

REDUCING YOUR WORKPLACE WASTE

A practical guide to help businesses towards zero waste

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

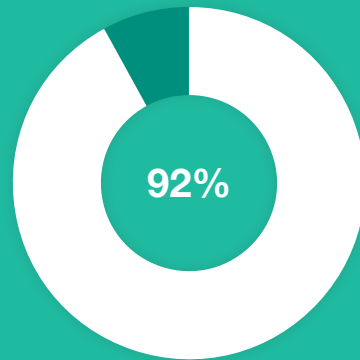
Let's talk waste...

The purpose of this guide is to enable businesses to think differently about the waste they are generating, and to empower them to make simple changes that will have a big impact.

Many businesses are time-poor which can make implementing changes seem difficult but, rest assured, it doesn't take much! It is often small changes or tweaks to current systems that can make a tangible difference. Work with zero waste experts and businesses of all sizes and from a wide range of industries has offered up steps and ideas that will get you on your way.

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

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.



92% of respondents said that waste reduction was important or very important to their business. The majority of respondents said that reducing their environmental impact was a key motivator to minimise waste.



Credit: Troy Tanner, Real NZ

WHY REDUCE YOUR WASTE?

We have no choice!

For every one bin of waste you put out on the kerb, 70 bins of waste were made upstream just to make the junk in that one bin you put out on the kerb. So even if we could recycle 100 percent of the waste coming out of our households, it doesn't get to the core of the problem. **The Story of Stuff** is essential reading and talks more to this.

Reducing waste makes sense!

It makes financial sense, environmental sense and it makes sense as an employer. Environmental sustainability is now a key part of doing business. Customers, employees and other stakeholders are all expecting and demanding more from organisations. There are numerous benefits besides reducing your environmental impact. These can include:

SAVING RESOURCES & REDUCING COSTS

By valuing resources, reusing and recycling, your business can save on purchasing and handling costs. Reducing your business waste leads to a direct decrease in waste disposal costs. For example, in most cases recycling services cost less than services sending your waste to landfill with ever increasing waste levy costs

Rather than the unsustainable linear model of “take-make-waste”, minimising waste creates a more **circular approach** where resources are kept in use for as long as possible. This ensures we can extract more value from existing resources and at the end of their useful life they can be repurposed or materials can be recovered.



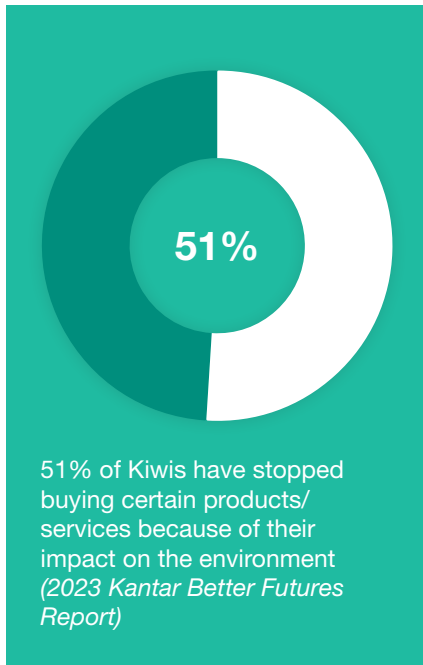
Credit: Ridgeline NZ

CUSTOMER PERCEPTION

People want to understand and feel good about what they are buying and who they are dealing with.

Sharing the story about your sustainability efforts improves your company's reputation and enhances your brand.

