

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

## Case Study: On Focus 2010

### On Focus

On-Focus is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation providing support services for people with disability - intellectual, physical and acquired brain injury - in the Richmond Valley in Northern NSW. It is located in Barker St, Casino.



On-Focus utilises Richmond Valley Council's weekly garbage collection using 240L wheelie bins. A waste audit was conducted in late 2009 and at this time there was no separation or collection of recyclables in place at the office.

Management at the centre wished to identify their options for recycling and requested assistance with developing a Sustainability Policy for their business. A small working group was formed by the staff to implement the policy across the organisation.

### The Challenge

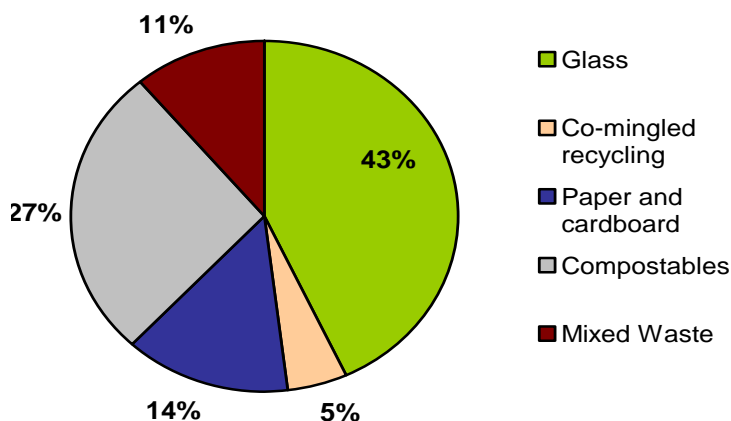
The greatest challenge for On Focus was the lack of recycling services available to businesses in Casino. Over the period of the project Richmond Waste initiated a co-mingled recycling service for businesses which enabled the business to separate recycling.

### Waste Characterisation

On-Focus produced one 240L wheelie bin of waste in one week at their main office in Casino. Whilst this is not a significant volume of waste, the business has the capacity to grow and already has two offices and a day house for clients. On-Focus would like to address waste management issues and improve their performance before implementing improved waste management initiatives across the organisation.

Based on the audit results, 87% of the waste was potentially recyclable, 4% was able to be composted and 9% was mixed waste, destined for landfill. The graph below outlines the breakdown of waste streams.

Cardboard and paper made up the majority of the recyclable materials, combined they accounted for 77% of the volume of waste produced weekly. All A4 paper in the bins had been used on both sides, which is a great start to reducing paper wastage. Recyclable plastic and glass accounted for a further 16% of the recyclable materials. The 9% of mixed waste contained a considerable number of plastic bags used for bin liners.



Compostable materials represented 4% of the waste. Whilst it was not a significant section of the waste stream it can be easily recovered and recycled with the assistance of a dedicated staff member, willing to remove and utilise organics. The organic waste is generated in the staff lunch room and includes food scraps, coffee grindings, tea bags and could also include the paper towel from the bathroom.

## The Results and Opportunities

**1. Implement cardboard and paper recycling.** By accessing a co-mingled recycling bin from Richmond Waste for approximately \$6.50/week the majority of paper and cardboard could be diverted from the waste bin. This would be the most economical option for On-Focus, considering the volume of waste produced is equivalent to one 240L MGB each week.

**2. Recycle plastic and glass.** The 16% of plastic and glass containers can be recycled through the co-mingled recycling bin.

**3. Reduce/ remove compostables.** By placing a clearly marked bucket with a sealed lid in the lunchroom for compost, organic materials could be separated for composting. There are a number of options for how to compost the organics:

- a. It could be taken home by a staff member for composting at home;
- b. On Focus could purchase a Bokashi bin (an odourless composting unit costing approx \$90 with an ongoing cost for active bacteria of \$30/year) that can be placed in the staff room;
- c. On Focus could purchase a worm farm (approx \$80 with worms and no ongoing costs) which could be placed outside under the veranda.

**4. Avoiding waste and purchasing sustainable products.**

- a. Replacing paper towel in the bathroom with a washable hand towel would eliminate this waste stream;
- b. Emptying contents of bins into the wheelie bin without removing plastic bin liners when possible ie. when bins contain only clean office paper, would greatly reduce plastic bag waste in the bin;
- c. Choosing recycled content copy paper and stationary products for the office, recycled toilet paper and refillable permanent and white board markers. Prices today are quite comparable with non-recyclable products.

## Savings and Improvements

On Focus demonstrated initiative by requesting assistance with the development of an Environmental Policy for the organization.

With assistance from the NEWF, a draft policy was developed. The policy targeted sustainable practices in waste, water and energy use. A small staff working group was formed to review and implement the policy, to allocate timeframes, select priorities and allocate budget.

The broad policy framework included the environmental principles of:

1. Conserving and being efficient in the use of energy and water resources;
2. Reducing paper use;
3. Carrying out good waste management practices and recycling;
4. Minimising pollution to air, land and water;
5. Purchasing products that conform to environmental performance criteria.

Strategies to achieve these goals included:

- Training of staff in management on water, energy and resource efficiency in the workplace;
- Incentive based strategies for staff to encourage participation;
- Assigning roles to staff to follow through with implementation of strategies;
- Reporting and feeding back results to staff on a regular basis;
- Budgeting for infrastructure to improve environmental efficiency of the workplace.

### 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. 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.

### Contacts

**Jeanie McKillop -BWRP Co-ordinator**

Ph: (02) 66874945 email:

business@northeastwasteforum.org.au

**Ainsley Carpenter**

Phone: (02) 6662 2333

email: acarpen@on-focus.org