Project Launch Outcomes Report
Launch date: 24 July 2014

25 YEARS
1989-2014

Summary

On 24 July 2014 at Customs House, Sydney, the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) launched the key project deliverables of the *Becoming Social* social media project. The project, conducted over 18 months with a combined cash and in-kind value of more than $100,000, enhances councils' understanding and use of social media as a relationship and policy development tool in relation to local and regional environmental matters.

A key output from the project is the **Becoming Social website** (www.becomingsocial.com.au). This purpose-built website supports the suite of project deliverables, which include:

1.   The Becoming Social web-based decision tool and associated resources

2.   The Becoming Social online community platform

3.   Guides to implementing a social media initiative, including strategy development, monitoring and evaluation

4.   A survey report on the use of social media in Local Government

5.   A literature review report on social media and its use in Government engagement, consultation, education and policy development.

Presentations from the project consultants, the SCCG project manager and SCCG Member Willoughby Council were delivered to 41 participants representing 19 different organisations. The presentations contextualised the project providing an overview of social media, especially in local government, and addressed gaps, needs and opportunities. The suite of resources developed through the project was reviewed in detail to provide participants with the understanding and familiarity to access and use them immediately. This was complemented by the presentation from Willoughby Council, which provided an 'on-ground' practitioner's perspective and insight. An end-of-launch panel discussion then afforded participants the opportunity to explore issues further and have presenters address any queries or questions that emerged during their presentation.

The subject matter, structure, duration, high calibre of presenters and the contribution of participants ensured that the event was a success. This was reflected in participant feedback, with 95 per cent rating it good or excellent. Lessons learned and evaluation results will be applied to future activities to ensure continuous improvement of SCCG events.

LAUNCH

Project:	Becoming Social
Date:	24 July 2014
Venue:	Customs House, Circular Quay, Sydney
Time:	9:00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.
Target audience:	Environmental managers, educators and other relevant staff (such as those in communications) with limited social media experience but who currently or propose to undertake a social media initiative.

Event objectives

		Achieved
1.	Engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders	✓
2.	Deliver presentations from industry/sector experts on relevant issues including from a local government practitioner's perspective	✓
3.	Provide capacity in relation to social media – offer insights into and increase knowledge and skills regarding social media: demystify what platforms to use, increase confidence creating, and monitoring and evaluating initiatives	✓
4.	Review the SCCG's Becoming Social project, in particular, its methodology, elements and deliverables	✓
5.	Provide a forum for networking and sharing of research, initiatives and ideas	✓
6.	Showcase SCCG achievements generally towards sustainable coastal management	✓

Attendance

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Speakers	Participants	SCCG Member Councils	Organisations	Other council

	SCCG Member Councils	Other Councils	Other organisations
1	Hornsby Council	City of Ryde Council	Dialogue Consulting
2	Manly Council		Community Solutions
3	Mosman Council		Howard Partners
4	North Sydney Council		Kimbriki Resource Recovery Centre
5	Pittwater Council		Manly Environment Centre
6	Randwick City Council		Office of Environment and Heritage
7	Sutherland Shire Council		Sydney Coastal Councils Group
8	Warringah Council		
9	Waverley Council		
10	Willoughby City Council		
11	Woollahra Council		

Background and context

Social media is a key communication media that can facilitate engagement, participation and awareness of Councils' issues, policies and programs. It has changed the way we work, rest and socialise, but questions arise as to when and how to harness it to increase community engagement, participation and awareness. And what happens if it generates negative commentary? There can be hesitation in the uptake of new technologies due, in part, to a perceived loss in control of content.

Effective social media frameworks and strategies can compliment traditional communication and engagement activities, connect with new and hard to reach audiences and promote an interactive discourse, triggering insights and ideas.

Becoming Social project

Our *Becoming Social* social media project helps to answer the questions posed above. It increases councils' understanding and use of social media as a relationship and policy development tool to engage, consult and educate coastal communities in relation to local and regional coastal environmental issues.

