



PRECINCTS REPORT

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End Food Waste Australia, established to deliver the National Food Waste Strategy, aims to halve Australia's food waste by 2030. The organisation implements initiatives from farm to fork, including the Australian Food Pact, Sector Action Plans, supply chain collaboration, and research and progress monitoring. Partnering with various organisations and engaging with all government levels, End Food Waste Australia supports the National Waste Policy Action Plan and Australia's transition to a circular economy.

Executive Summary

This project, funded by the New South Wales Environmental Protection Authority and developed with the participation of local governments, aims to address the significant issue of food waste in Australia.

End Food Waste Australia (EFWA) has been established to deliver the National Food Waste Strategy, with the ambitious goal of halving Australia's food waste by 2030. This initiative involves various stakeholders, including local councils and foodservice businesses, working collectively to develop shared solutions for managing food waste.

The Precincts Project is a key component of this strategy, focusing on geographical concentrations of foodservice businesses to support collective solutions for food waste management. The project highlights the economic, environmental, and social benefits of reducing food waste, such as cost savings, increased sales from consumer preference for sustainable businesses, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

The methodology of the project includes desktop research, workshops, data gathering, and engagement with local foodservice businesses and councils. Key findings indicate that space, financial resources, and lack of perceived benefits are major barriers to effective food waste management. However, successful case studies, such as the Waverley Council's Bronte Café Strip trial, demonstrate that collaborative efforts and regular support can lead to significant reductions in food waste.

The report concludes that while reducing and diverting food waste in small and medium hospitality businesses is challenging, facilitated collective approaches can overcome these barriers. Ongoing support, awareness raising, and tailored solutions are essential for the long-term success of these initiatives.



1. Introduction

1.1 The Precincts Project

The purpose of the Precincts Project is to work collectively with food service businesses in close proximity to develop shared solutions to managing their food waste. A **'precinct'** is defined as a geographical concentration of foodservice businesses (cafes, bakeries, restaurants, quick service restaurants and/or takeaways) where there is a sufficient volume of food waste generated and opportunity, through physical proximity, to support collective solutions.

The majority of these businesses are SMEs with 91% restaurants and cafes in Australia employing fewer than 20 employees (statista, 2024). Individual businesses may not have the space, infrastructure or financial capacity to successfully source separate and/or manage their waste. By bringing businesses together, a group solution may be discovered which would not be feasible for an individual business or for local councils which may be able to facilitate collective solutions. The project supports the NSW Government's goal to achieve net zero emissions from landfill and halve organics waste sent to landfill by 2030.

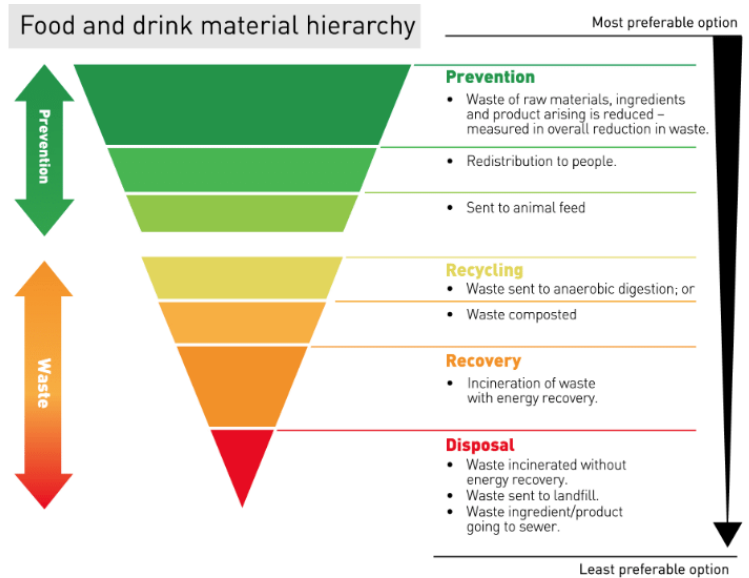
1.2 Food Loss and Waste

Globally, one third of all food produced goes to waste (FAO, 2011) with associated environmental, social and economic impacts. Food loss and waste generates up to 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Mbow, et al., 2019) and reducing food loss and waste has been identified as one of the best strategies for reducing emissions and fighting the climate crisis (Project Drawdown, n.d.).

In Australia, 7.6 million tonnes of food are wasted annually costing the economy \$36.6 billion each year (FIAL, 2021). Australia produces enough food to feed 75 million people every year, whilst 3.4 million households experience food insecurity (Foodbank, 2024). The hospitality sector is responsible for 1.2 million tonnes of annual food waste and 67% of this wasted food is edible (FIAL, 2021); the equivalent of throwing away 4.6 million meals each day.

The National Food Waste Strategy (Australian Government, 2017) provides a framework to support action to halve Australia's food waste by 2030, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.3 to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Avoiding food waste or repurposing it, follows a circular economy approach, where resources are kept in use for as long as possible whilst minimising negative impacts.

