.

Thankfully most of our suppliers have continued on after weathering the worst of the COVID-19. Coincidentally, we had received large donations just prior to March from the few suppliers that didn't reopen after lockdown. For example, we cleared three department stores of mannequins at the beginning of the year.

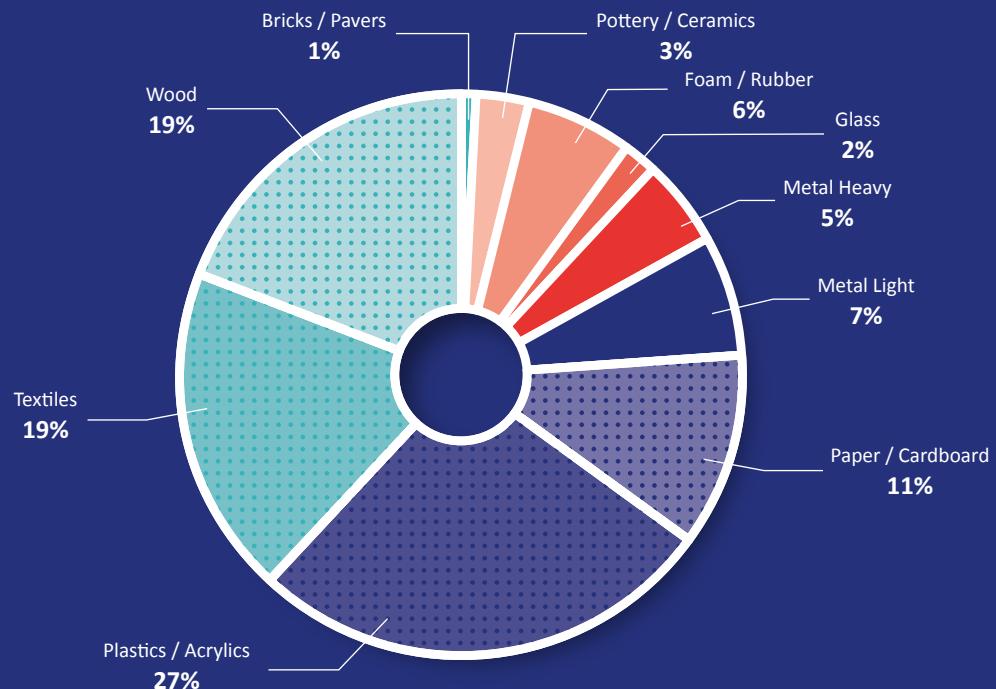
With spaces like the ICC Darling Harbour, and events in general under tough restrictions, there has been less of the large jazzy donations, and we expect this will continue for a while.

We gradually reopened the dock for donations and recommenced pickups from mid-May 2020.

For us, the silver lining of lockdown was many large event companies, film studios and councils had the time and energy to devote to clearing out their own storage – and a lot was donated to us.

We have been weighing donations for two consecutive years now (starting July 2018), providing very interesting data. Aside from the anomalies caused by COVID-19

DONATIONS BY CATEGORY OF MATERIALS



from March to June, the data is remarkably consistent year on year. The difference between the monthly comparisons is give or take one truck load of stock.

In a workplace that relies on the generosity and environmental awareness of donors, it is interesting to see the consistency of workload, donations and even types of donations year on year – with obvious allowances for the third of the year impacted by the pandemic.

Due to COVID-19 dramatically affecting donors from March to June, the total weight we diverted from landfill is 178,769 kg, down by 28% from the previous year.

DONATIONS ACCEPTED BY MONTH



We have retained consistency with the breakdown by category of materials.

1. Plastic (including acrylic) is 27% (47,624kg)
2. Textiles is 19% (34884kg)
3. Wood is 19% (33274kg)

In 2019/2020, the Operations team completed 1,820 jobs, two thirds of the 2018/2019 total.

Our truck and ute have collectively travelled 14,760kms (down a fifth from previous year) to collect donations, and deliver reuse resources across greater Sydney.

