



EcoRecycle Victoria's reception is furnished with recycled products. The couches and tables pictured are made with liquid paperboard (milk cartons) and recycled PET (soft drink bottles). Furniture by MID Design in conjunction with Wharington.

ECORECYCLE VICTORIA - A WASTE WISE ORGANISATION

The introduction of the Waste Wise Government Program to EcoRecycle Victoria, the state government agency facilitating waste reduction and the efficient use of resources, has had an motivating impact on an organisation whose 30-strong team already understands the basic principles involved.

The Waste Wise Government Program is a based on EcoRecycle's Waste Wise model which encourages learning through action and participation. The government program offers the sector the opportunity to involve staff at all levels, to develop and implement policies and actions to reduce their waste and use their resources more efficiently. It offers both environmental and financial benefits for all organisations.

MOTIVATION

While environmental concerns are part of the organisation's culture, EcoRecycle doe not promote waste reduction and recycling at any cost. The Waste Wise Government Program makes smarter management and financial sense.

Already an environmentally friendly organisation, EcoRecycle determined that a structured program would make it more closely examine its waste generation and management issues and introduce necessary improvements.

In proceeding, EcoRecycle would also be testing the Waste Wise model in a government organisation. The result is that management and staff have a better understanding of issues faced by those implementing the same program in the government sector.

The outcome would also provide individual staff with the confidence that the organisation indeed 'practised what it preached'.

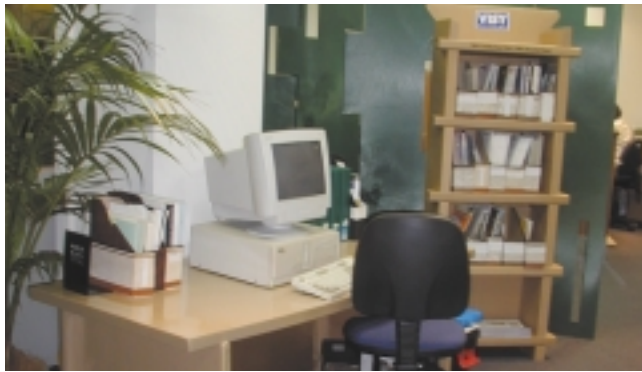
HOW ECORECYCLE APPROACHED THE PROJECT

As is normal practice on the introduction of the program to a business, EcoRecycle was assisted and encouraged by a Regional Waste Management Group (in this case, the Western RWMG).

The process was discussed with all management and staff to confirm everyone's involvement and understanding of the objectives.

The following steps were then taken:

- a working group was assembled to identify needs and opportunities;
- a team champion was appointed to run the program;
- an audit of existing solid waste was performed;
- an action plan was developed and implemented; and
- improvements were monitored by the working group.



Recycled paper has been resurrected as bookcases and a desk. This furniture made by Visy using 100% recycled paper was used during the Sydney Olympics. It is now being reused in EcoRecycle's Community Access Centre.

Those improvements included the following actions:

REDUCE

- the team increased emphasis on the conversion of publications to electronic form for delivery and introduced a policy to expand and develop the system. This system continues to meet the need of the organisation to provide equitable access and wide-spread distribution of its publications and information.
- where possible, communications with stakeholders would occur electronically; including the distribution of publications, newsletters, and invitations.
- a process to reduce paper waste by encouraging double sided photocopying and printing was initiated, including examining developments in technology to make this task easy. The team also encouraged the reuse of single-sided paper and introduced an electronic means for sending and distributing faxes within the office.
- arrangements were made with suppliers to minimise unnecessary packaging, eg. bulk purchase of tea bags and asking stationery supplier to take back cardboard boxes for reuse.