Diverting food waste from landfill alone does not count towards reducing Australia’s target to halve food waste by 2030. However, many businesses do not acknowledge, or are unaware, of the amount of food waste generated until they physically separate it from general waste and it becomes a visible problem. A food waste reduction challenge run by Zero Waste Scotland found that 71% of businesses that separated and weighed food waste achieved a 30% reduction in food waste through measurement alone (Zero Waste Scotland, 2024).



The project found both benefits for foodservice businesses and for local government councils from taking a collective precinct-based approach to separating and managing food waste.

Benefits for foodservice businesses in reducing food waste

- **Economic benefits**
 - Identifying amount and source of food waste can lead to reductions and subsequent savings on ingredient costs, overheads, labour and waste disposal
 - Increased sales from consumer preference for sustainable businesses
- **Collective solutions**
 - Reduce costs for services such as organic waste collection
 - Access to services that otherwise might not be available to single business
 - Building networks and knowledge sharing
 - Creation of hubs that attract sustainability conscious consumers; increasing business
- **Environmental benefits**
 - Reducing waste to landfill
 - Reducing emissions associated with wasted food and reducing carbon footprint

NSW introduced Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) legislation in March 2025. Businesses or institutions that sell or handle food, like supermarkets, cafes, schools and hotels, are required to source separate food waste. This will happen in stages from 1 July 2026, based on the number of weekly garbage bins. For more information see [here](#).

Benefits for councils to address business food waste

Businesses in NSW are responsible for organising their own waste disposal and do not rely on council services. However, councils have targets to divert food from landfill, in line with national targets and strategies. Addressing business food waste, not just separation but also reduction, is necessary to achieve these goals given the large volumes of food waste generated by foodservice businesses.

- **Waste targets**
 - Reduce total waste generated
 - Address shortage of landfill capacity
 - Improve recovery rates from waste streams
 - Divert food organic waste to meet target to halve organic waste to landfill by 2030
 - Commit to broader emissions target to be net zero by 2050
- **Support local businesses and economic growth**
 - Reducing food waste saves foodservice businesses money (ingredient costs, labour costs, overheads and disposal fees)
 - Consumers increasingly want to support sustainable and environmentally responsible businesses. 70% of consumers want restaurants to be more sustainable, with addressing food waste identified as the most important action (Wateraid, 2023)
- **Community**
 - Business operators may be local community members
 - Building sustainable cities/circular economies
 - Addressing community complaints about bins/waste

Project Aim

To help food businesses in precincts overcome barriers to source separate food waste by understanding what they can do collectively, thus reducing costs, and understand how councils can best support their local businesses and facilitate solutions. Once businesses separate food waste, they can identify ways to reduce it. Our desk top research illustrated the key role that Councils have played across the country in activating improved food waste management in food service precincts.

The overall project plan for the Precincts Project, agreed with the NSW EPA, included the following project outcomes:

Project outcomes:

- Raise awareness food waste issues
- Source separation by foodservice businesses
- Measuring/monitoring food waste

Key barriers for source separation include:

- Limited space

- Limited financial resources/buying power
- Lack of perceived benefits of addressing food waste

2. Methodology

This project used the action research method to simultaneously investigate and solve an issue. Action research is formative, not summative, and is conducted in an ongoing, iterative way. While the proposed activities outlined below were planned initially, the inability to recruit food service businesses for active participation halted some of the later proposed initiatives of this action research project.

Proposed activities proposed at the outset were:

Desktop Research

Desktop research and interviews to explore what other precincts have learned and achieved to date.

Engagement

Workshops with potential precinct councils to understand:

- What resources/solutions are currently available for local businesses?
- Potential options for businesses to collectively source separate food waste and reduce costs
- How council would like to position this project with their local businesses/ chambers of commerce etc.

With local foodservice business operators to:

- Understand what is currently working well in source separation and waste management, what is missing and what barriers need to be overcome?
- Is there a desire to work collectively with other precinct-based businesses?
- Explore what resources/support/services are available and what are needed to improve food waste reduction and management?
- How can businesses work better collectively to reduce food waste to landfill and costs? Raising awareness of the benefits of monitoring/measuring and reducing food waste.

Data gathering

- Combination of foodservice business data. Bin Trim data if shared by businesses and available NSW EPA C&I

- Establish a baseline to allow project evaluation – how many businesses currently source separating/number of services available/volume waste (general and organic)
- Waste contractors/procurement contract specialist input
- Cost benefits of joint waste contracts

Workshop with foodservice businesses and councils

- Expand on findings from previous engagements and propose solutions
- Co-design between foodservice businesses and councils to provide cost-effective and practical food waste management solutions

Follow-up and evaluation

- Interviews/observations with participating foodservice businesses to evaluate project outcomes
- What has been implemented, what has been effective and why?
- Interviews with councils to assess uptake of services offered

3. Desktop Research Findings

EFWA engaged with over a dozen state and local organisations, governments and businesses nationwide to understand the current landscape and to learn from projects currently being developed and implemented to help foodservice businesses tackle their food waste collectively. Research findings from the interviews and web based research are presented thematically in the sections below.