Deliverables and Outcomes

The project has three 3 key outputs, the first two of which underpin the third:

1. A **survey** among SCCG Member Councils exploring application, adoption and use of social media, and, in particular its use to address environmental issues. Results identify current social media strategies, policies and tools employed and gaps, barriers and capacity required.

2. **Literature Review and Report** investigating, summarising and synthesising social media and its use in Government engagement, consultation, education and policy development.

3. An innovative **online tool** (and associated resources) to enable Councils to use social media as a relationship, project and policy development tool which can be integrated with traditional engagement, consultation and education methods addressing local and regional coastal environmental issues.

AGENDA

8.45 – 9.00	**Registration**
9:00 – 9:10 (10 mins)	**INTRODUCTION, WELCOME, & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY** **Geoff Withycombe**, Executive Officer, SCCG
9:10 – 9:30 (20 mins)	**THE *BECOMING SOCIAL* PROJECT** **Stephen Summerhayes,** Manager Projects and Programs, SCCG The genesis of the project and a review of the project elements.
9:35 – 9:50 (15 mins)	**THE WHAT, HOW AND WHY OF SOCIAL MEDIA - A GUIDE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT** **Anne Howard**, Director, Howard Communications Anne presents the outcomes of her Social Media literature review and report.
9:55-10:10 (15 mins)	**SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR** **Hugh Stephens,** Social and Digital Media Consultant, Dialogue Consulting
10:10-10:30 (20 mins)	**THE *BECOMING SOCIAL* ONLINE PLATFORM** **Matthew Cox,** Strategic Consultant, Dialogue Consulting What it is, what it can do for you and how to use it.
10:30-10:50 (20 mins)	***BECOMING SOCIAL* PLATFORM RESOURCES** **Hugh Stephens** The Platform's resources including the online *Community Platform*, and a look at the process of how Councils can prepare for a social media initiative.
10:50-11:15	**Morning Tea**
11:20 – 11.50 (30 mins)	**MONITORING AND EVALUATING SOCIAL MEDIA** **Matthew Cox** An overview of the pilot case study conducted using the monitoring and evaluation framework developed.
11:55 – 12:25 (30 mins)	**COUNCIL CASE STUDY - EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ONLINE ENGAGEMENT** **Darius Turner,** Corporate Planning and Governance Co-ordinator, Willoughby City Council On-ground experience and guidance for councils in establishing and maintaining an online community, managing contentious discussions and combining online and offline engagement.

12:25 – 12:55 (30 mins)	**PANEL SESSION**
	A facilitated panel discussion to explore (a) questions from attendees which arose during the presentations, (b) issues for councils in conducting social media in relation to environmental matters and policies, and (c) future priorities.
	Panellists: **Matthew Cox** **Darius Turner**
	                      Anne Howard
	                      Hugh Stephens

12:55 – 13:00	**Wrap up – summary of event, future activities and initiatives, close**

Biographies* & Synopses*

Matthew Cox, Strategic Consultant, Dialogue Consulting

Matthew has been working at Dialogue Consulting for over 3.5 years as a Strategic Consultant specialising in social media strategy and campaign development. He has worked with organisations such as Geelong City Council, Murrindindi Shire Council, the North East Connections Project, Defence Health, Relationships Australia NSW and QLD, and HCF. Matthew's knowledge in strategy development, training, and enabling organisations to see the benefits of social media provided the project with knowledge working across a large range of clients.

As part of the icebreaker Matthew demonstrated an online platform, http://www.polleverywhere.com/, as a way to engage an audience and solicit and compile in real time their responses to targetted questions.

Later in the Agenda, Matthew presented details of the *Becoming Social* online decision tool and associated resources, focussing on the needs it addressed, what it can do and how it can be used. He guided attendees through the elements of the tool, including navigation through the website.

After morning tea, Matthew presented the *Becoming Social* Monitoring and Evaluation Framework as well as an application of the framework against an environmental social media initiative, Witness King Tides, which assists communities to visualise the potential future impacts of sea level rise.