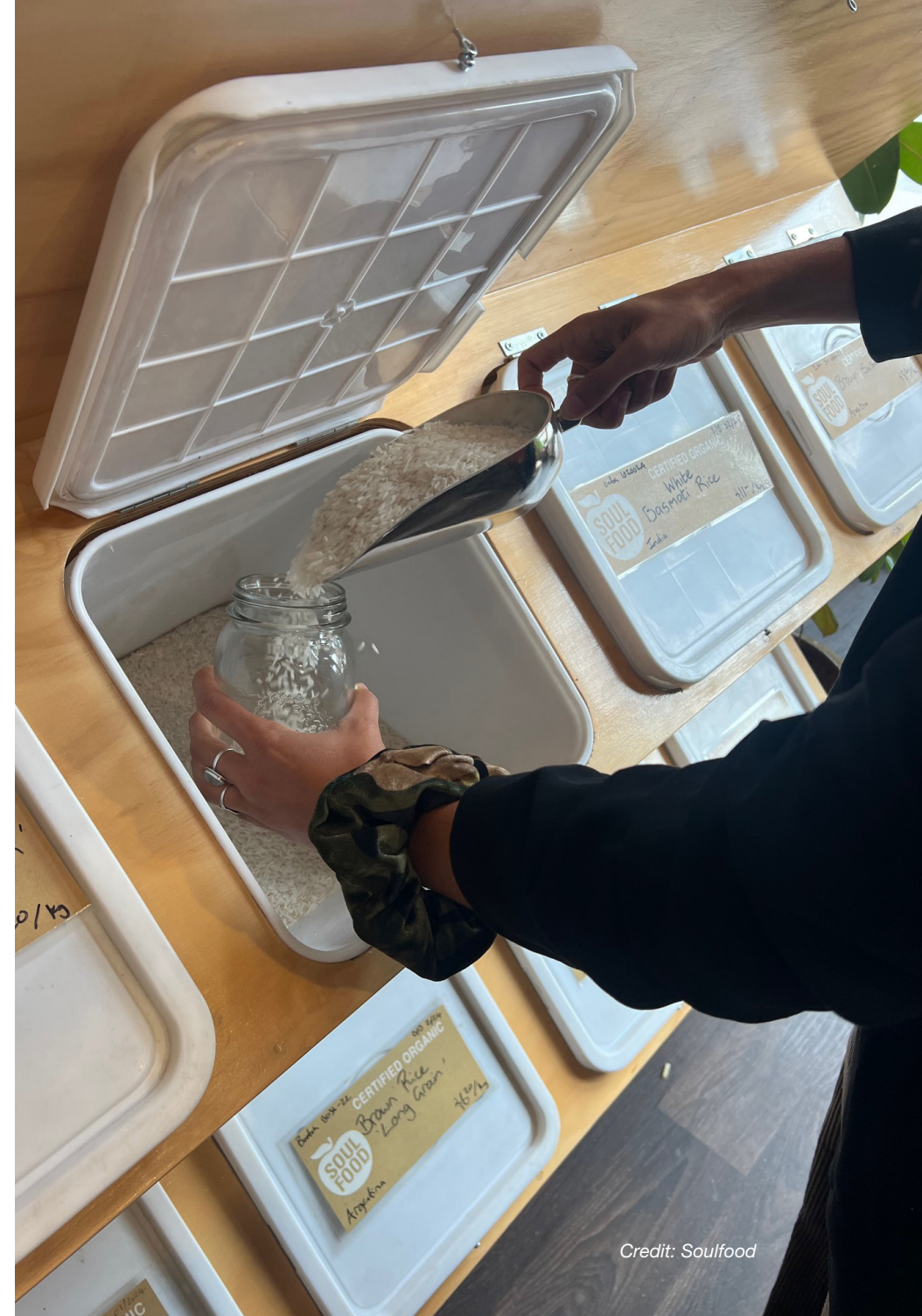
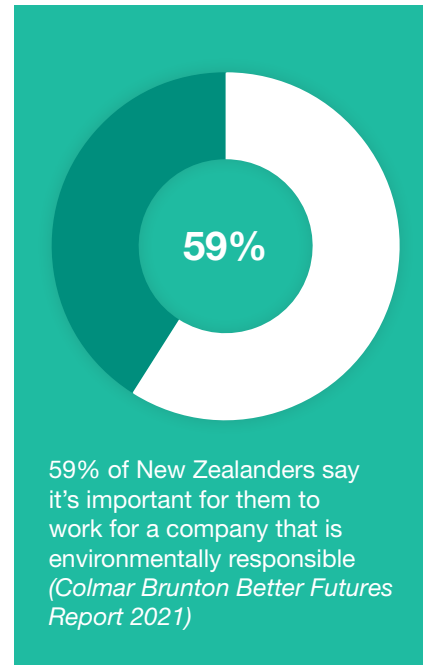
Additionally, by not implementing a circular approach to resources, you may lose customers who are looking for sustainable options.



