

Canterbury Event Waste Sustainability Guide

How to minimise and manage waste at events in Canterbury



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In Canterbury we love nothing more than celebrating our unique region through fun, vibrant and diverse events. As a region we recognise the value of events, but we are also aware of the negative effects they can have on our natural world. We're taking action to educate and support event organisers to deliver events which minimise the impact on our environment through sustainable waste management practices.

This guide offers easy and practical ideas to start you on your journey, so let's get started.



Why... Taking responsibility!

The importance of running a sustainable event

Cleaning up your event waste has a number of positive benefits:

- Reducing the environmental impact by using fewer resources and putting less waste in the ground. Waste is a contributor to NZ's greenhouse gas emissions.
- Demonstrating your social responsibility and commitment to people and planet.
- Reducing event waste disposal costs.
- Complying with local waste and bylaw requirements. These can differ by district.
- Making your event site cleaner and safer which improves the event experience.

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This document has been developed by waste minimisation consultants, Sustainably, a subsidiary of Total Waste Solutions.

Understanding your event waste

Where do we start?

Making a commitment

As a team, make a formal commitment to minimise the waste at your event. This might be through a list of simple achievable goals (ban single-use plastic, install water refill stations etc.), or it might be with a more detailed plan including a percentage of waste you intend to divert from landfill. Document your commitment and communicate it to all key stakeholders. From here make a small action plan for achieving each goal, for example – if banning single use cups, send an email to food vendors prior to your event then audit them on event day.

We suggest starting with small realistic and achievable goals.

Get to know your input to understand your output

You can't change something you're not aware of, so your first step is to get an understanding of where your waste is coming from and what's in it. Event waste generally includes the following:

- **Front of house** – this is where your event attendees are and is often the area where the most waste is generated. You'll mainly find food and beverage packaging here, but it can also include waste brought in by attendees, from sponsorship activation (brochures, give-aways etc.) and from activities and entertainment (confetti, art and craft supplies etc.).
- **Back of house** – this is where your artists, staff and contractors can access. The waste from this area will be similar to your front of house waste but will also include contractor waste (cable-ties, electrical tape, broken equipment etc.) as well as event specific waste (pyrotechnics etc.).
- **Pack in/out** – this waste is generated by event staff and contractors during set up and pack down of your event site. It's generally made up of contractors' waste, food and beverage packaging, event specific waste (from installations etc.) and general waste (cardboard boxes, other packaging etc.).

Working out waste

To establish how much and what type of waste will be generated at your event consider these questions.

- ❓ Will there be food and/or glass bottles or canned beverages?
- ❓ How long does the event run and over how many meal times?
- ❓ What types of exhibitors will be on-site and how many of each?
- ❓ What activities are partners and sponsors doing?
- ❓ Are there large volumes of one type of waste being generated? eg. 10,000 water bottle give away by a sponsor.
- ❓ Are there any environmental features that should be considered? eg. the use of confetti near water
- ❓ Are attendees permitted to bring their own food and drink to the event?



Sharing your journey:

Make sure everyone is on-board by sharing your commitment to delivering a sustainable event with your key stakeholders, including attendees, sponsors, media, contractors, artists, local businesses, staff, volunteers etc.

Here's some ideas on how to get the message out:

- Social media campaigns and digital newsletters. Get other stakeholders to share through their platforms too.
- Organise a launch event with the spotlight on your commitment to waste minimisation.
- Create engaging site signage.
- Get sponsors to make their on-site activation activities sustainability focused and waste free.
- Ask the MC to include information about your waste initiatives throughout the day.
- Engage with local media and invite them to write a story about your waste minimisation journey.
- Engage staff by appointing sustainability ambassadors who can help implement waste initiatives and champion waste minimisation efforts.
- Include information about waste systems and how to use them within your event brochures/online apps.
- Get a photographer/videographer to document your waste initiatives so that you can use the imagery for post-event communication and marketing for future events.

Waste streams

Now you know what's in it, let's have a look at where it's going to go. Event waste can generally be divided into three key waste streams – organics, recycling and general waste, just like at home.

Organic materials:

If processed correctly this waste stream can be turned into compost, a valuable natural resource. Acceptable organic materials differ between facilities and regions. Please be sure to check with your waste provider to see what they are able to accept. Here are some organic materials you are likely to find at an event.