Anne Howard, Director, Howard Partners Pty. Limited

Anne has been working with government, industry and NGOs to develop corporate communication and community engagement strategies for the past 20 years. This includes helping clients integrate social media into their engagement strategies. Anne is the author of 'Connecting with Communities: How Local Government is Engaging with Citizens,' published in 2012. She holds a Master's degree in Online Communication, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Strategic Communication and Marketing, and is a Director of the public policy and management advisory firm, Howard Partners.
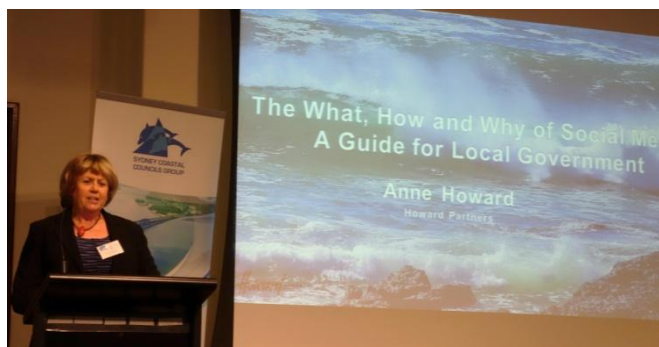

Anne discussed the evolution of social media use in local, national and international contexts. She highlighted the opportunities that social media presents for organisations to engage with their stakeholders and emphasised the need for organisations to keep abreast of the technologies that are emerging in the social media space. Anne also explained the process and methodology employed in preparing the social media literature review report, placing it in context of related national and international work that she undertook previously.

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* in alphabetical order.
* pdfs of PowerPoint slides are available upon request.

Hugh Stephens, Social and Digital Media Consultant, Dialogue Consulting

Hugh is a successful social and digital media consultant combining business analysis and statistical methods with marketing and communications practices to produce evidence-driven strategy, research and risk management for clients. Having worked for many years in IT and with internet projects, Hugh has enjoyed the rapid expansion of social media, embracing it in its early stages and continuing to learn about new tools, techniques and platforms on an almost daily basis.
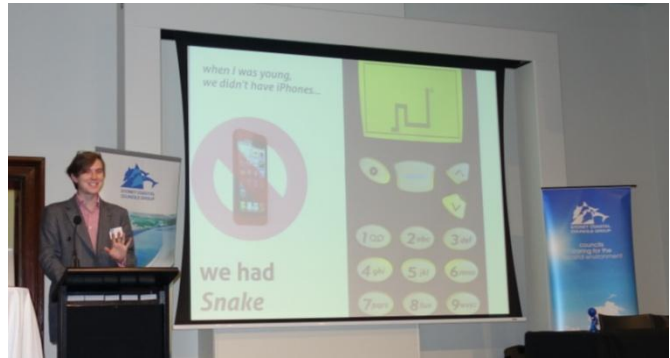
Hugh runs Dialogue Consulting, a specialist social media consultancy providing social media advice, strategy, training, content, analysis, and risk management solutions to clients from both the public and private sector. Dialogue Consulting has grown from a single-person business to now employ six staff members and a range of contractors.

Hugh introduced the audience to the dynamic nature of social media, providing a historical context from his many years of experience in the industry. He spoke of the utility of social media in the public sector, including knowledge and resource gaps as well as current, evolving and predicted future needs. His presentation set the framework for discussion on the *Becoming Social* online tools.

After Matthew discussed the *Becoming Social* online tool, Hugh took participants through each of the site's supporting resources, particularly the Community Platform, where local government employees can come together and discuss their ongoing needs, requirements or campaigns, and receive feedback from other community representatives.

Stephen Summerhayes, Manager Projects & Programs, SCCG

Stephen is a solicitor of 20 years' standing, admitted to practise in both England and Australia. In 2003 he established his own legal firm to fund undergraduate studies in Environmental Science and International studies and, thereafter, a postgraduate Master of Environmental Science by research. Before starting work with the SCCG in 2011 he spent two years in Latin America studying and working for not-for-profit organisations in Ecuador and Guatemala. To assist his role at the SCCG he has undertaken a Diploma of Project Management, Diploma of Management and a Cert IV in Training and Assessment.

