

REDUCING WORKPLACE WASTE IN THE AIRBNBS & HOLIDAY RENTALS

A practical guide to help Airbnbs and holiday rental businesses towards zero waste

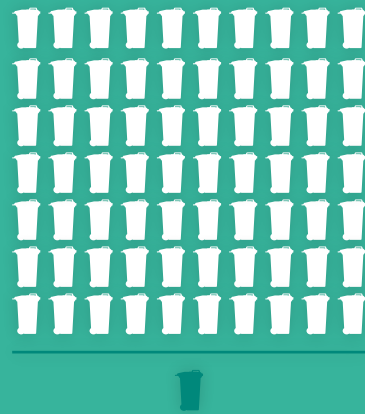
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WHY SHOULD I REDUCE MY WASTE?

Environmental sustainability is now a key part of doing business. By minimising your waste, you can cut your disposal costs, reduce your carbon footprint, and build your brand's reputation with staff and customers alike.

In 2023, Queenstown Lakes District businesses were **surveyed** to get a snapshot of how organisations were managing their waste and how they could be supported to reduce and minimise their waste outputs. The majority of respondents said that reducing their environmental impact was a key motivator to minimise waste and 92% said that waste reduction was important or very important to their business.

QLDC is committed to helping our communities become a low waste and low emissions district, and to helping your business achieve its waste minimisation goals.



For every one rubbish bin of waste that you put out on the kerb, **70 rubbish bins of waste were made upstream just to make that one bin on the kerb.** Even if we could recycle 100% of the waste coming out of our households, it does not get to the core of the problem. Correct recycling is vital, but we need to think about cutting off the waste streams and bringing less waste into our businesses in the first place. **The Story of Stuff** is essential reading and talks more about this.



Credit: Ridgeline Wānaka

KEY WASTE STREAMS IN AIRBNBS AND HOLIDAY RENTALS

Working and consulting with hosts and accommodation providers across the region has helped identify the key waste streams for Airbnb and holiday rentals, and come up with practical solutions to help you reduce your waste.

Making a start can be the hardest part and if you manage a holiday rental alone, it can seem even more challenging if you don't have people to work on this with you. This is where this guide will help you. Considering how you manage waste within your own home is a great way to start when you're thinking about your short-term rental; practise what you preach and preach what you practise!

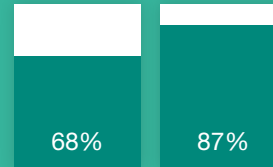
If you are part of a company, together with your team and stakeholders, identify what you can tackle first. Engaging your colleagues and staff is vital. If you have an engaged team committed to your waste goals, you'll see results quicker and will be able to communicate your values far more easily to your guests. Encourage their input and suggestions.

If you manage holiday rentals as part of a commercial enterprise, Wastebusters has put together **a document** to help you communicate your waste minimisation strategies to your team, with content for staff induction manuals. It's a great idea to have a policy in place so that waste minimisation is seen as the norm from the outset.



TELL YOUR STORY!

Having a clear zero waste story to communicate to your guests in your listing and at the point of booking is a great way to share your values. According to a sustainability report by Booking.com, **68% of clients are interested in searching out eco-friendly accommodation, and 87% of travellers worldwide state that they want to travel sustainably.** Promoting your zero waste initiatives could have ripple effects in the choices that travellers make when booking elsewhere or when hunting out activities in the region. **Lead the way!**



- Make zero waste your unique selling point. Mention your waste minimisation strategies in your listing and tie it into the broader region's commitment to zero waste. It is something to be proud of and guests should want to be part of this.
- Reinforce and communicate your zero waste policies with booking confirmations. Encourage guests to bring their own coffee cups, water bottles and containers for taking away food. What about including a zero waste guide to the Queenstown Lakes District? Your Regional Tourism Organisations (Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism) may have sustainable itineraries on their websites that you can use.
- Offer links to zero waste travel blogs. There are plenty of them online (links to a few of these are at the bottom of this guide) that offer really helpful tips when travelling.
- Don't stop communicating! If you send check-in or last-minute information, use this as another opportunity to remind guests of what to expect.
- Do you manage a number of properties alone or as part of a rental business? Can you create a category within your portfolio and on your website that highlights properties that champion zero waste?
- If you are working in a holiday rental business, make sure all of your team is on board.
- Practise what you preach in your office workspaces and kitchens. Have clear recycling stations and consider whether you might be able to remove some of your rubbish bins to discourage unnecessary waste. Have a look at the [**QLDC website**](#) to make sure you know what materials you can recycle in the district and [**check out these guidelines for tips on how set up effective rubbish and recycling stations.**](#)
- Consider introducing waste into your regular reporting and celebrate your wins with your teams and on your socials.
- Have a look at the [**office waste guide**](#) for more ideas on how to minimise your office waste.



Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka

IN YOUR RENTAL PROPERTY

Airbnb's tagline is “Live Like A Local” and this is why many people opt for a holiday rental over a hotel.

It can be hard for holiday makers to make low waste choices if they don't know what local practices, including recycling, are. By making it as easy as possible for your guests, you will not only encourage them to consider how they travel but you might also sow a seed for when they go home. Many travellers are Airbnb hosts themselves; they might take your ideas and follow suit!

- A key starting point is to monitor waste streams. What are your guests throwing out and how can you help them change their habits? A clear visual of what is going into rubbish bins will help you make the changes needed to eliminate waste and assess whether recycling rules are understood.
- Many holiday rental websites enable hosts to upload their house guides to their listing. This immediately eliminates printing costs and paper usage and means you can keep the information current and updated without having to constantly reprint it.
- If you prefer to have printed information in the house, extend the life of the paper by keeping it in a clear sleeve folder to avoid it becoming messy and unusable.
- Think about having a ‘sustainability chart’ in the property that explains all the measures you have taken within the property to help reduce its environmental impact, and how you have helped your guests reduce their negative impact as they travel.
- Educate guests on recycling in the Queenstown Lakes District, including public rubbish and recycling systems. Have clearly labelled bins for glass recycling, mixed recycling and waste. Provide clear signage around what can be recycled. QLDC has a very helpful, **visual guide** to recycling that you can provide a link to. Alternatively, the region's libraries have printed copies available.
- Provide a compost and bokashi bin and let your guests know what goes in which bin. If you are unable to use the food scraps yourself, connect with local community groups and gardens that will take them. (There are links to resources at the end of this guide.)
- Review all the amenities you offer. Is a paper pad and a plastic ball point pen necessary in this digital age?
- Let your guests know that the tap water is clean and safe to drink. Overseas travellers may not have this luxury in their hometown so they might otherwise default to bottled water. Alternatively, invest in a filtered water dispenser.
- Rather than sachets and pods, try loose coffee and tea, or loose, plastic-free tea bags in sealed containers. Provide milk and sugar in refillable containers.



Credit: Tracey Hocking

- Instead of disposable plastic bottles for soap, shampoo and conditioner, use liquid dispensers that can be refilled and reused.
- If you prefer to provide soap bars, consider “naked” bars that come with no packaging. There are lots of local options and it’s a good way to support and promote local businesses.
- Keep a supply of containers or beeswax food wraps in your rental and encourage your guests to use these in place of plastic food wrap.
- Provide reusable takeaway coffee cups, water bottles, shopping bags and containers in your rental. Highlight these in your guest information and promote cafés and shops that welcome customers with their own containers for takeaways or deli items. Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism have links on their websites too.
- Keep a library of glass jars and containers for your guests to use for refillable items. Let your guests know where they can find shops that offer refills. This can not only reduce plastic waste but also food waste as travellers can buy just what they need and not end up with surplus from prepackaged ingredients. The Rubbish Trip has a good Whakatipu **guide to low waste shopping** and **Plastic Free Wānaka** has a good one for the Upper Clutha.
- Provide information about local zero waste hubs and op shops. People often get caught short when travelling and providing circular shopping options reinforces the zero waste message.
- Invest in long-life LED lights and, when looking to purchase battery powered appliances, look at whether there are USB-charged alternatives.
- Consider how many rubbish bins you need in the rental and the size they should be. Keeping bins as small as possible is a great way of making people aware of their waste. If a liner is necessary, try newspaper or something similar, that can be replaced when soiled.
- Encourage guests to donate unopened, non-perishable food items to local food banks. These can be found at local supermarkets and social services hubs. Encourage guest feedback. Hearing what guests have to say will help you with future bookings and further minimise rental waste.



