

REDUCING WORKPLACE WASTE IN HOSPITALITY

A practical guide to help hospitality businesses towards zero waste

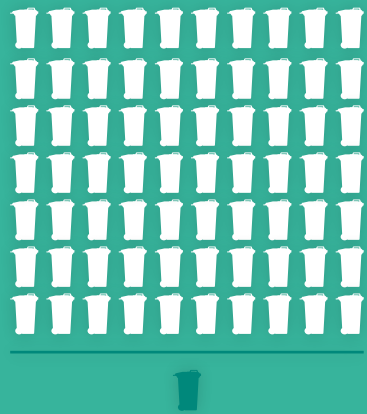
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WHY SHOULD I REDUCE MY WASTE?

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: Plastic Free Wānaka

TACKLING WASTE TOGETHER

Work and consultation with businesses of all sizes across the region has helped identify three key waste streams for the hospitality industry and have come up with practical solutions to help you reduce your waste.

Making a start can be the hardest part. 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 customers.

Encourage their input and suggestions. When **Big Fig** went single-use cup free, a key component of their success was educating their staff and empowering them to communicate confidently their values to customers. **[Listen to their story here.](#)**

Wastebusters has put together **[a document](#)** to help you communicate your waste minimisation strategies to your team, with wording 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.



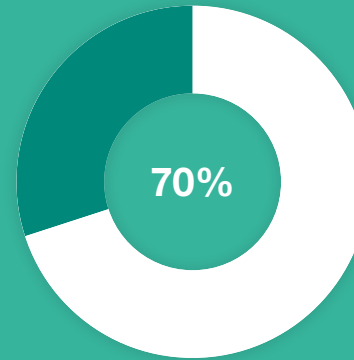
Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka

FOOD WASTE

If food can't be rescued, how do you keep it from ending up in the bin? Food waste in landfill creates methane, a harmful greenhouse gas; food waste in a composting system can break down into nutrients to help grow more food.

- Measure your food waste. Do you see a pattern? Do you need to reconsider portion sizes? Should you offer sauces rather than automatically providing them? **Fedeli** café in Wānaka monitored the food waste that was being returned to the kitchen and adjusted their servings accordingly, right down to their portions of butter!
- Investigate composting options. Do you have the ability to compost within your organisation? **Fedeli** and **RealNZ** are two businesses that have implemented in-house systems. Realistically, you may not have the space or capacity onsite but there may be local worm farms or local compost sites that can take your waste. **Grow Wānaka** and **Zero Waste Glenorchy** both offer community drop-off options for composting - make sure you know what they accept first! Have a look at [QLDC's green and food waste page](#) for options in the region.

- Engage with your community when it comes to food waste. Are there pig farmers who can take your food scraps? Can you offer coffee grounds to your customers for compost? Social media is a great way to connect with people - post on your own accounts and engage with community groups to spread the word.
- Have takeaway containers and encourage customers to take home any unfinished food or encourage them to bring their own containers.
- Engage with food rescue organisations like **Kiwi Harvest** if you have surplus in-date ingredients or cabinet food. They will collect your excess food with their e-bike and trailer and distribute it to a local charity. In 2023, they rescued 130 tonnes of excess food. Remember: if food has been prepared for an event or buffet but has not been sent out of the kitchen, it can be rescued.
- Talk to your colleagues to share ideas and come up with combined solutions.



When Skyline Queenstown conducted a waste audit, it was revealed that approximately 70% of their total waste consisted of food waste that could be diverted from landfill. This would result in:

- A substantial percentage decrease in annual landfill costs.
- Considerable cost savings annually through food waste avoidance.
- Significant greenhouse gas emissions benefits from the reduction in methane emissions due to landfill disposal. According to Project Drawdown, composting waste instead of sending it to a landfill can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than half in terms of carbon dioxide equivalent.

These insights have been invaluable in building momentum to drive targeted actions, such as reviewing internal waste management processes, setting zero waste to landfill targets and scoping new initiatives to reduce and compost food waste.



