

# SUCCESSFUL RECYCLING GUIDE 2024

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# Why Recycle

We're recycling at home, but often the best systems are not in place where we spend most of our time: at work. Organisations have a vital role to play in support of national climate targets.

## Reduce Carbon + Methane [↗](#)

In 2023 Australia's waste generated approximately 13.9 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e.

## Environmental Protection [↗](#)

The circular economy is a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated, preserving biodiversity.

## Support a Circular Economy [↗](#)

Australia's circular economy rate is currently 3.7%, below the global average of 8.6%.

## It's a Fundamental [↗](#)

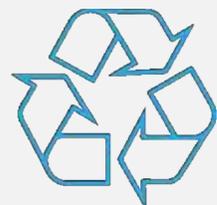
Australia aims to recover 80% of all waste by 2030 – and we spend 30% of our time at work.

# About the Authors

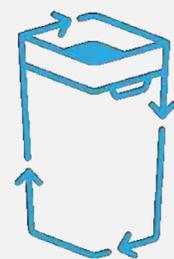
Method are a team of passionate waste professionals working to help organisations reduce waste to landfill and support the adoption of circular waste practices in their workspaces.

Founded in Wellington, New Zealand in 2015 we've helped organisations around the world including Microsoft, Atlassian, The Sydney Cricket Ground, Foster and Partners, Auckland Airport and many more.

We are on a mission to help our customers divert 1 billion kilograms of waste from landfill by 2030.



Our bins are made from 50-80% recycled materials



We have an end-of-life bin program



Method is a proud certified B Corp



Made in NZ, our bins come with a 5-year warranty

# Keys to Success

When designing your recycling system, there are two key things you'll want to focus on:

## 01

Making recycling visual and accessible so it's easy for people to do the right thing.

## 02

Demonstrating that the business and its leadership are genuinely committed to reducing waste.



# 01 Conduct a Waste Audit

# Bin Audits

Setting yourself up for success starts with knowing what is in your bins. Most waste providers or environmental consultancies provide these. Alternatively, complete a DIY Waste Audit using our guide [here](#) ↗

Identify what types of waste are in your bins.

- Inform what recycling streams you need.
- Aid in setting your reduction and avoidance goals.
- Identify opportunities for reducing certain materials or waste streams.
- Provide your baseline data to start measuring your waste reduction progress.



# Procurement Audit

As the saying goes: “What goes in, must come out.” With that in mind, creating a sustainable procurement policy will ensure you prioritise purchasing more sustainable and waste-reducing products and eliminate those that are not, which will result in cost benefits.

[Procurement Audit Guide](#) ↗

## 01 Inventory Review

Based on your waste audit, what are your reduction priorities or opportunities? (ideas on pages 31 and 32). Check if items are being overstocked, leading to waste through expiration or obsolescence.

## 02 Supplier Assessment

Evaluate suppliers based on their sustainability practices, packaging methods, and waste generated from their products.

## 03 Purchasing Data

Collect and review data on purchasing habits, focusing on volumes, frequency, and types of materials purchased.

## 04 Contractual Obligations

Examine procurement contracts to ensure they include clauses that promote sustainable practices, such as minimal packaging or take-back programs.

# Planning Your Bin Placement

Walk around your workplace with a floor plan and a tape measure. Make notes of where your bins are. You will use this information to determine where your bins or set of bins should go.

[Bin Placement Guide](#) ↗

Consider the following:

- Are bins placed in stations, with all streams together so it's easy for the user to do the right thing?
- Are bin stations within a 10-15 second walk from desks?
- Are there lone general waste bins that need to be replaced with stations of 20 litre bins?
- Are the bin stations the right size for the volume of waste in that area? If not, add more stations or more streams.
- Are speciality streams available where most appropriate? For example, e-waste, batteries, etc.
- Do you need precyclers on desks so people can separate their waste at their desk before depositing in a station.

# Set Goals

Start with small wins early on that build momentum and motivate your team to remain invested in this project. The idea of a zero-waste office will appear out of reach to many, so it can be beneficial to set more tangible goals towards your ultimate goal and regularly report your progress. Here are some commonly implemented targets:

## Increase Landfill Diversion

Once you conduct your waste audit, you will know how much waste you send to landfill. Set achievable diversion targets. For example, if you're diverting 40% at the moment, aim for 50% diversion within a calendar month.

## Waste Avoidance

First refuse. Set goals to reduce overall waste through sustainable procurement. Can you have your coffee beans delivered in refillable buckets or provide reusable cups to avoid single-use cups? Is it possible to go paperless and remove the printer?

