

Better Waste Management at School

Where to begin?

Want to find a better way to manage your school's waste? Before you jump into a waste audit, take a few moments to answer these questions. The time spent in planning will help make any future waste minimisation efforts all the more successful.

STEP 1:

- How is the waste currently collected? For example: does the school have a single skip bin for all waste or does it have Council kerbside bins for different waste types?
- Is the waste contract fixed term, ongoing or flexible? If you want to make changes, the timing of those changes may be influenced by any existing waste contracts.
- Does the school have white paper recycling collection? The Education Department has a contract with one of the big companies that schools can use. For many schools, this is the only recycling they do.
- How much does the school currently pay for waste management services? Changes may cost money and this is an important consideration if you're looking to make long term, sustainable changes.

STEP 2:

Find out:

- Who empties each bin? Is it the cleaner, grounds-staff, students?
- Do all bins have bin liners? Many bins have liners, which are not necessary and can be simply adding more soft plastic to the general waste bin. Liners in a recycling bin may contaminate the waste being recycled and are best avoided.
- How many bins (of all types) are at the school? Count both outside and inside including classrooms, common areas (such as the library and eating areas), staff rooms and the office.
- How often are all the bins emptied?



STEP 3:

Carry out a waste audit. You can find an easy to follow waste audit template at:



www.rethinkwaste.com.au/at-school/schools-program/

A waste audit will show you what types of waste and how much waste is generated at your school. The results can be confronting and it can be daunting to know where to start. Take small steps and be persistent, remembering that processes can be perfected over time as you find what works and what doesn't. One small change that is achievable is better than a big change that can never be implemented.

Getting started may be as simple as:

- Choose to target one item at a time. An example could be to start by reducing the number of zip lock bags that are thrown out every day.
- Choose to review the packaging on items sold in your school canteen. An example could be to ensure all packaging is recyclable.

Or you could choose to replace plastic straws and plastic, single use cutlery with re-usable or compostable items.



What Else?

Consider these things to help make your journey to reduce waste even easier:

- What are the best locations to place bins? Consider where waste is generated including near an eating area or next to the photocopier etc.
- How will you include staff, students and parents in the process? Messages about recycling and waste management will have to be repeated every year as the population of the school changes. Involving many people in the process as early as possible increases their motivation and engagement, and they could also bring new ideas to the table.

- Ensure long term success by not relying on a single person to manage the school's waste. Instead, make waste management part of the school's everyday procedures. Hold quick waste management meetings to measure progress and encourage staff, or add it as an agenda item in other regular school meetings.

Better waste management is one part of a process to becoming a more sustainable school. You can also consider ways to reduce energy and water waste; to not only help you save money, but also help Tasmania's environment.

In Summary:

1. Consider the tips in this Fact Sheet
2. Get key people on board (principal, grounds keepers, cleaners, students, parents)
3. Conduct a waste audit
4. Decide where you want to start – with one waste item or one waste stream?
5. Take small steps and celebrate successes as you go
6. Check progress, fine tune, have fun and be persistent!