

# S O C I A L R E S E A R C H R E P O R T



North East Waste Region

F E B 2 0 1 5



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*Produced by North East Waste  
as part of the Love Food Hate  
Waste Program*  
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The North East Waste region covers almost 21,000 sq kms of land area and has a population of almost 300,000. The seven member Councils within this region are Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire.

[WWW.NEWASTE.ORG.AU](http://WWW.NEWASTE.ORG.AU)



## OVERVIEW

NSW householders throw away more than \$2.5 billion worth of edible food every year. On average 800,000 tonnes of food a year goes to landfill in NSW, and in the NE Waste region a waste composition audit showed that over a third of the domestic waste bin is made up of food waste, the majority of which could have been avoided.

Food waste has economic, environmental and social costs. For example, according to CSIRO data, throwing out a kilogram of beef wastes the 50,000 litres of water it took to produce that meat. Throwing out one kilogram of white rice wastes 1,550 litres and discarding one kilogram of potatoes wastes 500 litres of water. Additionally, a potential \$1,000 a year can be saved by each NSW householder by avoiding food waste, and practicing better planning, shopping, preparing, cooking and storing habits.

The NSW Government has committed to the issue of food waste through the Love Food Hate Waste program and the provision of \$2.7 Million worth of grant funds over 3 years available to community and local government to educate target groups on how to avoid wasting food.

NE Waste was successful in obtaining grant funds for the 2014 Love Food Hate Waste Program, from the NSW Government's Waste Less Recycle More (WLRM) initiative. This report is the completion of Phase 1 of the campaign, and has enabled the design of future programs

targeting parents with young children in our region. The second stage of the campaign is development of the communication and media resources (including a TV Commercial and digital media campaign) in combination with face to face community engagement and awareness raising at community events across the region.

The target audience for the NE Waste program is parents with young children, who were identified in a [food waste avoidance benchmark study in 2009\\*](#), as being high wasters of edible food. While we all waste some food, the top three food wasting groups in NSW are young consumers (aged 18–24), higher income households (incomes more than \$100,000 per year) and families with children. On average these groups waste \$24.90–\$26 worth of food per week.

Six focus groups were run in the NE Waste region, 4 of which were funded through the WLRM initiative, and 2 of which NE Waste Councils agreed to fund independently. In total 44 parents (42 female and 2 male) attended these focus groups, from various education levels and income brackets, ensuring a broad cross section of our target audience. The focus group participants were screened prior to attending the focus group, and filled out a survey about their household food management behaviours when they arrived at the focus group. This was to ensure independent views could be captured as well as the views of the group.

# 2

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the focus groups was to gain a snapshot of people's understanding of food waste in the household, their current practices (what they were wasting, how much and why) and identify which actions they'd be most likely to undertake to avoid wasting food. Additionally, the groups explored communication tools and messages, which of the main communication messages in the Love Food Hate Waste program (\$2.5 billion, \$1,000 individual households, amount of water wasted, waste etc) would impact and motivate them to waste less food, and in what format they wanted this information (digital, TV, etc). The groups also had a performance from the NE Waste's performer Cowgirl Chef or French Chef Pierre.



# 3

## Objectives of the Focus groups

- ▶ To conduct social research through focus groups to improve our understanding of our target audience and identify the most suitable methodology for engagement;
- ▶ To provide input into the design of proposed and future Love Food Hate Waste education and communication campaigns, including the TV ad, social media methodology, mobile LFHW program, as well as any new LFHW initiatives developed by NE Waste.



## 4

## LOCATIONS

Each focus group was held in a different location, at various times of the day.

Suffolk Park (Coogera Preschool) – 7pm – 9pm (9 participants)

Lismore (St Vincents Hospital Education Centre in conjunction with Friends of St Vincents Early Childhood Centre) – 5.30pm – 7.30pm (11 participants)

Casino (Casino Community and Cultural Centre) – 12.00 – 2.00 (7 participants)

Grafton (Grafton Library) – 12.00 – 2.00 (6 participants)

Kyogle (Grove House/ Community centre)– 12.30 – 2.30 (6 participants)

Lennox Head (Community and cultural centre) – 10.30 – 12.30 (5 participants)

A total of 44 parents with young children participated in the 6 focus groups.

TIP: If coordinating education sessions, workshops, focus groups etc, with a target audience of parents with children, consider partnering with early childhood services, and running the sessions in the evening.

## 5

## Recruitment of Participants

Participants were recruited through Council promotions (news, newsletters, websites and facebook sites), school newsletters, partnerships with local preschools and community centres and word of mouth. All were required to be:

- ▶ Parent of young children (under the age of 12)
- ▶ The parent mainly responsible for household food management (shopping, food preparation and planning, cooking)

Participants were then asked screening questions which included questions about the number of children and adults in their homes, their academic level, income bracket and cultural background.

A financial incentive of \$50 was provided to participants to attend, as well as light refreshments. In 2 of the venues the focus groups were organised in conjunction with the local Preschool/early childhood service. These 2 focus groups were held in the evening to ensure working parents could attend, and were the most highly attended.