Serviettes



Food scraps



Paper drinking straws



Compostable Packaging

(accepted by some waste providers only)



Compostable food packaging in NZ

NZ currently has a lack of regulations regarding compostable food packaging. This means some facilities are unwilling to or unable to accept it within the organics waste stream. The good news is, there are some opportunities for disposing of some compostable food packaging products through the Sustainable Events Canterbury (SEC) initiative. Get in touch with the your local Council events team to find out if they support SEC in your area.

TOP TIP: Be sure to confirm if your waste provider can accept compostable food packaging in the organics waste stream before your event.

Recyclable Materials:

In Canterbury recycling goes to EcoSort, the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Christchurch.

Recycling can be co-mingled (everything mixed in together) or separated (individual streams for each material such as cardboard, plastics, glass and aluminium). Separating recycling can reduce disposal costs and is the best option for larger events, particularly for bulky cardboard.

Not all products are recyclable, here are some recyclable materials you are likely to find at an event.

Plastic bottles and containers

(Numbers 1,2 & 5. No smaller than 100ml or bigger than 1 litres. Empty and lidless)



Steel cans (rinsed)



Glass bottles and jars

(empty and lidless)



Aluminium cans



Cardboard (flattened)



Paper (no serviettes)



General waste materials:

Products that are neither compostable nor recyclable go in the general waste stream and will go to landfill. In Canterbury, general waste ends up at Kate Valley Regional Landfill in Waipara. You want to try to minimise this waste stream. Do this by using recyclable, and where appropriate, compostable alternatives. There are a wide variety of material types found in this stream. Here are some general waste materials you are likely to find at an event:



Soft plastics, Tetra Pak, coffee cups and lids, nappies, cigarette butts, chewing gum, bottle lids etc.

*some preapproved food packaging can be accepted for composting under SEC Events.

Avoiding recycling contamination

Recyclable waste is easily contaminated with other non-recyclable waste (eg. food residue, general waste, non-recyclable plastics etc). Too much contamination can cause your recycling to be rejected from the Material Recovery Facility (MRF).

To avoid contamination follow these steps:

- Provide Bin Ambassadors to stand by your bins to educate people on what bin to use.
- Restrict food vendors from offering food in plastic containers as they are usually unable to be cleaned on-site and are therefore destined for landfill. Investigate compostable or reusable options instead. Avoid smoothies too as these make a big mess when not disposed of correctly.
- Get volunteers to hand sort your event recyclables before going to the recycling facility (more on waste sorting at events later in the guide).



TOP TIP: Use clear signage on your bins to help people make the right choice. Event bin lids including signage is a great option as these really stand out. For events held in Selwyn, the Selwyn District Council has event bin lids for hire, contact event.bins@selwyn.govt.nz for details. For better results attach key waste materials from your event to your bins or bin lids.



Waste minimisation

Less input = less output!

Diversion from landfill

Diversion is simply the amount of waste from your event that you have ensured **hasn't** made it to landfill. Here's a simple example:

Your event has generated a total of six full bins. This is made up of three recycling bins, one organic bin and two general waste bins. This means you have diverted four wheelie bins of waste away from landfill as you sent a total of four bins to either recycling or organics.

For larger events diversion is worked out using weights and might look a little something like this:

WASTE STREAM	WEIGHT (kg)
Comingled recycling	320
Organics	130
General waste	280
Total waste	730
Total waste to landfill	280
Total diverted from landfill	450

Your event successfully diverted 62% away from landfill, congratulations!

Be sure to request this information from your waste provider prior to your event to ensure they record it for you.

Exhibitor engagement

Exhibitors are the various groups that you have selling or showcasing goods or services at your event. They include stall holders, food vendors, bars, sponsors sites and amusement rides. Food vendors are the largest generators of event waste so be sure to focus your attention here. Work out what waste products exhibitors will be generating and inform them of any requirements you have for reducing waste. Here are some tips:

- Ask them what type of products they will be selling and prohibit single-use and high waste products such as glow sticks and individually wrapped lollies.
- Prohibit or restrict materials like balloons, glitter, promotional flyers and single use cups.
- Encourage all food packaging to be compostable even if you do not intend to compost it. Compostable packaging doesn't contain petrochemicals which means it's better for the environment even if it can't be composted. Consider running a workshop for food vendors to showcase sustainable packaging options and provide brochures.
- Require vendors to use communal condiment options, eg. sauce bottles instead of single-use items like sachets.
- Require food vendors to sort or take home their back of house waste.
- Communicate expectations to food vendors well in advance and in writing, this reduces the likelihood of non-compliance.
- During setup, check with your exhibitors to ensure they are complying with any requirements. Be confident in enforcing requirements if you have provided the appropriate information and support leading up to the event.