JOBS COMPLETED

Donations delivered to us
72%

Pick ups
28%

This year we welcomed Roger as our truck driver (with a little handyman on the side) and Evan as an operations trainee in September.

The stalwarts of the Operations team (Con 15 years, Emma 12 years and myself 18 years) have seen some interesting times at Reverse Garbage but we feel it safe to say it has been a year like no other. My team has proven resilient, adaptable and consistent. Thank you to them all.



Our team

Employees

In a place where no two days are ever the same, the one constant is our small, hardworking team.

We have had very few changes. We farewelled Nikki from Administration, and Kim from our casual retail team.

We've welcomed Evan as a trainee in our Operations team, Roger as our driver for Paper Round, and Mia to our casual retail team.



LOU



KIRSTEN



AMY



NAOMI



EMMA



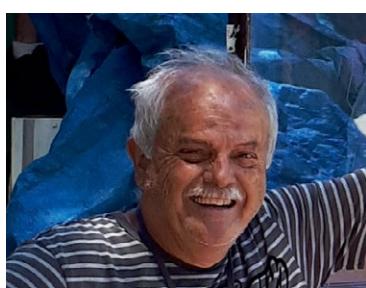
FIONA



ELLA



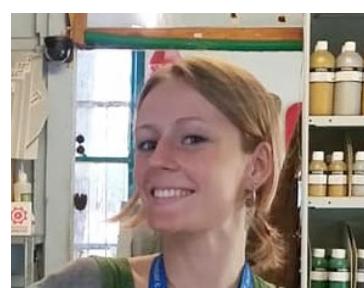
BRETT



CON



LISA



MIA



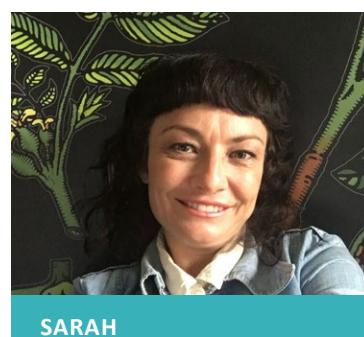
LEAH



ROGER



EVAN



SARAH

Our team

Volunteers

We are so grateful for our volunteers! As a not for profit charity, our resources are stretched and without the help of our volunteers, Reverse Garbage just couldn't run.

Sadly, COVID-19 ceased the volunteers who help us through government programs such as NSW Department of Justice, NSW Department of Revenue and Australian Department of Human Services.

We were grateful for all the assistance we received from corporate groups this year. Having a team of eager workers for a day helps us tick some big items off our to do list.

We treasure our volunteers who come each week simply because they love what we do and want to be a part of it! Thank you Peter, Natalie, Deanne, Karen, Mia, Celia, and Sally.

And let's not forget the students – some come to complete the 'Service' component of their Duke of Edinburgh award, some through university programs, and some – like Leslie, Niamh and Harvey just because they love the place!



A pandemic didn't stop us thanking our troupes on Volunteers Day on 19 May.



Mirvac cleared out the tiles so we could make a learning garden.





Some of the 80 students from St Ignatius, Riverview who spent their annual day of service painting barrels, sorting textiles and creating prototypes.



KPMG made giant games from reuse resources.



Through the UTS Shopfront program, this team of design students created an animated video on the difference between reuse and recycling.



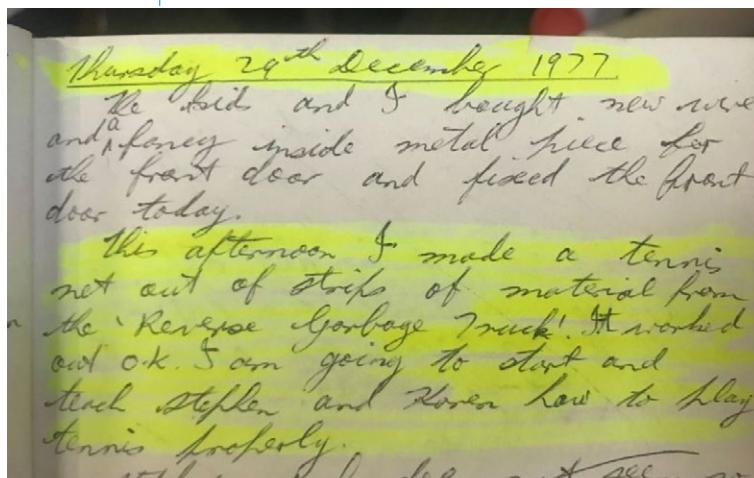
Deloitte painted logos on our barrels.

