



Tips and hints

- A waste audit is a great way to illustrate areas for improvement in a school.
- It's important to record information from a waste audit: take lots of photos and make notes of observations and share with the whole school.
- Repeat waste audits at a later date is a good way to show if the actions undertaken have led to improvements.
- Having student teams engaged in the audit helps make them advocates for targeting appropriate and effective messages to the rest of the student body.
- Support from the facilities manager and school leadership team is essential for rethinking the waste management strategy.
- Presenting waste audit findings at staff meetings or school assemblies is a great way to highlight the problems and increase support.



Contact Actsmart Schools if you would like assistance to conduct a waste audit:
actsmart@act.gov.au

case study



Daramalan College Waste audit case study



Profile

Daramalan College is an independent co-educational Catholic college located in Dickson, ACT. Established in 1962, the college has 1400 students (Y7-Y12).

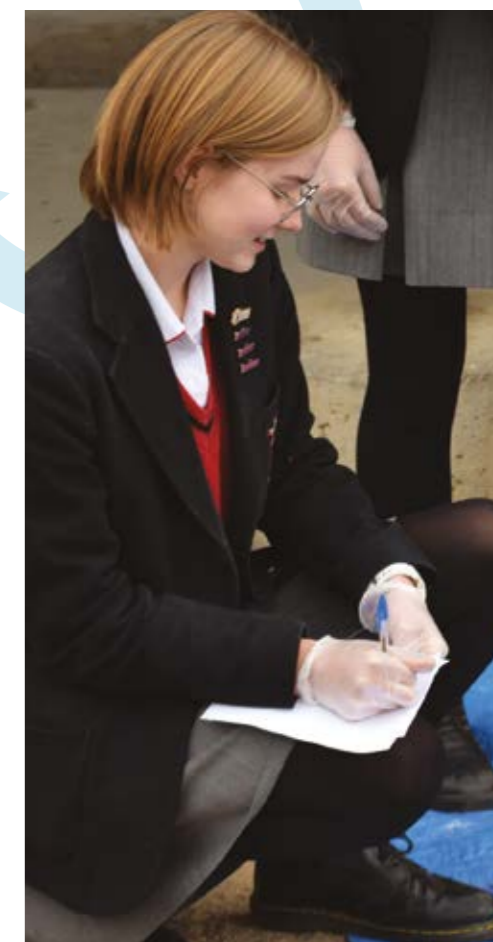
Background

Like most colleges, Daramalan has struggled with contamination in its bins. At times mixed recycling has been so contaminated that the waste company refused to pick it up! Mixed recycling bins have only recently been reintroduced into the outdoor areas and set up in well signed stations.

Why do the waste audit?

The college has an active student environment team who were keen to conduct an audit of an outdoor waste station to illustrate the issue of contamination to the rest of the school community. They wanted to use the findings to educate and engage the students and teachers on how to improve their recycling habits.

The Actsmart Schools Waste Education Officer assisted the students to conduct the audit.



The audit

The bin audit was conducted immediately after school, the day before the bins were to be picked up by the waste contractor. This represented three days of waste.

Wearing gloves and closed-in shoes, the students used tongs to sort a waste station with a 240L landfill bin and a 240L mixed recycling bin. The students quickly realised that the bin station included waste brought into the college from local shops by senior students who were able to leave the campus during the day. Understanding this helped the environment team tailor their communication of audit results.

One student took photos and videoed the audit. A photo of all bins was taken prior to the audit and a visual estimation of the fullness of each bin recorded. The landfill bin was estimated to be 80% full prior to the audit. Sorting the bin showed that more than half the contents was recyclable.

The mixed recycling bin was estimated to be 75% full prior to the audit. Sorting the contents of this bin showed that 15% was contaminated and should have been placed in the landfill bin.

The waste was re-sorted into the proper bins after the audit (see diagram):

- The landfill bin was estimated to be 25% full (down from 80%).
- The mixed recycling bin was 105% full (up from 75%).

Following the audit the college's Sustainability Coordinator presented the findings to the staff. It had a major impact!

Many staff participated in, and encouraged students to join in the 'Clean Up Dara Day' which occurred the week after the audit, and requested a copy of the audit information to share with their students.



Before and after the audit

Challenges

- Using data and observations from the waste audit to improve waste management at the school.
- Create lasting behaviour change by showing the difference between knowing the issues and taking action to address them.

Results and benefits

- A new staff environment committee was formed to continue recycling improvements. Science Teacher, Simon Aylott, stated "[the] bin audit was a really engaging way to find out facts about our school's waste and recycling, and it seems to have got the right kind of conversation happening."
- Sharing the audit results helped to increase student engagement, with many more students participating during lunchtime clean-ups.
- The audit showed that a large amount of recyclable material placed in the landfill bin came from local food outlets. It also showed that much of the landfill waste consisted of uneaten fruit, unopened snack packets and untouched sandwiches. These findings allowed the student team to target the sorting habits of senior students and address food wastage.
- The results of the audit encouraged the team to run an inaugural Nude Food Day. They held a poster competition to promote the day and sold beeswax wraps. A bin audit undertaken a week before Nude Food Day, on the day of the event and a week later, found a reduction in waste.
- With the renewed interest in waste management, the college engaged the Actsmart Public Events team to provide recycling at the college's athletics carnivals and Chevalier Day (whole-school community day), resulting in the college being nominated for an Actsmart Business Award.
- **The college has reduced the size of their landfill skip from 4.5m³ to 3m³, resulting in a cost saving to the school.**
- The College won the 2017 Actsmart Mobile Round Up (15.05 kgs of mobile phones collected).

