

Recycle wood pallets and save

Recycled wood and timber can be converted into mulch or animal bedding, yet broken or damaged wooden pallets often end up in landfill.

A recent audit of commercial and industrial waste streams by DECCW found 13 per cent of the total material going to landfill was wood¹.

The benefits of recycling

Recycling wood and timber saves unnecessary logging of our forests, conserving a valuable living resource. By removing used timber from going into the waste bin your business could benefit from a reduced total waste disposal charge. Your business may also be able to reuse the material or sell the better pieces of this salvaged timber.

Australia's National Timber Product Stewardship Group currently has an initiative to double the recovery of post-consumer timber and wood products to one million tonnes per year by 2017².



Photo: Stephen Mitchell

Multiple uses for recycled wood or timber

Wood or timber that is not chemically treated or painted can be reused for a tremendous range of applications, including construction and furniture making. In NSW, several specialist firms recycle salvaged timber and sound old wooden doors, windows, flooring and other building material.

Old pallets and other timber can be recycled into useful products like mulch, animal bedding, building products – such as particleboard – biofilters and even renewable bioenergy³.

Simple ways to save wood waste costs

Think in terms of the waste hierarchy. How can you avoid, reduce, reuse or recycle wood?

- Avoid** → **Do we need it?**
- Reduce** → **Do we need so much?**
- Reuse** → **Can we use it again?**
- Recycle** → **Can someone else use it or convert it into something new?**

1 DECCW (2010). *Commercial and industrial waste in Sydney*, <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/warr/CommercialIndustrialWaste.htm>

2 National Timber Products Stewardship Group (2010). <http://www.timberstewardship.org.au/general-about-us/about-us.html#who-we-are>

3 National Timber Products Stewardship Group (2010). *Recycling wood pallets and packaging*, http://www.timberstewardship.org.au/images/pdf_documents/wood_packaging_recycling_brochure_final.pdf



AVOID

Consider using pallets made from plastic instead of wood. These are easier to handle, last longer and are 100 per cent recyclable. Negotiate an exchange network for standard pallets with your customers and suppliers.

Your business should refuse to accept products packed in non-standard or damaged pallets. It will be hard to find someone to accept these non-standard pallets when you want to dispose of them.



REDUCE

Order timber pre-cut to the required size for your production to minimise timber off-cuts and wastage on projects.



REUSE

You can significantly increase the life and safe use of timber pallets by maintaining them regularly and fixing any damaged boards straight away.

Consider adapting unused or under-utilised wooden furniture and fittings for new purposes. For example, large old wooden desks can be converted into tables.

Other timber can be reused for concrete pours, garden edging, staking plants and some building applications.



RECYCLE

Go to BusinessRecycling.com.au to find a local recycling service provider. Recyclers may charge to collect wood or timber. But if the wood is clean, sorted and of good quality, recycling it could save the business money.

Ask your recycling service for staff training signs and information about innovative systems for storage or processing. Put up signs so that staff will know where they can recycle or store wood waste.

It is important that your staff understands what wood or timber products can or cannot be recycled and how it should be prepared. Here are some more tips:

- Painted, coated and preservative treated products may contain toxic components, so they are often sent to landfill. However non-chemically treated wood can generally be recycled.
- Remove material attached to otherwise useful timber which limits its reuse value. These contaminants can include nails, metal connectors, plaster board, plastic wrapping, oils, dirt, sand, laminates (including some plywoods), edge bandings, glue and resins.
- Some recyclers will take back damaged pallets and replace them with reconditioned pallets for a low charge.
- Wooden office furniture that is no longer suitable for your needs can be sold second hand or donated to charity shops.

Help build a market for used timber. Where practical request it and use it yourself around the business and at home. Inform customers or clients about your recycling efforts and use it to publicise your business.

Be prepared to give clean and uncontaminated wood away free of charge. Sawdust can be donated to people who use it for mulch, compost or animal bedding. By recycling wood and timber you can save on waste disposal costs and help preserve the environment.

For further information

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