Community

Our vision is to inspire others to make reuse their first choice.

Diary notes

"This afternoon I made a tennis net out of strips of material from the 'Reverse Garbage Truck'. It worked out O.K." 43 years on and Helen and her husband, George still visit us regularly to buy resources for their street's Christmas decorations.



New donor

600 kilograms rerouted from the tip to us all because one person piped up and said "hey, there has to be a better way". First time donors, Penny and Evie from Harlequin Kids were very excited to discover an alternative to dumping old stock.

In true circular economy fashion, our community also inspires us. Every day we have customers coming in with fabulous donations and creations – big and small, but all clever and creative.

From the back of Bourke

Literally! Peter donated the bee hive drawers left behind when he upcycles the hive boxes into furniture.



Never too young

Thank you to early educator, Kaylene for the photos of our architectural samples at play. Beautiful!

Wedding spectacular

Aaron and Wynn couldn't be with friends and family for their wedding (due to COVID-19), so they took it to them via Zoom. Using mostly reuse resources discovered here at RG, they created an extraordinary set for their wedding.



Taking to the streets

We held a free placard making workshop – open to all – providing reuse resources. There was a great turnout with many a great placard heading off to protests over the following weeks.



From St Andrews, Scotland

Such a pleasure to meet Milly and Sophie Dorothe from Plastic Unwrapped, who are travelling the world documenting the stories of individuals and companies who are striving to create solutions to plastic pollution.

HSC artworks

A fabulous example of the circular economy - Nicki bought all of her resources for her HSC artwork from Reverse Garbage and has now donated her masterpieces to us!

Board members

Yvette Andrews

Chairperson

BA Hon (Syd), Masters of Media Arts (UTS), MTeach (UNE)

Yvette a leading engagement professional and is currently the Manager of Strategic Engagement and Community Relations at the City of Sydney. She was previously the Chief of Staff to President of the Legislative Council, Meredith Burgmann and a senior ministerial advisor to Linda Burney. Yvette joined the Reverse Garbage Board in 2009. She lives in the Inner West.

Amanda Brown

Director

BCom (Murdoch), BSc (Murdoch), Chartered Accountant A&NZ

Amanda is a Director at KPMG with over 25 years of experience across offices in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne and London. She has led the IT insurance assurance group (2006-2017) and currently is responsible for Quality and Risk for Management Consulting nationally. Amanda has been on our Board for five years and has enjoyed the opportunity of working with an iconic organisation dedicated to sustainability, education and reuse. She lives in the Inner West.

Sally Barber

Director

BEc LLB (Hons) (USyd) FGIA FCIS

Sally is a corporate lawyer with over 20 years of experience, including a dispute resolution background, in-house experience as a General Counsel and a long history of involvement in pro bono programs. She is a Fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia and Special Counsel at international law firm Bird & Bird. Sally joined the board of Reverse Garbage in 2018 and is enjoying working with the dedicated team at a much-loved not-for-profit organisation both practising and teaching sustainability and reuse. She lives in the Inner West.



Fiona Katauskas

Director

BA (Hons) ANU

Fiona is a freelance cartoonist, illustrator, author and television producer with over 20 years' experience in a wide range of media roles. Her interests include education, governance, sustainability and community engagement. Fiona has been a member of the Reverse Garbage board since 2010 and has great respect for the organisation, its vision and its history as well as great enthusiasm for its future. She lives in the Inner West.