## Decrease Contamination

If your current contamination rate is 30%, set an attainable target of 25% within a calendar month. When you implement best practices for waste stations and provide educational materials, you will be best placed to achieve this target.

## Reduce Single Use Plastics

Pick a problematic material and set a goal around reducing it. Share this goal with your team and introduce gamification to help avoid it. For example, the floor with the least single-use coffee cups in their bins gets a free lunch.

# Common Mistakes

## Not Placing Bins Together

Recycling stations with all streams together achieve the best results. This level of convenience encourages participation and seamlessly integrates waste management into daily routine, making recycling a social norm.

## Lone General Waste Bins

Lone general waste bins will become a catch all and reduce your recycling rate. Replace lone bins with consistent stations so that recycling can become an unconscious habit.

## Built-Ins

A lot of workspaces have bins built into cupboards to hide them. However, by having waste stations out in the open, you create adaptable opportunities for adding bins while encouraging accessibility and accountability.

## Desk Bins

Desk bins are a relic of the past, when waste was an afterthought and bins were just hidden under desks. This results in recycling and waste almost entirely going to landfill as people habitually throw it in their desk bin.

## Poor or No Signage

Recycling can be confusing, so signage and visual cues are vital to reducing contamination. Signage and labels should be easy to read, have minimal text, clear iconography and be set above the bins.

## Not Enough Streams

Two or three bin recycling stations can actually increase contamination and reduce the quality of the recycling. Separating recycling into individual streams like paper or glass can reduce contamination and reduce the cost of disposal.

# Get Your Senior Leadership Engaged

Gaining buy-in from your business leaders is vital for acquiring support and resources that will drive change across your organisation and achieve waste reduction targets. Here's how you can effectively engage upper management in your sustainability and waste reduction initiatives:

How to get leadership onboard with sustainability [↗](#)

## Align Waste Reduction Plans With Business Objectives

This might include cost savings (present any ROI calculations), enhancing brand reputation, achieving regulatory compliance or mitigating risk.

## Gain Executive Champions

Who is already interested in sustainability or is vested in ESG for example? Cultivate their support early.

## Present the PR Opportunity

Use benchmarks and examples of other companies (especially competitors or industry leaders) that have successfully implemented waste reduction programs and their positive outcomes.

## Provide Measurable Milestones and Success Stories

Start with small wins early on that build momentum and program confidence.

# 02 Make a Plan

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# Create Ownership

As with any project, to succeed you need a person or team responsible for doing the work. If you don't have a dedicated Sustainability Manager, there are two ways you could approach this: by assigning a Waste Reduction Project Lead, or creating a [Green Team ↗](#). Their responsibilities include:

- Communication and reporting, including regular updates to stakeholders, public communications and internal reporting on KPI metrics and organisational impact.
- Stakeholder engagement, including championing cross-department collaboration and property and facility management.
- Employee education and training, including communication of the waste reduction program, creating a culture of sustainability and ensuring the necessary tools and resources are secured.
- Coordinating with external providers, which could include supplier engagement and waste management companies.

# What Bins Do I Need?

The bins you need will vary based on your waste composition and the standard collection offered by your waste provider.

Ideally, by this stage you will already have your waste audit data to help you identify what streams you need. To the right we have added the average office waste composition data to support this step.

At the least, we recommend having a collection for plastics, cans, glass, paper and organics as this is by weight the majority of your waste. The greater segregation the better: it's estimated to save up to 80% on disposal costs.

	Material	% of Total Weight
	Paper + Card	24.27%
	Plastic + Cans	9.45%
	Food Waste	31.20%
	Compostable Packaging	4.69%
	Glass	17.57%
	Soft Plastic	0.93%
	Landfill	11.89%

Data is the average composition from 5 organisations office waste audits over 8 buildings completed between 2020 - 2024.

# Consider the One-Percenters

Especially when aiming for a zero-waste workplace, incremental improvements can help you reach your goals faster. Use your waste audit data to identify common materials that are going to landfill and find custom recycling programs to collect them.

## Common Specialty Recycling Programs



Beverage Containers

Often used for non-dairy milks but not collected as standard everywhere. You can collect them separately and send for recycling.



Soft Plastic

By weight soft plastics isn't a significant portion of waste but it is bulky and a common contaminant. Having a stream for this can help reduce contamination in other bins.



Batteries

Also hazardous waste, collect batteries separately and send to a collection program.



Coffee Cups

The prolific office waste, ideally transition to a reusable solution like a stash of in house Keep Cups or a return program like Cercle or Huskee.



