

Don't be rubbish, manage waste well

Why waste matters for your business

Acknowledgement of Country

Circular economy inspires regeneration of land and rethinking the current waste and resource intensive systems we are a part of. It asks us to rethink how we can apply better practices in our businesses that prioritise community, land, and welfare of people and planet. This toolkit acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation who practice this care and have for tens of thousands of years, providing a lesson for us all to value the materials and food products in our business and supply chain, now and into the future.

How to use the toolkits

These toolkits are designed for managers, owners and chefs who want practical, workable sustainability improvements. Each toolkit focuses on simple actions you can introduce into day-to-day operations without disrupting service. The examples show how circular economy principles can be applied in real kitchens and venues, improving efficiency, reducing waste and uncovering measurable cost savings.

Each guide covers one core area of your business: waste management, food and organics, packaging, and procurement. Use them individually or as a series. Start with the area that creates the most waste or cost pressure in your venue.

You'll find clear steps to reduce environmental impact, strengthen operational discipline, cut unnecessary spend and build a story your staff and customers can stand behind.

Definitions

MICROPLASTICS

Tiny plastic fragments formed when larger plastics break down. They can enter waterways, soil and the food chain and are difficult to remove from the environment.

ORGANICS

Food scraps and coffee grinds that go into a Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) bin to be composted instead of sent to landfill.

COMMINGLED

A mixed recycling stream for rigid plastics #1, #2 and #5, glass bottles and jars, aluminium and steel cans, and HDPE milk bottles. The numbers refer to the plastic code on the item.

Less waste means



lower costs

Every kilo sent to landfill attracts rising levies. General waste is your most expensive waste stream. The more you recycle and divert organics, the more you reduce collection fees and future cost exposure.

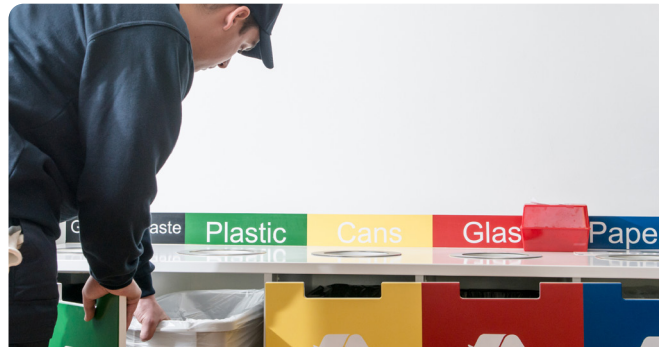
Strong waste systems also demonstrate leadership to staff and customers. They show that your venue values efficiency and the environment.

What works in practice



SET THE STANDARD

Use clear, visual signage so everyone knows what goes where. Keep instructions simple and bold.



TRAIN FROM DAY ONE

Include waste separation in OHS induction so new staff understand expectations immediately.



START SMALL

Install the right bins in the right places. Small operational changes compound quickly.

The bigger picture



In 2020-21, **Australia generated 75.8 million tonnes of waste**. That's enough to fill the Sydney Opera House 471 times¹.



When waste breaks down in landfill, it releases greenhouse gases. Single-use plastics like bags, straws and containers break down into microplastics that enter soil, waterways and food systems².



Recycling works. Diverting four tonnes of food waste and coffee grinds from landfill has the same benefit as planting 5.8 million trees³. When organics are recycled correctly, they become compost or biogas, rather than methane in landfill.

1. <https://www.dceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/national-waste-report-2022.pdf>

2. <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Your-environment/Plastics/Plastics-Action-Plan>

3. <https://aora.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2022-Economic-Contribution-of-the-Australian-Organics-Recycling-Industry-Report.pdf>

Setting your team up for success

Waste management is a team effort. From a single paper straw to milk bottles, prep offcuts and small packaging items, every piece of waste has a correct place. When each person takes responsibility for putting the right item in the right bin, the system works. It's everyone's job to get it right, every shift.

1. Get the waste dock right

Ensure you have the right bins for organics, commingled recycling, cardboard and landfill. Keep them in a safe, convenient spot so waste can move easily from the kitchen to disposal.

GOOD

Speak with your waste provider or strata. Ensure you have bins for organics, commingled recycling, cardboard and landfill. Discuss what bin sizes would suit your venue depending on how much waste you generate.

BETTER

Monitor bin fill levels for four weeks. If landfill bins are not full, reduce their size or frequency.

BEST

Map where waste is created. Place organics bins in prep and dishwashing areas. Place cardboard bins near delivery zones.

2. Use clear signage

Use signage to explain what is and is not accepted in recycling streams. Support education by discussing this with your teams.

GOOD

Download from sources like CitySwitch or request approved signage. Make it bold, visual and colour coded.

BETTER

Install signage at eye level wherever bins are located, including kitchens, front of house areas and waste docks.

BEST

Keep bins and signage in fixed positions. Use green liners for organics, clear for recycling and black for landfill. If bins look identical, liners must clearly differentiate streams.

3. Lead by example

Set clear expectations for separating waste and recycling and show that it matters by doing it yourself. Recognise when staff get it right and reinforce good habits in team meetings and daily routines.

GOOD

Bring floor and kitchen managers together to align on expectations. Correct contamination immediately.

BETTER

Hold a review session after two weeks and adjust bin placement if needed.

BEST

Embed separation into OHS and daily routine. Set it as an expectation, not an option.