Ellen O'Brien

Director

BSc (USyd), MSc (USyd), MBA (MGSM), CEnvP, MEIANZ, MACD

Ellen is an independent sustainability practitioner who has worked with SMEs, large industrial corporates, NGOs and local governments on eco-efficiency, waste management and sustainability programs. Ellen joined the Reverse Garbage Board in 2019 and she believes that education and communicating sustainability are key for the behavioural changes required for us to successfully aid us in managing challenges posed by climate change. She lives in the Inner West.

RSE GARAGE

USE SINCE 1974

L-R Vicky Lalwani, Anita Mitchell, Scott Brunsdon, Sally Barber, Amanda Brown, Phil Nanlohy, Ellen O'Brien, Yvette Andrews, Fiona Katauskas.



Scott Brunsdon

Director

BE-d (USyd)

Scott is a local and long term patron of Reverse Garbage. He has been on the board since 2015. Scott began his working life as a secondary school teacher, then spent 20 years in the advertising industry, and now runs a quantity surveying company. He is also a 'maker' and believer in the mission of Reverse Garbage. He lives in the Inner West.

Phillip Nanlohy

Director

M.Ed. (USyd), M.Ed. (UOW), B. Ed., Dip. Teach

Phil was one of the group of teachers and community workers who set up Reverse Garbage in 1975. He served as the Chairperson of the original cooperative and on the board for its first 12 years. Phil worked as a teacher and education lecturer for over 35 years. During that time he maintained his contact with the cooperative, returning to the board in 2016. He lives in the Inner West.

Anita Mitchell

Director

MBA (USyd), Company Directors Course AICD, MEM (Macquarie) BSc (UTS)

Anita works at Lend Lease and is a recognised expert in sustainability with 25 years' experience in sustainability and environmental management spanning the energy, water, waste, property and construction sectors. Anita has recently returned from London where she was leading Lend Lease Europe in environment and social sustainability. Anita joined the board in 2019.

Vicky Lalwani

Director

BIT (Bond University); MIT (Bond University);
MBA Executive (in progress with AGSM, UNSW)

Vicky has been on the Reverse Garbage Board since September 2016 and has found it an amazing opportunity to support a beloved organisation with an ethos to positively support our environment for generations to come. He is currently the General Manager at Adrenalin - a digital marketing, technology and consulting firm.

Case study

From leftovers to lifesaving

On the evening of 23 March 2020, after a tough day at the office where we were teetering on closing the doors like the rest of Sydney, Reverse Garbage received an email from a doctor asking for help. His hospital had run out of face shields – an essential tool in protecting our health professionals from COVID-19.

Within 48 hours of receiving the request for alternatives to Personal Protective Equipment, we found the resources and the volunteers to make face shields to donate to health professionals around Sydney and beyond.

That was just the beginning. Together with 81 volunteers from our wonderful Reverse Garbage community, we made 2100 face shields that were distributed across Sydney and beyond - as far as Katherine, NT.

This huge community effort attracted a lot of attention – from the media and our community. ABC's 7.30 Report wanted the story, but as their crews were in lockdown they couldn't film it. So with zero film experience, and lots of email direction from the show's Producer, we filmed it on an iPhone and it aired on 31 March 2020.

Stories like this, and articles in the Sydney Morning Herald inspired extraordinary generosity of many including a Family Foundation, QBE Foundation, The Awesome Foundation and our own wonderful community donating \$13,615 through a GiveNow fundraising campaign.

How did we do it?

This face shield project has turned out to be the perfect case study for why it's important to rethink our waste.

Each of the components for the first round of face shields was donated to us by companies who no longer had a need for the resource:

- The elastic was donated by a closed down wholesaler.
- Sturdy plastic sheets were actually folders donated by a company that had a stationery clear out.
- The double sided tape came as an end of roll from regular donor Husky Tapes.
- The foam offcuts come from the Foam Booth, leftover from their projects.

Each of these companies could have sent these items straight to landfill, but instead they chose to donate it to us for creative reuse.

Individually the items had no purpose, but together they became an extremely valuable resource that has been gratefully accepted by our legendary health professionals.

The spirit of the Reverse Garbage community was demonstrated in that madcap few days when volunteers lined up to collect the kits and return them to us.





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