

Enquiries to:
Jeanie McKillop
 Business Waste Reduction
 Project Co-ordinator
 P: 6687 4945 M: 0421 888 686

PO Box 340
 LENNOX HEAD NSW 2478
 business@northeastwasteforum.org.au
 www.northeastwasteforum.org.au

Business Waste Reduction Project – Case Study First Sun Holiday Park

Background

The North East Waste Forum (NEWF) is a collective of local councils that have come together to share resources to help avoid and reduce waste going to landfill in the Northern NSW region.

An initiative of the NEWF, **The Business Waste Reduction Project** (BWRP), began in April 2005 and initially focussed on developing Waste Reduction Action Plans for six local businesses. Having completed this objective the project moved into its second stage of transferring information gathered from the initial participating businesses to other business operators across the NEWF region. How best to implement sustainable practices and promoting the recovery of recyclable resources are essential components of the project. New businesses from other commercial sectors have been selected to be involved in this second stage and the First Sun Holiday Park in Byron Bay is one of these.

First Sun Holiday Park



First Sun is owned by Byron Shire Council and managed by Graeme and Judy Tregonning. First Sun has been operating for approximately 35 years, having been upgraded three years ago. On average, 90,000 people stay at the caravan park annually, with levels fluctuating depending on seasonal patronage.

There are ten staff members currently on board and before joining the project the Park emptied two x 3 cubic metre trade waste bins (TWB's) three times per week and seventeen 240 litre commingled recycling municipal garbage bins (MGB's) once a week.

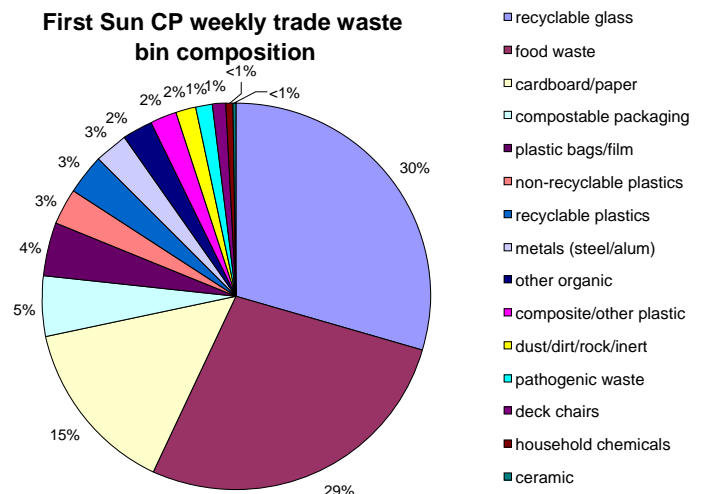
The Challenge

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 business money in the process. The project outputs will serve as effective blueprints for improving waste management among similar businesses in northern NSW.

Waste Characterisation

A waste audit was conducted early on in the project to determine the main components of the waste stream, and to identify the main materials that would be the target of waste reduction efforts and activities.

First Sun CP weekly trade waste bin composition



Audit results revealed that the total waste generated per week was approximately 1,180kg. The largest component from the trade waste bins (TWB) was recyclable glass, followed by food waste and cardboard/paper.

Glass was also the major component of the commingled recycling bins at 65% of the total recycling, followed by cardboard and paper at 14%. Due to the limited number of recycling bins available at the time of audit and the level of patronage recycling bins were filled quickly with the excess deposited in the TWB's.



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Waste Reduction Action Plan

Before developing a Waste Reduction Action Plan (WRAP) the results of the waste audit and site analysis need to be examined with the business. The main materials in the stream need to be identified and prioritising where waste reduction efforts need to be concentrated is essential.

Recycling

The results of the waste audit showed that approximately 35% of the mixed waste stream was made of recyclable glass and paper/cardboard. These could be easily diverted from landfill with a change to the recycling system.

Management addressed this promptly by increasing the number of recycling MGB's in the park. Efforts were then directed towards increasing the number of pickups for recycling. A contractor who provided a lift on demand system provided the most suitable service for the park due to the fluctuating nature of their waste generation. Access to recycling was also considered and bins were placed to maximise usage. A rotation system was established to ensure full bins were replaced when required.

Monitoring of their new system helped ascertain the need to reduce the number of waste bin empties per week. At present the Park has managed to eliminate one weekly lift of its Trade waste Bins.

Education

All waste reduction initiatives were accompanied by an education program. Management organised staff training to ensure the system worked and that staff were aware of what was expected of them.

In addition, recycling availability was outlined in the Park Guidelines to inform guests of the recycling regime and improve their awareness of local recycling systems as many interstate and international guests visit the park. Improved signage to highlight appropriate disposal was also undertaken and a holiday recycling game to encourage children will now be available.

Reuse

The action plan also addressed the significant number of unused cleaning cloths and scourers that were identified by the audit. The use of these 'disposable' products was reduced when management purchased reusable hard plastic brushes for cleaning in cabins.

As the options for reducing waste vary between businesses your action plan needs to be tailored to suit your specific needs. However, First Sun also improved their options and knowledge base by researching the actions of other similar industry operators.

Outcomes

- The First Sun waste reduction project proved to be successful in significantly increasing its recycling and thereby reducing its mixed waste stream.
- An additional 6 x 240l MGB bins have been purchased and an additional weekly lift is occurring. On average weekly audit figures this is an increase of 35% or 141kg per week of glass, cardboard, paper and plastics.
- The Park has a more accessible and streamlined system of waste recycling and disposal.
- Awareness of the waste reduction and recycling processes introduced by management has been raised within the staff and visitor sectors.

Cost Savings

No cost savings have been recorded from implementing the WRAP to date as First Sun is still monitoring its performance over time to account for seasonal variations.

The Future

The next area of the waste stream to be targeted is organics recovery. Although composting and worm farming were investigated in the early stages of this project, options are still being explored. The Park is restricted by its small area and limited staff numbers in this endeavour.

Management is also investigating the construction of a recycling station within the park grounds.

Contacts

North East Waste Forum

Jeanie McKillop, Business Waste Reduction Project Coordinator

P.O. Box 340, Lennox Head, NSW, 2478

Ph: (02) 6687 4945

Fax: (02) 6687 5318

Email: business@northeastwasteforum.org.au

URL: <http://www.northeastwasteforum.org.au>

First Sun Holiday Park

Graeme and Judy Tregonning, Managers

Lawson St, Byron Bay, NSW 2481.

Ph: (02) 6685 6544

FAX: (02) 6662 1666