

REDUCING WORKPLACE WASTE IN HAIR AND BEAUTY SALONS

A practical guide to help hair and beauty salons towards zero waste

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WHY SHOULD I REDUCE MY WASTE?

Environmental sustainability is now a key part of doing business. By minimising your waste, you can cut your disposal costs, reduce your carbon footprint, and build your brand's reputation with staff and customers alike.

In 2023, Queenstown Lakes District businesses were **surveyed** to get a snapshot of how organisations were managing their waste and how they could be supported to reduce and minimise their waste outputs. The majority of respondents said that reducing their environmental impact was a key motivator to minimise waste and 92% said that waste reduction was important or very important to their business.

QLDC is committed to helping our communities become a low waste and low emissions district, and to helping your business achieve its waste minimisation goals.



For every one rubbish bin of waste that you put out on the kerb, **70 rubbish bins of waste were made upstream just to make that one bin on the kerb.** Even if we could recycle 100% of the waste coming out of our households, it does not get to the core of the problem. Correct recycling is vital, but we need to think about cutting off the waste streams and bringing less waste into our businesses in the first place. **The Story of Stuff** is essential reading and talks more about this.



Credit: Freepik

TACKLING WASTE TOGETHER

Working and consulting with businesses across the region has helped identify the three key waste streams for beauty and hair salons, and come up with practical solutions to help you reduce your waste.

Making a start can be the hardest part. Together with your team and stakeholders, identify what you can tackle first. Engaging your colleagues and staff is vital, because if you have an engaged team committed to your waste goals, you'll see results quicker and will be able to communicate your values far more easily to your clients.

Wastebusters has put together **a document** to help you communicate your waste minimisation strategies to your team, with content for staff induction manuals. It's a great idea to have a policy in place so that waste minimisation is seen as the norm from the outset.



Credit: Diana Light

PACKAGING

According to a Forbes report, **120 billion units of packaging** are produced by the global cosmetics industry every year. More than **552 million shampoo bottles** end up in the landfill each year. It is estimated that by 2050 the ocean will contain **more plastic than fish**.



Auckland salon, Luxe & Duke uses 'Vish', a **Bluetooth technology** which individually weighs each client's colour requirements, accurately recording the amount used to reduce waste on visits. Each bowl is weighed after the service giving them the exact colour usage for the next visit, creating price transparency for the client and minimising their waste.



According to the Sustainability Business Network, about 70% of your business' sustainability impact comes from your supply chain. Whether it's talking to your existing suppliers or looking for alternatives, beginning at the source is key.

- Talk to your suppliers about their packaging. Is it necessary? Is it recyclable? Can they take back packaging or will they supply the same product in reusable outer containers? Do they know the origin of their products? Transparency across the supply chain is key.
- Use refillable containers. Whether it's shampoo, conditioner, hair dyes or soaps, look for suppliers who can provide these essentials in refillable form. Where space is at a premium, having wall mounted refillable containers are a great solution and clearly communicate your zero waste policies to clients.
- For refillable items, encourage your clients to bring their own bottles and containers when purchasing these products. Perhaps you can incentivise this with a discount when they bring a container in.
- For products that you have for sale - makeup, shampoos, treatments etc. - can you find options in glass or cardboard?
- Can you make the change to shampoo and conditioner bars or at least offer these for purchase?
- Consider local suppliers who can provide products with no or less packaging. (Plus, you're supporting local!)
- Consider renting equipment (office, kitchen, front of house) and check second-hand options before you go for something new.
- Consider moving to reusable hand towels in place of disposable paper ones. If this isn't an option, then buy ones that are made from 100% recycled materials.
- Consider industry collaboration. They may be your competitors but other businesses may be key to your success. Involve the big guys too. Can you buy in bulk, share resources and reduce packaging waste? Can you lobby suppliers to make the changes you want to see? There's strength in numbers and great PR to be had!



Credit: Daiga Ellaby, Unsplash

SALON ESSENTIALS



In addition to the packaging considerations mentioned, there are essential items in hair and beauty salons that may have zero waste alternatives and solutions to think about.

- Use and promote products from brands that prioritise sustainable packaging and environmentally friendly, cruelty free ingredients.
 - Foil is not the answer! **Paper Not Foil** strips, an alternative to foil, can be used multiple times before they break down or they can be used as weed mats or in compost. As the strips are stone based, they will degrade by UV into dust and will not emit greenhouse gases.
 - Sustainable Salons provide **options for recycling** when it comes to plastic items that can't go into your local kerbside recycling bin. They offer access to specialist recycling for items including foil, spray canisters, colour tubes and other aluminium items. Read about this [here](#).
 - Manage your stock levels to avoid having perishable items reach their expiry date.
- Use reusable towels, cloths, gloves and mitts for your beauty treatments in place of single-use wipes and cotton. Shop at reuse hubs or op shops for these items and give a longer life to existing products.
 - Move from plastic wax strips to fabric and give longer life to old sheets or rags by upcycling them as fabric strips.
 - Use reusable capes instead of single-use ones.
 - If you notice that your colour tubes or wax pots consistently have to be thrown away with product still inside, can you source alternative options that are a better size to minimise waste? You'll be saving money on products that otherwise might end up in landfill and which may have harmful chemicals in them.
 - For toilet paper or unavoidable paper towels, choose products made from 100% recycled materials.