Project Interviews Nationwide	
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Melbourne • City of Yarra • Cirque du Soleil • Moonee Valley Council • Reground • Sustainability Victoria
Tasmania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasmanian Hospitality Assoc
South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Industries South Australia • Unley Council
Western Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WALGA

ACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canberra Joint Regional Councils
NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Org • Veolia • <i>Better Business Partnerships*</i> • <i>Blue Mountains City Council*</i> • <i>City of Sydney*</i> • <i>Waverley Council*</i> <p><i>* project participants</i></p>

3.1 Council Community Engagement

Council community consultation has found there is a demand for councils to help food businesses manage their food waste.

Initial engagement by councils with food service businesses has found:

- Variable levels of understanding of sustainable waste management
- General interest in learning more about sustainable practices
- Businesses run by casual staff, with no owner on site, are less interested
- Foodservice businesses face challenges with space, time, cost and inconsistent service from contractors
- There is an appetite for cooperative services.

There is no one solution that will fit all scenarios and businesses; there is a need to develop a series of solutions that can be tailored for each precinct. Understanding what data needs to be collected and what will potentially be the best fit will enable time and resource poor businesses to select the most appropriate solution to manage their food waste.

3.2 Cooperative Collections/Services

Consolidating organic waste collections or the cooperative use of on-site processing equipment has many obvious benefits. If food waste from multiple venues can be collected by one service provider, the number of collection vehicles visiting the precinct will be reduced and may enable businesses to have more frequent collections of food waste, reducing associated problems such as odours and pests.

Individual businesses may not have sufficient space or financial resources to invest in on-site processing equipment. Finding a common space or pooling resources can overcome these barriers.

While each individual business may not produce sufficient organic waste to warrant investment in a collection service or equipment to process organic waste or may not have sufficient volumes for efficient running of equipment, collectively the volume may justify the expenditure and be sufficient for operations. All these considerations should be taken into account. Organising a joint collection service for businesses is a time consuming and complicated process.

- Establish what information each business is required to supply (e.g, amount of food waste produced, frequency of collection necessary) to understand whether a joint procurement for waste services will be viable and cost effective in the long term.

- Identify who will be responsible for this joint contract with the waste contractor/service provider and what will happen if businesses close, change hands or additional businesses want to join.
- Responsibility for the service needs to be clearly defined so all users understand their roles and responsibilities. Who will be responsible for maintaining and operating equipment, ensuring it is kept clean and used correctly, monitoring and addressing contamination, following up on missed collections etc?
- Businesses using a joint service need to ensure that they all adhere to correct source separation; otherwise contamination of waste streams will become an issue. If one business does not have adequate separation of waste this will cause contamination of the entire food waste collection from all participating businesses.
- The location of a joint collection point must also be carefully selected to prevent public access and address safety concerns for users, especially if bins need to be accessed late at night by staff members.
- An important element of pre-planning is understanding what government permissions may be required such as street usage, environmental health or town planning development approvals permits, including for combining commercial and residential wastes.
- The process of getting people to sign up together may be more of a challenge than any regulatory barriers.

The [Degraeves Street Recycling Facility](#) was launched in March 2013. The purpose of the program was to change the waste and amenity culture in the café precinct and provide for food waste, cardboard and commingled recycling. The program was born out of the Integrated Waste Management Program endorsed by Council in 2010. The program included initiatives to trial small-scale organics processing technology and test the model of a shared recycling collection point in the central city. While this program is a highly successful Victorian example, each state may have specific regulations applicable to planning and running this type of facility.

3.3 Circular Economies

Many councils and regions are driving change towards a circular economy; reducing food waste and diversion from landfill is often included in these broader frameworks and action plans. Including food waste reduction as part of a broader sustainability messaging may make the issue seem more important for businesses to act upon.

Councils may have little budget for addressing business food waste, unlike residential waste programs which can be funded through domestic waste rates. Including business food waste programs under broader circular economy actions may allow access to a wider source funding and grant applications.

Applying a circular economy lens to individual and precinct business operations may provide insights to recycle and reuse resources and reduce the overall environmental footprint of businesses.

3.4 Local Hubs

There is an appetite to create local, place-based solutions, again reducing the amount of transportation required to deal with food waste and fostering a sense of community problem solving and knowledge sharing. For example, if food waste can be processed on site, it reduces the need to be transported off-site

and the resulting compost could be used in local spaces such as parks, gardens, golf courses et cetera. However, each state will have specific regulations applicable to processing and potential application of food waste products. By understanding the composition of food waste streams there may be an opportunity for upcycling waste; 'what is deemed as waste by one business may be a useful commodity for another'.

