

Reducing waste at Bunnings Warehouse, Stoke – a Case Study

Background

In 2011 Waste Education Services (WES), part of the Nelson Environment Centre (NEC) and funded by Nelson City Council (NCC), worked with team members at Bunnings Warehouse to consider ways to reduce waste from their store in Stoke. Considerable effort has already been made by Bunnings to reduce levels of waste going to landfill but it was agreed that further support would be beneficial to drive the programme forward and consider the next steps.

The Challenge

- To further reduce the amount of waste going to landfill
- To improve waste management systems and cost efficiencies at the store
- To move from an emphasis on recycling to an emphasis on reducing waste generated at the site
- For all team members to take responsibility for waste reduction in their area

The Process

- A visual waste audit was undertaken by WES with support from Bunnings in March 2011 - the audit provided a snapshot of waste generated by the store on an average day.
- A walk-through of the store was also undertaken to better understand the flow of waste through the various departments and store as a whole.
- The above activities along with baseline statistics provided by Bunnings regarding landfill and recycling rates indicated that there were a number of actions that could be taken to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill further.
- A report with recommendations was submitted to Bunnings, Stoke to support them in their journey of waste reduction

The Results (up to November 2011)

- Good progress has been made in reusing and recycling waste from the store and reducing the amount of waste going to landfill
- Many items destined for landfill are now donated to local charitable organisations and schools for reuse
- The store now recycles a wide range of materials

Implementing Change

- A team member, Margaret Tolley, is allocated time to develop and maintain waste management systems with support from others
- Implementation of recommendations was staggered over time to help staff adapt to new practices and systems

- Some 'easy wins' were implemented before more difficult changes were attempted

Waste Reduction Initiatives at Bunnings, Stoke

- Improved sorting and separation of recyclable materials from the general waste by some members of the team has reduced the incidence of recyclable materials going to landfill.
- Clearly labeled recycling bins are located in the Café area for glass and plastics (1-7) – these are well used by members of the public and team members.
- Bins for recycling plastics (1-7), cardboard, paper, metal cans and glass are located in the main team room for individual team members to use. Team members are encouraged to take any items that are non-recyclable back home with them.
- Bunnings provides a collection box for old fluorescent bulbs, which is free to all members of the public to use. This is located at their customer services desk.
- Large cardboard boxes are recycled via cages in the back storage area and are picked up on a regular basis. Smaller cardboard boxes are made available to members of the public to use instead of biodegradable plastic bags. No non-recyclable plastic bags are provided by Bunnings.
- Old disused plant pots are donated to a number of local charitable organisations including Waimarama and Victory Community Gardens for reuse. Members of the public are also welcome to ask for some.
- Untreated wooden pallets are taken to Wholesale Landscapes for conversion to boiler fuel. Members of the public are also welcome to ask for these if they wish to use them in their own gardens etc.
- Unsold plants are donated to a number of local charitable organisations and schools including House 44 and Hampden Street School.
- Shredded office paper is also available for collection by members of the public should this be required e.g. for composting or animal bedding purposes.

Future areas for development

Considerable progress has already been made. Areas for future consideration include:

- Greater education of team members to improve knowledge and use of established reuse and recycling systems, and more information provided to team members on how the store is performing against waste reduction targets

Bunnings is keen to welcome any interested businesses to tour the warehouse in Stoke and find out more about these and other environmentally friendly initiatives that have been implemented. Please contact Bronwyn Pownall to arrange a suitable time to visit on 03 547 1640.