

REDUCING WORKPLACE WASTE IN THE ACCOMMODATION SECTOR

A practical guide to help accommodation businesses towards zero waste

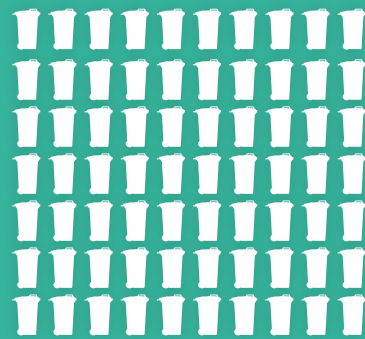
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WHY SHOULD I REDUCE MY WASTE?

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: Troy Tanner, Real NZ

KEY WASTE STREAMS IN ACCOMMODATION

1%



According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, **hotels are accountable for 1% of global emissions.** As hotel demand increases, this figure will too, which is why implementing sustainability initiatives in hotels is so important to mitigate this negative impact.

Working and consulting with businesses of all sizes across the region has helped identify the key waste streams for accommodation providers, both large scale and small, commercial, and private, and 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.

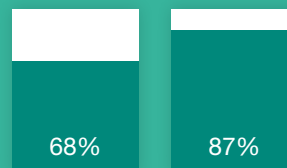
Wastebusters has put together **a document** to help you communicate your waste minimisation strategies to your team, with wording for staff induction manuals. It's a great idea to have a policy in place so that waste minimisation is seen as the norm from the outset.



Credit: Lakeside Apartments, Plastic Free Wānaka

AT RECEPTION AND IN THE OFFICE

Having a clear zero waste story to communicate to your guests on your website and at the point of booking is a great way to share your values. According to a sustainability report by Booking.com, **68% of clients are interested in searching out eco-friendly hotels, and 87% of travellers worldwide state that they want to travel sustainably.** Promoting your zero waste initiatives could have ripple effects in the choices that travellers make when booking elsewhere or when hunting out activities in the region. **Lead the way!**



- Make the most of technology and cut down on your printing. Cloud software, shared online files and e-signatures instead of business cards can instantly reduce your paper footprint.
- Online check-ins and check-outs will reduce your printing costs and waste. Email invoices to customers and only print out what's requested and necessary.
- Communicate your zero waste policies with booking confirmations. Encourage guests to bring their own coffee cups, water bottles and containers for taking away food. What about including a zero waste guide to the Queenstown Lakes District? Your Regional Tourism Organisations (Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism) may have sustainable itineraries on their websites that you can use. Take the lead from **Onaero Bay Holiday Park** and publish a SEO optimised, low waste travel blog on your website.
- When you need stationery, buy environmentally sustainable and certified paper, refillable pens and, first of all, be sure that you really need it!
- When you need to print, go double-sided, black and white, and use draft settings to reduce ink.
- Make sure everyone understands how to recycle batteries and electronic waste responsibly. Batteries 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 all your team is on board and practise what you preach in your office workspaces and kitchens. Have clear recycling stations and consider removing some of your office place rubbish bins to discourage unnecessary waste. 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 introducing waste into your regular reporting and celebrate your wins with your teams and on your socials.
- Have a look at the **office waste guide** for more ideas on how to minimise your office waste.



Credit: Kinn Living

GUEST ROOMS

Kinross Cottages has refillable amenities in all cottages, including refillable milk bottles supplied by Windy Ridge and refillable water jugs. Every cottage has a liner free rubbish bin and a recycling bin which the housekeeping team empties and sorts by hand to minimise contamination. Each cottage has clear signage to educate guests on their waste management initiatives



- Review all the amenities you offer. Is a paper pad and a plastic ball point pen necessary in this digital age?
- Provide drinking water in jugs or refillable bottles.
- Rather than sachets and pods, try loose coffee and tea, or loose tea bags in sealed containers. Provide milk in refillable containers.
- Instead of disposable plastic bottles for soap, shampoo and conditioner, use liquid dispensers that can be refilled and reused.
- Consider in-room tablets or providing QR codes for accommodation guides and information. Celebrate your zero waste guides with information about why there are no printed versions.
- Necessary notices can be framed to last longer. This could include information about the different ways in which your business is reducing waste and recycling.
- Educate guests on recycling in the Queenstown Lakes District. Have bins for recyclables and one for waste and provide clear signage around what can be recycled.
- Consider providing high quality reusable takeaway coffee cups in all guest rooms. If a guest chooses to take the cup with them, this can be added to their check-out bill.
- If a rubbish bin liner is necessary, try newspaper or something similar, that can be replaced when soiled.
- If you provide laundry services, offer a reusable laundry bag in place of plastic ones.
- Give guests the option of reusing products during their stay. Using the same towels and linen for several days reduces handling and laundry costs.
- Do you need paper or plastic door handle signs? Could you get creative and employ a local craftsman to make unique door hangings with repurposed items?
- Encourage guests to use digital room keys and mobile apps for hotel services instead of plastic cards or printed collateral.



Credit: Freepik

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Read the [hospitality waste guide](#) for detailed food and beverage (F&B) guidance.

