



MONASH
University

SUSTAINABILITY MADE SIMPLE

A GUIDE FOR HOSPITALITY
BUSINESSES



Take Action on Sustainability: Reduce Your Waste and Energy Use

For most hospitality businesses, the biggest environmental impacts come from carbon emissions and waste generated through everyday operations. Understanding where these impacts occur is the first step toward reducing costs, improving efficiency, and supporting a healthier environment.



How your business creates carbon emissions

- Gas cooking
- Refrigeration
- Hot water
- HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air conditioning)
- Equipment (dishwashers, lighting, etc)
- Deliveries and/or procurement (sourcing of raw materials)



How your business creates waste

- Food preparation (offcuts and trimmings)
- Stock management (spoilage)
- Plate waste
- Single-use items (packaging, take-away, cleaning)
- Contaminated bins



These are the main areas where changes can make a big difference.

Why Sustainability Matters for Hospitality Businesses?

By focusing on waste and energy use, you can reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Less waste and energy > business benefits:

- **Portion control** > Food waste reduction > Cost savings (less waste, low cost)
- **Efficient equipment** > Reduced power usage > Lower bills
- **Inventory planning** > Smarter purchasing > Reduce waste costs
- **Green choices** > Sustainable branding > Attract more customers
- **Better relationships with suppliers** > Reusable and recyclable packaging > Less waste



Portion control



Recyclable packaging



LED lighting and efficient equipment



What's Good for the Planet is Good for Your Business.



Lower costs > stronger brand > Future ready

Reducing Energy Costs – Common Challenges and Simple Fixes



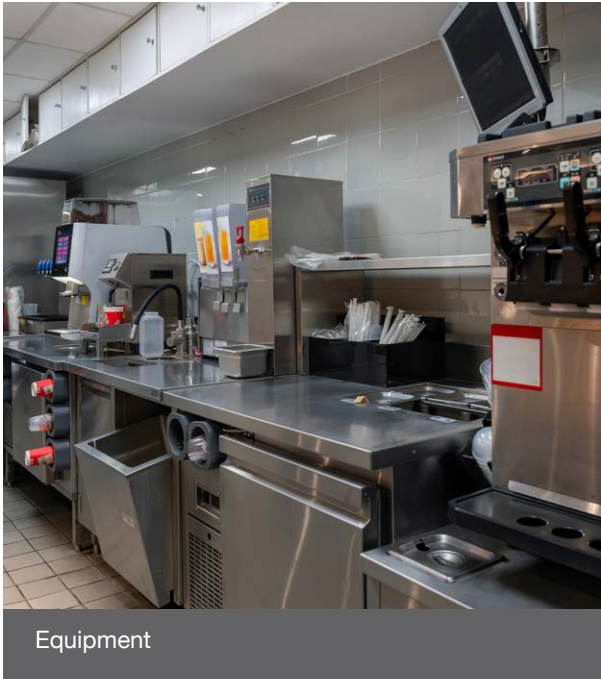
Energy use is one of the biggest operating costs for hospitality businesses. Changes to equipment, maintenance, and daily practices can reduce energy bills, improve efficiency, and lower carbon emissions.

Challenges	Problems	Solutions
Gas-heavy kitchens	High energy use	Upgrade to electric and induction cooking.
	Hot kitchen with poor air quality	
	Higher risk of burns	
Budget constraints	Cash flow is tight	Plan upgrades gradually. Upgrade each appliance at end of life.
	Upgrades are expensive	Find rebates and incentives. Compare finance costs to savings.
Leased premises	Landlord approval needed	Discuss how cost savings can help secure a long-term tenancy.
	Solar may not be possible or allowed	Purchase 100% renewable energy or Greenpower.
	Rewiring not possible	Use portable electric equipment.
	Split incentives – can’t take fixed equipment with you	Ensure paybacks are possible within your lease terms.

Challenges	Problems	Solutions
Equipment, Refrigeration and HVAC	Run long hours, high energy use	Service equipment, refrigeration and HVAC every 6–12 months.
	Inefficient lighting	Upgrade to LED lighting.
High standby power	Appliances left on during slow times and overnight	Turn off non-essential equipment. Use timer switches. Train staff.
	No shutdown routines	Create end-of-shift checklists.



Lighting and air-conditioning



Equipment



Business benefit:

Lower electricity and gas bills > Save money > More efficient operations

Start small > Maintain > Upgrade gradually

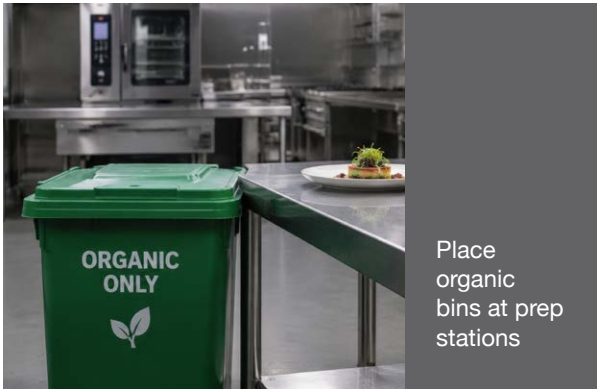
Reducing Food and Packaging Waste – Common Challenges and Practical Fixes



Food and packaging waste increase food costs, bin collection fees, and staff workload. Most waste happens during prep, service, and sorting.