GREATER EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Demonstrating that your organisation cares about sustainability can help attract and retain staff.

Involving staff in waste reduction efforts creates engagement within the workplace and enables them to communicate your values with more confidence to your customers, clients and stakeholders.



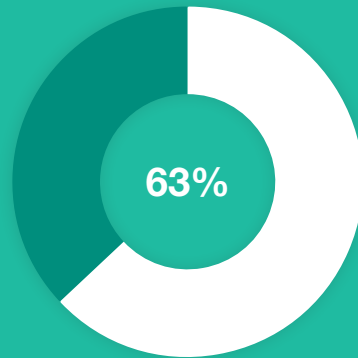
LEADING CHANGE

Modelling your values to colleagues, suppliers, customers and your staff can cause ripple effects that spread well beyond your business, inspiring and motivating other organisations to reconsider their own waste management practices.

The changes you make to minimise your organisation's waste will have a continuing impact, helping to normalise behaviour within your wider community and make sustainable choices more accessible.

Minimising waste can lead to new partnerships and creative solutions.

The **SUCfree** [single use cup free] campaign is a great local example of businesses coming together to lead change. Multiple cafes and caravans in Queenstown and Wānaka have now implemented cup-lending schemes or libraries and many are completely SUCfree, saving 180,000 cups from landfill annually in Wānaka alone.



Wastebusters' 2023 Resourceful Communities survey found that 63% of Wānaka respondents took their own cup always or usually (compared with a national figure of 17%). This transformative behaviour change has been driven through cafes taking ownership of their waste stream, supported by the campaign along with not-for-profit not-for-profit community enterprise **Plastic Free Wānaka**.



Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka

GETTING STARTED

Making a start can seem like the hardest part but it doesn't have to be. With a few simple steps, you'll be well on your way to seeing where changes can be made that will help reduce your business's waste.

Waste minimisation is about focusing on what you can do, one step at a time, to make change achievable and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Understanding your waste

To reduce your waste you need to know what your waste is and where your main waste streams are coming from.

This could be as easy as logging how many bins of waste your business produces over a fixed period of time and what the associated costs are. If you work with cleaning contractors, talk to them about how they can collect data and ask them for their thoughts and input.

You could conduct a walk-through waste inspection of your site. This will give you a snapshot of current processes and the waste created, where the opportunities are, and where to start.

A full waste audit by an external provider will measure and cost your waste in detail. Refer to the resource section for local waste audit service providers.

Business walk through

Take a walk around your business premises to get an understanding of the types of waste you are creating. What sort of bins do you have and who is doing the sorting, emptying? What are you currently paying for waste management? How much does your waste cost to dispose of each year?



Credit: Freepik

INVOLVE YOUR TEAM

Get your team onboard.

If you involve everyone from the outset, you'll find it much easier to implement changes and then communicate them. Your staff will have their own ideas so they will be able to offer up invaluable suggestions.

Giving them context around the 'why' is as important as helping them understand the 'how' of waste minimisation. Armed with this information they will be able to communicate your zero waste goals more confidently to clients, customers and suppliers.

You could also establish a team of motivated people who represent a cross section of the business, who want to lead the charge and report back on progress.

Can you incentivise behaviour change within your team that will reduce your business waste? A monthly zero waste morning tea shout for the team member who has generated the least amount of waste in that month?



Credit: Kiwi Harvest

GET PLANNING AND START MONITORING

Once you know what needs to be done, put a plan in place and make sure it's regularly reviewed and updated. Involve contractors, cleaners and suppliers as well as your own in-house teams. Incorporate your waste management strategies into your staff inductions and encourage all of your team to provide feedback on how you're tracking. Wastebusters has produced [a document](#) to help you communicate your waste policies to your staff, with content that you can use in your induction manuals.

Keeping track of the progress you're making is a great way to keep people engaged and motivated. Involve your team in day-to-day tracking. They will have the best idea of where your waste is coming from.

Linking waste minimisation to your business strategy and including it in your reporting will also help ensure long-term success.

In deciding where to start reducing your waste, here are some helpful questions to ask yourself:

What type of waste do we have the most volume of?

What bothers us or is a reputational risk?

