



Business Waste Reduction Project Murwillumbah Business Waste Survey Report

Introduction

The Business Waste Reduction Project, 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 Murwillumbah CBD were surveyed in March 2011 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 Murwillumbah:

- i) Tweed Shire Council can provide
 - ✓ 240L/140L or 80L red lidded wheelie bins for waste (once weekly collection)
 - ✓ 240L yellow lidded wheelie bins for comingled recyclables (fortnightly or weekly collection)
 - ✓ 240L green lidded wheelie bins for green (garden only) waste (fortnightly collection)
- ii) Private Waste Contractors can provide
 - ✓ bulk bins for waste, cardboard/paper, recyclable containers
 - ✓ 240L wheelie bins for cardboard/paper or recyclable containers.

Survey Summary

A total of 51 businesses in the Murwillumbah CBD (including Murwillumbah, Wharf, Commercial, Wollumbin and Brisbane Streets) responded to the survey.

The graph at Figure 1 below illustrates business responses regarding participation in the recycling of cardboard/paper, comingled recyclables, green waste and food organics. The positive response indicators are inclusive of those businesses that have a recycling collection service as well as those who claimed they recycled via alternatives such as taking home, or where the items were taken for reuse.

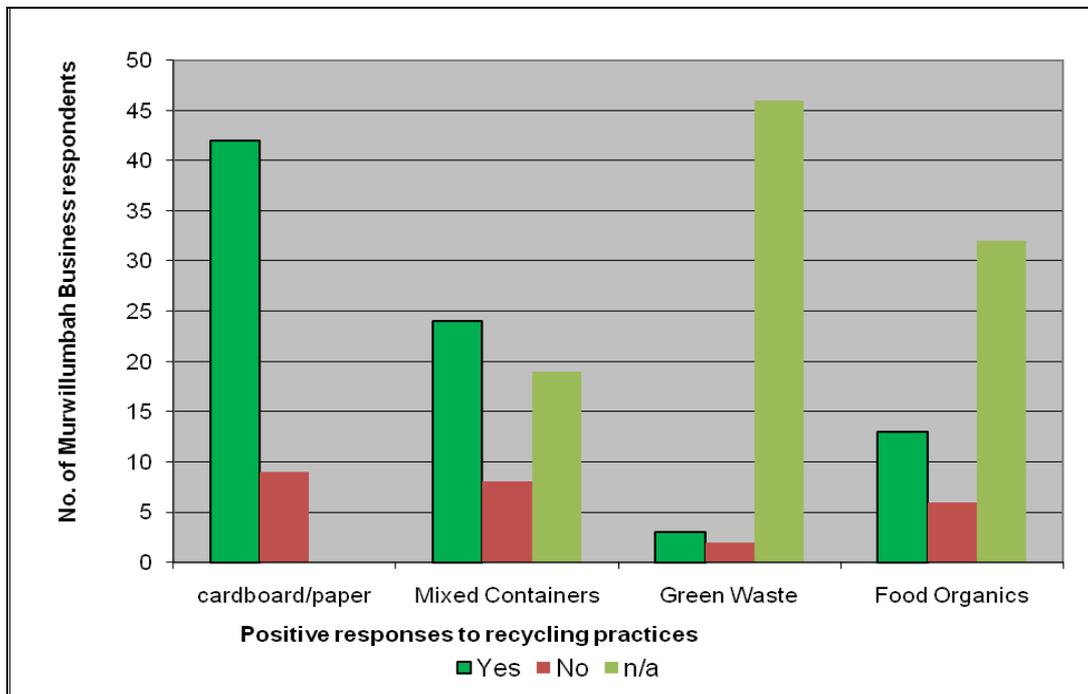


Figure 1. Positive Business Responses to Recycling Practices

The majority of businesses surveyed in Murwillumbah CBD are participating in recycling at some level but opportunities still exist for significant improvements in the rate of recycling and diversion of waste from landfill, particularly from the hotels, some of the cafes and white goods/electronic goods retailers. The improved provision of shared recycling bins for many of the smaller businesses operating in arcades and shared buildings would also contribute towards increasing diversion rates.