Credit: Pixabay

IN THE SALON

Sustainable Salons partnered with industry leaders, [enrich360](#) and [Soilz Alive](#), to unearth the full potential of recycled hair as an additive material in fertiliser. The results exceeded expectations, finding that “human hair is a safe and pathogen-free compost material. The balanced level of micro & macro nutrients supports beneficial bacteria and enhances yield.” Talk to local composting experts to find out more about how you might be able to compost hair and the requirements around this, especially when thinking about coloured hair.

Have a look around your space and see what waste reduction measures can be taken, and where alternatives can be found. Here are a few things for you to consider:

- Move to digital. Whether it's booking confirmations, client registration forms or receipts and invoices, taking away paper reduces your printing and disposal/recycling costs. Digitise your brochures and price lists. It makes it easier to update when price changes come into effect, will minimise paper use and waste, and will cut down on printing and design costs.
- If you currently provide disposable slippers, consider putting an end to this. Communicate the change to your clients and encourage them to bring their own.
- If you offer tea, coffee, and other beverages to your clients, use loose tea and coffee granules that can be composted. Buy your milk in glass bottles and opt for refillable containers for items like sugar, tea and coffee.
- Many people these days will use their phone rather than reading print materials, so you may find you don't need as many magazines anymore. Rather than buying new ones, think about finding magazines or books from op shops or reuse hubs; when you're ready for a new supply of publications, take the ones you have back and find some more. Depending on the size of your business, could you remove print material altogether and have a tablet available for your clients if they would like to read online and don't have their own device?
- Have clearly marked rubbish and recycling in place with clear signs indicating what can and cannot go into each bin. Have a look at the [QLDC website](#) to make sure you know what materials you can recycle in the district and **check out these guidelines for tips on how set up effective rubbish and recycling stations.**
- Make sure everyone understands how to recycle electronic waste and batteries responsibly. Batteries cannot be placed into rubbish or recycling bins as they pose a significant fire risk to collection trucks and waste facilities. Refer to the **A-Z Rubbish and Recycling Directory** for information on how to recycle batteries and other electronic waste responsibly.



Credit: Robin Worrall

TELL YOUR STORY!

Beauty and hair salons build up loyal clienteles and people are always looking for sustainable options when it comes to purchasing and service decisions. Tell your story and become part of the change!

- Talk about your waste minimisation initiatives on social media and your website and optimise your SEO for key low waste, circular economy terms.
- Educate clients about the salon's sustainability efforts and encourage them to adopt similar practices.
- Tell your Regional Tourism Organisation (Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism) about what you're up to. Increasingly they are posting web blogs and stories about sustainable initiatives in the region.
- Promote your story to local media outlets. The local news apps have podcasts that showcase businesses in the region. There's nothing like waste minimisation and innovation to spark interest.
- Use your client booking confirmations and appointment reminders as a way to keep your zero waste commitments front and centre. Remind them to bring their own water bottles, coffee cups etc. What you do can inspire others, regardless of industry, to follow suit.

What is Sustainable Salons?

Watch and be inspired...



Credit: Adam Winger

SO MANY IDEAS, SO MANY QUESTIONS! WHERE SHOULD I LOOK NEXT?

Remember you're not alone and help is at hand! Here are some useful links to support you on your waste reducing journey:

- Take a look at this [general guide for businesses](#), which gives additional ideas on how to implement changes in the workplace with helpful links and resources.
- [Check out these other industry resource guides](#). You may find more ideas there to help you on the path to zero waste.
- You can find some rubbish and recycling signage on the QLDC website here: [QLDC - Waste Minimisation for Businesses](#).
- [Talk to Zero Waste champions in Aotearoa](#) like [Wastebusters](#), [Zero Waste Network NZ](#), [Sustainable Queenstown](#), [Zero Waste Glenorchy](#), [Wao](#), [Sustainable Business Network](#), and [WasteMINZ](#). Sign up to their newsletters, join their zero waste events and be part of the conversation.
- [Research your local composting options](#). Contact [Grow Wānaka](#), [Zero Waste Glenorchy](#) or [Sharewaste](#).
- [Go global. Green Salon Collective](#) has fantastic information on their site. Read more about hair mats for oil spills. Read [Nori's Eco Salon](#) story for ideas on how to reduce your waste and improve efficiencies. The [British Beauty Council](#) has launched a sustainable beauty coalition to reduce the industry's environmental impact and has a great [manifesto for change](#).
- Make good purchasing decisions using this [smart purchasing guide](#) to ask questions of your suppliers.
- Connect with other low-waste businesses via [circular economy directory](#) or [CiRCLR](#) - a simple B2B platform that encourages circular economies, which turns the existing cost of waste disposal into new revenue streams for businesses.
- Consider undertaking a [waste audit](#) - you can't take action if you don't know what you're dealing with. Waste audits connect you with zero waste experts who have the know-how to help you with simple and measurable waste solutions.
- Get back to basics. Find out who is offering [waste management services](#) in your area.
- Be inspired. Read [local case studies](#) to see what other businesses have done to reduce their waste.



Credit: Canyon Brewery

This guide was written by Wastebusters and designed by QLDC under the QLDC Zero Waste District Programme funding as part of the Resourceful Communities initiative.

Resourceful Communities aims to make the link between global work on the circular economy and local reduction and reuse activities.

The year-round programme inspires and supports behaviours that are part of the transition to a more circular economy.

Our aim is to help to build a culture where resources are valued and kept in use, and waste minimisation is the norm.