## 6

## Focus Group Methodology

Upon arrival to the focus group, an on-line survey was completed by each participant (the results of this are in Appendix 2). The first part of the focus group explored what foods were being wasted, why and what might the barriers and solutions be. The second part of the focus group explored the issues related to communication and messaging for our region.

The questions were developed using:

- ▶ Research into Spheres of Influence Survey Methodology
- ▶ Doug McKenzie Mohr's social marketing methodology, and
- ▶ Social research questions developed as part of the WRAP UK Program and the NSW EPA LFHW program.

There was insufficient time to draw a mind map for each participant as had been suggested as an activity.



## 7

## Focus Group Program Overview

- ▶ Introduction to the focus group, including overview of NE Waste, focus group aims and ground rules
- ▶ Activity 1: What do you waste and approximate weekly volume (using the activity sheet provided in Love Food Hate Waste UK)
- ▶ Practices/behaviours to wasting food and motivations to avoid it
- ▶ What messages will impact them/ community
- ▶ How they want to get further information
- ▶ Show Mid Waste and Netwaste TV ads
- ▶ Council specific questions
- ▶ Performance by Chef Pierre or Cowgirl Chef (to test their response to the NE Waste drama-based LFHW program).



## An overview of the response to questions 1 – 6 is provided below.

### Question 1: Why is food wasted in your home?

A broad range of responses were given across the 6 focus groups, however two key responses were stated in every region. These were:

- ▶ Children refuse to eat (either too picky or no appetite)
- ▶ Food goes bad because too much has been purchased (because it is cheap/on special/purchaser had good intentions)

The third most popular explanation was given in 5 of the focus groups and relates to improper storage techniques leading to food not lasting or people being unsure if the food was still edible so throwing it out. All three less populated council areas- Kyogle, Richmond Valley and Clarence Valley – mentioned an over surplus of some crops leading to discussion over their tendency to be shared – but still having an overabundance.

### Question 2: What are the barriers to reducing food?

The overarching barrier that generated a lot of discussion within every group is a lack of knowledge relating to proper storage techniques – including how to store different items correctly, freezing methods and not labelling precooked or frozen foods. Other barriers listed by all groups are being time poor/multitasking and the erratic appetites of children. Both Kyogle and Byron Shire participants debated the philosophies behind supermarket culture and the competing values they are perceived to represent which were quality versus quantity.

### Question 3: How can we prevent food waste?

The most popular actions suggested in order to prevent food waste were menu planning, understanding kitchen hygiene/storage, limiting snacks for children and making freezing

a habit (as well as reusing the frozen foods). Bread in particular was repeatedly discussed in relation to reducing food waste by freezing.

A participant at Richmond Valley led an enthusiastic and inspiring discussion on creating a food diary in order to prevent food waste, the findings of which greatly changed her food purchasing, cooking and storage habits leading to cost savings.

### Question 4: What messages have the most impact?

Participants from every focus group attempted to seek more information on who the message was for prior to commenting and believed that the individual's background played a key part in their response to each informational message shown. For example, it was perceived \$1000 in food waste per year would not impact on someone in a high income bracket but was a relevant message for lower income earners.

The two messages that caused the highest amount in dialogue were:

- ▶ The visual act of throwing out a shopping bag of groceries as soon as you leave the supermarket;
- ▶ The fact that water and energy is being wasted as well as the food – the power of looking at food waste from a holistic perspective.

All groups agreed that using a 'real' parent rather than a personality was more impactful for the food waste target audience. Clarence Valley had an interesting group conversation on the use of 'hate' in Love Food Hate Waste and believed that using the word 'hate' creates a resistance to participate.



### Question 5: What are the best ways to communicate food waste messages?

Social media was the first communication technique mentioned across all 6 focus groups, mainly Facebook. Byron Shire in particular discussed a range of social media platforms, including Instagram and approaching bloggers.

Targeting school newsletters to disseminate information and holding workshops at the schools themselves (for parents/parents and children together) were discussed by 5 out of 6 focus group. Clarence Valley was the only focus group that didn't suggest holding workshops at schools, yet suggested council holding workshops instead. They also had the most animated discussion on how best to engage the community. Examples included pop-up dinners at the community gardens and edible roadside initiatives.

Many groups gave advice on capturing the target audience better, for example: Creating a flyer magnet on correct kitchen hygiene techniques (Byron Shire); focus on women's reasons for wasting food rather than men's given women are still generally the main providers within the home (Richmond Valley); Give specific examples such as comparing the annual cost savings of reducing food waste to, for example, kids tennis lessons (Byron Shire) or messages such as 'don't give kids so much variety in their lunch boxes' (Lismore City); and use the power of food to disseminate community information in order to instil a community ownership of the project (Clarence Valley).

### Question 6: Discuss the impact of the Netwaste and Mid Waste Love Food Hate Waste TV Commercials to provide context for development of one for NE Waste

Both TV Commercials had positive feedback. Recommendations for the development of a NE Waste TV Commercial included use of a 'real' family (rather than Chef's), use children in the advertisement, concentrating on one action, impact of the dollar value of food waste.

