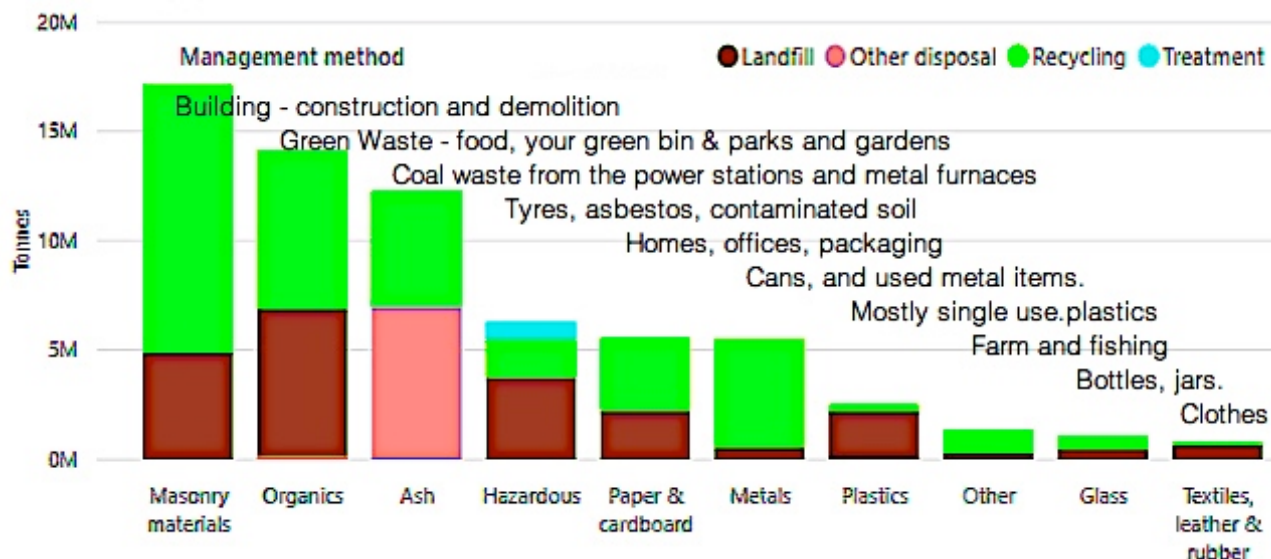


Session 6 : Waste & Consumption

In this session we will look at what we use and the waste we produce



The figures on what we use, and what we need to manage as waste, is staggering. Annual waste comes to 3,300 kgs per person. A 1/3rd household waste, a 1/3rd commerce, a 1/3rd construction.

Overall around 53% is recycled or reused, but this varies by waste type:

Building 72% Green 54% Ash 43% (mostly roads) Hazardous 27% Paper 60%
Metals 90% Plastics 12% Other 80% (includes farm waste) Glass 57% Clothes 4%

This is only part of the story - studies suggest that we use up 70 times as much in raw resources to make each kilogram of what we then consider waste. And a lot of the “waste” was never used in the first place - a 1/5th of food bought is never eaten and gets sent to rubbish. more [\[6.1\]](#)

So Where Do You Stand Now on Waste?

The ABC TV series “ War on Waste” - highlighted the the areas where households and schools can make a difference with waste - a summary of the series is on the website [\[6.2\]](#)

But some of the facts were:

- * 85% of soft plastics from bags and packaging ends up in landfill.
- * On average 1/3 of household rubbish is food waste.
- * Supermarkets and food retailers send about 170,000 tonnes of food to landfill each year.
- * Three-quarters of clothing purchased is thrown out within a year.
- * It takes 2700 litres of water to produce one item of clothing.
- * 1 billion, single use, coffee cups are used in Australia every year, and not recycled.
- * Glass is infinitely recyclable - but only 56% gets recycled.
- * 1 billion plastic water bottles are bought in Australia every year - 20% get recycled.
- * A school was sending 9 tonnes of rubbish a week to landfill - costing them \$2,300 a month

How Full is Your Typical Council Bin on Collection ?

