

case study

Circulate, NSW EPA Industrial Ecology



Wood into Plastic REMONDIS Thornton, NSW

Industrial Ecology facilitators for the Hunter region, WildBlue Global Consulting, identified opportunities for a food processing company to recycle their hard plastic and excess wooden pallets that were previously being sent to landfill, resulting in costs savings of approximately \$45,000 per annum.

Background

Industrial Ecology facilitators in the Hunter region, WildBlueGlobal Consulting, hosted three network breakfasts to provide waste generators the opportunity to connect with businesses who could transport and/or process their waste. These events highlighted considerable scope to address the large volume of wood within the Hunter region being sent to landfill.

WildBlueGlobal decided to host another network breakfast focusing specifically on wood diversion opportunities in the region. Among the participants was a major local food processor who was seeking a solution to the issue of excess timber pallets accumulating on their small site.

REMONDIS, engaged participants in the NSW EPA Industrial Ecology program, Circulate, have managed the food processors' waste disposal contract for several years. REMONDIS were keen to work with their customer to improve their recycling and to provide alternative waste disposal options. For the food processor, lack of time, awareness and impetus were the main barriers to landfill diversion to date.

Situation

WildBlue Global Consulting identified a number of issues to resolve at this food processing site:

- The business was very busy and waste disposal was not at the top of the agenda.
- Employees were not appropriately trained or qualified to identify recycling opportunities.
- The site lacked space for additional recycling bins.

The waste disposal profile at this food processing site:

- Paper and cardboard were being recycled.
- All other waste streams were being sent to landfill.
- Excess wooden pallets were problematic.

Photo: The program identified recycling opportunities for hard plastics and excess wooden pallets.

Over 200 tonnes per annum of hard plastics were being disposed as general waste.



Typical disposal costs of general mixed waste in this area is \$225 per tonne.



Hard plastic disposal was costing the food processor \$45,000 per annum.

Solution

Through discussions between the food processor and REMONDIS, initiated at the 'wood waste' network breakfast, REMONDIS has been able to assist the food processor separate and recycle their hard plastic waste as well as their wood pallets.

By drawing generators of wood waste together at the network breakfast to discuss issues surrounding source separation, contamination, aggregation and processing as well as efforts to raise awareness of potential end markets for wood, new pathways have been developed.

Outcomes

In raising the profile of commercial and industrial waste, the Industrial Ecology project has broadened business awareness of the issues and opportunities. It has put recycling back on the agenda for businesses that would otherwise let it remain on the back burner.

In doing so, it has also reduced the costs for the businesses involved and provided work opportunities for the recycling companies.

- 200 tonnes of hard plastic waste produced by the food processor is now being recycled and diverted from landfill, resulting in a cost saving of approximately \$45,000.
- New pathways have been developed for potential end markets for wood waste.
- Increased business awareness and staff competency.
- Outstanding partnership between business and waste service provider to improve efficiencies, reduce waste and increase cost savings.

WildBlueGlobal Consulting

WildBlueGlobal is an environmental management and education consultancy involved in helping businesses improve their use of resources (e.g. energy, water, raw materials) and to minimize their waste and its' impacts.

For several years, WildBlue have been working with State and Federal government programs, providing consulting services to medium and large businesses across NSW and Australia.



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Circulate, NSW EPA Industrial Ecology

Over four years, Circulate, NSW EPA Industrial Ecology seeks to engage with 1000 medium-to-large enterprises to establish approximately 100 industrial ecology projects. During this period the program is targeting 160,000 tonnes of landfill diversion and \$21 million dollars in additional income and/or savings for participating businesses. The program will focus on the recovery of wastes currently being sent to landfill.

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