E-Waste

A hazardous but valuable waste, it should be collected and taken to a specialty recycler.

# Getting Your Waste Provider Right

Your partners-in-waste are a crucial part of achieving success with a recycling system – cleaners, bin providers, waste providers, and anyone who helps with your waste journey. Each and every waste provider is going to have a different way of collecting recyclables, depending on what they can take and how they separate them.

Once you've established what bins you need, on page 10, it might be easier to engage a waste broker to negotiate your contracts to get you the best deal.

When comparing waste providers, you should consider:

- What kinds of waste/recycling do they collect?
- How do they need you to separate it – does paper need to be separated?
- How often do they need bins to be emptied?
- How transparent are they? Do you know what they are doing with your waste?
- Are they dependable and do they provide competitive prices?

[Full Guide to Assessing Waste Providers](#) ↗

# 03 Rollout Comms

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# Talk to Your Cleaners

Your cleaners are critical in your waste and recycling progress, and it's important to engage and educate your service providers before commencing your waste reduction program.

We always recommend working with cleaners experienced in waste reduction programs who include client targets in their KPIs.

## Remember to:

- Provide advanced notice.
- Explain why your workplace is invested in reducing waste.
- Provide detailed servicing instructions and ensure any training materials are provided.
- Seek feedback from the cleaners as part of your feedback loop.

[Waste Goals and Cleanings Staff](#) ↗

# Bin Roll Out

People can be resistant to change. We heard of someone who chained their desk bin to their desk! Your rollout communications will set the tone for how your program is received and engaged with.

## 01

Communicate early and clearly. What is changing and why. What are the benefits to the employees, the business, and the environment?

## 02

Where possible, set up the new recycling stations outside of business hours so that when people arrive in the morning, everything is ready.

## 03

On the first day, host a lunch and learn with a free lunch for those attending to increase participation.

## 04

Provide contact details for the project lead or green team who are responsible for the project, encouraging feedback and questions.

## 05

Pay attention in the first four weeks, and where possible, provide progress updates and positive reinforcement.

# Comms Plan

Communication is one of the most important aspects of making your a success.

When you're designing your communications plan:

- Be clear about the outcomes of the change.
- Ask for feedback and respond.
- Share your goals and that you will keep them updated.
- When addressing contaminants only do 1 - 2 at a time.
- Make it fun! [Work Inc designed Tinder for Bins](#) ↗



# 04 Educate + Engage

# Lead by Example

Management has a pivotal role in promoting sustainability initiatives by setting the tone, leading by example, and creating a supportive environment for sustainability efforts to thrive. Here are two key ways management can promote sustainability initiatives effectively:

## Model Sustainable Behaviour

By adopting sustainable practices in their own work habits, such as using reusables and not using the printer, management can foster a culture of engagement.

## Leverage Internal Communication Channels

For example, one of our customers had set up a free barista coffee station for anyone that brought a reusable cup to the lobby. It was largely quiet until one of the senior leadership team posted a picture of them with their coffee on the Slack channel which brought an influx of people.

# Demonstrate your Commitment

There are a few ways to show your commitment:

## Public Commitment

Making a visible and public commitment to sustainability, whether mandatory or voluntary, and reporting on the outcomes demonstrates your commitment and transparency. Have members of the leadership attend the training and education sessions.

## Celebrate Successes

Management must create opportunities for recognising and celebrating achievements in sustainability, whether it's achieving a waste reduction target or the number of employees participating in initiatives, offer rewards and use internal communication channels, meetings and so celebrate milestones.

