

Waste and recycling in businesses:

Business typologies & opportunities

To improve recycling in businesses, it is important to recognise their business typology. Solutions that benefit a cafe will look different from solutions targeting a pharmacy, or a hair salon.

This page lists business typologies, their common waste outputs, the contaminants found in recycling, and barriers to improving recycling. *The next page highlights the opportunities for each business typology.*

Hospitality

Common waste output

Cardboard, food scraps, milk bottles, napkins, coffee grounds, aluminium packaging, hard plastic packaging

Common contaminants in mixed recycling

Liquid paperboard & tetrapaks, soft plastic, receipts, vinyl gloves

Barriers to improving recycling

- Busy periods and seasonal changes in output
- Lack of consistency relaying information to part time and casual staff
- Changes in management

Grocery & Supermarket

Common waste output

Cardboard, soft plastic, food waste (sometimes still in packaging e.g. after 'use by' date), unrecyclable material (e.g. meat trays)

Common contaminants in mixed recycling

Soft plastic, receipts

Barriers to improving recycling

- Can have large waste management infrastructure (such as waste compactors) that can be hard to remove.
- Quantities of waste produced, such as organic material, can be logistically difficult to recycle due to cost.

Retail

Common waste output

Cardboard, soft plastic

Common contaminants in mixed recycling

Soft plastic

Barriers to improving recycling

- Branches and franchises require head office to organise changes
- Branches and franchises may use different contractors for different locations
- Employees often believe their store creates no waste because it is not 'messy' waste
- Low waste output limits cost effective options for branches

Medical, Pharmacy & Hospital

Common waste output

Hazardous & confidential waste, cardboard, soft plastic, mixed material products (e.g. blister packs). *Note that hospitals typically have a mix of all business typologies, as they may have cafes, admin areas, gift shops, etc.*

Common contaminants in mixed recycling

Soft plastic, niche streams (e.g. blister packs), contaminated recycling

Barriers to improving recycling

- Produce niche waste that requires extra labour to recycle;
- Can be challenging to change recycling behaviour in high intensity environments such as medical practices or hospitals.

Hair & Beauty

Common waste output

Plastic bottles, contaminated recyclables and aluminium (beauty product residue), hair trimmings

Common contaminants in mixed recycling

Contaminated recycling

Barriers to improving recycling

- Small salons produce little waste, so several 120L or 240L streams becomes expensive
- Lack of info regarding tailored options (Sustainable Salons)
- Seasonal or ad hoc schedule creates difficulty with waste collection schedule

Service (i.e. florist, gym, office)

Common waste output

Unique depending on type of service, but most businesses still produce soft plastic, cardboard tissues/napkins/wipes

Common contaminants in mixed recycling

Soft plastic, napkins or paper towels

Barriers to improving recycling

- This area needs to be further investigated to distinguish more typologies and the specific recycling commonalities and barriers

Waste and recycling in businesses: Business typologies & opportunities

There are many innovative methods to improve recycling in businesses.

Centres can support businesses in leveling up their resource recovery and processes, by first identifying their businesses typology. Typologies help guide decisions, such as, how to best diversify recycling streams, if businesses are suitable for sharing bins with similar neighbours, and more.

Hospitality

- Cardboard & paper bins are extremely effective in diverting waste and are easy to use. These bins are the cheapest and easiest additional stream to implement.
- Ground coffee bins & food and garden organics (FOGO) bins can be installed to divert waste to home gardeners and composting facilities, respectively.
- Set up a shared 10c container deposit scheme (CDS) bin which can recycle bottles, cans and single use items, with drop-offs organised by employees or a social enterprise.
- Swap to a milk supplier that offers returner scheme for milk bottles, such as The Udder Way.
- If a trader has several general waste bins, it is usually easy to switch at least one to a recycling stream.

Grocery & Supermarket

- Introduce a process for selling older produce at a discounted rate, such as a 'daily discounts' stand or a produce box.
- Partner with a food rescue program to reduce landfill (eg. Second Bite, OzHarvest).
- Introduce a food and organics bin to divert waste destined for landfill to a composting facility.
- Establish the business as a CDS collection point. Since grocery stores are often high traffic areas for the community, creating a collection point for CDS is effective for locals to return their drink containers with ease. This would establish the store as an ethical and connected part of the community and appeal to more customers.

Retail

- Install a soft plastics stream. Soft plastics collected from retail stores is usually clear of contaminants, making it easy to recycle.
- Install a cardboard stream. Cardboard is a cheap and easy to implement stream. If cardboard and soft plastics streams are installed, the majority of waste will be recycled.
- Connect head office with manufactures that offer returner schemes, where waste is returned to distribution centers for recycling.
- Contact the head office of the franchise to understand how best to rollout new streams for your local area.

Medical, Pharmacy & Hospital

- As medical businesses and pharmacies produce niche streams, this creates an opportunity to establish collection points for these streams. For instance, establish a [blister pack collection point](#) at a pharmacy.
- Introducing a soft plastic stream can divert a large portion of waste in these businesses.
- Ensure internal bins reflect external bins so staff have easy access to recycling in high pressure situations.
- Hospitals may have much larger budgets and therefore capacity to install many recycling streams for niche streams. Niche streams may include polystyrene, scrap metal, hard waste, toners, fluro tubes and pallets.

Hair & Beauty

- Encourage partnership with [Sustainable Salons](#), which offers pathways to recycling many niche streams that salons produce. This will also bring in new clientele who prioritise sustainability and ethics.
- Introduce a FOGO bin for hair trimmings. (This depends on the Council and their respective FOGO processing requirements).
- Encourage product stewardship and bulk buying for beauty products.
- Educate traders to encourage washing their recyclables before placing them in the bin to prevent contamination.

Service

- Service businesses can often produce small quantities of waste. Sharing opportunities can provide accessible recycling. This can look like multiple low-waste businesses removing their individual bins and introducing one shared stream each in order to diversify streams while maintaining low costs.