What is something we can do right now?

What could make a difference but we're not able to complete it right now?

What waste provides us with an opportunity? e.g. We could sell it or give it away?

How can my waste management provider help me?

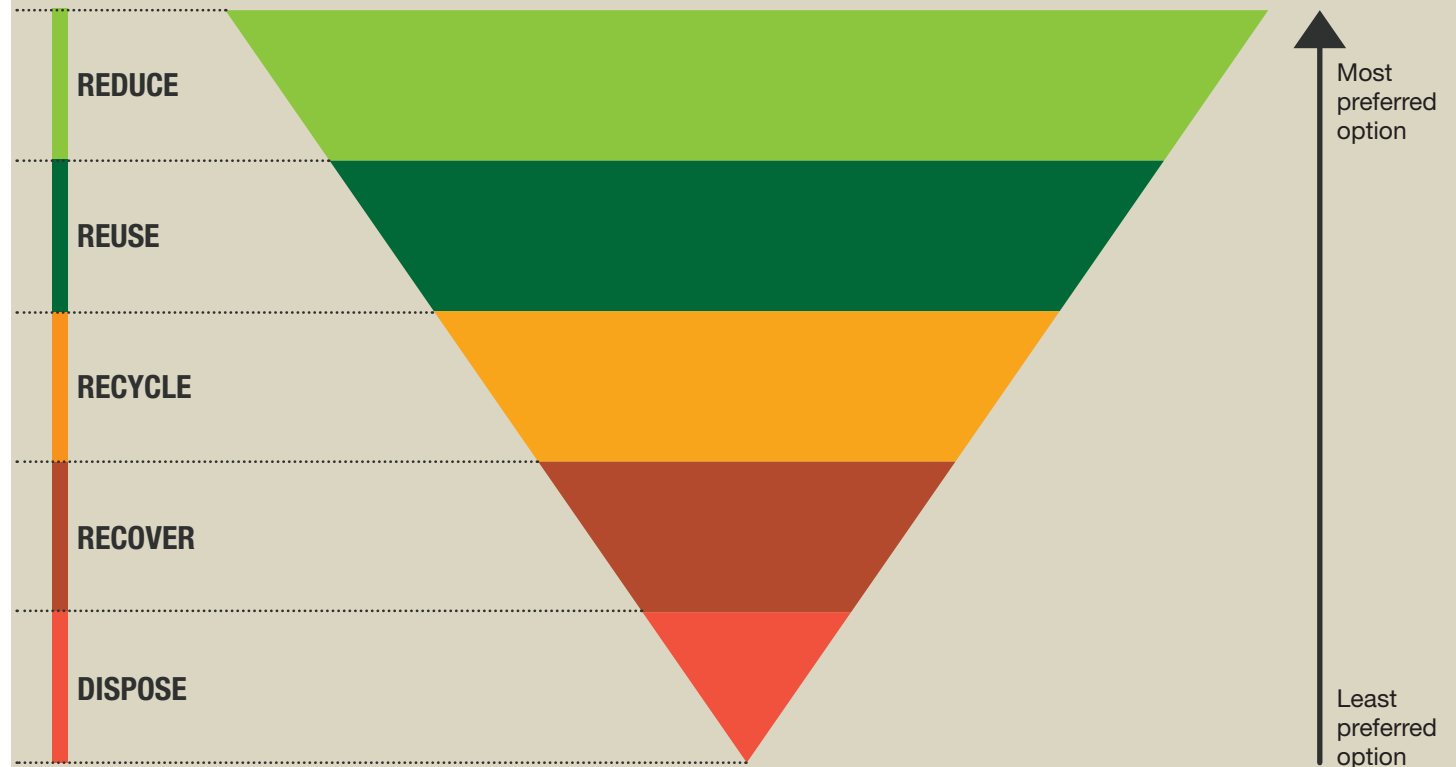


FOLLOW THE WASTE HIERARCHY

There are lots of different things businesses can do to minimise waste.

A great framework to help you get started is the **Waste Hierarchy**. Focusing our efforts at the top of the waste hierarchy is the easiest and most effective way to reduce waste. Sending items to landfill is the last resort.

