

Media release

14 March 2017

Why Australian businesses who don't recycle are missing out

Making the business case for less waste

Australian businesses who don't recycle or optimise their waste management face unnecessary losses which can directly impact their bottom line, their position in the market, and staff morale.

Every year in Australia, businesses generate over 12.5 million tonnes of waste. Almost half of that waste (46%) goes to landfillⁱ despite estimates that approximately 70% can be reused or recycledⁱⁱ.

New research shows that 76% of businesses believe that reducing waste is part of being a sustainable and ethical businessⁱⁱⁱ. However, there is also the perception that they are doing all they can to manage their waste, that there may be little benefit in doing more, or that they don't have the knowledge to improve their waste and recycling practices^{iv}.

"It's clear that many workplaces don't understand that they may be wasting money by sending waste to landfill. Take Cumberland Golf Club as an example; by investing in a wood chipper they cut their waste fees by \$8,000 a year, and The Good Guys in Rockdale reduced their skip bin pick-ups from three times a week to one a fortnight saving thousands of dollars a year," says Ryan Collins, Recycling Programs Manager at Planet Ark.

"Our new resource, *The Business Case for Less Waste*, provides employees and management with advice and guidance for establishing a recycling strategy within the workplace, and explains the many benefits associated with pursuing better waste management, including reduced costs, improved reputation and better staff morale."

Saving on the bottom line

The costs of sending business waste to landfill, instead of recycling, are significant and not just environmental.

Australian workplaces pay a state government levy for each tonne of eligible waste sent to landfill. The rate varies depending upon material type and business location. The most common charge in Western Australia is \$55 a tonne, in Victoria it is \$62, South Australia \$76 and in NSW it is \$133. In the ACT the landfill gate fee is \$146. These levies are easily avoided by sending waste material to recycling.

Workplaces who conduct regular audits of their existing recycling programs can also find savings. By adopting new waste management equipment, reviewing contracts with recycling providers, or creating green supply chains, which minimise waste and promote efficiency, businesses can make surprising savings.

By saving on waste costs a workplace can reinvest in their core activities. "As a community owned not-for-profit we'd much rather use money for children's education resources than to have rubbish taken away," said Kathryn Barker, Early Childhood Services Manager at Illawarra Area Child Care.

A competitive edge

More than one in two (53%) businesses agree that efficient waste management and recycling gives them a competitive edge^v. Recent research has supported this by showing that businesses and brands with a demonstrated commitment to sustainability outperform those without^{vi}.

Increasing numbers of consumers (66%^{vii}) are willing to pay more for goods and services from companies committed to reducing their environmental impact, and that commitment has the power to sway product purchases for more than 45% of consumers^{viii}. By adopting positive environmental practices, like recycling, Australian businesses also demonstrate to their customers and stakeholders that they are forward thinking and innovative.

Happy staff — better business

More than nine out of ten Australian households recycle^{ix} and employees are increasingly expecting recycling facilities in the workplace. Statistics indicate that Australia-wide, 80% of employees would like more recycling in the workplace and that having recycling facilities make them feel like they work for a responsible employer^x.

The high staff morale associated with high levels of job satisfaction leads to a more cohesive and productive team, and longer-term staff retention, alleviating the costs of recruitment and training.

Help is at hand

The Business Case for Less Waste^{xi} is a new Planet Ark resource designed to help staff at any level in a workplace look at their waste management systems, identify the inefficiencies and unnecessary costs and then make the case for better systems. It also provides scientifically proven ideas for engaging colleagues with waste and recycling initiatives.

BusinessRecycling.com.au provides online and over-the-phone information, resources, and also has the most comprehensive listing of recycling service providers in the country. Details on recycling options for over 90 different materials make the process of finding the right recycling solutions for individual businesses quick and easy.

The site also has resources for choosing the right recycler, creating free signage, and reviewing waste contracts, and access to the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Bin Trim Program, a free Excel tool (that can be used by any Australian workplace) that helps SMEs measure their waste and provides tailored information to help reduce, reuse, and recycle materials.

BusinessRecycling.com.au and Hotline 1300 763 768 are made possible through the support of Foundation Partner, the NSW EPA.

For enquiries about the EPA Bin Trim Program and grant recipients call the NSW EPA on 02 9995 6415 (including after hours) or email: PublicAffairsSection@epa.nsw.gov.au.

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About Planet Ark

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit organisation with a vision of a world where people live in balance with nature. Established in 1992, we are one of Australia's leading environmental behaviour change organisations with a focus on working collaboratively and positively. We help people, governments and businesses reduce their impact on the environment in three key areas: sustainable resource use; low carbon lifestyles; and connecting people with nature. We promote and create simple, positive environmental actions – for everyone.

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ⁱ A National Waste Policy: Managing Waste to 2020 – Department of Environment, 2009

ⁱⁱ <http://betterbusinesspartnership.com.au/>

ⁱⁱⁱ What's the Deal with Business Waste? – Planet Ark 2016, with thanks to the NSW EPA

^{iv} Media Release: What a Waste – 58% of businesses keeping no records on waste management – Planet Ark, 30 March 2016

^v Social Research on Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) Waste and Recycling – Environment Protection Authority, 2016. <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/waste/small-medium-business-recycling-research-160139.pdf>

^{vi} Global Corporate Sustainability Report – The Nielsen Company, 2015, p.16

^{vii} *ibid*

^{viii} *ibid*

^{ix} <http://recyclingweek.planetark.org/recycling-info/theworld.cfm>

^x All Sorted – Answering the Big Recycling Questions Report – Planet Ark, 2015, p.21

^{xi} The Business Case for Less Waste – Planet Ark 2017, with thanks to the NSW EPA

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Positive environmental actions, for everyone.