Challenges	Problems	Solutions
Food spoilage and Plate waste	Unpredictable daily demand	Use flexible menus with shared ingredients.
	Large portion sizes	Offer smaller portion options.
	Ingredients expiring before use	Use FIFO (first in, first out) with colour-coded labels. Track food waste weekly/ rapid visual waste audits (tracking waste for even one week can reveal quick savings). Buy locally where possible.
Limited space and Bin confusion	Small kitchens with limited bin space	Use slimline or stackable bins.
	Staff turnover leads to contamination	Place organic bins at prep stations. Include 5-minute waste training during onboarding.
	Different council rules create confusion	Add simple icon-based signage above bins. Use coloured labels and wall posters.

Challenges	Problems	Solutions
Waste management	Organic waste is heavy and costly	Separate organics properly. Diverting organics can significantly reduce bin weight.
	Coffee grounds often end up in general waste	Divert coffee grounds where possible. Train baristas on clean separation.
	Fear of liability when donating food	Donate safe surplus food to registered food rescue organisations. Know that the Good Samaritan Act protects safe food donation.
	Confusion around 'compostable' packaging	Learn about the different classifications of compostable and dispose of properly. If in doubt, landfill is better than contaminating compost.



Business benefit:

Lower food spends > Reduced bin fees > Positive community impact

Track > Train > Simplify

CASE STUDY 1: DANTÉ RESTAURANT DAREBIN



CASE STUDY 2: CROP KITCHEN MELBOURNE



From waste reduction to business growth

Local cafés and restaurants are already making small changes that reduce costs and waste. Here are real examples of what worked.

Revenue
increased by
15%
within 7
months

What they changed

- Turned stale bread and leftover vegetables into soups
- Composted food scraps for their garden
- Removed single-use plastics
- Switched to reusable items like metal straws, linen napkins and containers
- Worked with local suppliers to reduce packaging and switch to reusable packaging in some cases
- Switched slow cooking from gas to induction

Was it expensive?

At first, there were extra costs and staff training required.

Changing habits took time. However, the long-term benefits outweighed the initial effort.

Want to see how they do it?

Links to a
short video:



What happened?

- Revenue increased by 15% within 7 months
- Waste disposal costs reduced
- Gained more loyal customers
- Improved operational efficiency

“Going zero waste helped us save money and operate better”

How a local salad bar cut emissions and waste

Opened in 2022. Official salad provider for the Australian Open 2024.

Reduced
waste collection
from 3
times a week
to once
a month

Innovative Solutions

- **eWater System:** Replaced chemical cleaners with a water-based disinfectant that refills spray bottles on-site, reducing plastic waste and freight emissions
- **Creative Menu:** Used normally discarded broccoli and cauliflower stems in salads, adding flavour and freshness
- **Reusable bowls:** Offered reusable salad bowls on deposit to cut single use packaging

Local Partnerships

- **100km Rule:** Limited ingredients to seasonal produce within 100km to minimise food miles and support local farmers
- **Farm Recycling:** Partnered with a local farm that collects café's produce boxes for reuse and repurposes cartons for garden mulch
- **Keen Tracking:** Regularly monitored waste levels to identify further reduction opportunities

Key Results

- **Reduced waste collection from three times a week to once a month** within the first year of operation
- **Lower waste costs and improved operational efficiency**
- **Secured contract as Official supplier for Australian Open 2024**



Reusable bowls

Where to Get Help?



Recognition of Work



If you'd like advice, rebates, or practical support, these organisations can help you take the next step.

Reducing Energy and Power Bills

a) Free Advice and Rebates

- Victorian Energy Upgrades – Rebates for efficient equipment
- Business Victoria – Advice on accessing grants and support
- Energy Savers Program – Advice on saving energy*
- Solar Savers Program – Solar rebates
- State Electricity Commission Vic Program

b) Practical Service Providers

- Refrigeration specialists
- HVAC contractors
- Solar installers (Clean Energy Council accredited)
- Kitchen electrification services
- Smart energy monitoring providers

Tip: Look for ENERGY STAR®, Energy Rating Labels, or Clean Energy Council accreditation when purchasing equipment.

Reducing Food and Packaging Waste

a) Free Advice & Support

- EPA Victoria – Waste compliance, recycling/resource recovery
- Building Victoria Circular Economy – Recycling and reuse grants and schemes
- Local Councils
- Best Bites (Mornington Peninsula Shire area)

b) Practical Services

- enrich360 – circular food waste solutions
- Compost Connect / KS Environmental / CORIO – Organic waste and FOGO services
- Reground – Coffee grounds collection, waste audits and consulting
- OzHarvest / Second Bite / Too good to go app / foodfilled – Leftover food donation/sale
- Planet Ark – Recycling directories
- Local commercial waste contractors
Tailored collection and sorting systems

Industry Expert Review

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Contributing Councils

Darebin City

Glen Eira City

Kingston City

Nillumbik Shire Council

Bayside City

Frankston City

Stonnington City

Hobsons Bay

Merri-bek City

Moonee Valley City

Whitehorse City

Cardinia Shire

This booklet is the output of an impact project titled 'Business Sustainability Guide to be available at local councils for use by hospitality businesses in metropolitan Melbourne', implemented by Prof. Peter Adey, Dr Xiao Han and Dr Chamila Weerathunghe at Monash University. It responds to the need to engage cafes and restaurants in metropolitan Melbourne with sustainability, as identified in Dr Chamila Weerathunghe's recently completed PhD project in the same area. Ms Xue Ruo Ng and Ms Natalia Candedo Lopez provided research and design, and administrative assistance, respectively.

We sincerely thank the sustainability staff of metropolitan Melbourne local councils, hospitality businesses, and consultants for providing valuable feedback to make this booklet more useful.

Listings are provided for information only and do not constitute endorsement

*check with your local council for programs in your area.



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