



## Business Waste Reduction Project Alstonville Business Waste Survey Report

### Introduction

The Business Waste Reduction Project (BWRP), an initiative of the North East Waste Forum (NEWF) is aimed at assisting businesses within the region to reduce the quantity of waste they generate and send to landfill through more efficient waste management practices. The service is free to business and is supported by your local council.

The waste practices and attitudes of businesses in the Alstonville CBD were surveyed in October 2010 in order to assist local business and improve waste reduction outcomes where possible.

### Benefits to Business

Implementing more efficient waste management and resource use practices has the potential to bring business and the wider community many benefits, including:

- Reduced waste collection and disposal costs;
- Improved operational efficiency, reduced production costs and improved staff morale;
- Improved environmental credentials & enhanced corporate image;
- Conserving natural resources, energy and water;
- Reduced pressure on local landfills and less impact on the environment from air and water pollution.

### Existing Waste & Recycling Services

The waste and recycling service options currently available in Alstonville include:

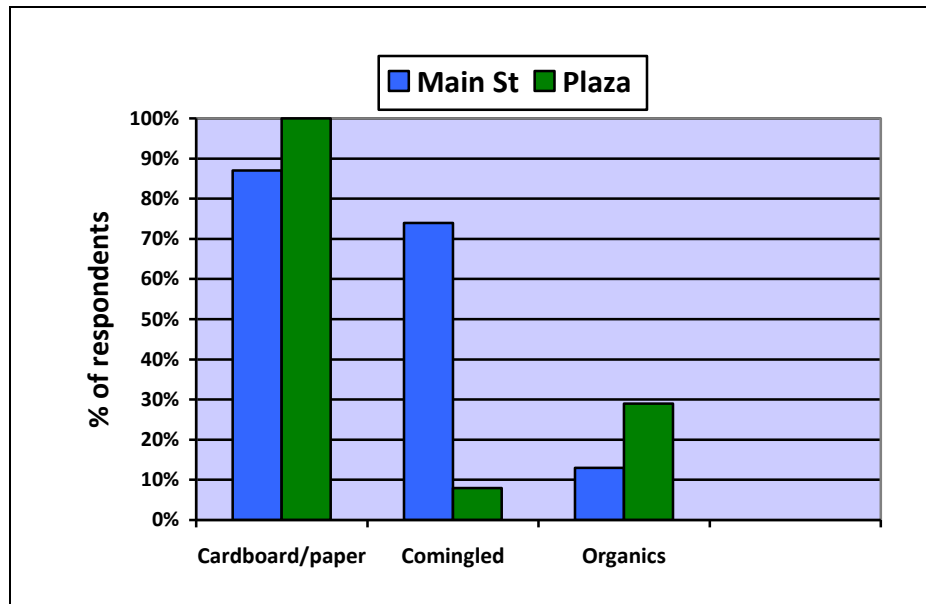
- i) Private Waste Contractors can provide
  - ✓ bulk trade bins for waste, cardboard/paper, or recyclable containers
  - ✓ 240L wheelie bins for cardboard/paper or comingled recyclable containers.
- ii) Ballina Shire Council
  - ✓ 240L wheelie bins for waste or comingled recyclables (*cardboard/paper & recyclable containers in the same bin*).

The Council's bulk bin service has recently been reviewed and since this survey was completed Council has resolved to cease the service from July 2011, deeming it financially unviable and being in direct competition to other local suppliers.

### Survey Summary

A total of 63 businesses in the Alstonville CBD, including the Plaza Shopping Centre and along Main St, responded to the survey.

The graph below illustrates business responses regarding participation in recycling. The positive response indicators for cardboard/paper and co-mingled recycling are inclusive of those businesses that recycle via alternatives such as taking home or giving to others to reuse. The positive response indicators for organics (food & green waste) only includes the 18 businesses in the survey that generate significant quantities of organics e.g. cafes, the hotel, florists etc.



The majority of businesses surveyed are already participating in recycling to varying degrees. Overall 92% of businesses are recycling cardboard/paper or do not generate a significant amount and 49% of businesses recycle comingled materials. Only 29% of businesses surveyed produced a significant amount of organics and of those businesses, 66% (12 of 18 businesses) were recycling some or all of their organics.

The main barriers for those Main St businesses currently not recycling are a lack of awareness regarding commercial recycling services and/or the cost of bins and collection. The information provided during the survey and the emphasis on the increasing cost differential between waste and recycling (due to the government levy on waste to landfill) may encourage more businesses to take up a recycling service.