Credit: Kiwi Harvest

SINGLE USE CUSTOMER ITEMS

Without access to a commercial composting facility, “biodegradable” takeaway cups and containers will end up in landfill and emit methane. These containers are disposable, single-use items that require resources to produce them (not to mention packaging waste and transport costs). While it’s great to see more and more customers bringing their own cups and containers, more can be done.

- Incentivise using reusable containers and cups - offer a discount to customers who bring their own containers and promote this far and wide.
- Join a reusable container loan network like **Chunky** or **Again Again**
- Consider a “loan library” of your own for those who don’t have their own cups or containers.
- Did you know that the Ministry for the Environment has banned a large array of single use plastic items? Check out **their website** to make use you aren’t using any of these items.
- Ditch the single use paper straws and wooden cutlery alternatives where possible.
- Remove single-serve sauces and condiments. Have refillable containers and dispensers.
- Sign up as a water refill station via **Refill NZ**.
- Ask tour companies, accommodation providers, Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism to encourage visitors to bring their own coffee cups, containers and water bottles. Spread the word!
- Again, work with your colleagues. Get as many businesses on board to promote zero waste takeaways. It’s great PR and makes for excellent storytelling!



Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka

The **SUCfree [single use cup free] campaign** is a great local example of businesses coming together to lead change. 28 cafés and caravans in **Wānaka** and the same number in **Queenstown** have implemented cup-lending schemes or libraries and a growing number of these are now completely SUCfree, saving 180,000 cups from landfill annually in Wānaka alone.



PACKAGING

According to the [Sustainability Business Network](#), about 70% of your business' sustainability impact comes from your supply chain. Whether it's talking to your existing suppliers or looking for alternatives, beginning at the source is key.

- 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!)
- Consider renting equipment (office, kitchen, front of house) and check second-hand options before you go for something new.
- Use refillable containers. Whether it's sauces, soap, cleaning products or pantry essentials, opt for products that can be refilled.
- Make sure everyone understands how to recycle batteries responsibly. They cannot be placed into rubbish or recycling bins as they pose a significant fire risk to collection trucks and waste facilities. Refer to the [A-Z Rubbish and Recycling Directory](#) for information on how to recycle batteries and other electronic waste responsibly.
- Make sure you have effective recycling systems in place for packaging that you can't eliminate. 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 moving to reusable hand towels in place of disposable paper ones.
- Consider industry collaboration. They may be your competitors, but other businesses may be key to your success. Involve the big guys too. Can you buy in bulk, share resources and reduce packaging waste? Can you lobby suppliers to make the changes you want to see? There's strength in numbers!

The [Postmaster's Cottage in Arrowtown](#) reuses their empty ice cream containers and gives them to their vegetable suppliers for their delivery. [Cardrona and Treble Cone's](#) waste-free journey began in 2013 when they made the decision to remove plastic wrap from pies. What seemed like a small step resulted in saving more than 24,000 plastic packets that year. Since then, they have, among other initiatives, required Bidfood to deliver fresh produce in paper bags not plastic and use reusable net covers for palletised deliveries. Leverage off the mahi done by larger companies and demand the same from your suppliers, regardless of your size.



Credit: Soul Food

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.
- **Takeaway Throwaways** offers ideas on how hospitality businesses can transition towards zero waste.
- **Research your local composting options**. Check out the information provided here: **QLDC - Green and Food Waste**.
- **Go global**. Read what's being done in hospitality around the world with practical resources from initiatives such as **Wrap** and **Upstream Solutions**. **No Mise en Plastic** offers great ideas for a waste free kitchen. **Guardians of Grub** has some useful visual resources that you can download or you might be inspired to customise your own.
- **Make good purchasing decisions** using this **smart purchasing guide** to ask questions of your suppliers.
- **Connect with other low-waste businesses** via **circular economy directory** or **CiRCLR** - a simple B2B platform that encourages circular economies, which turns the existing cost of waste disposal into new revenue streams for businesses.
- **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.

