

# Multiple awards for catchment compost project



*Celebrating their win are (back, left to right) Raya Giffard - Flinders Bioremediation, Andrew Thomas - Patawalonga Board, Paul Bowden - Jeffries Group, and (front, left to right), Nick Matthews - Lucas Earthmovers, and Dr Richard Stewart - Flinders Bioremediation*

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## The Patawalonga Board's innovative project to turn catchment waste into compost has again been awarded.

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After picking up the State Award in June, in November 2005 the Board received the National Case Earth Award for Environmental Excellence (Category: project value up to \$2 million) for finding an environmentally sustainable means of disposing of material collected in trash racks and silt ponds.

This was the project's third environmental award.

Andrew Thomas, Board Project Manager, said that urban stormwater runoff contains pollutants - nutrients, heavy metals, sediments, rubbish and biological contaminants.

“These pollutants are filtered out using wetlands, silt basins and gross pollutant traps to stop them going out to sea,” said Mr Thomas.

“Each year, the Board disposes of about 1,000 tonnes of material caught in trash racks.

“The levels of contamination in this material are often such that it is classifiable as low level contaminated waste, requiring disposal to landfill -an expensive and unsustainable proposition on a long-term basis.”

Until now, there has not been an environmentally sound and cost-effective alternative means by which to dispose of this waste, so the Board enlisted the assistance of scientists from the Flinders University-based Flinders Bioremediation to find a viable “zero waste” solution.

A composting solution was put forward. Composting renders many contaminants inert, and kills off any weed seeds contained in the product. The composted material provides valuable nutrient and mineral supplements which can be used as a soil improver.

A full-scale commercial trial has now been successfully completed.