Case Study

Single-O Coffee

Location

Surry Hills

Overview

Single-O Coffee is a Sydney-based coffee roastery supplying cafés across the City of Sydney and Greater Sydney. At their Surry Hills café, waste reduction has been treated as an operational priority to reduce waste volume and cut avoidable collection costs without disrupting service.

The Challenge

Previously, organics including food waste and coffee grinds were collected three to four times per week. General waste was also collected frequently. Cardboard was recycled, but overall waste volumes were high, driving up collection costs.

What Changed

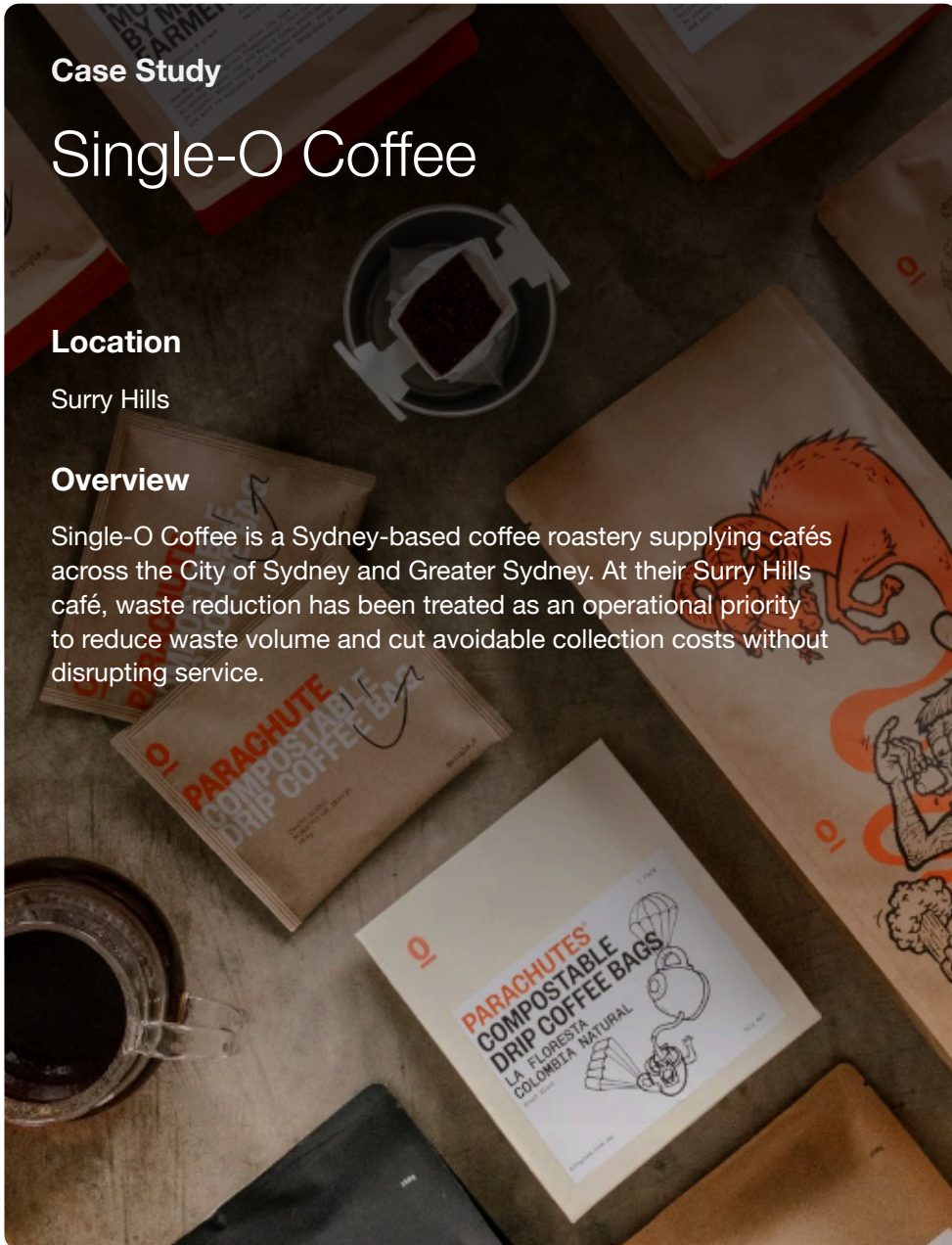
Single-O reviewed where waste was being created and adjusted their systems. They have:

- Introduced ReGround's coffee waste collection so all coffee grinds are separated into a dedicated stream
- Reduced organics collection to once per week by improving separation and using kitchen caddies to make recycling easy for staff
- Switched to plastic milk bladders, significantly reducing the number of milk cartons entering general waste
- Offered in-house crockery and returnable mugs to reduce disposable takeaway cup use
- Delivered a focused one-week staff engagement and training program to set clear expectations around new waste practices

Cardboard, food waste and coffee grinds are now consistently recycled streams.

The Result

By improving separation and reducing contamination, Single-O lowered the weight and frequency of both organics and general waste collections. This reduced waste management costs while maintaining smooth operations.



Acknowledgement of organisations supporting the Circular Economy and Sustainability Toolkits developed by Edge Impact, supported by the City of Sydney.

Edge Impact acknowledges the organisations who contributed their expertise and practical insight to the development of these toolkits. Through consultation and detailed feedback, they identified key barriers and enablers to circularity in hospitality and shared best-practice examples from their own operations.

Their input has strengthened the relevance and impact of this work.



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