- Ensure you have clear signage and guidance at your recycling stations.
- Introduce compost and bokashi bins in your guest and staff kitchens. Some accommodation providers, such as Sherwood and Edgewater Resort, compost onsite and use this in their kitchen gardens. If this isn't a possibility, discuss with your team who could use these in their home composts. If this is not possible, reach out into the community to find someone who could take your organic waste. QLDC's [food and green waste page](#) provides contacts.
- Remove all single use items and packaging: sachets, drink stirrers, napkins, hand towels.
- Buffets are a large source of waste. Consider your existing menus and consider how you might be able to adapt or customise them to reduce your waste.
- Consider donating surplus food to staff or food rescue schemes such as the food banks located at local supermarkets, Food For Love, or Kiwi Harvest.
- Communicate this to your guests with information about what is accepted and what is required of them. Make it easy by providing an easily accessed drop-off spot for unwanted items.



Credit: Kiwi Harvest

SUPPLIES AND SUPPLIERS

Edgewater Resort has implemented a number of initiatives to cut the waste generated onsite. They have gone SUCfree, partnering with **Chunky cups** in their restaurant and bar. They use refillable amenities in their rooms and public areas and prioritise working with local suppliers and seasonal produce to reduce their packaging waste.



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.

- Talk to your suppliers about their packaging. Is it necessary? Is it recyclable? Can they take back packaging or will they supply the same product in reusable outer containers? 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!
 - If you contract an external laundry company, ask them whether they have alternatives to plastic. This may be reusable canvas laundry bags, or cloth covers for garments.
- Auckland dry cleaner **Regal** offers garment covers which, when reversed, serve as laundry bags. Customers bring their items in for cleaning and have them returned in the same bag for repeat use.
 - Consider renting office equipment and furniture and check second-hand options before you go for something new.
 - Whether it's ink cartridges, whiteboard markers, soap, cleaning products or kitchen items, opt for products that can be refilled.
 - If you opt for paper towels, buy ones that are made from 100% recycled materials. Remember, while these can be made from recycled materials, they can't be recycled or composted so, if possible, opt for energy efficient hand driers or washable towels.
 - Use bagless vacuum cleaners. You'll save immediately on supplies and your waste bills.
- If you use an external cleaning company, talk to them about your goals and expectations and get them on board. Incorporate your objectives into contracts and monitor progress.
 - 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!



Credit: Sherwood

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO TO REDUCE OUR WASTE?

Whether it's the army surplus woollen blankets that are repurposed as curtains, the tiles made from recycled fishing nets or furniture made from recycled metal, Sherwood has committed to minimising their footprint and waste from the outset. **In just 18 months, they diverted 40,000 kg of waste from landfill** thanks to measures that include composting 100% of all food waste onsite, sourcing wines in kegs and replacing all single use napkins with cloth ones.

40,000  **KG**

- Purchase durable, long-lasting goods to reduce the need for frequent replacements. When it's time to move them on, donate furniture, fittings and other material to charities or advertise them in local community groups.
- Repair damaged and worn uniforms, sheets, towels and tablecloths etc. for continued use. When they're no longer fit-for-purpose, they'll make great cleaning rags. If towels have marks on them that mean they can no longer be used on-site, consider offering them to staff. If it's purely cosmetic and they're still fine to use, try and find a home for them first.
- Make sure your industry partners - here and overseas - are aware of your zero waste policies and ask them about their own strategies. You might be able to swap ideas along the way and they can then let their customers and clients know what you're doing.
- If you do use bars of soap, consider joining **Soap Aid**, a not-for-profit that recycles used bars and sends them to communities where soap is critically needed.
- Businesses can end up with hundreds of redundant items when it's time to refresh or rebrand, so you might want to consider whether your uniforms even require branding that may end up obsolete. For any old uniform, take a look at the **Re-Action** initiative that rescues and repurposes items for resale.



Credit: Sherwood

A report for **Eco Business** calculated that:

A 200 bed hotel will, on average, generate 300,000 pieces of single use plastic every month when at capacity.

The estimate includes 20,000 plastic water bottles, 49,765 plastic amenities and amenity packages, 216,693 pieces of plastic for food and beverage operations, including plastic wrap, storage bags and latex gloves, and 13,375 plastic bags, which does not even include plastic laundry bags used by third-party services to protect laundered clothing for staff and guests, and bags used by food suppliers.

- Publicise your waste reduction and other environmental policies. You'll attract and retain more environmentally conscious visitors. **Soneva Resorts** has an A-Z of their sustainability initiatives; while a lot won't be relevant, there are some good things to think about and it's a very easy-to-read way to absorb information.
- Inform guests about sustainability initiatives and encourage their participation.
- Use sustainable materials and practices in new construction and renovations.

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.
- **Research your local composting options**. Contact **Grow Wānaka**, **Zero Waste Glenorchy** or **Sharewaste**.
- Research your local composting options. Check out the information provided here: **QLDC - Green and Food Waste**.
- **Go global**. Read what's being done in the accommodation sector around the world, with practical ideas to be found from **Hotel Minder**, **Earth Changers**, **Tombag** and **One Planet Network**. **Business Waste UK** has some useful resources and offers some eye watering statistics to get you thinking. Booking.com has produced a **handbook** to help accommodation providers reduce their plastic waste.
- **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.