## Be Consistent

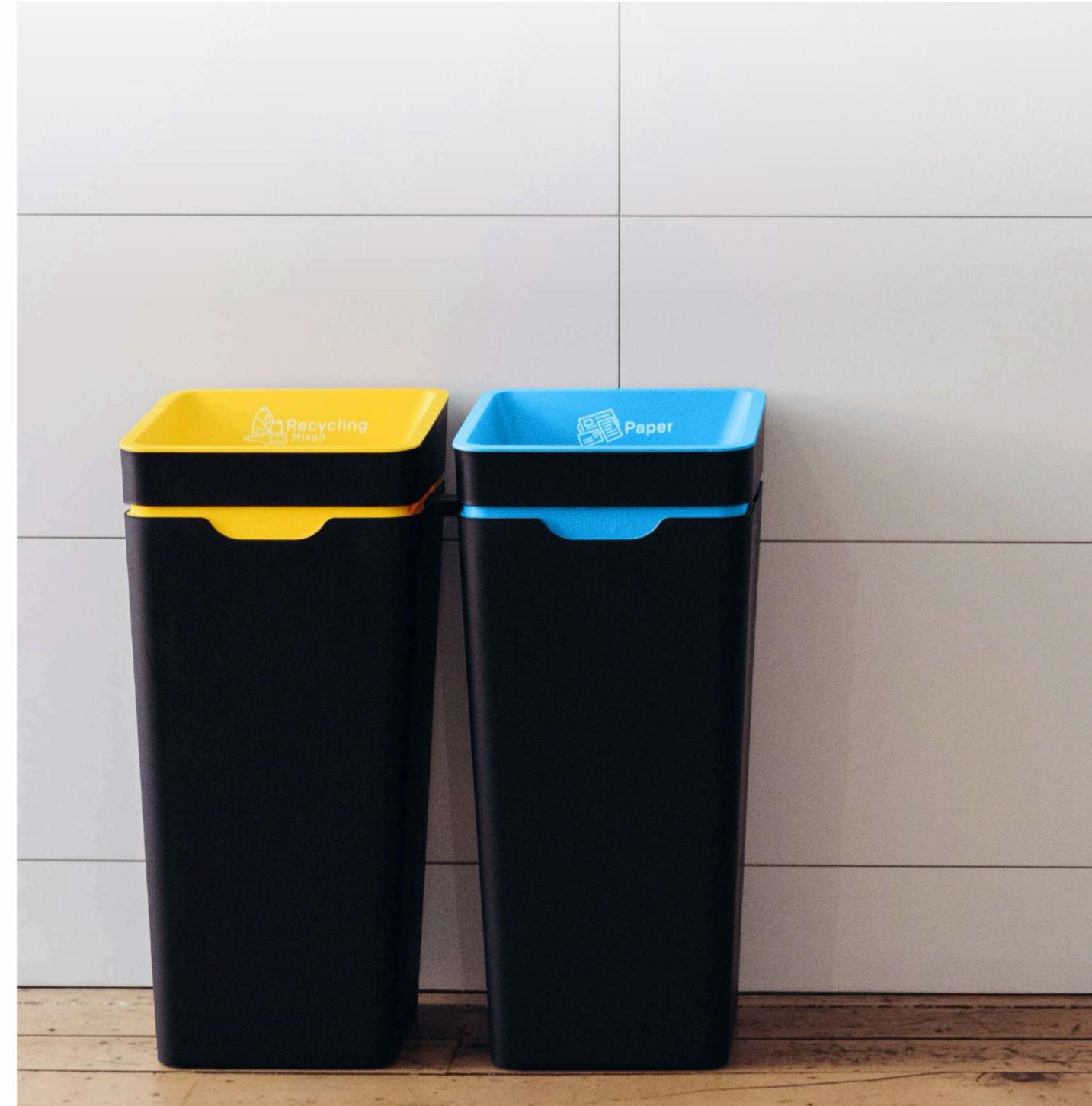
Creating a culture of sustainability and change requires the organisation to consistently demonstrate your values across the business. Be consistent in your efforts to reduce waste from your own packaging, to procurement to the office waste program.  
&nbsp;

# Recycling 101

Communicating regularly about recycling helps keep waste front of mind. We publish articles monthly on our blog directed at teaching the fundamentals of recycling so you can share these resources with your team and not have to do all the work.

We also provide tips and case studies so you can see what is working for other organisations and implement these strategies in your workplace. We want to make reducing waste as low effort as possible.

[Recycling 101 ↗](#)



