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Business Waste Reduction Project – Case Study Alstonville Adventist Retirement Village

Background

The North East Waste Forum (NEWF) is a collective of five local councils that have come together to share resources to help avoid and reduce waste going to landfill in the Northern NSW region. The NEWF collective not only provides support for participating local Councils in managing waste, but also provides support and advice to various commercial sectors on how best to implement sustainable practices that reduce waste generation, wastes landfilled, and promote the recovery of recyclable resources.

An initiative of NEWF, The Business Waste Reduction Project (BWRP), began in April 2005 and focused on developing Waste Reduction Action Plans for six businesses, ranging from hospitality, through to aged care facilities, a correctional centre, a club facility and a large shopping complex. The following is a case study for Alstonville Adventist Retirement Village.

Alstonville Adventist Retirement Village



There are 85 independent living units (ILUs) and a 50 bed aged care facility (ACF) at the Alstonville Adventist Retirement Village. Each of the ILUs are provided with a council distributed 240 litre garbage bin each week, and all share the use of 60 recycling bins. In addition to this, a shared 0.75m³ trade waste bin is also emptied twice a week.

The ACF uses a 0.75m³ trade waste bin (emptied twice a week) and a 0.75m³ cardboard recycling bin (emptied fortnightly). Clinical waste and used cooking oil are also stored separately for pick up.

The Challenge

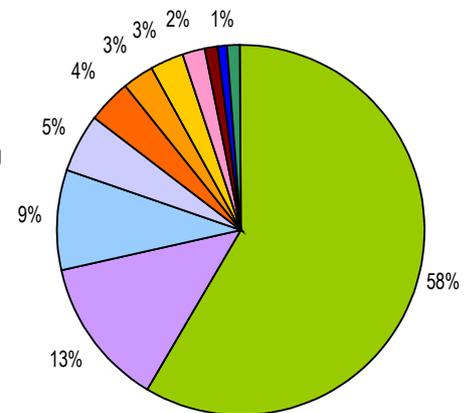
The main objective of the BWRP was to assess the efficiency of waste management practices at six businesses, characterise their waste streams and come up with waste management systems that would reduce the volume of waste going to landfill through waste avoidance, reuse and recycling and save these businesses money in the process. These studies have now been completed. It is hoped that their outputs will serve as effective blueprints for improving waste management among similar business in northern NSW.

Waste Characterisation

Waste audits and surveys were conducted at the outset of the project to determine the composition of the waste stream and identify the most efficient means of reducing waste.

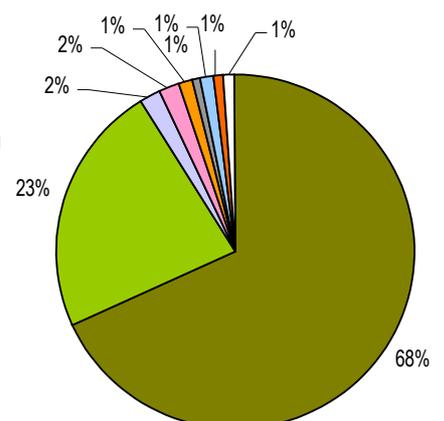
Aged Care Facility

- Food organics
- Pathogenic
- Cardboard
- Compostable packaging
- Metals
- Recyclable plastic
- Non recyclable plastic
- Plastic bags
- Earth/inert
- Glass
- Other organic



Independent Living Units

- Garden organics
- Food organics
- Compostable packaging
- Plastic bags
- Non-recyclable plastic
- Pathogenic
- Cardboard
- Recyclable metals
- Household chemicals



NORTH EAST WASTE FORUM

NEW WAYS WITH LESS WASTE



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Waste Reduction Action Plan

An important step in the project was the development of a Waste Reduction Action Plan (WRAP). This plan outlined recommendations made in collaboration with the centre to reduce waste based on the audit results and feedback from staff surveys.

Both the Independent Living Units (ILUs) and the Aged Care Facility (ACF) discarded large amounts of compostable organic material. The ILUs mainly generated garden organics, while the ACF mainly generated food organics. Based on these findings, the most logical step in the WRAP was to look at options for composting organics.

Residents of the ILUs have demonstrated their willingness and diligence to segregate materials for recovery. Audit results showed that there was virtually no contamination in their recycling bins, and virtually no recyclables in their garbage bins.

Outcomes

A full assessment of the success of the AARV WRAP implementation was not possible at the time the summary for this case study was written because AARV underwent a restructure, resulting in certain actions of the WRAP being placed on hold. However, a number of waste reduction initiatives put in place before that occurred remain in place and residents are more diligent with their waste management as a result of being part of the WRAP development.

The mulcher that is used to manage garden waste collected for ILU residents by maintenance staff has been particularly successful. The audit results have estimated its use has reduced green waste associated with the AARV by 98%. This equates to around 11.38 tonnes of waste per year being diverted from being landfilled.

Paper recycling collection bins installed in some ACF offices has made it easier for staff to recycle by separating recycling from waste at its source. This is also likely to contribute to the reduction of overall waste going to landfill from the AARV.

Cost Savings

No cost savings have been recorded thus far as part of implementing the AARV WRAP. Their involvement in the project relied more on the educational components of waste reduction to ensure that all residents were aware of the mulching program and how they could utilise it.

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AARV

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The Future

There are a number of actions devised under the AARV WRAP that are yet to be implemented. These include:

- Implementing a waste reduction and purchasing policy;
- Creating opportunities for recycling other materials; and
- Implementing ongoing reviews of the success of the WRAP, reporting to management and residents and undertaking education programmes to help residents and staff better manage their waste

New management have put these initiatives on hold until they are better established.