

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE

According to the Resource NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy (2003), Commercial and Industrial (C&I) waste includes all 'inert, solid or industrial [waste] generated by businesses and industries (including shopping centres, restaurants, offices, warehousing and logistics, manufacturing, repair workshops, all retail outlets, hotels, clubs etc) and institutions (such as schools, hospitals, universities, nursing homes and government offices), excluding construction and demolition waste, municipal [household] waste, clinical and related waste and hazardous waste.

C&I Waste contributes substantially to the total waste produced each year – approximately 38% of waste disposed of to NSW landfills is from business and industry (Australian Waste Database, 1998). Food and garden waste (organic waste) makes up the largest type of C&I waste (about 15% of the total). The next biggest types include: paper and cardboard, plastics, soil rubble, wood, metals and clay and concrete based materials.

Traditionally, most businesses have only worried about their financial performance when measuring their success. However this situation is changing with many businesses now concerned about the triple bottom line performance – financial, social and environmental. This change has occurred due to increased pressure from consumers and changes to legislation aimed at making businesses more responsible for their environmental impact (including waste generation). Some businesses now require a licence from the Environment Protection Authority for the types of waste they generate, and all businesses must comply with waste management legislation.

Waste management for all businesses is changing from a culture where disposal is viewed as the preferred option for managing waste, towards a culture of examining the need to produce waste and developing strategies to avoid or minimise as much waste as possible. Businesses are finding that by managing their waste effectively (by avoiding, reusing and recycling), they can save money and reduce the amount of waste they create.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Every one of us (individuals and businesses) buys products, all of which have some environmental effects associated with their manufacture, distribution, use or disposal. As the buyer of these products, we are in a good position to make environmental improvements by choosing products which reduce environmental impacts (such as reducing waste), while still meeting our needs.

Businesses can adopt an Environmental Purchasing Policy to reduce the amount of waste coming in to the business. Each product or raw material can be compared and given a rating to determine those that will

create the least amount of waste. Businesses can also reduce waste by:

- Avoiding over-packaged goods/products.
- Maximising the use of recycled and recyclable products.
- Minimising the use of non-renewable resources.
- Buying only what they need.
- Working with suppliers who have adopted an environmental policy.
- Closing the loop and buying recycled.

Waste can be avoided. Smart businesses know that less waste means more profit and more time.

MORE INFORMATION

- If you own a business the Environment Protection Authority has a series of booklets as part of its 'Solutions to Pollution' program containing information on a range of environmental issues including waste reduction. You can download these from www.epa.nsw.gov.au/small_business/index.htm or call the pollution line on 131 555.
- The Department of Environment & Climate Change NSW has a range of information for commercial and industrial organization. Go to www.environment.nsw.gov.au/education/recyclingandwaste.htm - to explore the various business waste reduction ideas as well as legislative requirements.
- The Tasmanian Government has some information for reducing industrial waste at: www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/CDAT-53MVFP?open
- The NSW Government Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy is designed to reduce waste in the C&I and Construction and Demolition sectors. Find out more at www.wrapp.nsw.gov.au