Such local systems can also help generate a sense of connection and community between businesses and residents. The City of Yarra ran a successful program, Compost Mates, with twenty-five cafes, four hubs and twelve residents. Residents collected food waste from the cafes, in return for a free coffee, and delivered it to composting hubs. They were trained to check for contamination of the waste stream and hence could identify issues directly at the source. The program ceased due to lack of on-going funding and the transient nature of the residential community, and may not be an applicable model in all jurisdictions.

If projects are council led there is the potential issue that businesses just outside council borders cannot be involved, or owners who do not reside in that council area are less interested. This could be overcome by considering projects between neighbouring councils or regional projects.

3.5 Data Collection

Having a waste baseline prior to implementing changes was a challenge for all the example projects interviewed. This is necessary to understand the effectiveness of any interventions to divert and reduce food waste.

It can be challenging to obtain this data from businesses who do not see the benefits of weighing and recording food waste data. It may be easier to use waste contactor records or help businesses to undertake an initial food waste audit.

3.6 Common Barriers

Space

Insufficient space was a common theme throughout interviews at all stages of food waste management, from insufficient kitchen space for bins for separating food waste, lack of space for additional bins in waste collection areas or space for an on-site processing unit. In inner city precincts with older infrastructure space is even more challenging than in less densely developed areas.

Potential solutions adopted included using stackable bins with lids, which had the added bonus of reducing odours and pest issues as well as reducing space required. Ensuring that collection services are sufficiently regular so that large volumes do not need to be stored on site.



Figure 1. What discourages businesses from recycling food waste (* original text shortened for graph readability). Source: Fogarty, E et al. 2021.

Time and resources

Hospitality businesses are fast paced environments running on tight margins and the current economic landscape has exacerbated these pressures. Many managers simply have so many competing demands for their time it is too challenging to change systems and practices. There is a clear opportunity to present the proposed changes as making financial sense and being easy to implement. The benefits of introducing interventions must be obvious and outweigh any discomfort of change.

3.7 Keys to successful projects

Setting up a successful project requires adequate time, as well as ongoing support. Simply providing information and services is not sufficient. It is important to build relationships with individual businesses, spend time to understand unique situations and train staff to correctly use services. It is important to engage with those in the business responsible for procuring and budgeting for waste services but also the staff responsible for practically dealing with waste handling.

Champions

Having a champion in the precinct contributes to the success of collective initiatives. The precincts or high streets need a committed business representative member to help promote and facilitate uptake of new practices. Businesses are much more likely to listen to, and take advice from, a peer who has implemented changes in their own operations and seen the benefits first-hand.

Communication

Delivering the message about food waste reduction issues and initiatives is challenging in such a diverse and fragmented sector. Possible ways to communicate with multiple businesses effectively include

- Chambers of Commerce or Trade Associations can be useful mechanisms to communicate with businesses since they often already have existing networks to leverage.
- Local associations such as the Wine and Tourism Association in wine regions
- Waste contractors have access to businesses and can provide data about volumes and contamination rates
- Council Economic Development officers who are already regularly visiting businesses.

Any communications to foodservice businesses need to be concise, practical and written in appropriate language. Many small businesses already operate in alignment with the principles of circular economy but would seldom use terms like circular economy or circularity. Any education/training materials provided need to be in appropriate formats, such as embedded into existing apps, social media posts or short (2-3 min) videos. However, the role of face-to-face interactions cannot be overemphasized. Foodservice businesses are fast-paced environments with multiple demands for attention; managers and staff may not have the time to read, digest and take on board new behaviours without support.

The Tasmanian Hospitality Association ran a project in Salamanca Place for collective organic waste solutions. They produced guides for performing a waste audit, creating a food waste action plan and reducing food waste. From their experience, these simply served as prompts to tackle food waste and more effective instruction came from mentoring and having a peer share real life experiences.

Education and Awareness

Although financial incentives are imperative, understanding why it is important to reduce and divert food waste from environmental and social aspects can help motivate staff to adopt change. Employees want to know why they are separating food waste and also what happens after collection to be reassured that is not ending up in landfill and their efforts have been in vain.

Culture

Creating a culture around food waste avoidance and diverting food waste was identified as a key recommendation in the Foodservice Sector Action Plans. This has also been identified in this desk top research. Once this is embedded in a business, addressing food waste then becomes part of the daily routine of working with food and is not perceived as extra workload. The culture must be throughout the business, fostered and supported by management and practiced by employees. Setting targets or goals and celebrating success, allows individuals to understand how they are tracking and what their actions have achieved.