Actions higher up the Waste Hierarchy have a greater impact on reducing your costs, carbon emissions and overall waste. Where possible, choose options which reduce and reuse materials before recycling. Talk with your recycling provider so you know exactly what materials can be recycled, then give them in a rinse before popping them in the right bin.



Recycling right means working together to provide clean, uncontaminated materials that can be made into something new.

Recycling is lower down in the waste hierarchy because it takes resources, time and energy to collect and process materials. Some materials, like glass bottles and aluminium cans are infinitely recyclable, while plastics and paper can only be recycled a limited number of times as their quality is reduced each time. Only materials with a sustainable end market demand can be recycled, so check with your recycling service provider to see what they accept.

Refuse

The most effective way to manage waste is to avoid it in the first place. Is there anything that you are providing or receiving that you can do without?

A FEW IDEAS:

Say no to unneeded extras like straws, serviettes, bags, soy sauce packets, or items that a supplier packages individually. As a retailer, avoid selling anything along these lines wherever possible.

Choose to receive email correspondence over printed mail where possible and opt-out of unwanted print databases.

Reduce

What steps can you take to reduce the quantity of waste that is being generated?

A FEW IDEAS:

Provide a 'library' of reusable crockery and containers that staff can use for takeaways instead of single-use cups, plates and cutlery.

Use refillable containers. Whether it's sauces, soap, cleaning products or pantry essentials, opt for products that can be refilled.

Replace your staff room coffee capsule machine with a plunger or machine that uses beans that can be composted.

Swap from buying milk in plastic bottles to buying it in glass swappa bottles or, for larger volumes, opt for a refillable keg service.

Buy in bulk to reduce packaging waste.

Swap paper towels for energy efficient hand dryers.

Go paperless.

Consider the types of materials you are using, are the products you need available in recyclable materials?

Can you rent, borrow or share items or equipment with others in your community?

Reuse

If it's not possible to avoid using and disposing of an item, consider if there is a way to reuse it. Is there another organisation or a charity that could reuse what you are going to dispose of, or can you re-gift something you will not use? Can you repair something instead of replacing it? Can you convert organic waste to compost to recharge the soil?

A FEW IDEAS:

Switch from disposable to reusable products e.g. refillable toner cartridges and whiteboard markers, reusable cups and hand towels.

Non-confidential, single-sided paper can be reused for notepaper. Used envelopes can be re-stickered.

Waste paper can be shredded and used for packaging or in compost.

Doing an office refit or have end of line stock? Ask local second hand shops or charities if they can rehome your unwanted office furniture and end of line products.

Use local exchange networks to source what you need and re-home what you don't.

Look at renting equipment (office, kitchen, front of house) over purchasing or look to buy second-hand first before you go for something new.

Recycle

Once you have taken all the steps to reduce and reuse your waste, the next option in the hierarchy is recycling. Here's what you need to do:

A FEW IDEAS:

Empty and clean your recycling so it's ready for your recycling bins. Work with your cleaners and waste collectors to monitor and manage recycling streams for contamination.

Make sure everyone knows what can be recycled in our district and understands where our recycling goes:

A-Z of recycling in the Queenstown Lakes

District. Here you'll find information about recycling electronics, engine oil and printer cartridges to name just three of many things.

There are a number of commercial waste providers who offer recycling services within the region: **Commercial Services** (qldc.govt.nz)

What else can we do?

FEED THE SOIL AND GROW MORE FOOD

Composted organic waste can be used to recharge the soil. If possible, set up a compost collection in the staff kitchen. If one of your team isn't able to take the organic waste or if you don't/can't have a compost or worm farm at your business, get in touch with community compost organisations such as **Sharewaste**, **Grow Wānaka** or **Zero Waste Glenorchy**.

Subsidised Bokashi bins are a great compost solution for smaller spaces and can also be purchased at **QLDC offices** or **Wānaka Wastebusters**.

Change is happening within our district!

Businesses in the Queenstown Lakes District are coming together at workshops and within their industry groups to tackle waste at source and demand changes from their suppliers. Just because you're not given alternative options from your suppliers, doesn't mean they're not there. Speak up, ask the questions and be part of the change!



