

BIN TRIM IS SUPPORTING EARLY WASTE EDUCATION



Case Study

Recycling is child's play



The Bin Trim program helped Illawarra Area Child Care with three important goals: becoming more sustainable, providing educational opportunities for children and reducing running costs.

“As a community-owned, not-for-profit organisation, we’d much rather use money for the children’s education than for taking rubbish away.”

Kathryn Barker
Illawarra Area Child Care

Illawarra Area Child Care

Illawarra Area Child Care Ltd (IACC) is a community-owned, not-for-profit organisation that manages 11 early childhood education and care services across the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions. It also runs a registered training organisation specialising in early childhood training, providing services throughout Australia. It also runs ECTARC, a registered training organisation providing services throughout Australia.

Sustainability is a core value for this organisation, due to its commitment to the environment but also as part of its compliance with a National Quality Standard for early childhood education and care centres. To comply with this standard, centres must not only embed sustainability into their day-to-day operations, they must help children learn about environmental responsibility. IACC is also dedicated to minimising costs so its fees remain as affordable as possible for families.

How Bin Trim Helped

When a volunteer board member mentioned the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Bin Trim program, the organisation jumped at the chance to find out more. Funded by the NSW Government, Bin Trim helps businesses identify simple actions to reduce their waste and boost profits. Through Bin Trim, eligible businesses can access a free waste assessment and apply for a financial rebate to help with the cost of purchasing recycling equipment.



This project is a NSW Environment Protection Authority Waste Less, Recycle More initiative funded from the waste levy.
epa.nsw.gov.au/bintrim



“I’d definitely recommend Bin Trim to others. It’s a way of building on what you’ve already begun. Or, if you haven’t started to implement sustainable practices, this is an easy and effective place to start.”

Kathryn Barker
Illawarra Area Child Care

Advice and financial assistance from the Bin Trim program has helped IACC with three important goals: becoming more sustainable, providing educational opportunities for children and reducing running costs.

With 220 full-time and part-time employees, 11 fully utilised centres filled with children, an educational training facility plus a head office, IACC produces a variety of waste across its various locations.

After contacting the EPA Bin Trim team, a Bin Trim assessor visited the sites and worked directly with IACC to complete a step-by-step waste assessment. This helped to identify the waste management processes, issues and opportunities at each location.

The assessment revealed a range of waste challenges, including:

- Staff had different understandings about what re-use and recycling mean, and what can or can’t be re-used and recycled.
- Food waste was an issue across all 11 centres, both where food was prepared on site and where children brought in their own food.

The numbers

- Bin Trim rebate: \$1026
- New equipment:
 - 3 x 165-litre commercial worm farms
 - 6 x 220-litre compost bins
 - 26 x 40-litre multisort bins and lids
- 8 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill each year
- \$3000 savings in waste costs each year.

The benefits



Less waste going to landfill



Lower waste removal costs



More re-use and recycling



Purchase of recycling equipment



Increased achievement of sustainability goals



Improved green spaces



Improved staff training



Higher staff morale



Better service for customers



Above: Nicole Walsh (educator) and volunteer 'compost commando' feed the worms.
Right: Mandy Knox (educator) preparing vegetables from the centre's gardens for children's meals.

- Some resources were misused or missing. For example, in the head office, individual desk bins were being used for general waste and few recycling bins were available.
- Paper waste was also a common issue across the organisation.

The Bin Trim assessor worked with IACC to plan practical and effective solutions to these waste challenges. The assessor was also able to provide advice about how to apply for a Bin Trim rebate to help fund the purchase of new recycling equipment.

Following this advice, the organisation introduced a variety of simple but highly effective solutions to address its waste issues:

- Staff were educated about best practices for re-use and recycling.
- Staffroom and individual office desk bins were removed and replaced with centralised office bins, purchased with help from a Bin Trim rebate.
- Additional large recycling bins were organised for council collections.
- To manage food waste, worm farms and compost bins were purchased and installed at all 11 centres, with help from a Bin Trim rebate. Staff were provided with information and support to help set up and use the worm farms and compost bins effectively.

Results

Through its participation in the Bin Trim program, IACC has achieved some excellent results, with benefits extending beyond the project's initial scope:

- IACC expects to reduce waste sent to landfill by 8 tonnes a year, or 39 tonnes over five years. The lower waste disposal costs have reduced the centres' running costs.



Above: 'Water warriors' ensure the plants in the centre grow
 Right: James Quinn (educator) and the 'recycle rangers' help to sort paper

- Through better sorting, and through use of the worm farms and compost bins, food and paper waste are now recycled and re-used instead of going to landfill.
- The compost and 'worm wee' is used on the centres' gardens. The healthy, beautiful gardens are benefiting from a resource that would otherwise have ended up in landfill.
- Staff are now more thoughtful about how much paper they use, and where there might be opportunities to print less, reducing both printing costs and paper waste. For example, training facility staff are moving away from paper-based assessment to online assessment. Where paper is used, any waste is sorted into the recycling bins purchased through the Bin Trim rebate.
- Some staff have become 'sustainability champions' and help by being alert to waste and by starting conversations about practices that could be improved.
- These initiatives have enabled the children at the centres to become more engaged and involved in sustainable activities. The children willingly do jobs on a daily basis such as being 'water warriors' or 'compost commandos', and this provides active opportunities to learn about sustainability.
- Further waste reductions have also been made by encouraging parents to provide less packaged food and to use less cling film by giving children 'nude food' in their lunchboxes. The children are also educating their parents about what can be re-used and recycled at home.

Take action

Could your business save on waste?

Register your interest to join 22,000 businesses recycling more through the Bin Trim program.

Visit

www.epa.nsw.gov.au/bintrim

Email

Bin.Trim@epa.nsw.gov.au

Call

131 555

(ask for the Business Recycling Unit)

NSW Environment Protection Authority

Email: info@epa.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

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