

# MINISTERIAL BRIEF

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ACT Legislative Assembly

Reducing commercial waste going to landfill in Canberra by improving the waste management practices of micro businesses.

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# Table of Contents

- Introduction ..... 1
  - 1. Background .....1
    - No Waste by 2010 Strategy*..... 1
- Details of Brief ..... 2
  - 2. Key Issues.....2
    - Trends in Canberra's Waste to Landfill*.....2
    - Micro Businesses in Canberra*.....2
- Conclusion ..... 3
  - 3. Recommendations.....3
    - Recommendation 1 – Education Targeted Specifically at Micro Businesses*.....3
    - Recommendation 2 – Municipal Commercial Waste Recycling Bins for Micro Business Communities* ..... 4
    - Recommendation 3 – Increased Price Regulations for Unsorted Waste Disposal* ..... 4
  - 4. Further Information .....4



# Introduction

## 1. Background

### No Waste by 2010 Strategy

The *No Waste by 2010 Strategy* was developed to set the vision and future directions for waste management in the Australian Capital Territory and was released as a framework in 1996. The *No Waste by 2010 Strategy* aims to achieve a waste free society by 2010 through the combined efforts of industry, Government and community working co-operatively to achieve sustainable waste management outcomes.



Figure 1 - Hierarchy for waste management.  
Source: A Waste Management Strategy for Canberra:  
No Waste by 2010, 1996, p8

Current strategies as part of the *No Waste by 2010 Strategy* have led to the successful reduction in the volume of household waste to landfill in Canberra, however there is still a need for improvements to the waste management policies currently being implemented.

To achieve the objectives of the *No Waste by 2010 Strategy*, there needs to be an increased focus on improving the waste management practices of businesses, specifically micro businesses, as commercial waste still accounts for the largest proportion of waste to landfill.

By implementing appropriate strategies as outlined in this brief to improve the waste management practices of micro businesses, the contribution that the business sector in Canberra makes to landfill will be substantially reduced. These strategies should be included in the new action plan currently being developed for 2007-2010 and will allow the ACT to continue to be a world leader in the field of sustainable resource management.

# Details of Brief

## 2. Key Issues

### Trends in Canberra's Waste to Landfill

Since 1996, Canberra's waste to landfill has steadily decreased and there has been a significant increase in resource recovery levels, however total waste on both a tonnage and per capita basis has increased. In 2002/03 commercial and industrial waste (excluding builder's spoil) still accounted for approximately 47 percent of waste to landfill. (Source: *No Waste by 2010 Action Plan 2004-2007*).

Although the previous *No Waste by 2010 Strategy* actions plans have successfully implemented a Business Waste Challenge and introduced the Ecobusiness principles to actively engage the Canberra business sector, many of these strategies have by-passed Canberra's micro businesses.

### Micro Businesses in Canberra

Micro businesses (which we will define as being those with 10 employees or less) are typically heterogeneous, and are often owner operated or family businesses. Many of these businesses are not linked with industry associations nor do they communicate voluntarily with government agencies. Micro businesses usually have very immediate concerns regarding cash flows and often do not have the human or financial resources to implement what they perceive as "unprofitable" waste management practices ("win-lose" situations). In Canberra, many of these businesses are located at local shopping centres or in industrial areas, which presents some unique opportunities to improve waste management practices.

# Conclusion

## 3. Recommendations

The first two recommendations outlined below are designed incorporate the voluntary co-operation and participation of micro businesses in becoming more actively involved in sustainable waste management practices.

The third recommendation is designed as a regulatory tool should the first two policies not be sufficient in achieving an appropriate level of waste to landfill.

All recommendations aim to encourage micro businesses to reduce waste and divert recyclable materials.

### Recommendation 1 – Education Targeted Specifically at Micro Businesses

1. A media campaign (television, newspapers and radio) to encourage the voluntary participation of micro businesses and increase awareness.
2. Improved communication with Canberra micro businesses maintained by advice and support services, including a phone support line (as part of Canberra Connect) and a web site (as part of a revamped ACT NOWaste Web Site).
3. Local free workshops which include:
  - an analysis of current waste management practices;
  - appropriate practical examples and case studies from previous waste management success stories or winners of the No Waste Awards.
4. Support materials specifically targeted at micro businesses:
  - booklets, guides and education packs;
  - free printed recycling posters;
  - lists of alternative waste recycling options such as <http://www.recyclingnearyou.com.au/>
5. Encouragement for micro businesses to participate in the current No Waste Awards by the introduction of two new categories: "micro business" and "local business region".

## Recommendation 2 – Municipal Commercial Waste Recycling Bins for Micro Business Communities

1. Provision of municipal recycling bins or hoppers for micro businesses at specific regional locations around Canberra.
2. These commercial recycling collection services to be located at local shopping centres or at a specific location for micro businesses in industrial estates.
3. Trials to be conducted over six months at one industrial estate and at three local shopping centres, with a review and analysis regarding further implementation.

## Recommendation 3 – Increased Price Regulations for Unsorted Waste Disposal

1. Increase in the current price of the disposal of unsorted commercial waste sent to landfill to further encourage the recycling of materials.
2. Increase in fines for dumping to discourage illegal dumping as a result of the increased price regulations for unsorted waste disposal.

## 4. Further Information

ACT NOWaste Web Site

<http://www.nowaste.act.gov.au/>

ACT Commissioner for the Environment – No Waste Progress Report

<http://www.environmentcommissioner.act.gov.au/specialreports/nowasteprogress>