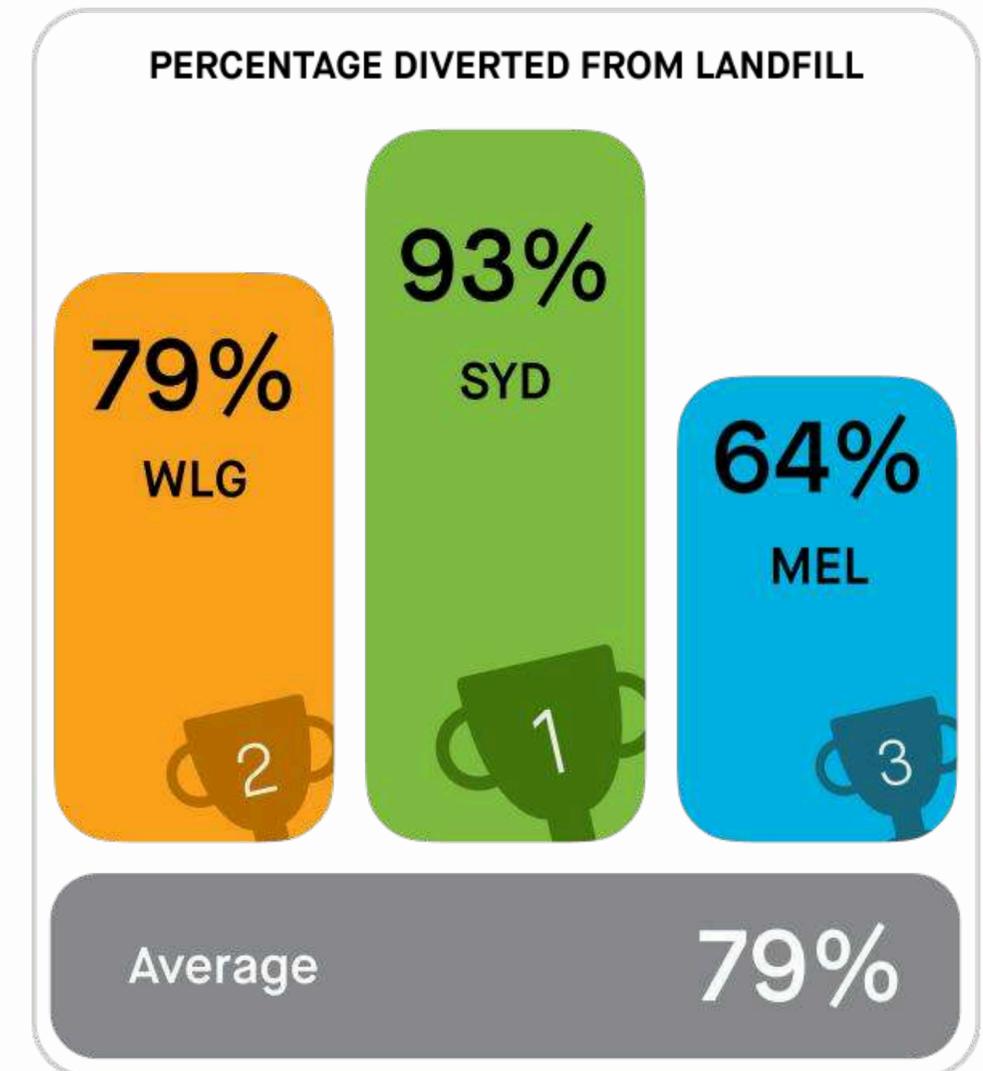
# Gamification

Who doesn't like a little competition?

Gamification involves creating competition around waste - it makes recycling fun and rewards people who are doing the right thing.

Here are a few ideas:

- Awarding a token each time someone uses a reusable cup in the building cafe. The floor with the most tokens gets a reward.
- A recycling quiz.
- Create comparative gamification through a recycling leaderboard so that floors, buildings, cities or even countries can see who is doing the best. The floor or building with the highest recycling rate gets a reward.



[Gamification with Method Insight](#) ↗

# 05 Reduction Initiatives

# Consider a Compactor

Do you have a significant amount of cardboard or soft plastic waste? By investing in a compactor you can have them collected for free in many metropolitan areas.

Compactors come in many shapes and sizes depending on the needs of your business. It compresses and bales large volumes of soft plastics or cardboard up to 95% of its original size. This process often results in low levels of contamination and can be sent straight to the manufacturer without sorting or bailing at the busy Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) so you have low or no collection fees for these materials.



Image Source - [Wikicommons](#) ↗

# Reducing Single-Use Coffee Cups

While gifting your team with a reusable mug is a great action, many people despite their best efforts or intentions won't have a reusable coffee mug on them. It's essentially building a whole new habit into their day.

[Reducing Single-Use Coffee Cups ↗](#)



# Reducing Contamination

When you're working to address contamination it's best to address the confusion head on. Here are some initiatives you can do:

- Post pictures in your Slack/Teams/Newsletter of materials you're seeing contaminating streams and where they should go.
- Have an 'I don't know bin' for items people are confused about and communicate about these specifically.
- Tour a local sorting or recycling centre.
- Have someone external come and speak to the team about materials and their impacts.
- Speak to your team and eliminate the material through adopting circular systems like refills.



# Include Waste in Onboarding

Onboarding is the time when people are most adaptive and interested in learning the office norms.