A study of foodservice businesses In Mitcham SA found sustainability motivations were most impactful for those businesses that actively recycled food waste:

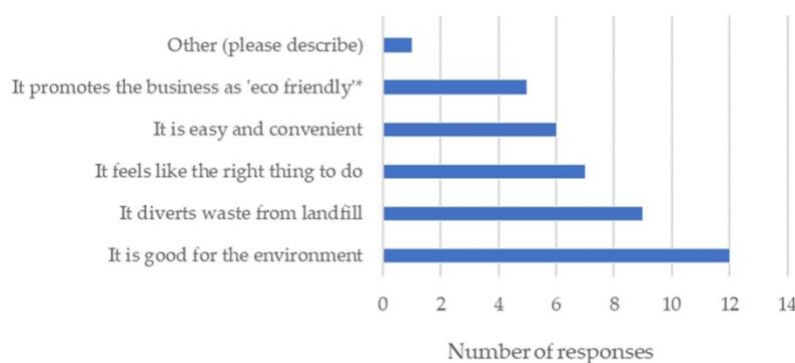


Figure 2. What encourages businesses to recycle food waste? (* original text shortened for graph readability). Source: Fogarty, et al 2021.

3.8 How to Engage Business in projects to reduce food waste

Many projects are developed and supported by those working in sustainability and waste management. However, it can be challenging to get businesses to engage.

Tips for messaging foodservice business involvement:

- No cost to participate
- Will save time/money
- Is not complicated
- Underpinned by raising awareness of not acting on food waste
- Sense of collaboration and collective problem solving
- Being seen to be leaders, setting the path for others

CASE STUDY: Gaining traction on taking action on food waste!

Getting businesses on board is the biggest challenge in getting combined action on food waste reduction. Nationwide, state and local governments have initiated precinct-based projects to work collectively in geographic concentrations of food businesses to reduce food waste.

Barriers and Keys to Success

Space: Limited kitchen and waste area space is a significant obstacle, especially in dense urban precincts.

Time and Resources: Busy small businesses require financially sensible and minimally disruptive solutions.

Champions: Business representatives who advocate for change are crucial.

Communication: Utilising existing networks like Chambers of Commerce and waste contractors improves outreach.

Culture: Embedding waste reduction into daily routines fosters lasting change.

Engaging Foodservice Businesses

Successful engagement strategies emphasise no cost participation, time and money savings, simplicity, collaboration and leadership recognition. Financial savings and regulatory mandates are key motivators, while challenges include contamination, data collection difficulties, and competing business pressures. Ongoing support and facilitation are key to success in the long term.

Finding a Champion

All it takes is one committed ‘champion’ to set an example for staff and neighbouring businesses, by creating a ‘can do’ culture to improve food waste management. Not only can they change practices in their kitchens, but their enthusiasm spills over into their broader companies or neighborhoods. One such chef is Fernando at the [Opera Bar](#); read about how separating organics has led to their 30% reduction in food waste. Leveraging local knowledge and contacts is critical to identifying likely champions, leading to additional recruitment and a successful project.

3.9 Summary of Challenges and Opportunities

Motivators

- Financial incentives and economic reasons are crucial, especially in today’s challenging economic conditions
- A clear and convincing business case for the perceived time and effort required to separate and reduce food waste
- Mandates for food waste diversion from landfill
- Providing necessary equipment such as bins, signage
- Social normalisation, the sense of ‘doing the right thing’, or that everyone is doing this
- Awareness raising. Understanding the issue can create a desire for change but needs to be followed up by creating the opportunity and ability to change.

- Being seen as leaders influencing peers
- Having dedicated assistance to help streamline waste management such as a 'waste concierge'

Challenges

- Lack of space: in kitchen or waste collection areas
- Lack of time: SME hospitality businesses run with minimal, time-poor staff and anything that is seen to be extra work will be difficult to implement.
- Contamination: separating food waste from general waste, especially packaged items and front-of-house waste
- Data collection: difficult to get businesses to weigh/audit waste
- Businesses not aware that food waste to landfill is an issue and there are other sustainability problems to address
- Confusing regulations and just seen as too hard to tackle
- On going attention and funding required to keep projects running
- Concerns about odours and pests

3.10 Conclusions

Reducing and diverting food waste for small and medium hospitality businesses is challenging, In such a diverse sector there is no one simple solution. Collective efforts can overcome barriers such as lack of space and resources, but may require Council or other facilitation. Awareness raising and understanding that even simple changes have big impacts can address concerns over the time required and feasibility of implementing change.

However, there is no quick fix and support is required to embed these changes and build long term solutions. The next phase of this project conducted workshops with targeted NSW Councils to better understand what type of support is required, what is already available and how best to provide this support to achieve environmental, economic and social benefits.

4. Council Engagement

After initial liaison with key officers and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between EFWA and the Council, in person workshops were held with the following participating councils:

- Blue Mountains City
- City of Sydney
- Waverley Council

Better Business Partnerships (a sustainability initiative funded by Ku-ring-gai, North Sydney and Willoughby Councils) was also consulted.