At the Plaza Shopping Centre the high rate of cardboard/paper recycling is due to the availability of recycling facilities to all tenants (waste/recycling services are included in their tenancy agreement) and the very low rate of comingled container recycling is due to the lack of suitable recycling facilities. Any improvement in comingled recycling rates would require negotiation between tenants and the centre management to organise a suitable collection facility and service.

A surprisingly high rate of organic recycling is already occurring in the Alstonville CBD. This may be a reflection of the strong community network and active local participation in composting and worm farming. This is not a practical or long term solution for all businesses and the introduction of a council commercial organics

service (*to be confirmed*) in 2011 will be welcomed by a number of interested businesses including the Federal Hotel.

More than 70% of surveyed businesses said that they also undertook other sustainable actions at work, the most popular being reduced paper use & double sided printing, installation of energy efficient lighting, turning off appliances, completing an energy audit and purchasing local produce where possible.

Ballina Shire Council is considering the installation of public place recycling (PPR) bins in the Alstonville CBD and 95% of surveyed businesses were in support of the initiative, although there was concern about the possible negative impacts of vandalism, contamination, littering from overflow and the cost of installing new bins.

## Conclusion

There are still many opportunities for businesses to further improve their sustainable waste practices through implementing a broad variety of waste minimisation and recycling strategies relevant to their particular business. Ballina Shire Council congratulates business on their recycling efforts whilst the North East Waste Forum, on their behalf will continue to:

- provide assistance and support to interested businesses where possible;
- promote successful waste reducing businesses and the benefits they gain;
- continue business networking through the Chamber of Commerce; and
- increase the distribution of information via the BWRP and NEWF E Newsletters.

## Business Highlights

Promoting the sustainable waste practices of local businesses is an ideal way to share knowledge and success, strengthen local networks, engage others and reward those demonstrating leadership for their efforts. The following three Alstonville businesses stood out from the crowd for their efforts in sustainable waste management.

### ❖ Snowy's Bakery

Bakery owners Sue Thomson and Peter Martin and their staff at Snowy's barely waste a thing. Instead of sending unsold food to landfill, they supply it to the local community. Sacks of day old bread are sold on to locals for animal feed and St Vincent de Paul's pick up fresh unsold bakery products on Monday and Thursday evenings for distribution to those in need via their local food bank.



*Emily Branford with a sack of bread for animal feed and a 'home made' cake tray.*

Cardboard boxes are all reused either to pack orders into or recycled into cake boards by covering with aluminium foil. Sometimes demand is so high that they even collect boxes from neighbouring businesses to reuse.

## ❖ Savannah Coffee Lounge

Business owner Linda Masters is using commercial comingled recycling services to divert all the Café's recyclable containers and cardboard from landfill, as well as placing food waste into a separate container, which then goes home for chook feeding and composting. In this way, the Café's waste is kept to a minimum, which will result in significant future savings as the cost of waste to landfill increases each year due to the State Government's levy on waste. Other sustainable practices at the Café include purchasing as much local fresh produce as possible, using environmentally friendly cleaning products and replacing old inefficient electrical appliances with new to reduce energy consumption.

## ❖ Federal Hotel

The busy hotel generates a large volume of waste but thanks to the effective waste and recycling practices put in place by manager Mick O'Connor, much of it is being diverted from landfill. They are separating out the large quantities of cardboard, glass bottles and plastic containers into bulk trade waste bins for collection and recycling via Council and a local waste contractor.



*Bulk bins for the separate collection of recyclables at the Federal Hotel*

Up to 50% of the waste stream (almost 1m<sup>3</sup> per week) is food waste. The prospect of a future Council organics collection for business will be welcomed as finding a local organic recycling option can be problematic.

A range of other sustainable initiatives are also occurring at the Hotel including: the extensive use of locally sourced fresh fruit and vegetables, fish and meat; the installation of a solar hot water system resulting in significant cost savings; energy efficient down lights throughout; half flush toilets and staff awareness training to improve participation in all initiatives.

## Further Information

The North East Waste Forum encourages businesses wishing to improve their waste management practices and sustainability to check out the business waste reduction DIY toolkit and other useful resources online at [www.northeastwasteforum.org.au](http://www.northeastwasteforum.org.au) .

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