[Click here to view the NE Waste TV Commercial.](#)



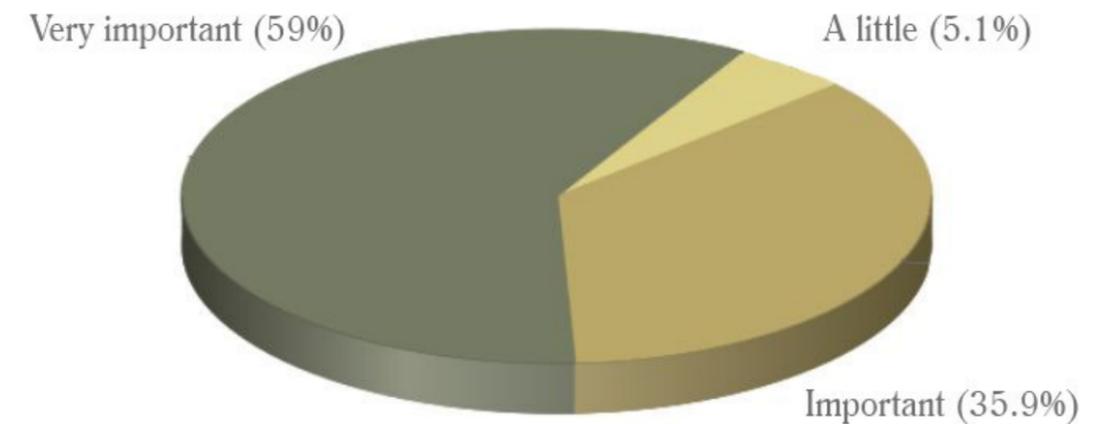
# 8

## General Summary of the main findings:

- ▶ 2 men participated in total, (5%) which indicates that the main household food manager for our target audience of parents with young children is the mother/female carer;
- ▶ 65% of participants had a good understanding of environmental issues and were already composting or taking actions to reduce their waste;
- ▶ Almost 95% of participants reported that it was important or very important for their family to reduce food waste in the individual surveys
- ▶ Most wasted food items: 1. Vegetables 2. Bread 3. Cooked meals
- ▶ Reported range of wasted food volume was from 0.1L per week to 50L per week;
- ▶ Participants who owned dogs, guinea pigs or chickens did not think they were wasting food as this food waste was being given to feed their pets. They also reported lower food waste volumes in general;
- ▶ The main barriers to food waste avoidance are similar to the EPA social research study (2009) for Love Food Hate Waste.

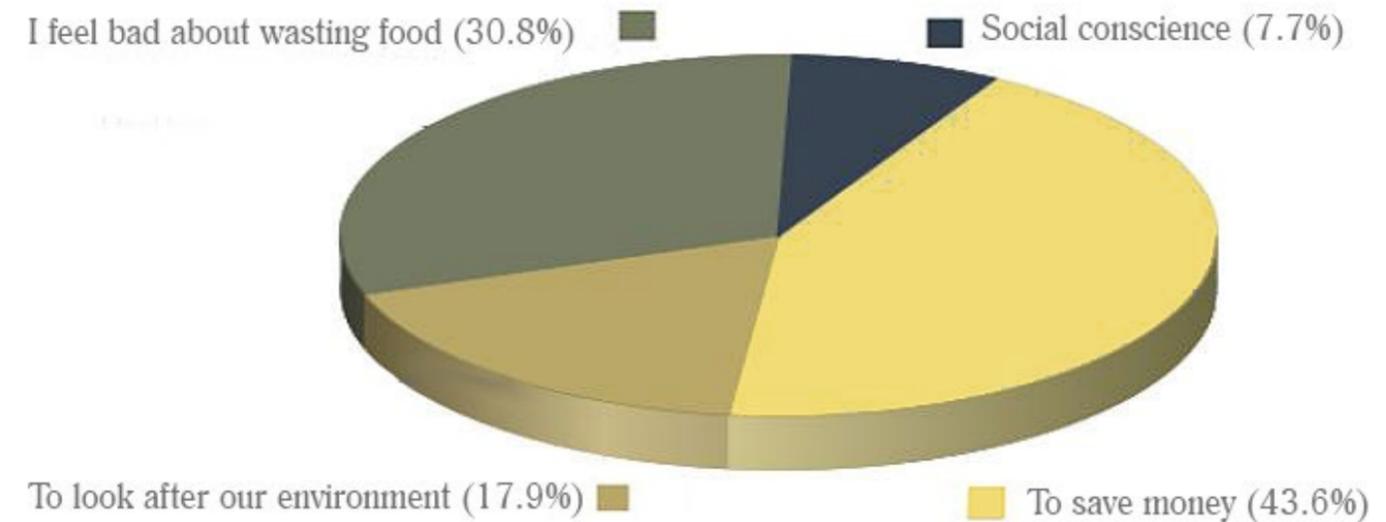


How important is to you and your family to reduce food waste?