The initial key council contacts organised in-person workshops and invited relevant participants from varying council departments including sustainability, circular economy, waste and business development teams who would have an interest in addressing business food waste. A representative from the NSW EPA also attended each workshop.

4.1 Workshop aims

The 1.5 hour face to face workshops were held as structured discussions to understand:

- What outcomes would a successful project achieve?
- What was currently happening with food waste in their LGAs?
- What are some of the challenges?
- Roles of council and EFWA in each project and what support is needed from EFWA?

4.2 Workshop findings

Measures of Success for All Councils

- Building council and business relationships (especially in preparation for NSW government FOGO mandates) and best ways of working together
- Understanding what support businesses need (including internal council education/comms)
- Councils are seen to be helping local businesses
- Project is owned by the participants rather than council/EFWA. This will more likely achieve long term outcomes and create lasting behaviour change
- Businesses see value in the project and addressing food waste from economic/environmental/social aspects. Also, as an individual business and as part of a community
- Creating a positive experience for participating businesses
- Local case studies
- Replicable and can be rolled out to other hubs/precincts

Measures of Success for Some Councils

- Creating a baseline so that impact of project can be measured (waste reduction and business engagement)
- Creation of local circular solutions and food waste processing
- Sense of community pride
- Reduced waste to landfill and GHG emissions
- Addressing other waste streams associated with foodservice businesses
- Development of best practice guidelines for businesses for managing organic waste collection
- Developing a business case for waste service providers for organic waste collection
- Address challenges of lack of capacity for processing organic waste
- For those in tourist destinations; link to sustainable destinations
- Clean organic waste stream, little contamination
- Sharing of knowledge

Main Differences between LGAs

- Provision/organisation of waste services for businesses
- Capacity for organics collection
- Space for possible local processing

Current Food Waste Initiatives

- Limited current council activity directed specifically @ foodservice/businesses
- Love Food Hate Waste for households
- Roll out of residential FOGO at various levels of maturity (need to take into consideration for resource allocation/alignment of messaging)

Challenges for All

- High foodservice business and staff turnover
- Economic climate, many businesses struggling to survive
- Competing pressures for busy SMEs
- Engaging businesses (time constraints and hours of businesses may limit workshop opportunities)
- Data gathering

Challenges for Some

- Lack of organic collection services
- Lack of capacity for organic waste processing
- Possible language barriers with hospitality staff
- Public complaints about businesses waste
- Willingness of businesses to work together

Considerations for Engaging Businesses

- Simple language and call to action/avoid over complicating things
- Create local stories and tangible solutions
- Highlight what is in it for the business/community

Selection of Precinct

One council had already identified their precinct to use as a model to roll out across the LGA.

Remaining councils used the workshop to develop the selection criteria below:

- 8-10 businesses (probably need to engage 12-20 allowing for attrition but will accept less if there is a clear likelihood of good outcomes)
- Independent food businesses – not franchises to ensure autonomy in decision making
- Not part of other council initiative (too confusing and time consuming for businesses)
- Replicable
- Champion or long term/established business

- Close proximity to one another and willingness to work together
- Sufficient food waste (i.e. cafes/restaurants not bars, mixed retail)
- Community connection

Roles/support from EFWA

- EFWA seen as the national body and expert on reducing food waste
- Can act as intermediary between councils and some service providers
- EFWA can provide support to council officers building businesses relationships
- One council felt being slightly removed from engagement would be more beneficial to achieve desired outcomes and preferred EFWA undertake direct business engagement

5. Foodservice Business Engagement

5.1 Blue Mountains City Council

The Blue Mountains project was run by Council collectively with the economic development and circular economy teams. Katoomba, with some 70 food related businesses, was chosen as the proposed precinct. The Council preferred to make contact with businesses and commenced a recruitment campaign with emails, follow up letters and a personal visit by council officers to each foodservice business in Katoomba. Council and EFWA worked together to design the flyer attached as Appendix 1 as a 'leave-behind' for businesses to contact Council through the QR code. Unfortunately, there were no interested businesses.

Since commencing this project with EFWA, Blue Mountains City Council has been a successful recipient of a NSW EPA Business Food Service partnership grant that commenced in July 2025. Council's focus has now pivoted to providing ongoing support to the broader Council area. Recruitment has already identified several willing foodservice participants in other communities.

5.2 City of Sydney Council

The City of Sydney primarily comprises dense, high-rise developments with limited space for waste management in some commercial establishments. This seemed ideal for collective solutions and the Council officers were highly engaged. After internal discussions City of Sydney initially identified three potential precincts. Their 'economic development' team reached out to all three precincts; through local business collectives, but without any positive response from the collective and/or local foodservice businesses. EFWA was asked to follow up and door knocked in the most likely precincts of Darlinghurst and Chippendale, interacting with 10 and 20 cafes and bakeries, respectively. While there is currently collective waste management activity in Kensington Street near UTS, there is no dedicated organics collection. Although these waste volumes are likely to trigger the NSW FOGO mandate in 2026, there was insufficient interest from the facilities manager to proceed, despite several contacts from EFWA staff.

