



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 St Mary's High School Casino

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 Stage one involved six local businesses or organisations. 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 the business money in the process. The project outputs serve as effective blueprints for improving waste management among similar businesses in northern NSW.

Stage 2 of the project has involved five new businesses from other commercial sectors and St Mary's High School at Casino is one of these.

St Mary's High School Casino



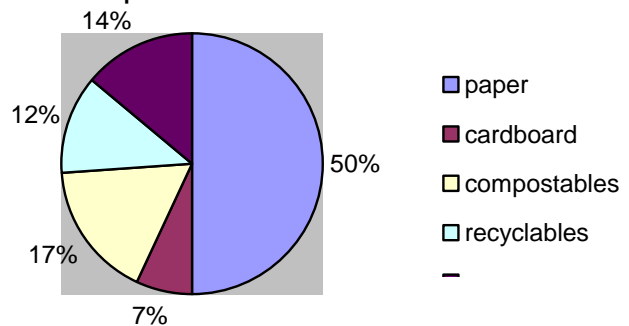
St Mary's High School Casino is a Catholic School in the Lismore Diocese. It was first officially opened by the Marist brothers in 1946 and was established as a co-educational high school in 1978. There are 55 staff and 440 students enrolled.

St Mary's has one 3m³ trade waste bin for mixed rubbish and this is emptied twice weekly. A cardboard and paper Trade Waste Bin (TWB) is emptied weekly. There are 24 yellow mobile garbage bins (MGB's) in the school grounds, 10 green MGB's and 10 green round metal bins. These are emptied into a TWB as required. The photocopy room has 1 paper only bin, 1 paper shredder bin and 1 MGB serviced by contract cleaners. Each classroom has a plastic waste bin and desk side wastebaskets are located throughout the school.

Waste Characterisation

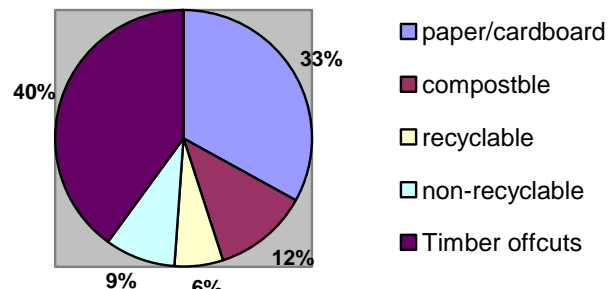
A waste audit was conducted of the staff/administration block and school separately to characterise the waste stream and identify waste management issues.

Waste composition of staff and administration block



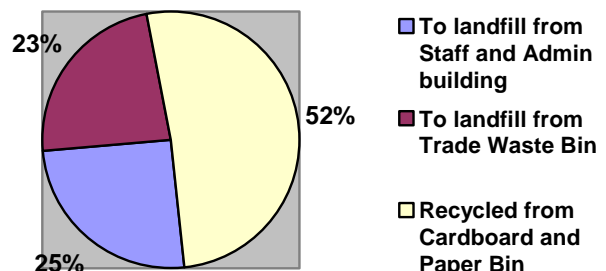
Analysis of the Staff and Administration bins showed that total waste generated is approximately 70 kg per week or 2800 kg per year. Of this the main component is paper. The compostable waste was food scraps with the balance consisting of paper towel. Recyclable plastic and glass accounted for 12% of the waste stream.

Composition of school trade waste bin



Analysis of the mixed waste TWB shows 40% timber offcuts, however, a single clean up event resulted in this statistic. If they are not accounted for then 50% of the waste is recyclable paper and cardboard.

Paper and cardboard disposal



A total of 159kg of paper per week is disposed of. Only 82 kg of this is recycled. This means 3,090 kg of paper and cardboard is sent to landfill from the school every year.



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Waste Reduction Action Plan

The Waste Reduction Action Plan (WRAP) for St Mary's was developed in consultation with a committee of teachers and administrative staff. A staff survey was conducted to gather input from all staff.

Paper and Cardboard Recycling

As paper and cardboard were the largest contributors to the waste stream the action plan targeted these first. A green casual day was held to raise funds where students contributed a gold coin to wear casual clothes. With funds raised on that day seven 120 litre blue recycling bins were purchased and distributed to focal points around the school. In addition 28 small mixed waste bins were purchased and existing mixed bins converted to paper bins for each classroom. Clear graphic signage indicated that the bins were for paper only. A system was devised for class paper bins to be emptied by students to the main paper recycling bins on a regular basis.

Organics

Food scraps from the staff contributed significantly to the waste generated. A compost bucket was situated in the staff room and 3 staff members share responsibility for its rotation and use for poultry at home.

Education

Staff and students were informed of the new recycling and composting regime. In addition, posters urging the reduction of waste, power and water consumption were distributed throughout the school. The school magazine informed parents of changes and elicited support.

A resource list of sites and topics about waste, energy and water was created for teachers and distributed to department coordinators. Bringing sustainability further into the curriculum will be an ongoing component of the action plan.

Reduce

In an effort to reduce existing paper consumption staff were encouraged to print documents double sided and use one sided paper for notes or draft reports. Signage was used to encourage reduction of paper and increased use of electronic filing.

Sustainable procurement

Recyclable paper products were investigated as an alternative to non-recycled copy paper and paper towel. A low watt blower is being considered for the girls toilet as 200m of paper towel is used every day.

Outcomes to date

- St Mary's green casual day raised sufficient funds to purchase 7 wheelie bins and 28 classroom bins for paper recycling
- A second audit showed that 52kg per week of paper and cardboard was diverted to recycling from the Administration Building
- Classroom diversion has not yet been quantified but 38kg of paper per week was in the mixed waste stream in the first audit, before classroom paper bins were introduced. Therefore in total paper diversion should approximate 3.6 ton per annum.

Staff removal of compost to use as poultry food reduced 5kg of food scraps per week from the waste stream. This equates to 200kg



St Mary's teachers have embraced the new paper recycling system. This simple initiative has produced an excellent result that serves as an example of sustainability to students.

The Future

The next area of the waste stream to be targeted is organics and co-mingled recycling. Both streams are problematic as kerb side recycling is not offered in the Richmond Valley Council area as yet. However, reducing the amount of plastic, glass and aluminium sold at the canteen could reduce the amount disposed of in landfill.

In addition, office staff are investigating more sustainable purchasing options for copy paper, hand towel and toilet paper.

Contacts

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