- During the office tour point out waste reduction tools in the space.
- Do a recycling training session for newcomers - this could also be a prerecorded video or 'cheat sheet' that is built into the onboarding process.
- Give them a 'sustainability kit' when they start to demonstrate your commitment and welcoming them on the journey.



Our sustainability kit for Isabela.

# Container Deposit Scheme

All states in Australia except Tasmania now have Container Deposit Schemes (CDS) that collect the most valuable materials in exchange for a small rebate.

For a workplace, including CDS means you are being paid to recycle and many of our customers use this to donate to their favourite charity or to invest in further waste reduction activities with their team.

Further, activities like the CDS inside the office educate your team to be more proactive in their personal lives.



# E-Waste + Batteries

E-Waste and batteries are both hazardous waste: they cause significant environmental harm when disposed of incorrectly and can start fires.

However they are filled with valuable resources so it's important to collect them safely and send them to a reputable recycler.

- Work with an IT consultancy who can help you build a tech strategy that limits waste e.g. for some renting phones or computers is more appropriate if your workforce size varies.
- Donate devices that are still usable to charities that repurpose them.
- Purchase rechargeable batteries to reduce waste.
- Speak with your waste provider on best practice storage.
- Encourage the team to bring in electronics you've provided for them at home to dispose of them responsibly.
- Have the waste collected regularly to avoid batteries leaking.
- Have process for collecting old devices to ensure any data is erased.

# Circular Opportunities

## Refills



Look for suppliers that will provide refillable options for consumables you order regularly to avoid single use packaging e.g. milk, cleaning supplies or coffee.

## Reusable Containers



Have a selection of containers available for your team to take when they get lunch to reduce single use packaging entering the office.

## Circular Catering



When selecting preferred caterers, ensure they can deliver and collect on reusable crockery (e.g. ceramic, glass or metal - a bonus is that it looks better too).

## Provide the Basics



Providing things like soy sauce, cutlery and tomato sauce will reduce the frequency of plastic fish, sauce sachets and single-use cutlery showing up in your bins.

# Circular Opportunities

## Ditch Single Serves



Swap sugar sachets, tea bags or chocolate powder for loose leaf tea and jars of sugar and chocolate mix – easier to get the right amount and less waste.

## Milk Dispensers



If you have an onsite cafe or cafeteria, milk dispensers can help to avoid thousands of single use bottles. Check out the Udder Way in Australia.

## Coffee



Invest in good beans and if budget allows, an espresso machine. Failing that a filter, such as a Moccamaster, a French press or refillable coffee pods.

## Business Cards



Order 1000 and need only 20? You can now get digital business cards or 'smart' business cards you can tap on someones phone - as a bonus the edges don't get damaged.

# 06 Report + Celebrate

# Communicate Publicly

## External Stakeholder Updates

Provide ongoing updates to upper management, department heads, and employees about the progress of the waste reduction efforts. Transparency is key to maintaining support and momentum.

## General Public Communications

If the company has external-facing sustainability goals, communicate your progress of waste reduction efforts to customers, shareholders, and the general public. Leverage marketing and PR to enhance brand reputation through sustainability initiatives.

## Public Engagements

Leaders should make a visible and public commitment to sustainability. This might include speaking at sustainability events, endorsing green initiatives, or personally participating in sustainable projects.

## KPI + Impact Reporting

Track and report on key performance indicators (KPIs), such as reductions in waste sent to landfill, increased recycling rates, cost savings, or carbon footprint reductions. Use data to demonstrate the tangible impact of the waste reduction project.

# Celebrate Achieving Goals

## Recognising Achievement

Highlight key achievements in sustainability, celebrating both individual and team contributions to foster a sense of accomplishment and ownership.

## Fostering a Culture of Celebration

Utilise team meetings, board updates, awards, and public announcements on company owned and social channels to celebrate successes, recognise efforts and inspire further commitment.

## Leveraging Milestones

Use achievements as a springboard for setting new targets, driving continuous improvement and encouraging innovation.

Encourage teams to propose new initiatives and strategies, building on past successes to push boundaries and explore new possibilities.

## Sustaining Momentum

Provide ongoing incentives and support to ensure that sustainability remains a dynamic and integral part of the organisational culture.