Children at Queenstown Preschool and Nursery



Credit: Soul Food



Credit: Kiwi Harvest



Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka

BRING YOUR SUPPLIERS INTO THE CONVERSATION

Talk to your suppliers about their packaging.

Is it necessary? Is it easily recyclable? If not, what alternatives do they or others offer? E.g. could they use reusable pallet netting in place of plastic for your pallet deliveries?

Consider local suppliers who can provide products with no packaging.

Incorporate waste minimisation in your purchasing policy and include it in tender processes.

Request less packaging from your supplier, or an alternative type of packaging. Ask your supplier whether the product can be reused, recycled, or can be easily repaired. If your usual supplier can't help you, perhaps there are other suppliers who can.

They may be your competitors but other businesses may be key to your success. 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!



Credit: Windy Ridge

TAKING THE LEAD FROM OTHERS

Seeing what other businesses are doing can be just what's needed to get started. There are lots of businesses making long-term and practical changes to reduce their waste.

Wastebusters has developed case studies from waste audits they undertook with financial support from QLDC's waste minimisation fund. The studies detail the audits results, challenges, and actions of the businesses. You can view the full archive on the [Wastebusters website](#).



Credit: Troy Tanner, Real NZ

CELEBRATING YOUR SUCCESS

Celebrating your success and sharing your story will help embed waste minimisation as a way of doing business for your organisation.

Celebrate with your staff. Highlight the actions they're taking and the results they are achieving. Ensure waste minimisation priorities and measures are reported in all relevant meetings and documents.

Bring your customers and suppliers with you on the journey and celebrate them when they make changes too. Tell others about who is helping you create less waste – it can be as simple as tagging them in a social media post. SUCfree cafés post photos of customers who have brought in their own cups. It's an easy message to convey but it has impact and is far-reaching.



Credit: Plastic Free Wānaka

LINKS AND RESOURCES

Remember you're not in this alone and help is at hand!

INDUSTRY RESOURCE GUIDES

Have a look at this growing library of industry specific guides to help businesses on their path to zero waste. Even if your industry isn't listed, you might find some ideas that you can implement within your organisation. [Hyperlink to the resource guides page when ready](#)

BACK TO BASICS

Find out who is offering [waste management & recycling services in your area](#) (QLDC). Ask your waste management service for your recycling stats and where your recycling goes.

WHAT CAN BE RECYCLED IN QUEENSTOWN LAKES?

For recycling processed at the Frankton Materials Recovery Facility, [check out QLDC website](#). For recycling processed by Wastebusters see their [recycling page](#). For alternative reuse and recycling options, delve into the district's A-Z Rubbish & Recycling Directory.

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. [Takeaway Throwaways](#) offers ideas on how hospitality businesses can transition towards zero waste.

CONSIDER UNDERTAKING A WASTE AUDIT

You can't take action if you don't know what you're dealing with.

MAKE GOOD PURCHASING DECISIONS, using this [smart purchasing guide](#) to talk to 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.

[THE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK \(SBN\)](#) is a fantastic forum for businesses that are interested in sustainable development practice, events and networking. Assess the sustainability of your business and your suppliers with [these tools](#).

[MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT](#) to see what the government is doing about waste.

[WASTEMINZ](#) is the largest representative body of the waste and resource recovery sector in New Zealand.

[BETTER FUTURES](#) - a free resource that provides key insights into consumer perspectives on sustainability and the social and environmental issues that are important to kiwis.

[ZERO WASTE NETWORK](#) is composed of various groups around the country all working with their local community towards Zero Waste. They offer training and have freely downloadable resources on their website.

[REUSE AOTEAROA](#) - an independent organisation dedicated to building the momentum and capability to scale reusable packaging systems in Aotearoa.

[GENLESS](#) is supported by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority, a government agency dedicated to moving New Zealand towards clean and clever energy use.

[ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS](#), a guide for traders: [Commerce commission](#)

[WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS?](#) - [business.govt.nz](#)



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 programme is designed to engage our communities in waste minimisation,

inspire behaviours that are part of the transition to the circular economy, and help to build a culture where resources are valued and kept in use, and minimising waste is the norm.

Special thanks to Waipa District Council, Waikato District Council, Waikato Regional Council and Hamilton City for allowing the recreation of their Reducing your Workplace Waste guide.

