



## **‘Bin there, Done that’**

A guide to removing waste bins from your office.

## Introduction

Do you really need a waste bin under your desk? Audits on Monash University campuses have shown that approximately 40% of our waste stream to landfill is still reusable or recyclable. Although the range of materials that can be recycled continues to increase, individual waste bins under desks discourage the use of our recycling systems.

### What is the 'Bin there, Done that' project?

Acknowledging that individual waste bins are becoming redundant, the 'Bin there, Done that' project replaces individual waste bins under desks with individual paper recycling boxes, a small desktop bin for tissues, wrappers etc. and a co-mingled central recycling station including a landfill bin for non-recyclable waste. At Monash University, 'Bin there, Done that' has already been implemented in:

- Centre for Health Economics (Clayton)
- Chemical Engineering (Clayton)
- Facilities and Services (Clayton)
- Human Resources (Clayton)
- ITS Web Research and Development (Clayton)
- Monash Health Research Precinct (Monash Medical Centre)
- Occupational Health, Safety and Environment (Clayton)
- Office of Environmental Sustainability
- Office of the Vice Chancellor (Clayton)
- Records and Archives (Clayton)
- Security and Traffic Peninsula

### Why does it work?

When individual waste bins are removed, it becomes comparatively easier to recycle because the temptation to throw recyclable materials into landfill is removed. The project therefore encourages staff to increase recycling and rethink the amount of waste they produce.

### Tell me about this guide

Following the success of these pilot projects, this guide explains the process and its benefits, and provides practical advice for Green Representatives interested in removing waste bins from their offices. For further advice and support at any stage, please get in touch with the Green Program Coordinator (see last page).

## Benefits of a waste bin free office

Besides the fact that offices without waste bins look good, there are several key benefits to the project.

### Environmental and economic benefits

Sending waste to landfill uses valuable land, produces greenhouse gases, and potentially contaminates soil and water. 'Bin there, Done that' has been very successful at reducing waste. For example, Facilities and Services at Clayton were producing approximately two large wheelie bins of rubbish per day, which reduced to around half a wheelie bin after removing bins. Increasing the effectiveness of our recycling systems also conserves our natural resources, and manufacturing products from recycled materials is considerably more energy and water efficient. Although this is *not* a cost-saving exercise, we also avoid the economic costs incurred by sending waste to landfill.

### Cleaners are able to focus on other tasks

Cleaning staff currently spend much of their time entering offices to empty individual waste bins, which is an expensive and time consuming process. In offices with centralised waste management, cleaning staff are able to focus on other tasks and potentially be more involved in managing paper, cardboard and bottle and can recycling systems in the future.



Fig 1. bin free workstation with a paper recycling box and small desktop bin

## Encourages staff health and awareness

By requiring staff to walk to recycling station, 'Bin there, Done that' encourages compliance with Occupational Health and Safety guidelines which suggest that staff should take a break from their desk every thirty minutes in order to stretch muscles and rest eyes. The project also leads to a workplace where all staff members are consciously involved in recycling initiatives, stimulating awareness of environmental issues in the office.

We don't usually have bins next to the dining table or couch at home, and we don't usually have kettles and photocopiers at our desks at work either. Getting up to use a bin and sharing facilities are both normal– this project simply combines these behaviours. Furthermore, offices that adopt this system demonstrate leadership by supporting a cultural change that fosters a more sustainable environment.

## But what do we do with our rubbish?

Instead of a waste bin, you will have a paper recycling box under your desk (see Fig.1). For all other waste, there will be a central recycling station that you will share with other staff in your office. This will include a bottle & can recycling bin and a waste-to-landfill bin for all non-recyclable materials (see Fig 2). The recycling station will be located in an easily accessible central area, no more than 30 seconds walk from any desk. In addition to these bins, each desk will be provided with a small desktop bin to hold small quantities of tissues, wrappers etc. which can be emptied into the waste-to-landfill bin at your convenience (see Fig 3). For more information on what can be recycled, please see our Recycling at Monash guide.



Fig 2. recycling station with a waste-to-landfill and bottle & can recycling bin

## How will this affect me?

As the majority of office waste is paper, your under desk paper recycling box will provide for most of your needs. For other materials, you will need to walk to the recycling station and choose between the bottle & can and waste-to-landfill bins, but these bins will be located in a central area so that you will most likely to pass them anyway throughout the day. The small desktop bins mean you don't have to walk to a bin immediately for small amounts of waste, such as a chocolate wrapper.



Fig 3. desktop bin for small quantities of tissues, wrappers etc

As cleaners are freed from emptying individual waste bins after bin removal, they may be able to empty paper recycling boxes in the future. However, at this stage paper recycling is not in their contract and *staff are responsible for emptying their own paper recycling boxes* into the large blue wheelie bins.

## Food scraps, tea bags and fruit peel

In addition to bottle & can and waste-to-landfill bins, your recycling station could also include a system to recycle organic waste. While this has previously been problematic in an office environment, there are now several viable options. To find out more about composting, worm farms and Bokashi buckets, please see our Recycling at Monash guide.

## Step 1: Tell your colleagues

You will probably have a reasonable idea of the level of support to expect from your colleagues; however don't be surprised if some become suprisingly attached to their bins when you suggest removing them! If you mention the project informally and sense some interest from a few (but not necessarily all) staff members, then give it a go.

