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MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 9 November 2021

Sydney residents help social enterprise break mattress recycling record

National social enterprise Soft Landing collected and recycled a record 538,000 mattresses and ensemble bases in 2020-21 – 35 per cent of them in Greater Sydney.

Announcing the results during National Recycling Week 2021, Soft Landing NSW Manager Joe Rasmussen said 2020-21 was the biggest year the social enterprise had ever had, with mattress volumes 16 per cent higher than the year before. The volumes included 191,700 mattresses and ensembles across the Greater Sydney region.

“The huge volumes were largely driven by the impacts of COVID-19 as industry and community members replaced mattresses at a higher rate during the pandemic,” Mr Rasmussen said.

“It also highlights growing community awareness of the importance of recycling and reducing landfill.”

Soft Landing diverts mattresses and ensemble bases from landfill and recovers the components to recycle, and provides stable and meaningful jobs for people with barriers to employment. Of the 260 people employed in 2020-21, 79 per cent had faced some sort of challenge in entering the workforce.

Its largest site at Smithfield in Fairfield services 14 Greater Sydney Councils, including the City of Sydney, and employs mostly former refugees. Other target groups are Aboriginal people, young people and long-term unemployed.

City of Sydney CEO Monica Barone said: “The City of Sydney’s ultimate aim is to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. This is just one component of our efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

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“We recycle items where we can and are always looking for new ways to reduce waste, including running a number of recycling trials, in addition to our day to day recycling operations.

“Last year we recycled 33,545 mattresses with Soft Landing. It’s wonderful to see other councils showing their commitment to waste reduction with more than half a million mattresses recycled.”

Soft Landing’s business model is to create jobs while doing the right thing by the planet.

“We don’t send materials overseas for disposal; we keep our by-products in Australia, support local companies, reduce transport mileage and maximise reuse of materials,” Mr Rasmussen said.

“We send foam to Australian carpet-underlay manufacturers, steel to Australian scrap steel merchants, and timber bed bases to local industry for mulch.

“In 2020-21 we diverted 9,124 tonnes of waste from landfill, recycling 7,127 tonnes of steel, 924 tonnes of timber and 1,073 tonnes of foam.

“As well as protecting the environment, we’re about providing stable employment for people who have been out of the workforce for a long time or have struggled to get into the workforce.

“Most of these people haven’t had access to the opportunities and support that many of us take for granted. Stable employment can change lives and has huge flow-on benefits for the whole community.

“Because we are a not-for profit, our revenue goes entirely to delivering our work.

“For every 35 mattresses that we collect and recycle each day, we can create a job for someone who really needs one.”

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