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Business Waste Reduction Project – Case Study Byron Central Apartments

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 focussed 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 Byron Central Apartments.

Byron Central Apartments



Byron Central Apartments comprise 28 self-contained holiday apartments and 6 retail outlets.

All apartments and retail stores share the use of fourteen wheelie bins for general garbage and fourteen recycling bins. Both are emptied on a weekly basis. The complex also shares a 0.75m³ trade waste bin that is emptied when full by a private waste removal contractor.

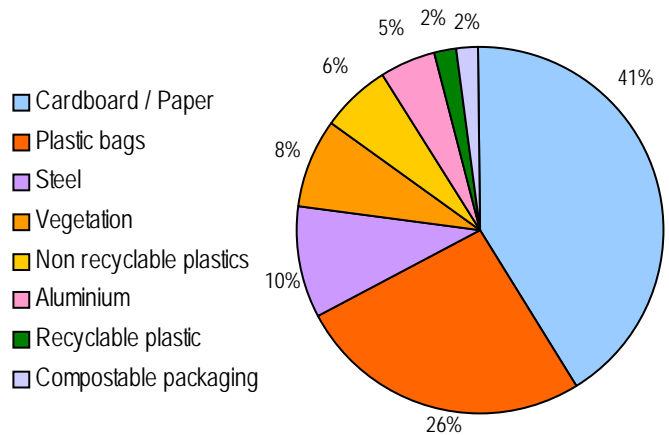
The Challenge

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.

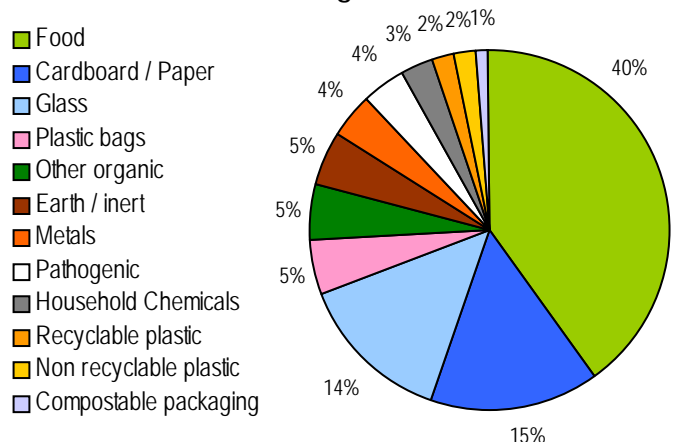
Waste Characterisation

Waste audits were conducted on the trade waste and residential wheelie bins at Byron Central Apartments to identify the main components of the waste stream.

Composition of the trade waste bin



Composition of the general garbage bins as used by staff and guests



NORTH EAST WASTE FORUM

NEW WAYS WITH LESS WASTE



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Waste Reduction Action Plan

A Waste Reduction Action Plan (WRAP) was devised based on information collected during the waste audit and feedback from staff and guests at Byron Central Apartments. Some of the main recommendations from the plan included:

General garbage wheelie bins:

Results from the waste audit showed that over 40% of material in the council-distributed wheelie bins were made up of food scraps and organic materials. Options for composting were reviewed, before a decision was made to install three worm farms.

The audit also revealed that recyclable materials contributed to about one third of all garbage bin waste, indicating that staff and guests are not allocating materials to the correct bin. The locations of bins were reviewed, and signage erected next to each bin clearly identifying the type of materials to be placed in each bin.

The audit also identified many unnecessary waste materials such as non-recyclable portion control milks, half used toilet rolls and soaps, and disposable dishcloths. To eliminate these materials from the waste stream, attention was focussed on substituting these materials for more environmentally friendly products such as recyclable milk cartons, reusable (washable) dish cloths and liquid soap dispensers. BCA also has plans to introduce toilet roll covers to maintain hygiene without the need to discard ½ used toilet rolls for each new guest.

Recycling wheelie bins:

Overall, the range of materials placed in the recycling bins was relatively good considering that the majority of guests are from other council regions, which may accept different materials for recycling.

Contamination in recycling bins was 12% prior to WRAP implementation, and 1% afterwards. This indicated that improvement was definitely possible with appropriate signage and education.

Trade waste bin:

The audit revealed that over 58% of the trade waste bin was comprised of recyclable materials, with paper and cardboard contributing 40% of total composition. Paper and Cardboard are easy materials to recycle so to address this situation, a paper and cardboard trade waste bin was introduced to substitute the existing general garbage trade waste bin.

Outcomes

Overall, the Business Waste Reduction Project proved to be a big success with BCA reducing the quantity of waste they sent to landfill by 43% and increasing the proportion of materials recycled by 64%. Some of the other successes of the program include:

- The introduction of the worm farm, which helped to reduce food waste by 38kg/week.
- Signs, education campaigns, and notice boards all assisted with reminding staff and guests to 'do the right bin'. The correct allocation of materials to bins improved markedly, so much so that there was no longer the need for a general garbage trade waste bin, and contamination in the recycling bin reduced from 12 % to 1%.
- Equally as encouraging, was the increase in the proportion of materials now recovered for recycling. Cardboard recycling increased by 57kg, glass 29kg, and plastics 11kg.

Cost Savings

BCA has saved approximately \$1774 per annum by substituting the general garbage trade waste bin for the cardboard recycling bin and by purchasing reusable products rather than single use products.

The Future

Byron Central Apartments has recently introduced a waste reduction and purchasing policy, which is likely to further reduce waste in the future. Systems set up during this study to manage waste will require ongoing monitoring to ensure the waste management needs evolve with the business.

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