

# REDUCING WORKPLACE WASTE FOR TOUR OPERATORS

A practical guide to help tour operators towards zero waste

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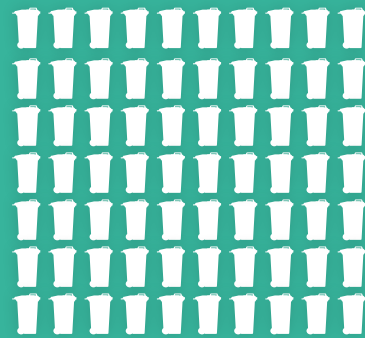
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# WHY SHOULD I REDUCE MY WASTE?

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: Ridgeline Wānaka



# KEY WASTE STREAMS FOR TOUR OPERATORS



**This guide offers practical solutions to help tour operators reduce their waste. Making a start can be the hardest part. Together with your team and stakeholders, identify what you can tackle first.**

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.

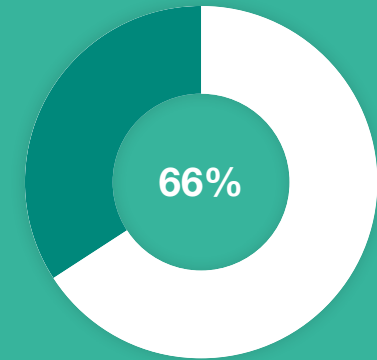


*Credit: Maria Ilves*

# TELL YOUR STORY!

## Communication is key! Before you meet your guests, why not introduce them to your zero waste story?

- Make your zero waste goals a key part of your branding and unique selling point. Share your zero waste story on your website and on your social media accounts in a dynamic and informative way.
- Share your story with your Regional Tourism Office and tourist information sites. Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism love [sharing stories](#) of operators who have made commitments to reduce their waste and carbon footprint.
- When confirming a booking, make sure you tell your guests about your waste minimisation initiatives. Encourage them to participate in your efforts during tours by bringing their own reusable drink bottles, coffee cups, food containers, and shopping bags.
- Include regional information such as recycling rules and the location of reuse stores. Provide low waste travel ideas in your pre-arrival communications.
- Educate staff on sustainable practices and waste minimisation techniques and make sure all of your team is on board.
- Practise what you preach in your office workspaces and kitchens. Have clear recycling stations and consider removing standalone 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.](#)
- Set up composting for organic waste generated from office kitchens and tour activities. If you cannot compost on site and no one in your team can take organic waste, consult the [QLDC website](#) for hubs in your region that can take it.
- At the start of each tour, reinforce your zero waste message to your guests. If they bring waste with them, ask them to take it home with them.
- Consider having a Sustainable Tourism Policy and have it visible on your website and in your promotional material. [Flying Kiwi Tours](#) does this on their website.
- Conduct regular waste audits to identify areas where waste can be reduced, and make sure you communicate the results to all of your team.
- Establish mechanisms for feedback on sustainability practices from customers and partners to continuously improve waste minimisation efforts.
- Support local waste initiatives and environmental efforts or start your own. Tell your guests about this, online and in person.



According to a 2019 World Travel and Tourism Council and Bloomberg Media Group report, a consumer survey across 60 countries found 66% of travellers said they would be willing to pay more for environmentally-friendly products and services.





Credit: Kiwi Harvest



# WASTE FREE SUSTENANCE



When tour operators **Exodus Travel** decided to remove single-use plastic bottles from their tours, they saved the equivalent of roughly **1.4 million single-use bottles of plastic in the first year**. That's the same weight in plastic as 2.5 T-Rex dinosaurs, 3 elephants or 4 hippos!

- Remind your guests when they book in and before they arrive to bring their drink bottles and coffee cups.
- Provide reusable plates, crockery, lunchboxes and napkins for your guests to use during the tour.
- Provide all food in reusable containers or beeswax wraps, and ask caterers to do the same.
- Source food locally and from providers who support waste minimisation. Buy in bulk for packaged ingredients.
- Reuse any safe, unused food for future meals or snacks.
- Establish a food waste plan - composting, bokashi - for any surplus food that cannot be rescued. If you're on the road for a few days, talk to your accommodation partners to see if they can help. Look at **QLDC's green and food waste page** if you need to find a regional hub that can help out with taking your organic waste.



*Credit: Sandra Harris*

# RETHINKING THE BASICS

- Make the most of technology and cut down on your printing. Cloud software, shared online files and e-signatures can instantly reduce your paper footprint.
- Establish an online reservations and payment system that removes the need for printing tickets, bookings, waivers, receipts etc.
- Partner with accommodation, activity and hospitality providers who share your waste minimisation values. Promote these to your guests.
- Make sure your industry partners - here and overseas - are aware of your waste minimisation policies and ask them about their own strategies. You might be able to swap ideas along the way!
- Make sure everyone understands how to recycle batteries responsibly. They 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.
- Do you need branded uniforms? Maybe not. Tourism companies can end up with hundreds of redundant items when it's time to refresh or rebrand. For any old uniform, take a look at the **Re-Action** initiative that rescues and repurposes items for resale.

“Sustainable tourism should maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.”

**UN World Tourism Organisation**



*Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka*



# SUPPLIES AND SUPPLIERS

**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?
- Consider local suppliers who can provide products with no or less packaging. (Plus, you're supporting local!)
- Consider renting equipment (office, kitchen, front of house) and check second-hand options before you go for something new. If you do need to buy new, opt for durable items that can be repaired.
- Use refillable containers. Whether it's sauces, soap, cleaning products or pantry essentials, opt for products that can be refilled.

- 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!

**Cardrona and Treble Cone's waste-free journey began in 2013 when they made the decision to remove plastic wrap from pies.**

What seemed like a small step resulted in saving more than 24,000 plastic packets that year. Leverage off the mahi done by larger companies and demand the same from your suppliers, regardless of your size.

 x 24,000



Credit: Soul Food



# 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.
- **Takeaway Throwaways** offers ideas on how hospitality businesses can transition towards zero 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.
- **Get listening!** The Indisposables podcast is full of inspiration and motivation.
- **Consider undertaking a waste audit** - you can't take action if you don't know what you're dealing with.
- **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.
- **Keep reading!** There are lots of resources online to help tour operators tackle their waste. Here are a couple of great starting points: **One Planet Network** and **Responsible Travel Holiday Guide**.



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.