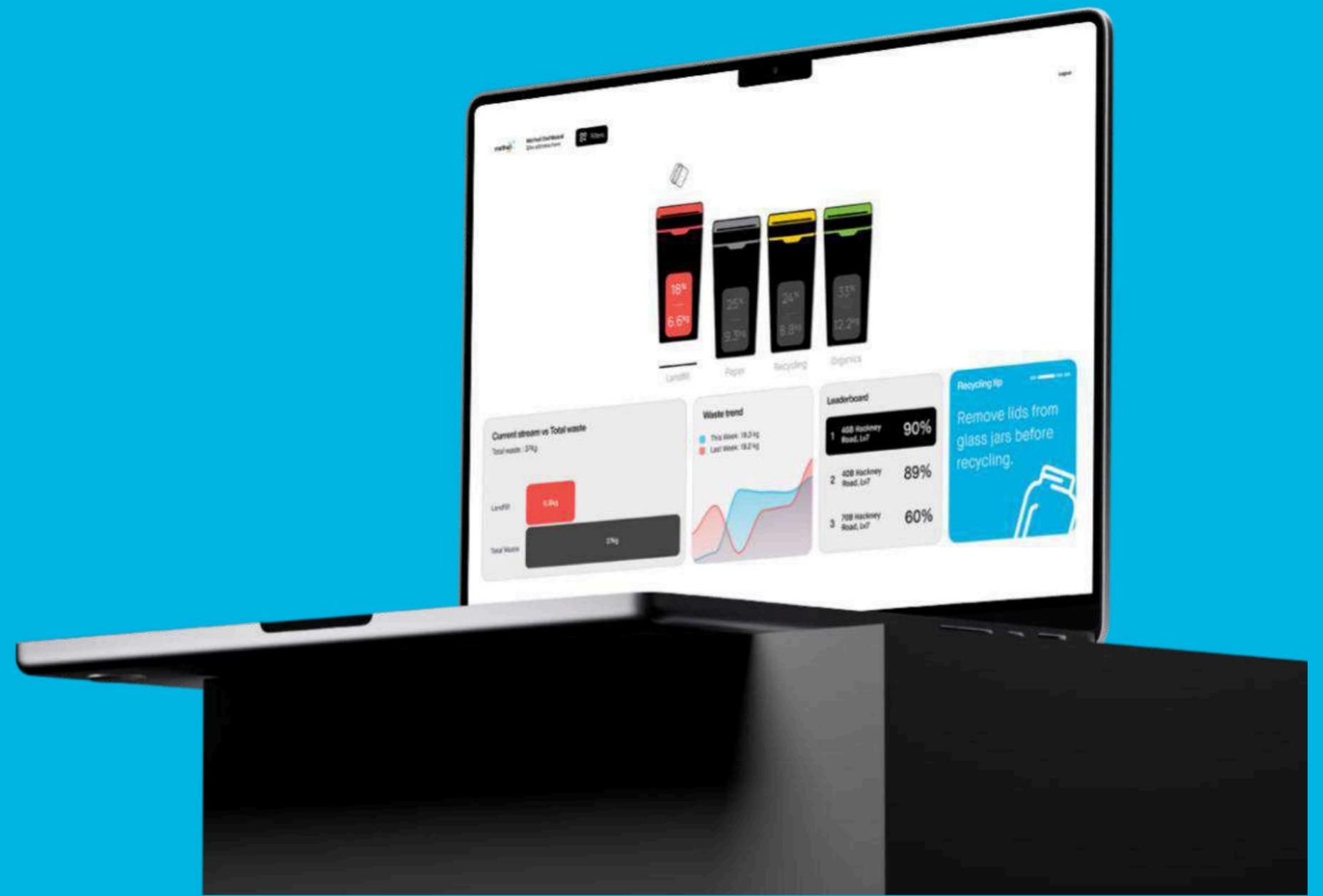
Share success stories, impact metrics and any voluntary or mandatory reports covering environmental reporting to reinforce the significance of collective efforts.

# Method InSight

**What you can't measure, you can't manage.**

Method InSight provides organisations with the most comprehensive waste data to create data driven change.

[Learn more](#)



