

Media release

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What a waste - 58% of businesses keeping no records on waste management

Embracing best waste reduction and recycling practices makes good business sense

New research shows over 75% of businesses agree reducing waste and recycling is part of being a sustainable and ethical business, yet a worrying 58% keep virtually no records on their waste management.ⁱ

A new report by Planet Ark, *What's the Deal with Business Waste?*, shows that failure to understand the quantity of waste and to monitor it is a significant obstacle to implementing waste management practices that can have both environmental and financial benefits.

“Conducting a waste audit is an important step in reviewing a business’s waste management practices, and diverting materials from the waste to the recycling stream,” says Ryan Collins, Recycling Programs Manager at Planet Ark. “The return-on-investment could save your business money.”

Over 12.5 million tonnes of business waste is generated each year in Australia, almost half (46%) of which goes to landfill, and the rates of waste generation are increasingⁱⁱ.

Disturbingly, seven out of ten businesses (68%) think that they are already doing all they can in regards to waste management and recycling. Businesses that feel they have already optimised their waste management are much less likely to seek information about changes in the waste industry and new services that are available to them.

Business Benefits

“Three out of four Australian businesses believe that good waste management improves public perception of the company,” said Collins. “Having an environmental strategy is something that an increasing number of clients now expect, with 43% of outsourcing companies finding that green factors play a role in the selection process of their clients.”

Green supply chains also promote efficiency and synergy among business partners, minimising waste and reducing costs.

Half of small to medium businesses (SMEs) state that motivating staff is a benefit of improving their waste and recycling practices. Many report an increased ability to attract and retain talented employees, as employees who perceive the business they work for to be ethical feel a greater sense of commitment.

Business Barriers

SMEs reported time pressures as being the number one hurdle to making more changes regarding their waste reduction and recycling improvements.

The perception that waste disposal is not a financial burden is also a barrier. Businesses are motivated by cost saving strategies, and if the expense of generating waste is not an important issue for managers and investors, it won't be a priority for them to address.

About one-third of SMEs recognise they don't have the knowledge to proceed, which is where tools such as Planet Ark's Business Recycling website can help.

Help is at hand

BusinessRecycling.com.au provides online and over-the-phone information, resources and service listings to help businesses to reduce waste and increase recycling. Details on where specific material types can be recycled across Australia are provided, making the process of finding the right recycling solutions for individual businesses quick and easy. The site also has free signage and resources to help get colleagues on board.

Bin Trim is a free Excel tool for SMEs to measure their waste and provides tailored information to help reduce, reuse and recycle materials. NSW SMEs can also have a free assessment conducted by an EPA-funded Bin Trim Assessor.

Taking advantage of free recycling programs like 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' or MobileMuster are other easy recycling wins for workplaces.

BusinessRecycling.com.au and Hotline 1300 763 768 are made possible through the support of Foundation Partner, the NSW Environment Protection Authority.

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¹ *What's the deal with Business Waste?* - Planet Ark 2016, with thanks to NSW EPA

² A National Waste Policy: Managing Waste to 2020 – Department of Environment, 2009

About Planet Ark

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit organisation with a vision of a world where people live in balance with nature. Established in 1992, we are one of Australia's leading environmental behaviour change organisations with a focus on working collaboratively and positively. We help people, governments and businesses reduce their impact on the environment in three key areas: sustainable resource use; low carbon lifestyles; and connecting people with nature. We promote and create simple, positive environmental actions – for everyone.

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