

## A Case Study: Byron Bay Hospitality Waste Practices Survey

### Café and restaurant businesses in Byron Bay CBD

Byron Bay is a township on the far north coast of NSW with a permanent population of around 5000 residents. It is the foremost holiday destination in the area, thus having a high number of hospitality, retail and accommodation businesses.



According to NSW's Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW), the leading waste streams for hospitality are paper and cardboard packaging, food scraps, and recyclable materials (aluminium, steel and recyclable plastics).

At the time of study, there were 53 hospitality premises in Byron Bay's CBD. In a town of 5000, this creates a significant sector of commercial and industrial waste. With no previous waste practices data specific to the hospitality sector, the North East Waste Forum set out to collate information and provide waste management support where necessary.

### The Challenge

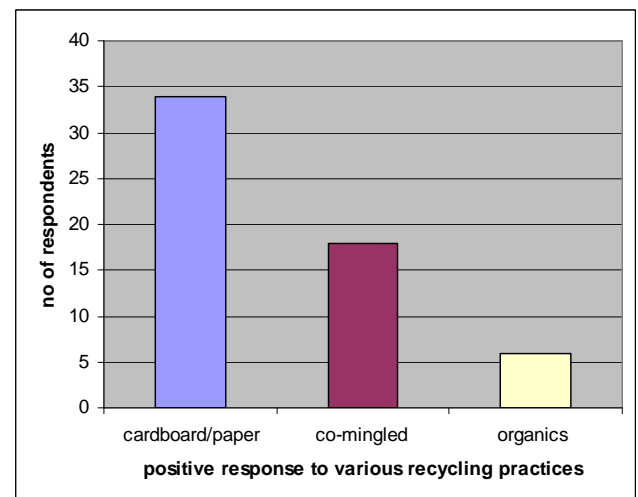
The main aim of the BWRP is to assess the efficiency of the waste management practices of businesses, characterise their waste streams and come up with waste management systems that would reduce the volume of waste going to landfill through waste avoidance, reuse and recycling. It also aims to save businesses money and transfer lessons learned to other businesses in the region.

### The Waste Practices Survey

In October- November 2009, cafes and restaurants in Byron Bay's CBD were surveyed in order to ascertain their waste management practices and attitudes. Key aims were to:

- Assess knowledge of available waste management options;
- Encourage managers to think more proactively about their waste practices;
- Disseminate and share relevant information where appropriate; and
- Support businesses to improve their waste management systems where possible.

While 83% of businesses surveyed recycled cardboard, only 44% participated in further recycling. The largest barrier to improving or implementing recycling was identified as landlords and body corporates, with 32% of businesses surveyed feeling frustrated with the current lack of support or interest from these groups.



Recycling practices of Byron Bay CBD hospitality businesses

Respondents undertook a wide array of sustainable practices, with the top three being businesses that:

- 1) source and purchase local/organic produce where possible;
  - 2) use recycled paper/biodegradable coffee cup containers/lids and/or takeaway containers and cutlery; and
  - 3) use energy efficient lighting.
- There were other innovative approaches to sustainability in the workplace such as setting all glass bottles aside for pick up by home brewers, and a woman who collects pineapple heads for planting from another establishment.

## Survey initiatives and successes

The chief success of this project was that the face-to-face surveying allowed us to provide instant advice and assurances. For example, businesses unaware of council's commercial recycling collection service were provided with an information leaflet, including prices. Some businesses were clearly unaware they were able to recycle only one type of recyclable product (such as glass) in the recycling wheelie bins if they so wished. Businesses that knew about the recycling service but did not yet have one were provided with support and given suggestions based on their responses to key obstacles.



*Soulbowl and Byron Local are an example of two surveyed hospitality businesses that have since commenced a joint recycling initiative, available to both staff and customers*

Other activities based on survey responses included:

- Seven follow up site inspections offering advice to streamline waste management systems
- Five businesses have implemented new recycling services
- Four businesses set up joint recycling programs
- One business initiated their own media campaign out of frustration at lack of management communication
- More cohesive systems were established based on clear signage for internal and external bins
- Arcade businesses were provided with information on how they can recycle themselves without financial support of management (however they still needed to communicate with management and seek approval for a recycling collection service)

## Contacts

Jeanie McKillop, BWR Project Coordinator

Ph: (02) 6687 4945

Email: [business@northeastwasteforum.org.au](mailto:business@northeastwasteforum.org.au)

Russell Chaplin, Waste Manager, Byron Shire Council

Email: [russell.chaplin@byron.nsw.gov.au](mailto:russell.chaplin@byron.nsw.gov.au)

## Further Opportunities

Surveyed businesses, particularly those in arcades, cited the difficulty in contacting absentee landlords or effectively communicating with their landlords as the main barrier to taking on a recycling service. This is because in order to access council's recycling service in Byron Bay, a business who leases their premises needs to have agreement from the owner or agent. Ways to facilitate improvement in this area could include:

- Working with real estate agents to ensure waste services and utility costs are adequately embodied in the lease
- Encouraging waste related matters to be addressed when the lease commences
- Developing a form for businesses to use that clearly lists the service and cost and includes a section for the owner/agent to easily complete.

With 24% of businesses expressing a desire to have an organics collection service, there was also scope to attempt marrying business desire with a practical solution. However, until a cohesive organics collection service is initiated it is predicted that little further food waste diversion will take place.

There may also be further opportunities to improve sustainable waste practices through implementing tailored programs such as:

- a 'BYO mug' campaign for takeaway drinks
- the promotion of successful waste reducing businesses and the benefits of doing so
- partnering with Green Table Australia, a certification program that supports and recognises hospitality businesses that reduce their environmental impact.



*Oaska Café implemented a recycling collection with particular focus on clear signage for the English Language School situated next door.*

## Background

The North East Waste Forum (NEWF) is a collective of local councils in the Northern Rivers region of NSW who take a regional approach to waste management. An initiative of the NEWF, the Business Waste Reduction Project (BWRP) works with local businesses to assist them in developing waste management strategies that promote waste reduction and resource recovery. The project began in April 2005 and has collaborated with a wide variety of businesses and institutions. An integral part of the project is to transfer information from participating businesses to other similar operations within the region. The project also works with industry organisations, such as Chambers of Commerce, to further disseminate information on commercial waste reduction.