Type	How Full				
General Waste - Red Bin	Full	3/4 Full	1/2 Full	1/4 Full	Empty
Recycling - Yellow Bin	Full	3/4 Full	1/2 Full	1/4 Full	Empty
Green Waste - Green Bin	Full	3/4 Full	1/2 Full	1/4 Full	Empty

Does your council take food recycling in the Green Bin ?
(FOGO)



The Waste Hierarchy - waste avoidance and resource recovery strategy



The original 3R's strategy - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - was easy to understand and got action underway, but it did not try to design waste out of the system in the first place.

So it has been expanded and current government and industry waste hierarchy policies now focus on avoidance rather than better disposal methods. The most important action starts with avoid & rethink & reduce, with the need to treat and dispose being the least of the activities.

This same strategy can be applied to domestic waste management.

Refuse, Rethink & Reduce

- ☐ Refuse plastic bags, go prepared with re-useable bags, containers and carry bags.
- ☐ Reject the poorly packaged option. Look for alternative items, or try other outlets.
- ☐ Rethink the source of supply - consider farmer's markets, local suppliers, places where you can question the design, packaging, materials, and drill back to the production methods.
- ☐ Rethink services and conveniences - can a bit of forward planning reduce the waste you have to deal with, reduce the amount of materials used, and reduce nett energy or fuel use?
- ☐ Actually rethink every purchase - do you really need it? Are you reacting to advertising?
- ☐ Reduce the chemicals in the home - try simple natural cleaners like vinegar/lemon juice liquid cleaner, or bi-carbonate of soda scrub.
- ☐ Refuse to use anything made with PVC, or polyvinyl chloride, as these create dioxins during manufacturing, use, and disposal. And dioxins are known carcinogens.
- ☐ Refuse (by Returning) excess packaging on consumer items and electronics.
- ☐ Rethink the use of virgin materials, look for the things made from pre-used materials, encourage a circular economy where resources go back into productive use.
- ☐ Reduce nett waste by choosing biodegradable options when available.

Reuse

- ☐ Choose new items that promise to have a long life. Re-fillable water bottles, stainless steel lunch boxes, metal cutlery sets, cloth napkins, handkerchiefs, cotton and bamboo cloths.
- ☐ Research big purchases and household appliances for ease of repair, degree of recyclable materials at the end of it's life, lack or otherwise of toxic materials, & durability of surfaces.
- ☐ Do It Yourself options are plentiful - make your own carry bags, beeswax food wraps.
- ☐ Reuse containers and shop at bulk foods stores, find shops and markets that let you drop off clean empties and take the same, newly filled with products, including wine and milk.

Rehome, Repurpose (recycle)

- ☐ Rehome surplus items through Charity Op Shops, lists on Gumtree or Freecycle.org, posts on local Good Karma and similar neighbourhood, or special interest, Facebook Groups.
- ☐ Rehome by organising neighbourhood Garage Sales and Swap Meets.
- ☐ Repurpose by inventive use of old furniture, building materials and fittings as new items.
- ☐ Repurpose chipped cups as pots for plants, old sheets as soft cleaning cloths, an old suitcase as a pet bed, shattered pottery as tiles in a garden mosaic.
- ☐ Repurpose (recycle) in using things for other functions, like a mattress inner-spring unit as a vertical pot plant holder or growing wall,

Rot & Compost, Recycle

- ☐ Collect your fruit and vegetable peelings and cuttings and create a compost bin. Use a Bokashi type fermentation system, so that prepared foods, meat, dairy, egg, coffee & tissues can also be tuned into compost.
- ☐ Use cardboard and newspaper to make weed mats, or shredded as carbon rich additions to the compost bin or as mulch.
- ☐ Develop a plan for the separation and collection of waste water, and use non-greasy grey water to grow more food.
- ☐ Recycle glass separately to avoid contamination with other things in your Yellow Bin.
- ☐ Recycle by pulling things apart and making art, toys, kids play items, and by correctly recycling the parts that won't contaminate the recycle pathways (dispose what is left)

Treat & Disposal (the things you can not deal with yourself)

- ☐ Take advantage of Waste Recovery Programs - toner ink to "Cartridges 4 Planet Ark" boxes at Post Offices or other office supplies outlets, mobile phones to "Mobile Muster" or similar collection points, fluorescent tubes and bulbs to council and library collection bins,
- ☐ Investigate your council's e-waste program, and ask about old paint and oils collections.