- ▶ Actions they are most likely to do (in order of preference) are:
  1. Shop to a list based on a menu plan
  2. Use the food at home before going shopping
  3. Buy only what is needed and say no to temptations
- ▶ Main message most likely to motivate: For the collective: \$2.5 Billion; for the individual \$1,000 (although this amount was thought to not be significant to some participants) – this was further supported by the surveys which indicated the main motivation for reducing food waste was a) financial reasons, b) feeling bad c) for the environment
- ▶ Many participants were also shocked about the amount of water being wasted when throwing food out, as for the financial implications;
- ▶ Schools and preschools are a highly important information access point/ community hub for parents. This message became stronger the further west the focus group was and less densely populated areas;
- ▶ Recommendations to run workshops/info sessions with both parents and students through schools and preschools, utilise school newsletters, and work with the schools directly;
- ▶ Importance of digital media as a means of modern communication;
- ▶ Bin stickers and fridge magnets – people love them;
- ▶ Still confusion about recycling – where it goes and what can and can't be recycled and how it's meant to be presented;
- ▶ TVC ads – keep the message (and one message only please) clear and simple, use a 'real' busy mum, not a celebrity chef or performer.

## What would the MAIN motivation be for you to reduce food waste in your family:



Direct Quotes from Participants

Individual comments about the importance of schools for communication

- ▶ 'I read the school newsletter every week so targeting school newsletters would educate parents'
- ▶ 'the kids need to be targeted. If they're taught to reuse leftovers at school, they bring the ideas home and I listen.'
- ▶ 'mothers educate other families through their children which spreads the message at school'
- ▶ 'children bring home messages to their parents from school, such as no plastic wrap, and then we change our habits based on those messages. For example, doing a food diary for a week would impact on the parent's actions and involve them in the process'
- ▶ 'our new school doesn't have a play bell for lunch time so my son wants to throw half eaten food in the bin and have disposable wrap so he can play straight away. That didn't happen at our last school where there was a set time for lunch.'
- ▶ my children influence our behaviour with what they bring home from school. For instance, reading packaging ingredients and putting items in the right bin'
- ▶ 'The school newsletter is the only thing I read every week'
- ▶ 'workshops at schools would be great, especially a family focused one where parents and kids can go together'

**FOCUS GROUP: Clarence Valley mums very proactive compared with other NSW regions**

# We're not food wasters

**WASTE NOT**

Ways to cut down on food waste include:

- **Lunchboxes:** don't give kids too many options or the lunchbox will come back from one bite from each.
- **Freezer-friendly:** The freezer is like a pause-button. It retains freshness so you can thaw it later on and it will still be fresh.
- **Best before vs use by dates:** know the difference. Best before does not mean it is out of date, it means it is simply at its best point before that date.
- **Storage:** Store things properly – in airtight containers, in the crisper section in the fridge etc.
- **Herbs:** put them in the freezer if you don't use them so they don't go bad and thaw them when you're ready to use.
- **Shopping habits:** write lists, don't buy in bulk if you don't need it.
- **Menu planning:** plan your meals so you don't buy extra things that won't get used.

**Georja Ryan**  
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IT IS hard to believe that as a State, New South Wales throws away \$2.5 billion worth of edible household waste each year, but we in the Clarence Valley have been dubbed 'very proactive' compared with some other regions.

Education coordinator for North East Waste Linda

**“What some people don't realise is that when you throw out 1kg of beef, you throw out 50,000L of water ...”**

— Linda Tohver

Tohver held a focus group with eight Clarence Valley mums to gauge food waste habits in our region as part

of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign, funded through the NSW Government's Waste Less Recycle More initiative.

"The program is all about food waste avoidance and how we can educate communities," Ms Tohver said.

"Our target groups are parents with young children because statistically they are the biggest wasters."

Ms Tohver said the local focus group indicated we were fairly proactive when it came to food wastage, and were keen to learn more.

"The focus group is so we can gauge what the key wasted items are and how we can share ideas on how to avoid wasting them," she said.

"What some people don't realise is that when you throw out 1kg of beef, you throw out 50,000L of water as well that went into making that beef. Then there is all the money involved in transporting it."

Six focus groups are being held across Northern NSW and results will be analysed and put back into education programs.

[www.lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au)



**DISHING IT UP:** Chef Pierre Froutifruta (performer) addresses the Clarence Valley focus group for the Love Food Hate Waste campaign.

PHOTO: GEORJA RYAN

### General comments about food waste

- ▶ 'food isn't entertainment - we've lost the art of making do and need to simplify our food'
- ▶ 'I buy more expensive bread and it gets eaten. Cheaper bread, we just don't care about and the kids don't eat it.'
- ▶ 'I share bulk purchases and big specials with my sister and they don't get wasted'

### Comments about communication products and resources

- ▶ 'involve kids in a TV commercial and it would be more powerful'
- ▶ 'I'd love an information magnet on best practice food hygiene or storing techniques like the healthy lunchboxes one my daughter brought home from school - she uses it herself all the time'
- ▶ 'social media is all I use'
- ▶ 'workshops at schools would be great, especially a family focused one where parents and kids can go together'
- ▶ 'including kids in meal planning and lunch box fillings means they're more likely to eat it.'