## **Engage management**

Make a time to meet with your manager to discuss the project. Be very clear on what is to change, focus on the benefits and mention other offices where this has been implemented. Try to anticipate what questions will be asked and how you will respond. You may prefer to invite a sympathetic coworker to this meeting if you feel your manager may have reservations.

## **Spread the word**

It is best to introduce the project at a staff meeting where you have the opportunity to clarify the project and answer questions. If you anticipate concerns, ask your manager to introduce the project and/or invite someone who has already implemented this scheme in their office (either another Green Representative or the Green Program Coordinator) to speak at the meeting.

Follow up this discussion by sending out an explanatory email reiterating the benefits of the project.

- A draft explanatory email is available from the Environment at Monash website. Please edit the details for your office and if possible, ask your manager to send this for you.

## **Step 2: Establish the new system**

Once you have general approval from your colleagues, you will need to establish the new system in your office. Each desk will need a paper recycling box and small desktop bin, and the central recycling station will need a bottle & can recycling bin and a waste-to-landfill bin.

### **Plan central recycling station location**

The central recycling station will need to be accessible to all staff. Remember, we're not trying to inconvenience people, just rearrange bin locations to support the behaviour we are trying to promote. It is therefore essential that the bottle & can and waste-to-landfill bins are placed next to each other, and are no further than a thirty second walk from every desk. Where you establish this station is up to you, however kitchens are usually a good choice since they are high traffic areas where waste is often generated. If your department is large, you may need more than one recycling station.

### **Tell the Green Program Coordinator!**

Even if you already have all the bins you need, please send an email to the Green Office Coordinator (see last page) with:

- Your name, department and contact details
- The exact location of the offices from which waste bins will be removed, and the number of staff in those offices
- The number of small paper recycling boxes, mini-wheelie bins, bottle & can and waste-to-landfill bins you require.
- The approximate date that you intend to remove waste bins.

The Coordinator will then send you signage and liaise with Facilities & Services, who will send these bins to you directly and notify cleaners. There is no charge for these bins.

### **Distribute the new infrastructure**

If possible, distribute the recycling boxes and bins as soon as you receive them to allow staff to adapt before Bin Removal day. You (and maybe your manager) can set a good example and test the new system by removing your waste bin early.

## **Step 3: Bin Removal Day**

It is a good idea to send a brief reminder email to staff several days before Bin Removal to avoid surprising anyone. You will also need to prepare feedback forms for all staff members, so that there is a formal avenue for any ideas/comments/complaints/suggestions.

- A draft reminder email is available from the Environment at Monash website (see last page). Please fill in your details and again, ask your manager to send this for you.
- Download the feedback form from the website (see last page), add your details and print a double-sided copy for each staff member.

## Remove bins

On Bin Removal Day, visit each staff member, removing their waste bin, distributing feedback forms (and perhaps chocolate!) inside the small desktop bins, and taking the time to answer questions. Choose your timing carefully – you may find that people are more receptive in the afternoon! It is definitely not advisable to remove waste bins from absent staff, so you may need to repeat this process to ensure all bins are removed. If you would like assistance with bin removal but are unable to enlist the help of colleagues, please get in touch with the Green Program Coordinator (see last page). Store the waste bins in a cupboard until it is clear that they are no longer needed.

## Dealing with resistance

Adapting to this system requires a behavioural change, which is difficult for everybody, but will challenge some more than others. Again, try to anticipate the questions and reactions you will receive, and be ready with a clear, concise and strong case. If you encounter resistance, put yourself in their shoes and try to match benefits of the project with their concerns, such as health, costs, innovation or efficiency. Remind them that bins have already been removed from several Monash departments (including the Vice Chancellor's office!). Please ask them to trial the new system for a month, and encourage them to suggest improvements. In our experience, there is likely to be one person in every office who complains vocally, but they have proven to be the exception, rather than the rule.

## Step 4: Feedback

Both positive and negative feedback on any aspect of the project is welcomed, and will inform future projects. Please encourage your colleagues to return their feedback forms, and pass on your own comments on this guide and the project. If anyone in your office remains uncomfortable after a month or refuses to trial the project, please contact the Green Office Coordinator to discuss possible resolutions.

## From waste bins to flowerpots...

It's been a month, your colleagues are comfortable with the new system and your waste bins are gathering dust and taking up precious space – so what can you do with them? OHSE can arrange for the scrap metal or plastic to be recycled, but feel free to get creative.. we have successfully reincarnated waste bins as flowerpots, and have brainstormed other possibilities ranging from herb gardens to sculpture. If you come up with something innovative, please let us know!

---

Many thanks to Matt Coller, Belinda Towns, Scott Rippon and Helen Clements for their invaluable comments on earlier versions of this guide.

### Contact the Environment Projects team:

**Elana Welsh**

Environmental Advisor

Telephone +61 3 9905 9884

Email [Elana.Welsh@adm.monash.edu.au](mailto:Elana.Welsh@adm.monash.edu.au)

Office of Environmental Sustainability

S609, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Building 11, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton

Environment at Monash Website:

<http://fsd.monash.edu.au/green>



**MONASH** University **Greening up our act**

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled content paper.

Last updated September 2008