If in doubt, go online to the many State sponsored sites, like Sustainability Victoria, that allow a search by item, to find the correct recycle options and service locations more [\[6.3\]](#)

What Are Other New Ideas & Actions?

Buy Nothing Project - a global network of local groups that don't sell, swap or barter, but gift into each group, posting what they have in surplus, and asking when they need something - the challenge is see if you can go 7 days without buying anything. Most groups focus on building hyper-local gift economies (and sustainable communities)[\[6.4\]](#)

Repair Cafe & Fix-It - Repair Cafés are free meeting places, all about repairing things together. You will find tools and materials to help you make any repairs you need. On clothes, furniture, electrical appliances, bicycles, crockery, appliances, toys, etc.. You'll also find expert volunteers, with repair skills in all kinds of fields. This is a national network dedicated to avoiding waste. [\[6.5\]](#)

Zero Waste Festivals - volunteer groups, working with private suppliers, are working on making large music, arts, and sports festivals zero food and drink waste events. They do this by supplying all the food vendors and outlets with durable, washable, plates, bowls, cup, mugs, and eating implements, and setting up wash stations and supervised waste recycling bins so that the nett result is minimal landfill, some clean grey water, and happy participants. One festival of 16,000 people, over 4 days, reported a drop in landfill from 16 tons to one 240 litre bin. [\[6.6\]](#)

Tool Library & Library of Things - or Sharing Sheds - lots of names, but basically a subscription based lending library of power tools and serious handy-person equipment at one end, to the sort of things found in the pantry, kitchen, sewing room or play-room at the other. Pretty much everything you might need for a project or party. Booking are usually made online, with set times for use and return, so other borrowings can be booked up. Just about everything is donated, and the aim is to reduce costs, get maximum use and life out of items, and save waste.

Community Litter Action - illegal dumping and general litter costs local government around \$70 million a year in collection and clean up costs. Community and volunteer groups like “Clean Up Australia” the various “Adopt Aroad, highway, town” groups, and bodies like “ Riverkeepers” are running clean up and collection events, and campaigns to raise public awareness.

There are also citizen action apps like “Snap Send Solve” that send notifications to councils, water authorities, and supermarkets of illegal or inappropriate dumping, and use photos to help prosecute offenders. [\[6.7\]](#)

Challenges

For one week - every time you get out a commercial cleaner, go online and look for a natural or low impact alternative like borax, eucalytus oil, lemon juice, vinegar, or salt.

Over one month - keep a diary of the tools and implements you use just once, and then think about sharing them with your neighbours, or donating them to a library of things.

Over one month - revisit the Bin Collection quiz - did you manage to reduce your waste?

Kids Fun - give out extra pocket money, but for spending at your local Op Shop, and talk about the bargains and the landfill saved. Organise a junk craft day - get ideas from books at your library. Organise a toy and game clean up and let them decide on keep-gift-donate.

Suggested Session Plan	
Catch Up - how has everyone’s week been?	10 min
Review Waste - what surprised you? what did you discover about the different product streams and industries?	30 min
Where Did You Stand - have you seen the ABC TV’s War on Waste? how waste-aware were you before this session?	30 min
The Waste Hierarchy - which of these have you already done? how has it worked out? what other actions do you think you might take on?	30 min
Challenges and Fun Ideas - suggest other ideas and activities?	10 min
Before you close Session 6, take time to reflect on how the session went, think of steps that might be taken in the next session, consider how the others are reacting and responding. Think Head, Hands, & Heart.	10 min