# 9

## CONCLUSION

There are a number of areas NE Waste and its member Councils might consider for future design and planning of a regional or local Love Food Hate Waste Programs. These include:

- ▶ The role of schools and early childhood services in partnering with the program: this can be explored further as an avenue for educating the target group of parents with young children.
- ▶ For skills building and behavioural change, there is huge potential to develop and run education sessions with common leftover and wasted foods. These could be coordinated in partnership with schools, preschools and TAFE, community events and pop-up events.
- ▶ The use of digital and social media avenues can be further developed in the coming years, to maximise reach and potential for awareness raising and action. A Facebook site dedicated to Love Food Hate Waste could be coordinated by NE Waste, with links to Council, EPA and other Love Food Hate Waste partner organisations.
- ▶ The impact of other sustainability links with food waste is an area that warrants further investigation.

The opportunity to conduct focus groups and individual surveys has been an immensely valuable activity. From a community engagement perspective, they have generated further interest about food waste avoidance issues to those who participated. The focus groups have also generated social research value for future planning, messages, tools and techniques in the regional Love Food Hate Waste Campaign.



For enquiries in relation to the Love Food Hate Waste Program, please contact the Education Coordinator: [linda@newaste.org.au](mailto:linda@newaste.org.au)

# APPENDIX 1 Notes From Focus Group Sessions

## BYRON SHIRE

21<sup>st</sup> August, Coogera preschool, 9 participants

### Why is food wasted in your home?

- Food goes bad (food such as kale and beetroot – have good intentions but don't eat, or only like a certain way)
- Only want to eat food at its freshest but buy too much
- Leave bottoms of jars/sauces
- Going shopping when hungry – buy more things that I don't use
- Convenience – so easy to just get more
- Leftovers: not enough leftover to make for dinner again, forgotten or unused
- Children: food preferences, different appetites at different times of day, snacking

### Barriers to reducing food waste

- Best before/use by date concerns
- Time poor/busy
- Pre-packaged foods go off quicker
- Poor understanding of ripeness etc when purchasing fruit and veg
- Cultural differences (eg. Raw foods not eaten readily in France)
- Competing values (quality vs quantity)
- Different time schedules within families

### What can you do to prevent food waste?

- Better organisation -> Menu planning
- Give leftovers to the dog

- Understand ripeness of fruit and veg (eg. when best to purchase, when it's too late)
- Worm farms/compost
- Council-provided FOGO bin
- Understanding proper storage techniques for various foods
- Be organised (links in with menu planning)
- Freeze leftovers/excess
- Understanding kitchen hygiene (eg. Correct temperatures and times allowed in freezer)
- Reuse wilted vegies in sauces, chutneys, etc.
- Better understanding of nutrient loss in fruits and vegetables (worries about nutrition leads to food waste)
- Shared baking eg mama bake
- Have a herb garden – grow your own and pick as you need
- Bulk purchasing/chest freezer (eg meat)
- Keep dishes simple – overload of fancy cooking culture and numerous recipe books – best intentions but little time to experiment or satisfy fussy children.
- Eat together as a family and demonstrate good eating habits to children
- Eating nutrient dense 'real' foods prevents snacking
- Introduce raw vegies early on
- Involved kids to grow, cut, cook
- Bribe kids with dessert to eat all their dinner
- Kids MUST try different things
- Bulk buy monthly meats from butcher and freeze
- Serve the dinner again in the morning if kids don't eat it for dinner

**Message impacts**

- \$2.5 billion cultivates empathy/guilt. I envision a starving child in a poor country
- \$1000 per household made it more personal
- Supermarket culture
- Need to listen to our core values, keep them in check when entering a supermarket
- Conflicting: core values battle against consumerist culture
- Media idea:
- Comparison of quality food purchaser versus mass supermarket food purchaser (exploring themes on mindset of 'bargains' and 1/5 thrown away)

**Communication**

- Flyer/magnet on correct kitchen hygiene techniques
- App (2 people mentioned)
- Facebook – eg. Daily recipe/tip
- Workshop for kids and parents together
- Creating a character/slogan (eg. Life Be In It campaign)
- TV commercial
- Get social media savvy (bloggers, Instagram eg. Spell) – Carly was a social media marketer.
- Instagram for LFHW and create competitions.
- Putting a figure to the money saved on reducing food waste (eg. Kids tennis lessons/year – however, what about low income families not thinking about tennis lessons and just trying to put food on the table?)
- Comparisons with other cultures eg. France
- Bumper stickers

**LISMORE CITY**

26 August, St Vincent's Education Centre, 11 participants

**Why is food wasted in your home?**

- Buy too many vegies
- If it's on sale I buy bigger quantities
- Children won't eat dinner
- Food past its used by date
- Portion size too big
- Size of lunch boxes and plates -> feel the need to fill
- Fridge not organised
- Busy and sickness can mean we 'forget' foods in fridge
- Frozen foods defrosted and texture unappealing
- Improper storage of leftovers
- Using our leftovers – is it still nutritious?
- Bulk quantities can go off
- Forget about the leftovers
- Appetites
- Time-poor
- Children reject
- Assumptions made about what children have eaten prior to arriving home
- Fussiness
- Easy access to cheap food (cultural – first world problem)
- Good intentions

**Barriers to reducing waste**

- Improper freezing methods...when I defrost I'm unsure if it's still okay as its texture/ looks different
- High expectations for kids – overfeed, give too much food.
- Too much choice/variety in kids lunchboxes – often thirsty not hungry; eat junk before sandwich; too much fruit.