The survey results indicate that approximately 51% of the surveyed businesses have a collection service for cardboard/paper recycling and a further 31% take it to the tip, reuse it or recycle it at home; 29% of businesses have a collection service for comingled recycling and a further 18% take it to the tip, reuse or recycle it at home. 18% of businesses (9) don't recycle any cardboard/paper or comingled recyclables.

37% of the businesses surveyed (19) produced significant amounts of food waste and 13 (68%) of these businesses were successfully recycling some or all of their organics locally through collection by local farmers, schools and gardeners for animal feedstock and composting or taking home for composting & pets. Informal collection is not a feasible or long term solution for all businesses and 9 businesses stated that they would be interested in a Council commercial combined (food & green waste) organics collection service if one became available.

For the larger businesses that are currently not recycling (cardboard and/or recyclable containers), a lack of space for bulk bins, the time and perceived inconvenience of separating recyclables and the costs of recycling were all raised as barriers to participation. For most small businesses not currently participating in recycling, the lack of available recycling facilities was the main barrier and there was also a reluctance to pay any further costs particularly where bins are shared.

The continuing promotion of recycling and its benefits, with an emphasis on the increasing cost differential between waste and recycling (due to the government waste levy) may encourage more businesses to take up a recycling service in the future. Those businesses who expressed an interest in getting a recycling service during the survey were provided with relevant information or if they requested, will be contacted directly by Tweed Shire Council's Waste Management Unit.

82% of surveyed businesses said that they also undertook other sustainable actions in their businesses beyond recycling cardboard and containers. The most popular 'other' sustainable business practices were: the use of energy efficient lighting; reduced paper use &/or reuse of paper; offering customers an alternative to plastic bags; and switching off appliances when not in use.

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. Tweed 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 NEWF's 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 Murwillumbah businesses stood out from the crowd for their efforts in sustainable waste management.

❖ The Modern Grocer

Jo and Simon Nimmo, owners of the Modern Grocer in Wollumbin St, are committed to reducing the waste generated by their business. As well as using Council's services to recycle all used recyclable containers particularly plastic milk containers, they take home their food waste and some of their cardboard each week for composting and mulching in the garden. They've also put up signage to encourage customers to recycle their used paper coffee cups and plastic lids.

Jo and Simon buy as much produce as they can from local sources and are aiming to reduce plastic bag use by providing reusable bags for sale to their customers. Keeping energy use down through switching off appliances when not in use and installing energy efficient lighting is also helping the business to save money as well as improving their green business credentials.



Jo Nimmo with a reusable bag and local coffee for sale

❖ Office World



Elaine with her cartridge recycling box

As well as supplying a range of recycled content office and stationary products, Office World helps customers to keep the 100% recyclable ink cartridges generated from printing & faxing out of landfill, by offering a drop off service for customers and the general public. All kinds of used ink cartridges can be dropped into the box, which is conveniently located by the entrance and when full, manager Elaine Hogben arranges for them to be sent off for recycling.

As well as facilitating this great environmental initiative Elaine ensures that as much of the business's waste as possible is diverted from

landfill for recycling, with all cardboard boxes being folded and collected on a weekly basis by a local contractor. Any paper or small cardboard packaging, glass, plastic, aluminium or steel containers are recycled via Council's 240L comingled recycling bin service. Since the recycling bin service is cheaper than the waste service Office World is saving money as well as adopting sustainable business practices.

❖ Luffley Cafe

The owner of Luffley Café on Wharf St is very conscious of waste issues and the cost to both the environment and her business of generating and disposing of it. All cardboard and containers are recycled as is the food waste, which Kirra takes home each day for composting. She gets 10L buckets from the paint shop up the road for hygienic and convenient storage of the food waste in the kitchen. "Coffee grounds in particular are great for camellias and roses and they deodorize and accelerate the composting process" said Kirra. "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" she said.

The café also buys local and organic products so supporting the local economy and reducing the food miles associated with its menu. Other sustainable business practices such as the use of biodegradable cleaning products and the sale of 'Fair Trade' food and other items are all indications of the business's commitment, to a healthy and sustainable workplace.



Kirra with her food waste recycling container

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. The Business Waste Reduction Project Coordinator can be contacted for support on ph. 02 6687 4945 or business@northeastwasteforum.org.au