

# Household Waste Tracker Activity Guide

A Guide to Conducting a Bin Check/ Waste Audit at home

November 2021

Prepared by the Resource Recovery Education Officer on behalf of Dubbo Regional Council, Mid-Western Regional Council and Narromine Shire Council



# Benefits of Reducing Your Waste at Home

Households are the biggest contributors to food waste in Australia being responsible for 34% of all food waste, followed by primary producers (31%) and manufacturers (24%)

~ Foodbank 2021~

## Cost Savings

It is expensive to send valuable materials to landfill. With space for landfill more scarce and waste volumes increasing, landfill is expensive for councils and communities as growing waste disposal costs contribute to rates increases.

When looking at the cost of food waste to Australian households, the average household discards up to 20% of the food they purchase. That is 1 in 5 shopping bags going to waste in each home, over \$1000 worth of food a year!

Finding ways to improve waste and purchasing habits is a great way to reduce costs for your household.

## Rescue Resources

It is unsustainable to send valuable resources to landfill.

Preventing valuable finite resources from ending up in landfill improves resource recovery and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. These outcomes provide important social and environmental benefits for the broader community.

When we dispose of items that others could still use or that we could reuse or recycle, we are wasting those materials and the energy and water that went into the production, transportation and consumption of that item.

## For Now and the Future

There is no away for our rubbish. When we dispose of items in landfill many items do not break down for a very long time. The landfill process is a source of air and water pollution, also emitting a powerful greenhouse gas methane which is 25 time more potent than carbon dioxide. We need to rethink of rubbish as a resource. By conserving space in our landfills, recovering materials to keep them in circulation, and importantly examining our consumption behaviours, we are creating a better future for younger generations.

# Reducing waste at home



If you are wanting to improve your waste practices at home tracking your waste is a simple and easy way to start. Using a waste tracker will help you to figure out a clearer picture of the waste you generate and will help pin point opportunities to reduce waste in your home.

## Conducting a home bin check

Rather than digging through your bin at the end of the week you can simply record your outgoing waste on a *Household Waste Tracker sheet* (see page 6) as you place items in the bin.

The record sheet provided will help you record four main streams of waste:

- recycling
- organics (food & garden)
- landfill/ general waste
- reusable items and problem wastes that do not belong in kerbside bins

Recording for at least a week will give you a good picture of what your overall waste looks like. Tracking your waste increases your awareness of the waste you generate and you may find yourself adjusting some of your typical habits during the process as a result.

## Reviewing what you found

When you have completed your list for the time period you decide on, you can review what is working well and not so well with waste in your household. There are prompt questions for your review on the Household Waste Tracker.

Look at your list/s and see what stands out as a big waste stream or an easy fix.

Some examples may be a large volume of landfill/general waste. If this is the case examine what items it mainly consists of. Ask yourself if there ways to avoid, reuse, repurpose or recycle these items?

Or it may be a large amount of food waste that was previously going in to your general waste. You may want to reduce the amount of food waste you produce first by reconsidering your food shopping, storage and meal planning, or you may want to set up a better way to utilise the kerbside Organics (FOGO) service provided by council or start your own worm farm or compost bin.

## What next?

Once you have identified what you want to focus on changing as a household, how you are going to do it, and who will be responsible, you are ready to take action! Stick to the plan and ensure good communication about the change with all members of the household. Give yourself and other household members time to adjust to any changes put in place.

You can complete another bin audit using the Household Waste Tracker at intervals after you have made the change. This way you can see your progress. You can even use the NSW EPA's Recyclator to calculate your impact.

# Ideas for Action



It is important when determining your actions that they are achievable and realistic. Starting small is not a bad thing at all.

Dependent on your waste tracker findings, some ideas for action could be:

- Do you have a large amount of clothing, household items, or toys you are throwing away? Think about buying less. Challenge yourself to buying nothing new for a month, or next time you need to replace an item check out your local charity shop or second hand marketplaces.
- Loads of food waste? Think about avoiding waste first up. Look at Love Food Hate Waste's Food Smart pages that help you to store food well to keep it fresher longer, how to plan your meals and shop smart and how to get creative with left overs. It is also good to think about if and how you use the council kerbside organics bin or if you prefer to establish a compost, bokashi bin or worm farm for food scraps.
- Have you got mountains of soft plastics? Consider alternative options without the plastic, if you cannot avoid it look at setting up a soft plastics bin separately and deposit them in the REDcycle bin at your local grocery store when you go to do your shopping.
- Lots of food waste in your general waste bin? Try changing it up with your Organics(FOGO) caddy. Maybe it's the smell or the hassle of taking it out regularly that is putting some family members off. Think about making space in the fridge or freezer for your caddy to stop the stink. Or you can deodorize your caddy by sprinkling bi carb soda over the contents regularly.

We are excited to see what other fantastic ideas you come up with and implement. Let us know how you and your household is being waste wise by contacting [wasteeducation@dubbo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:wasteeducation@dubbo.nsw.gov.au)

Whatever household waste challenge you take on, please remember that by prioritizing your actions in line with the NSW EPA waste hierarchy you can make the biggest impact. The most preferable actions are to avoid waste generation, followed by reusing, recycling, and lastly disposing of items.



# Other Helpful Resources

- **Love Food Hate Waste** is run by the NSW Environment Protection Authority as part of Waste Less Recycle more, a NSW Government Initiative funded from the waste levy. Love Food Hate Waste have some excellent resources including information about food waste, access to the Food Smart program, recipes and videos, and other great tips which can all be found here.
- **VISY** provide some great information on recycling for households which can be found here.
- **NSW EPA** provides information for householders on waste prevention, recycling, food and garden organics, problem wastes and community recycling centres. Find out more here.
- **Planet Ark** provides a range of information around waste and resource recovery, including their helpful tool Recycling Near You. Please find more information here.
- If you are unsure about what belongs in each bin, please visit your council's website and search kerbside bin guide or call for more information.
  - Dubbo Regional Council (02) 6801 4000
  - Mid-Western Regional Council 1300 765 002
  - Narromine Shire Council (02) 6889 9999



# Household Waste Tracker

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Date: \_\_\_\_\_



before you place that item in the bin, please write the item down under the correct category.

## Recycling

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## Food & Garden Organics (FOGO)

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## General Waste (Landfill)

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Reuse/ Donation Items (left) & Problem Wastes that cannot go in kerbside bins e.g. batteries, light bulbs, chemicals etc (right).

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## Review

When you have completed your bin check for the period of time you decide on (a minimum of a week), review your findings by exploring the questions below.

- Are there any waste streams that stuck out as large or an easy fix?
- What do we need to change that is realistic for our household?
- How do we go about that change?
- Who is responsible?