- Time factor – not enough time to finish food at school
- Husband buys takeaway if I am busy rather than the leftovers or using what's there
- Pre-packaged food snacks too big
- Too much 'grazing' between meals
- Temptation to buy specials
- Working long hours
- Tired/sick
- Sudden change of plans
- Cultural issues (eg. Over cooking representing abundance/love)

### What could you do to prevent food waste?

#### Personally

- Be more organised
- Menu plan
- Over buying
- Cook and serve less
- Write a list
- Give choices
- Smaller portion, smaller plates
- Limit nibbling before meals
- Have dinner earlier
- Children may think they're hungry but are actually thirsty
- Supervise lunch at preschools and schools
- Freeze
- Plan and incorporate into the next dinner
- Have for lunch the next day

#### In community

- Fast food/cafes waste a lot of food to give us convenience – cook simpler foods at home

#### Message impacts

- Water issue with potato and meat confronting and something I don't think about
- 1/5 shopping bag statistic
- Wasted \$1000 per year – how to save it and keep it in your pocket?
- Annual amount for state/country was too overwhelming and not personal enough
- Ad: Food going into bin is powerful
- Strawberry Recycle Devon ad not well received (inappropriate, too long, not sure what it was about for a long while)

#### Communication

- People know what missing out of their back pocket, so personal amount of money bigger impact
- Use specific examples eg. Don't give kids so much variety in their lunchboxes
- Use social media – links to tips, use videos but only 30 sec to 1.5 mins.
- Pinterest – visual pictorials
- Targeting school newsletters to educate parents
- Simplifying foods – we've lost the art of making do.
- Menu planners
- 'food isn't entertainment'

## RICHMOND VALLEY

28<sup>th</sup> August, Casino Community Centre, 7 participants

#### What are some reasons that food might get wasted in your homes?

- Oversupply of a crop eg. potatoes, mandarins
- Good intentions (but don't get time to cook what I planned to)
- Fruit is not ripe or difficult to prepare or already off (not understanding when to purchase)
- Time management – have to do meals as quickly as possible
- Too much bread
- Trying something new and not well received

- Portion sizes too big and can't eat the last bits (eg kids and chip packets, cream, jars of curry paste, sauces etc)
- Forgetting the food in the fridge
- Fussy kids
- Flat leftover soft drinks
- Meal planning that doesn't happen
- Pre-packaged foods

### Barriers to reducing food waste

- Time
- Multitasking
- Space in freezer
- Not knowing how to reuse foods appropriately eg freezing methods, leftovers used in other dishes
- The unexpected so not home to cook
- Not using measuring tools eg. 1 cup of rice measured correctly, over-pouring

### Things that we can do to prevent food waste

- Buy more expensive bread and it gets eaten – cheaper bread I didn't care about and kids don't eat it
- Bread only used for 2-3 days and then gets thrown out as not fresh enough. Solution: freezer it in portions
- Trial and error (but does everyone get time to experiment?)
- Keep skins on potatoes for mashed potato – extra nutrients and no peel waste
- Give oversupply to friends and family where possible
- Implement a swap system
- Reduce portion size
- Buy small sized apples
- Pre-packaged foods allow for smaller portions so get eaten
- Share bulk purchases/big specials
- Purchase smaller amounts of food more often
- Leftovers to dogs or use the next day

- Have a 'cook day' (eg. Sunday, a couple cook together for the week and then freeze – use barbeque trays from Bunnings, reusable pouches for baby food)
- Buy bulk meat
- Using bigger packages rather than smaller packages allow for even smaller portions for fussy/small children
- Do a grocery diary for 1 month and see what you are spending and what you are wasting
- Reduce overeating/snacking before meals

### Message impacts

- Biggest impact: 1 out of 5 bags
- \$1000 economic impacts (x3)
- Water etc. that's wasted behind the scenes – first world problem (x2)

In community:

Personal financial impact and water wasted would make biggest impact on RVC community

### Communication

Focus on bread

Teaching reuse of leftovers etc. at schools

Other:

RVC green bin rollout:

Love the calendar

Sticker on actual bin eg Tuesday, so no confusion

Yes to kitchen caddy and compostable bags

Worry about rates going up

Disposable nappy worries – issue with fortnightly waste pick up. Need info sessions at mothers groups, etc.

Need clearer and updated information on managing recycling eg. washing before placing in recycling bin etc

At landfill: feed discount for businesses dealing with green waste

## CLARENCE VALLEY

2<sup>nd</sup> September, Grafton Library, 6 participants.