Stephen conducted the initial icebreaker and introduced attendees to the project. He discussed the genesis of the project and the approach taken by the SCCG, namely considering social media as *any online facility that enables communication* and approaching such facilities as *'communications ecosystems'* that have considerable value for councils to engage with their communities and vice versa. The project elements (aim, objectives, deliverables etc) were reviewed. Thanks were extended to the contribution of the Steering Committee and consultants.

Stephen then reviewed the first project stage, namely the survey undertaken by ACELG addressing the application, adoption and use of social media by SCCG Councils, cross-referenced against a previous national survey.

Stephen also facilitated the panel discussion.

Darius Turner, Corporate Planning and Governance Co-ordinator, Willoughby City Council

Darius currently develops and manages online community engagement projects at Willoughby Council. Over the past 3 years Darius has developed strategy which has seen an increase in participation and subscription to the organisation's online discussion forum Have Your Say Willoughby. Darius enjoys combining online and traditional forms of community engagement and is passionate about reaching the community in new and innovative ways.

Darius has a degree in Media and Communications and is currently studying his Masters of Commerce specialising in marketing at the University of Sydney. In his spare time he enjoys photography and playing and refereeing soccer.

Darius' presentation placed the project outputs in an on-ground context. He discussed the social media programs of Willoughby Council, particulary drivers within council and platforms they use and have used. He shared Council's experience in relation to branding and the establishment of a community panel to foster engagement and participation.

A number of case studies were explored by Darius including lessons learned for future initiatives.

Geoff Withycombe, Executive Officer, SCCG

Geoff Withycombe has an Applied Science degree in coastal management and has been the Executive Officer of the SCCG since 1998. In his role as Executive Officer, Geoff has responsibility to implement the Group's Strategic Plan and provides advice, policy development and decision making support for the 15 member councils. Geoff also holds other Director positions.

Geoff welcomed participants and thanked presenters and the host Council, City of Sydney. He gave an Acknowledgement of Country and set the context of the event, drawing upon other SCCG projects that compliment the *Becoming Social* project. He also reviewed the role the SCCG plays in sustainable coastal management, reviewing its Aim, Mission and Strategic Plan.

At the conclusion of the event, Geoff summarised key elements of each presentation, the results of the panel discussion and reiterated his thanks to all for participating.

Evaluation

The SCCG is keen to keep doing the things it does well and to address those things that can be improved. To assess the success of the launch against the Objectives and to enable the SCCG to deliver informative, relevant and engaging events, a post-event online survey was conducted. The survey was specifically designed to obtain information and insight into participants' views of the event, including suggestions for enhancing future events.

Forty-six percent of participants completed the online survey. Results were overwhelmingly positive:

- 95% considered that, overall, the event was good or excellent
- 95% agreed or strongly agreed that the event was well structured, engaging and thought provoking
- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that it increased their skills and knowledge
- 100% agreed that presenters were well prepared
- 95% agreed that presenters communicated well
- 72% thought it was a good networking opportunity.

Highlights for participants included the diversity of speakers, the case studies presented, the range of social media platforms explained, the opportunity for networking and the analysis of trends in social media use. For the most part, they found the presenters informative and engaging. Some participants suggested more time could have been spent on the practicalities of social media use, and examples from different Councils. It was also suggested that interactivity could be improved if participants had the opportunity to trial the tools on the day and if there was more time to discuss with colleagues about their social media experiences.

The SCCG Secretariat will consider the evaluation results in detail, particularly the comments to tailor the delivery of future events. The resolution of results provided by the structure of the survey enables resources to be allocated to areas identified as priorities or which are evaluated less favourably. The results also contribute to the SCCG's baseline data against which future performance can be judged.

Acknowledgements

The Becoming Social Steering Committee guided and informed the project and reviewed all deliverables. Our thanks are extended to Committee members for their respective contribution.

The Becoming Social Advisory Committee guided and informed the project and our thanks are extended to Committee members for their respective contribution.

The SCCG extends thanks to presenters and participants for their contribution and feedback. The contribution of the City of Sydney Council in providing the launch venue is also gratefully acknowledged.

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This event was conducted in accordance with the SCCG's sustainable event management policy.