With a finite time frame on this Precinct Project, and challenges for Council in identifying additional potential precincts, EFWA was unable to proceed with this trial.

5.3 Waverley Council

Waverly Council has made clear commitments to sustainability and circular economy leadership, evidenced by their Circular Economy Roadmap for Bondi Junction. This innovative program is guided by six key principles and includes a broad range of initiatives to build awareness and adopt circular economy actions, especially with the business community in their commercial centre.



Figure 3 Bondi Junction Circular Economy Roadmap Principles

While initially Bondi Junction was explored as a potential precinct trial site, the scattered and disparate nature of food businesses, intermixed with other small retailers, suggested this was not an appropriate location. Alternatively, Waverley Council identified Bronte Beach as a suitable hub. The strip consists of 9 cafes, 6 with a common owner, a loyal and busy customer base and a convenience store.

Waverley Council’s Business Development officer maintains a good relationship with the businesses and visited the cafes with the Sustainability Project officer to assess interest in diverting organic waste and demonstrate better sustainability practice. There was strong interest from some businesses and eventual interest from all 9 cafes to improve capability to reduce and divert food waste.

In New South Wales, a statewide mandate requires the separation and collection of food and garden organics (FOGO) for all households and businesses by 2030, with business separation rolling out in a tiered approach, starting in 2026. Waverley Council identified the precinct trial as a good opportunity for their Waste Services team to trial a business organics collection alongside their current residential FOGO trial. At project initiation, Waverley Council’s Waste Services were trialing domestic FOGO with 1,800 households. Discussions within Waverley Council resulted in a small-scale, targeted, commercial organic collection service to coincide with the food waste reduction trial.

The 3-month trial commenced in May and finished in early August. This trial demonstrates the vital role regular support and communication contributes to the success of a precinct trial. Waverly Council’s sustainability officer visited the Bronte strip several times a week to see how their program for waste separation was progressing and to determine if any assistance, such as different bins or additional liners, was needed. EFWA also visited the cafes with the sustainability officer to see if practical information on reducing food waste would assist café owners educate their staff on the importance of reducing and diverting food waste from landfill. More detailed information on the trial is documented in the Case Study below.

Case Study: Waverley Council's Bronte Café Strip¹

About the trial:

Waverley Council was a key participant in the Precincts Project, running a three-month trial where nine cafés along the Bronte beachfront introduced green organic bins into their operations.

To support the trial, Waverley Council's Sustainability and Resilience Officer Hayley Ackroyd, maintained a strong on-the-ground presence, visiting cafés weekly to troubleshoot issues, check in with staff and build relationships. The Council supplied the necessary infrastructure, including subsidised bins and a dedicated weekend collection service to facilitate the trial, while technical experts from End Food Waste Australia offered guidance informed by their recent Café Sector Action Plan.

The results were varied. Five of the participating cafés, all owned by a single operator, shared one green organics bin. Despite the apparent efficiency of this model, it proved ineffective in practice, as the lack of ownership over the shared bin led to high levels of contamination and disengagement from café staff. Meanwhile, the Bogey Hole and The Coop cafés stood out as leaders in the trial, engaging enthusiastically and providing valuable feedback throughout. These cafes also identified that they were keen to participate due to the environmental benefits and a desire to do the right thing for the planet – even if it came at a small cost.

The Coop Café cut its landfill waste by a full landfill bin each week, simply by separating food scraps into a green organics bin and switching to a one-landfill, one-green bin system. Bogey Hole Cafe, while already minimising food waste internally through re-use practices like turning vegetable peels into vegetable stock, still managed to divert the equivalent of one landfill bin's worth of food waste per week. The most commonly diverted items included coffee grounds, fruit and vegetable peels, eggshells and plate waste.

The success of the trial was clearly due to individual engagement. When a business, especially with an engaged owner, manager or chef, was responsible for its own bin and changed processes in the kitchen, results were better.

Throughout the trial, the hands-on support from Council was critical. The participating businesses often ignored email communication given their roles were not desk based, but regular in-person visits

¹ Note: will be designed as a standalone case study for EFWA and Waverly council's websites.

created trust and accountability. Each of the businesses had very individual challenges, so regular communication allowed for more custom troubleshooting.

Thirdly, businesses did state it was easy to implement source separation – they just needed to make it habitual. As one café put it, “It’s really just pulling a napkin off a plate and putting the rest in the green bin. It’s not that hard.”

The trial did highlight one major challenge - the lack of weekend green organics bin collections was particularly problematic for larger cafes, who had larger waste volumes on weekends. Without collection at peak times, businesses struggled to maintain consistent separation.