### What are some reasons that food might get wasted in your homes?

- Bad planning – I have a mental plan but get busy or forget the plan because it's not written down/clear
- Children half eating things
- Sandwich crusts
- Lunchboxes come home with food
- Leftovers go uneaten/forgotten
- Made too much
- Milk leftover in cereal bowls
- Unfinished tea/milo
- Vegies on special so get bulk quantity but don't use
- Poor planning
- Use by date vs best before
- Don't know appropriate storage techniques

### Barriers to reducing food waste

- Inedible bits eg corn husks, rhubarb leaves, bones etc
- Use by dates
- Children don't like it
- Something goes off before the use by date especially dairy
- Frozen meat at the back of the freezer
- No shopping list
- Pantry moths
- Excess vegie produce from the garden
- Fruits tastes wrong – sour or floury

### Things that we can do to prevent food waste

- Group cooking eg blanching and freezing days

- Freezing
- Reduced packaging means you change what you buy
- Use leftovers
- Freeze bread in particular (didn't used to and it would always get thrown out)
- Use books such as '4 ingredients' for using up leftovers/end of week fridge items

### Message impacts

- Love food...but hate waste? Do not connect with the word 'hate' – too harsh. Creates resistance to participate.
- The connection of waste to water
- \$2.5 billion – perhaps better for another demographic
- Both ads looking at fresh foods

### Communication

- Facebook – peers telling/sharing with peers (the whole premise of social media and the most effective info sharing)
- Movement must be community driven rather than top-down. Always more successful (eg. UK LFHW was community driven)
- Using the power of sharing food to disseminate info – must have community ownership
- Website – holistic approach (eg beef/water etc); real chef cooking or real family
- Difficult to start 'in the middle of the conversation' – so many connections (nutrition, plastics, fossil fuels etc)
- Use the P&C for food waste messages
- Has to be personal
- Focus on peer pressure for youth (money not an incentive as they have a disposable income)
- Make messages region specific – eg. Grafton is low socio-economic area so money saved is an incentive
- Shops need to get on board
- Mothers educate other families through their children spreading messages at school
- Children bring messages home to their parents from school eg. no plastic wrap
- Pop up dinner at community gardens
- Edible roadside initiative
- Need community drivers

- Animation?
- Real chef cooking and kids who get involved in the ad
- Look at other successful marketing products (eg slow cooker recipes Facebook page); Yamba Edible Food Initiative; Clarence Valley Waste Not, Want Not
- Workshops through council on simple meal preps – short course
- Ownership from the community – ‘healthy sustainable communities’ – share food, time and experiences
- Link in with community gardens
- Social media – competitions
- Link in with what’s there already
- Word of mouth
- Shock campaign – make it emotional – get people out of their comfort zone for a moment and then make them comfortable

#### Motivations to change

- Personal, social pressures and peer pressures (especially in young people)
- Money and making food waste unacceptable
- Shopping centres need to (triangle?) our practices
- Change in families will occur through the children, through the schools. Kids have the power to educate the parents and frequently do.

#### Other discussion: green bin service

- The red bin is for the ‘too hard basket’ items especially meat
- Like the idea of the compostable bag – like the colour as if I put it in the freezer I know which bag to use for meat scraps
- People can’t be bothered to clean bench top bins so are more likely to use it if they have a bag liner

## KYOGLE SHIRE

3<sup>rd</sup> September, Grove House, 6 participants.

#### Reasons food gets wasted

- Lost/forgotten in fridge
- Don’t use veg/salad in time
- Picky eaters/fussiness
- Can’t go to animals or composted eg cooked leftovers
- Cooked too much
- Appetites of kids unpredictable – difficult to plan. Eg. Kids given birthday cake at school so don’t eat much lunch
- Kids who won’t eat different things
- Bread crusts not eaten
- Too many leftovers

#### Barriers

- Supermarket culture - food freshness questionable eg storage, already old through transportation
- Supermarkets are driven by profit, food wastage and liability
- Time – better planning needed
- Energy to make something from the food items
- Pre-packaged vegies goes off quickly
- Put off by defrosted food texture so do not freeze
- Unsure what can and can’t be composted

#### What can you do to prevent food being wasted?

- Buy more but freeze it
- Eat leftovers on toast for breakfast
- Share leftovers (give a meal to family/friends/someone who is sick)
- Reusing leftovers
- Salads get made and put in *glass* jars (keeps for much longer and easy to use throughout week – must be glass)

- Check the fridge and cupboards first – ‘make do’ before a grocery shop
- Preserving foods eg dehydrating
- Friday night is open fridge night
- Menu plan to use leftovers
- Buy at farmers markets instead of supermarket (fresher so will last longer)
- Make customer complaints to supermarkets with below par freshness
- Community food swaps/salad bowl eg. Laden fruit trees, excess lettuce in vegie patch
- ‘kids only have carrots after dinner if they’re still hungry’
- Find recipes to use leftovers, thought planning is better
- Planning important
- Create a Facebook page ‘community salad bowl’ – fresh fruit and veg swap group

#### Message impacts

- Not just the waste, but the water and energy – the holistic approach is powerful
- the back story is important ie emotional attachment to a personal story eg. Visiting a dairy farm etc
- \$1000 best message for lower income earners
- Shopping bag
- Kate Bracks ad is obviously higher production and is action based, clearer

#### Communication

- Facebook
- Council newsletter
- School newsletter
- Information magnet like the ‘healthy lunch boxes’ fridge magnet that are used now
- Workshops (part of monthly info sessions? Emma)
- Information sessions at schools, fairs, mothers groups.
- If using a TV commercial, involve kids in the commercial – don’t watch TV so if the kids show the parents an ad, the message may be heard!
- Schools and kids intrinsically links between parents and community. Eg. Project on what parent cooked for dinner, what ingredients and how much ended up in the bin
- The story behind food – ethical production, personal experience of farmers, truck drivers etc. for kids and adults. The whole picture.