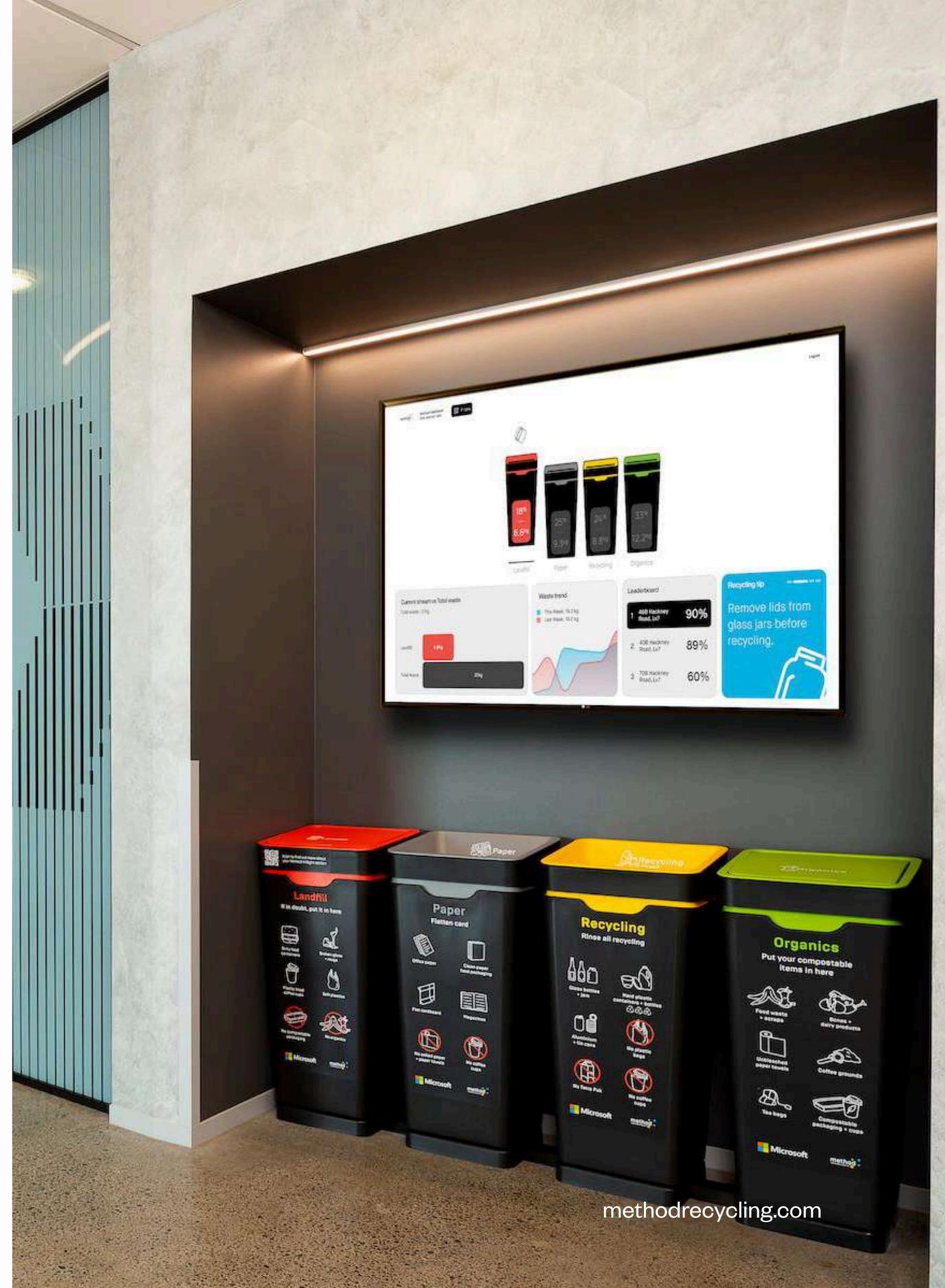
Case Study:

# Microsoft + Method InSight

“We know we still have a long way to go to reach our zero waste target, but this has given us the tools to get there. We now have the means to educate all our people on how, individually, they can make a difference to our organisation and our planet”

**Roseann O’Hare,**  
Microsoft ANZ Sustainability Lead.

InSight has already created serious inroads into Microsoft’s Zero Waste Goal. With automatic, hourly waste data, Microsoft ANZ has moved waste diversion up to 82-84% across sites. Read more [here](#) ↗.



# Ready to Make a Change?

“Method went above and beyond what anyone would expect from a company that sells bins and it was this passion that made the decision for the museum. It was clear that there was a strong alignment in values between the two organisations.”

**Adrian Snelling,**  
Australian Sea Museum

The Method team can work alongside you to ensure you set up a system for success.

Get in touch [here](#) ↗.



# Resource Centre

[Bin Placement Guide](#) ↗

[DIY Waste Audit Guide](#) ↗

[How To Get Cleaners Onboard With Your Cleaning Goals](#) ↗

[How To Get Leadership Onboard With Sustainability](#) ↗

[How To Reduce Single-Use Coffee Cups](#) ↗

[How To Select a Waste Provider](#) ↗

[How To Set Up a Green Team](#) ↗

[Procurement Audit Guide](#) ↗

[Recycling 101](#) ↗