The cost impact of using green organics bins was inconsequential. Several businesses found the switch to be either cost-neutral (due to landfill bin savings) or very low cost, with one café estimating the new system at just \$2 per day. Importantly, the trial did not require major changes to kitchen layouts or bin storage, as most cafés already had room for multiple bins, provided they were collected regularly. The trial found that staff were also flexible, adjusting quickly to source separation or food waste reduction training.

The trial with Waverley Council demonstrated that reducing landfill waste and increasing the use of organics bins is highly achievable through collaborative, council-led efforts. It also highlighted that separating waste at the source helps businesses gain clearer insights into the types and amounts of organic waste they produce - insights that can support more effective food waste reduction strategies.

For instance, The Coop Cafe, with support from Waverley Council’s Sustainability and Resilience Officer, will now explore ways to better manage their coffee ground waste. Currently, around 60 kilograms of coffee waste is generated each week, which could be completely repurposed through initiatives like Reground, avoiding both the green organic bin and landfill bin altogether.

Pull out quotes:

“We did this trial because we want to be more sustainable. We want to save the planet and this type of action is what’s going to help. Also if we show it can be done, we can encourage other kitchens to do it too.” – Bogey Hole Café

“The cost [for a green/organics bin] works out to be about \$2 a day – that’s manageable. It’s a small cost to be more sustainable and better for the environment.” – The Coop Café

5.4 Better Business Partnership

The **Better Business Partnership (BBP)** is an innovative business sustainability program jointly funded by Ku-ring-gai, North Sydney and Willoughby Councils to support the local business community to be successful through sustainability – economic, environmental and social.

BBP was established with grant funding from the NSW Environmental Trust Urban Sustainability Program. It is a collaboration between councils, business owners, business networks, community organisations, and other government agencies that strengthen the local business community.

BBP targets small-to-medium-sized businesses and educates and supports them through face-to-face positive encouragement.

BBP facilitates a collaborative and connected sustainable business network, promotes member businesses to the local community and recognises and rewards businesses for their sustainable achievements.

BBP received a NSW EPA Business Food Service partnership grant, specifically to raise awareness of the upcoming FOGO mandate for organics separation food waste recycling and to empower businesses with the knowledge and skills to better manage their food waste. The Partnership cooperated with EFWA on the precinct project by using their dedicated officer to identify an appropriate ‘precinct’ to develop collective solutions for organic waste management.

West Pymble, with eight food related businesses, was the precinct selected. Three businesses expressed interest in learning more and two, an IGA and fruit and veg shop, undertook BBP food waste audits with an estimated 300L and 550L of food waste per week.

Currently, Ku-ring-gai Council does not offer an organics collection service for either commercial or residential customers. These businesses are hesitant to engage an additional waste provider, preferring to continue using council waste services exclusively. One retailer currently pays \$51.50 for a 660L general waste bin. The most competitive quote for a 660L organic waste pickup was \$78. With cost as the major consideration for these businesses, additional costs associated with a separate organics collection such as extra bin liners, bin cleaning services and increased staff time also influenced their decision not to proceed until they are required to source separate their food waste by the NSW government’s FOGO mandate in 2030.

6. Conclusion

Reducing and diverting food waste in small and medium hospitality businesses is complex with no single solution. Collective approaches can overcome barriers but requires Council facilitation, ongoing support, and awareness raising. Embedding simple, effective changes can lead to significant environmental and economic benefits. Continued engagement and tailored support will be essential for the long-term success

of a Precinct based approach.

With thanks to

ACT

Canberra Regional Joint Association

NSW

- Better Business Partnerships
- Blue Mountains City Council
- City of Sydney
- NSW EPA
- Org
- Veolia
- Waverley Council

SA

- GISA
- Unley Council

TAS

- Tasmanian Hospitality Association

VIC

- City of Melbourne
- Cirque du Soleil
- Moonee Valley Council
- Reground
- Sustainability Victoria
- Yarra Council

WA

- WALGA

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Appendices

1. **Blue Mountains City Council & EFWA flyer for businesses**
2. **Precinct Tool Kit for councils**

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A U S T R A L I A

For further information
please contact:

enquiries@endfoodwaste.com.au
or visit endfoodwaste.com.au

NEED HELP MANAGING FOOD WASTE?

WE HAVE SOLUTIONS THAT WON'T COST THE EARTH

Join this free initiative to find out:

- What food is being wasted in your business
- Simple changes you can make to save time and money
- How to reduce your environmental footprint
- Ways to work with other local businesses

End Food Waste Australia has teamed up with the NSW EPA and your local council to find ways to help you:

- Reduce the amount of food ending up in the bin, helping your profits and the planet
- Make sure what does get thrown away ends up in the right place
- Understand how upcoming NSW EPA mandates for separating food waste will affect your business

Register here for more information:



End Food Waste Australia (EFWA) is a not-for-profit organisation working towards halving food waste in Australia by 2030.