Credit: Kinn Living

SUPPLIES AND SUPPLIERS



- Talk to your suppliers about their packaging. Is it necessary? Is it recyclable? Can they take back packaging or will they supply the same product in reusable packaging? Do they know the origin of their products? Transparency across the supply chain is key.
- Consider local suppliers who can provide products with no or less packaging. Plus, you're supporting local!
- If you contract an external laundry company, ask them whether they have alternatives for plastic covers.
- Consider renting furniture and check second-hand options before you go for something new.
- Use refillable containers. Whether it's bathroom items, cleaning products or kitchen supplies, opt for products that can be refilled.
- If you opt for paper towels, buy ones that are made from 100% recycled material. Remember, while these can be made from recycled materials, they can't be recycled or composted so, if possible, opt for a reusable option.
- Buy responsibly sourced toilet paper in bulk. **With Small** is an Aotearoa supplier that offers bulk purchases of bamboo based toilet paper with no plastic packaging.
- Use bagless vacuum cleaners. You'll save immediately on supplies.
- If you use an external cleaning company, talk to them about your goals and expectations and get them on board.
- Consider industry collaboration. They may be your competitors but other hosts and rental services may be key to your success. Can you lobby websites to promote zero waste holiday homes? There's strength in numbers and a collective approach makes for great PR!



Credit: Daiga Ellaby, Unsplash

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO TO REDUCE OUR WASTE?



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Globally, roughly 1 million plastic bottles are purchased every minute, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

For every six bottles of water bought, one is recycled, according to National Geographic. 80% of plastic bottles end up in landfills worldwide and over 8 million tonnes of plastic bottles end up in the ocean each year. You might think that as a rental property host you cannot bring about change but with 5 million hosts on Airbnb alone and over 7.5 million listings on the website, imagine what could be achieved if every host took steps to reduce waste at their property!

- Purchase durable, long-lasting goods to reduce the need for frequent replacements.
- When it's time to update furniture, fittings and other materials, donate items in good condition to charities or advertise them in local community groups.
- Repair damaged and worn towels, sheets, tablecloths etc. for continued use. When they're no longer fit-for-purpose, they'll make great cleaning rags.
- Make sure your industry partners - here and overseas - are aware of your zero waste policies and ask them about their own strategies. You might be able to swap ideas along the way and they can then let their customers and clients know what you're doing.
- If you use bars of soap, consider joining **Soap Aid**, a not-for-profit that recycles used bars and sends them to communities where soap is critically needed.
- Use sustainable materials and practices in new construction and renovations.



Credit: Maksim Siadura

SO MANY IDEAS, SO MANY QUESTIONS! WHERE SHOULD I LOOK NEXT?

Remember you're not alone and help is at hand! Here are some useful links to support you on your waste reducing journey:

- Take a look at this **general guide for businesses**, which gives additional ideas on how to implement changes in the workplace with helpful links and resources.
- **Check out these other industry resource guides**. You may find more ideas there to help you on the path to zero waste.
- You can find some rubbish and recycling signage on the QLDC website here: **QLDC - Waste Minimisation for Businesses**.
- **Talk to Zero Waste champions in Aotearoa** like **Wastebusters**, **Zero Waste Network NZ**, **Sustainable Queenstown**, **Zero Waste Glenorchy**, **Wao**, **Sustainable Business Network**, and **WasteMINZ**. Sign up to their newsletters, join their zero waste events and be part of the conversation.
- **Connect with local groups** doing great things: **Plastic Free Wānaka**, **SUCfree Whakatipu** and **SUCfree Wānaka**.
- **Research your local composting options**. Check out the information provided here: **QLDC - Green and Food Waste**.
- **Read what others are doing**. There are lots of great resources and tips online relating to Zero Waste Travel. **Spire NZ** has a helpful Airbnb host zero waste checklist, **Earth Savvy** has a post on low waste travel in Aotearoa. **Mammamode** has another very good Airbnb zero waste checklist. **Good Tourism Institute** has some very good and varied travel related articles that are worth a read. **Booking.com** has produced a handbook with advice on reducing plastic consumption and waste. **Sustonica** has created recycling labels that are targeted at children to encourage them to recycle while on holiday.
- **Make good purchasing decisions** using this **smart purchasing guide** to ask questions of your suppliers.
- **Consider undertaking a waste audit** - you can't take action if you don't know what you're dealing with. Waste audits connect you with zero waste experts who have the know-how to help you with simple and measurable waste solutions.
- **Get back to basics**. Find out who is offering **waste management services** in your area.
- **Be inspired**. Read **local case studies** to see what other businesses have done to reduce their waste.



Credit: Canyon Brewery

This guide was written by Wastebusters and designed by QLDC under the QLDC Zero Waste District Programme funding as part of the Resourceful Communities initiative.

Resourceful Communities aims to make the link between global work on the circular economy and local reduction and reuse activities.

The year-round programme inspires and supports behaviours that are part of the transition to a more circular economy.

Our aim is to help to build a culture where resources are valued and kept in use, and waste minimisation is the norm.

