



Business Waste Reduction Project – Case Study Angourie Rainforest Resort

Background

The North East Waste Forum (NEWF) is a collective of local councils that have come together to share resources to help avoid and reduce waste going to landfill in the Northern NSW region.

An initiative of the NEWF, **The Business Waste Reduction Project** (BWRP), began in April 2005 and initially focussed on developing Waste Reduction Action Plans for six local businesses. Having completed this objective the project moved into its second stage of transferring information gathered from the initial participating businesses to other business operators across the NEWF region. How best to implement sustainable practices and promoting the recovery of recyclable resources are essential components of the project. New businesses from other commercial sectors have been selected to be involved in this second stage and Angourie Rainforest Resort is one of these.

Angourie Rainforest Resort



Angourie Rainforest Resort is situated on the outskirts of Yamba in Northern NSW. The Resort offers a range of accommodation options. The grounds include tennis courts, swimming pools, a children's playground and several BBQ areas. There is a conference centre, restaurant, day spa, gymnasium and café on the premises. There are thirty-five staff employed.

At present there are thirty three 240litre bins (MGB's) distributed in close proximity to accommodation and facilities. Four of these are used by the restaurant. A number have yellow bin lids to indicate recycling but no signage confirms this.

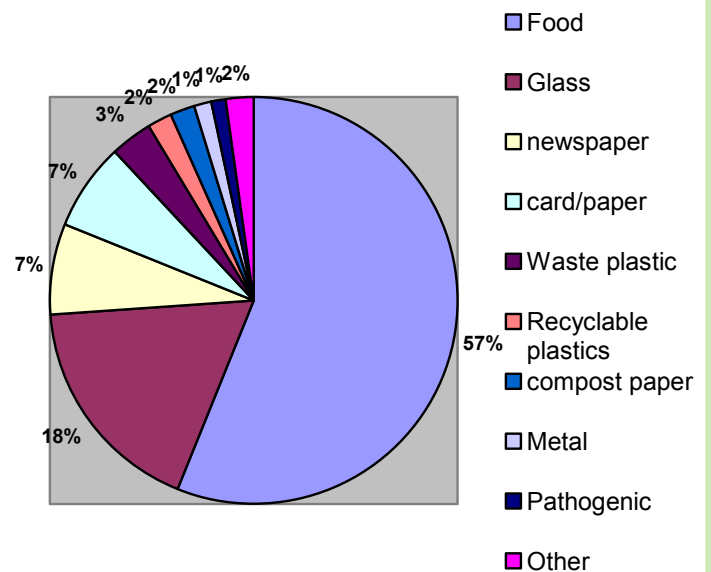
The MGB's are collected three times per week by a local contractor and the waste is compacted and taken to landfill.

The Challenge

The main aim of the BWRP is to assess the efficiency of the waste management practices of businesses, characterise their waste streams and come up with waste management systems that would reduce the volume of waste going to landfill through waste avoidance, reuse and recycling. It also aims to save businesses money and transfer lessons learned to other businesses in the region.

Waste Characterisation

A waste audit and a visual assessment was conducted to determine the main components of the waste stream at the Resort and to identify the main materials that could be the target of waste reduction efforts and activities.



59% of the waste stream is compostable materials consisting mainly of food waste from the restaurant. The balance is packaging such as serviettes and paper towel.

32% of the waste stream is potentially recyclable. This sector largely consists of glass, cardboard/paper, recyclable metals (aluminium and steel) and plastics numbers 1, 2, 3 and 5.

9% of the waste stream is not recoverable however, it is possible to find alternatives to immediate landfill such as changes in products and reuse. Cleaning and toiletry products were a major component of this category.



Waste Reduction Action Plan

Before developing a Waste Reduction Action Plan (WRAP) the results of the waste audit and site analysis need to be examined with the resort to identify where waste reduction efforts needed to be focused. Once this is achieved an action plan is developed to provide simple steps for the business to work through. The actions given top priority are outlined below.

Staff Survey

The staff survey indicated willingness of 100% of staff to be involved in waste minimisation and resource recovery. Most participants already recycled or minimised waste in some way at work and were keen to extend this practice. The staff's strong commitment to improved environmental performance could be harnessed and used to provide encouragement to guests who visit the resort.

Reducing Organics

As organics from the kitchen made up the majority of the waste stream it was the first target for action. A worm farm had been used on the site before but had fallen into disrepair. Reinstating this was a high priority in the action plan. Using the castings from the farm on surrounding gardens was also considered.

Reusing and reducing products

One disturbing element revealed by the audit was the number of cleaning cloths, scourers, soaps and individual shampoo bottles disposed of each day. Investigating alternatives to disposing of these items was given priority.

Recycling

Investigating the options to recycle glass, plastic and paper was considered an important first step. Recycling bins were available but signage was inadequate and existing contractor did not cater for comingled recycling.

Education

Making staff aware of any changes and involving them in the process was highlighted as important to the projects success. In addition, it was determined that guests also needed to be made more aware of the services available and how they could contribute to improved environmental performance. Information and encouragement through resort promotional and service literature, signage and kids club activities was recommended.

Sustainable Procurement

Purchasing products that reflect the Resort's commitment to the environment is important. This could include recycled paper products, green power, energy efficient light bulbs, recyclable cups for water dispensers, refilled printer cartridges and eco-friendly toiletries.

Outcomes

The Resort has initiated many of the actions outlined in their Waste Reduction Action Plan and continues to work towards improved environmental performance. A 'resort style' worm farm (below) is now diverting most of the resorts food waste from landfill. At the time of audit this represented 40 kg per day of organic waste.



In addition the Resort has:

- Established a comingled recycling system with clear signage for guests.
- Reduced any unnecessary servicing of rooms, allowing guests to fully use toiletries and reducing the number thrown away on a daily basis.
- Changed the supplier of toiletries to reduce plastic packaging and adopt a product with less environmental impact
- Encouraged patrons to return newspapers rather than disposing of them in waste bins
- Replaced non-recyclable plastic cups with a recyclable variety
- Converted to more power efficient light bulbs and electronic memo's
- Used pushbikes not cars around the resort
- Gain accreditation as a Green Star resort

Waste disposal bills have halved with the new initiatives

Contacts

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