



THE 3R'S: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Every year, the Australian community (that's all of us) continues to create mountains of waste. We do this by making choices about consumption (buying things) and disposal (throwing things away). The effects of our choices means that a lot of what we consume ends up in landfill and that valuable resources such as minerals, petroleum and energy are wasted unnecessarily. If you are keen on taking an active approach to fixing the waste problem all it takes are a few small but effective choices.

While avoiding the waste of resources where possible is the most important choice we have, the '3Rs' are a simple guide in helping you manage and minimise waste effectively whether at work, home, school or leisure. Most importantly, remember to 'Reduce' waste, if that is not practical with certain items 'Reuse', and if all else fails 'Recycle' your waste.

Reducing waste, in simple terms, means reducing consumption or buying less. By only using products and packaging that we really need, and only buying the amount we need, we can begin to throw away less waste. Reducing waste stops us creating waste in the first place and is a better way to reduce our waste than reusing or recycling.

Reuse is simply using the same item more than once instead of disposing of it after a single use. Reusing saves the energy and resources used to create new products and means that fewer items unnecessarily end up in landfill.

Renting (items such as catering equipment or videos) and loaning (borrowing books from a public library or loaning your bike to someone) are common examples of reuse that happen every day.

Recycling is a process where a waste product is remade into either the same product (such as a glass bottle) or something different (jackets are now available that have been made from recycled plastic bottles; even your food scraps are recyclable into a soil conditioner for your garden). Making goods from recycled materials can help to reduce air and water pollution as less energy is needed in most recycling processes when compared to making products from raw materials.

By using the 3Rs principle we can all help ease the environmental impacts of landfill (less land is needed for disposal and the production of toxic waste, leachate and greenhouse gases is reduced). There is less need to use raw materials (for example, less mining and logging of forests) and the amount of fossil fuels required for energy are also reduced, minimising the release of greenhouse gases and other pollution.

You can save money by reducing your waste in many ways too. Consider the cost of refills versus buying an entire product each time. Less money spent on purchasing items used infrequently, and renting, hiring or borrowing, is money saved. The community can help reduce waste disposal and management costs by working together to reduce waste. Less waste for businesses means a direct saving in waste disposal costs.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Common 3Rs methods of waste reduction include - avoid buying unnecessary items, choose products with minimum packaging (for example, buying in bulk or in a concentrated form), use durable and repairable products, compost your organic waste and make the most of products by using only as much as you need.

Check out the 3 information sheets for Reduce, Reuse and Recycle for some great tips on waste reduction.

MORE INFORMATION

- www.reusedirectory.com - The North East Waste Forums reuse directory lists a wide range of businesses on the NSW north coast who are involved in the reuse sector, from auto wreckers to second-hand furniture sellers.
- www.pneb.com.au - The Publishers National Environmental Bureau has tips on implementing the three 3's into your life.
- www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/CDAT-5942HN?open - ideas for living the 3Rs philosophy.
- www.reduce.org - US site on reducing waste.
- www.northeastwasteforum.org.au/NEWF/CMS/index.php?page=A_to_Z - Check out some of the other information sheets in this series- Bulk buying, Buy Recycled, Disposable Items, Disposal, Household Waste, Recycling and Waste Avoidance.

