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A TO Z OF WASTE



BUILDING WASTE

Building waste is responsible for 40% of Australian landfill waste, incorporating both construction and demolition (Environment Australia). During the construction process, waste materials cleared from sites include trees and soil, left over materials and off-cuts, and post-consumption materials. Building demolition usually reveals a large scope for reusing, with timber, fittings and other materials able to be used for other building activities. Labour, storage and transportation costs are needed to remove these materials as well as landfill dumping fees. Removal and disposal costs can certainly be significant!

Large savings can be made by reducing and recycling building waste. Commonly used quarried materials can be replaced with recycled material and is often cheaper in price. For example, reinforced concrete can be reused as foundation materials on new projects. Reducing the need for raw materials from quarries benefits our environment through resource and energy conservation, aesthetic value and by avoiding environmental degradation.

References:

Environment Australia Wastewise Construction Program. Online at www.ea.gov.au/industry/construction/wastewise/index.htm

WHAT CAN I DO?

- By buying Australian where possible, less energy is needed to transport materials and therefore also helps to reduce waste through minimal greenhouse gas emissions.
- Demand that the right thing is done with your building waste! Ensure the contractor seeks recycling/reuse options or hire a contractor that does. Ask whether demolition in the future will contribute to toxic waste.
- Separate the different types of building wastes. This will make it easier for waste transfer and minimise the quantity of waste that you produce, and saves money on raw materials and disposal costs.
- Think about what materials can be reused or recycled. For example, trees and paper can be mulched, while items like fittings and bricks can be salvaged and resold. Are there any second hand building material businesses in your area?
- If you are in the building industry, develop a waste minimisation strategy. Information is available at www.ea.gov.au/industry/construction/wastewise/index.htm

MORE INFORMATION

- Go to www.wrapp.nsw.gov.au and click on the demolition or construction icons for an interactive experience in reducing building waste.
- To be involved with recycling your building and construction waste, look up the 'Supply of Recycled Material for Pavements, Earthworks and Drainage' on the NSW Environment website at: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/education/recyclingandwaste.htm
- For tips on minimising building and construction waste click on www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/www/html/1723-get-involved.asp and look under the business and industry column.