REUSE

- "boomerang" envelopes made from recycled paper were introduced; they are designed with easy opening to accommodate reuse.
- during an office relocation and refit, the existing furniture, fixtures and fittings were reused: This included partitions, desks, chairs, bookcases, benches, filing cabinets; kitchen appliances and fittings; reception desk and fittings; computers, telephones, printers, photocopiers, and the fax machine.
- reclaimed glass panels were used to refit the partitioning wall in the new office reception.
- it was agreed to use refillable, rather than disposable, pens, and ceramic cups and mugs.
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RECYCLE

- the collection system for glass, cans and plastic was improved.
- discussions were held to seek understanding with the Building / Facility Manager for the introduction of recycled toilet rolls and a worm farm (see Lessons Learned).
- a thriving worm farm was established to deal with food scraps.
- a Buy Recycled Policy was introduced, to ensure that office consumables (predominantly paper products), new IT equipment and fixtures, and fittings have recycled content.
- every attempt was made to purchase furniture with recycled content, including: tables made from toner cartridges and appliances; sofas upholstered with recycled PET; a coffee table made from recycled liquid paperboard drink containers; a screen made from milk bottles; and cardboard chairs and shelves.
- a display in the reception area was set up to showcase products made with recycled content.

As an added bonus, the organisation decided to join Greenfleet (www.greenfleet.com.au), an organisation which plants trees to create a carbon sink to absorb greenhouse gases emitted by motor vehicles. For a minimal fee, Greenfleet will now plant 17 trees per car leased by EcoRecycle Victoria.

SAVINGS & SUCCESSES

EcoRecycle is confident that the introduction of the Waste Wise Program has contributed in a positive way to the organisation. The close examination, fostered by the program, has provided a means for continual improvement and a better understanding of underlying issues by management and staff.

It has also empowered staff to participate in its planning and implementation, which has led to improved morale and team building.

The following benefits have also been noted:

- an anticipated savings of approximately \$2,500 per annum, in areas of paper purchases.
- more awareness of waste generation and opportunities for individual improvement.
- specific actions (eg. the worm farm and recycled furniture) have provided points of conversation and examples when dealing with visitors.
- improved credibility with others implementing the Waste Wise Government and Business Programs.
- considerable savings have been recognised in publication reprinting, storage and distribution costs.



It doesn't take 'hi-tech' office equipment to start a basic office paper recycling system! Old cardboard boxes double for paper receptacles under employees' desks.

LESSONS LEARNED

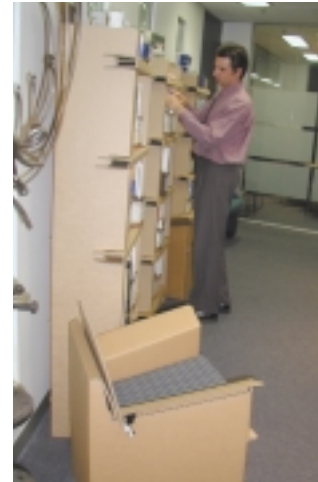
Achieving lasting change and commitment must involve all staff. As with any process involving change, barriers are encountered.

In the new office fit-out a limited budget meant that individual office light switches, which save energy, could not be introduced. The more affordable sector lighting was installed.

The experience also alerted EcoRecycle to the fact that not everyone shares its level of knowledge and that background information can be useful to persuade others (particularly outside of the organisation) of desired actions and strategies.

EcoRecycle was surprised when the Building's Facilities Manager expressed fear that recycled toilet paper would block the sewage system. This myth was quickly dispelled. Concerns were also expressed that the worm farm may attract vermin. Information supplied soon allayed these fears.

Planning for change has assisted EcoRecycle to identify opportunities for improvement and enabled staff to plan ahead to achieve good results in the future.



Practising what they preach: an EcoRecycle staff member making good use of the 100% recycled paper furniture in the foyer.

FUTURE ACTIONS

The status of being Waste Wise calls for an on-going commitment. The EcoRecycle working group has already identified further opportunities that will contribute to a better environment:

- reduction in non-recyclable and non-compostable food waste entering the office from staff households by encouraging rubbish free lunches;
- introduction of tea leaves and suitable strainers to eliminate the staples and strings in teabags that can make their way into the worm farm;
- regular audits to measure progress; and
- incorporation of the Waste Wise ethos as part of the staff induction procedures.

EcoRecycle has also chosen to embrace further environmentally friendly actions in energy use. They include:

- investigation of the use of Green Power;
- purchase of a larger, more energy efficient fridge to suit the size of the organisation.
- encouragement of staff to take the stairs; and
- encouragement to switch off computers and other office equipment at the end of the day.

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