- Food choices
- Trip to the Tip
- Behind the scenes food production eg video tracking of their apples
- All about now -> immediate desires. Food production doesn’t work like that.
- Need interactive dialogue between kids and adults/parents
- Children to do a food diary – impacts on parents actions too
- Ongoing reinforcement
- Internet and digital media

#### Other thoughts

- Split bin issues: ineffective and ‘recycling goes straight to landfill’
- Use internet links to watch for example a box apples get to the children. Eg. Farmer picks apples, packs, trucks, stored, bought.
- Schools that don’t have a clear lunch/play bell means that kids (esp boys) are asking for plastic to ‘throw and play’

## BALLINA SHIRE

9<sup>th</sup> September, Lennox Head Community Centre, 5 participants.

#### Why are we wasting food?

- Kids change their minds
- Sibling influences/FOMO – ‘didn’t want to miss out’
- Not meal planning: tempted by specials
- Didn’t cook because of unforeseen circumstances
- Leftovers are forgotten, not frozen or simply don’t feel like them
- Not in the habit of freezing
- Cook too much because we plan to eat the leftovers then they don’t get eaten
- Good intentions
- Overbuy perishables like lettuce and other vegies
- Reduced to clear temptations
- Packaged lettuce: keeps fresher but the packages are too big for us

**Barriers to reducing food waste**

- Lazy
- Too busy
- Sizing of packaged products
- Fussy eaters
- Not enough space for freezing food
- Food being buried at the bottom of the freezer
- Not labelling frozen items so unsure how old they are and throw them out
- Unsure what can be frozen (eg. Discussion about past and cream based dishes)
- Time: multitude of tasks
- Space
- Not knowing how to reuse foods
- Having to change habits
- Not using measuring tools

**How can we prevent food waste?**

- Freeze/have an extra freezer
- Share leftovers/excess fruit and vegies
- Freeze bread – especially kids sandwiches
- Menu planning – waste less and save money, not tempted by specials
- Stick to shopping list
- Avoid impulse buying by using click and collect online
- Use the same ingredients for 2 different meals eg beef lasagne and salad then tacos using the beef and left over salad items the next night (essentially menu planning)
- Involving the children in meal planning, cooking, lunch box decision making
- Making food fun eg sandwich cutters ([www.littlelunchkin.com](http://www.littlelunchkin.com))
- Providing smaller portions to the kids
- Purchasing smaller amounts more often – fresher, less likely to get wasted
- Share bulk purchases/2 for 1 specials amongst family/friends

- Use leftover bread for breadcrumbs
- Planning the cooking process by having a ‘cook day’
- Portion sized food still too big for kids – should buy larger packets and make our own smaller portions
- Pre-cut all fruit and veg on a designated day for the week ahead (a tip from the ‘organised housewife’ Facebook page) – more likely to get used and easy for children to help themselves to healthy options

**Message impacts**

- Broader environmental issues – water, energy, etc. Social conscience is triggered, that the issue is more than just food that you’re throwing away.
- Bigger \$ figures not as effective as they’re not personal enough. \$1000 is more personal – financially better off to be food waste savvy
- The bag of shopping going to waste
- Focus on bread

**Communication**

- I only use social media (though there is so many messages coming through that its difficult to filter)
- Don’t use social media so TV
- School newsletter – the only thing I religiously read every week
- Flyer in the letterbox so more likely to end up on fridge
- Digital media
- Promote the food waste aspect
- Workshops through schools

**Discussion on workshops in schools:**

- Food waste aspect of the focus group the most interesting – not the \$50.
- Family focussed workshops - for kids and parents/carers together
- Create workshop times that suit a range of families: after school and on school holidays
- Use demonstrations and activities, real products (eg. Beef/water/kms etc) eg. The jug of water etc vs the small steak left.

**Other thoughts**

- Using food banks (eg. C3 church in Byron Industrial Estate) – allows businesses to donate food that would otherwise be thrown out due to OH&s or use by date reasons
- My children influence our behaviour with information they bring home from school (all four participants agreed) – eg. Reading packaging, putting items in the right bin
- UK example of perfect carrots vs wonky carrots for much cheaper – encourages and normalises use of less than perfect foods.

**One thing each participant will take away from the focus group**

1. Don't overcook
2. Don't overbuy
3. Investigate storage options

## APPENDIX 2

Results from on-line surveys completed by focus group participants are in the following link:

[www.newwaste.org.au/lfhw\\_results.html](http://www.newwaste.org.au/lfhw_results.html)

## APPENDIX 3

Focus group screening questions – for a cross section of the participants who were involved in the focus groups (NB – a few participants did not complete the screening questions).

[www.newwaste.org.au/lfhw\\_results\\_pre.html](http://www.newwaste.org.au/lfhw_results_pre.html)

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*This document has been produced by North East Waste as part of the NSW Love Food Hate Waste program.  
The program is supported by the NSW EPA Waste Less, Recycle More initiative funded from the waste levy.*