Initiatives for reducing waste

There are lots of savvy ideas for reducing waste at your event. Here's a few to get you started.

- Introduce digital ticketing and programming to avoid paper waste.
- Use a reusable cup system such as Again Again. againagain.co.nz
- Have water refill stations to avoid plastic bottle waste.
- Incentivise positive attendee actions, like biking or BYO containers, with discounts on entry or food and drink.
- Make merchandise eco-friendly, reusable and locally made.
- Make your event chewing gum/lollipop/smoke/glitter free to avoid micro plastics.
- Use Bin Ambassadors to educate attendees.
- Run social media campaigns prompting attendees to post photos of themselves using the correct bin, using BYO containers or picking up litter etc. Give a waste free prize to the winner!
- Use stamps instead of wrist bands, bubbles instead of balloons, UV body paint instead of glow sticks etc.



Waste sorting

Waste sorting is the most valuable tool for maximising landfill diversion. It involves a team of people hand sorting waste into individual waste streams, removing any contamination and getting it ready for removal off site.

The two leading approaches to waste sorting are:

- **Bin station waste sorting** – this approach requires the placement of Bin Ambassadors at your bin stations. Their job is to engage with event attendees ensuring things go into the correct bin. They can remove any contamination using a litter picking tool. This approach is best suited to smaller events, although can be used at larger events in conjunction with back of house waste sorting.
- **Back of house waste sorting** – this approach involves Waste Removers transporting waste from bin stations, back to the waste yard and Waste Sorters dividing it into the different waste streams. This is ideal for larger events as the volume of waste generated makes bin station waste sorting on its own ineffective.

You can set up your own waste sorting system or enlist a waste provider to do it for you. They can take care of all your event waste requirements including infrastructure, site set-up and staffing (refer appendix).

Waste sorting must-haves:

To waste sort successfully you'll need the following pieces of equipment:

- ✓ Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including cut-resistant gloves and hi-viz vests.
- ✓ Bin liners and event bin lids.
- ✓ Tables for sorting waste on.
- ✓ Litter picking tools.
- ✓ Infrastructure to sort the waste into such as wheelie bins or larger gantry skips.
- ✓ Signage to communicate to your team what waste goes where.
- ✓ General event production equipment like cable ties, gaffa tape, first aid kit, cleaning products etc.
- ✓ Job responsibility lists, so your team know what they're doing.
- ✓ Relevant health and safety documentation.

Waste management Everything coming together on-site

Waste equipment

Having the right equipment on-site can make or break your event. There's nothing worse than having too much waste and not enough bins; this can make for a messy site and can impact the event experience.

Get in touch with your local event waste providers and ask them to advise you on what you need based on the details of your event. Get 2–3 quotes for comparison and be aware of hidden costs; the types of costs you can expect to see on a quote are hire fees, transport fees, disposal fees and staffing fees (where applicable). Here are some standard pieces of event waste equipment:



240L wheelie bins

The most common event bin which comes with different lid colours depending on the waste stream.



660L & 1100L wheelie bins

Larger wheelie bins often used in the waste yard. These are best utilised for lighter waste streams (no glass!).



Gantry skips

Used for larger events with multiple waste streams and are housed in the waste yard.



Event bin lids

These come in a variety of styles and often include signage about what can go into each waste stream, depending on regional regulations.

TOP TIP: See APPENDIX Waste Providers Directory for a list of local waste providers who offer event waste services.

Assembling your waste team

Waste minimisation and management takes people power, so your next job is to assemble a waste team.

The size of your event will determine how many people are required and what roles you'll need them to fill.

To keep costs down engage local community groups and offer a koha or free tickets to your event.



Here are some important roles that you'll need to recruit for:



Waste Yard Manager – oversees everything relating to waste including bin placement and servicing, waste yard set-up, waste team management and waste sorting. They may also liaise with your waste provider and carry out relevant health and safety checks.



Waste Removers – places bins during set-up and removes waste from bins during your event. It's good practice to make them responsible for litter picking too.



Waste Sorters – sorts waste into individual waste streams as it comes into the waste yard.



Bin Ambassadors – engages with event attendees as they use bins, ensuring things go into the correct bin and removing any contamination.

Whether you're using paid staff or volunteers, carry out training prior to your event ensuring that your team knows what is expected of them, what goes in each bin, site layout etc. Make sure you make their welfare a priority with regular breaks, nice uniforms and free food and drinks etc.

Setting up your site

Now you've got your equipment and waste team sorted you need to think about how you are going to place equipment around your site. Here's some important considerations:

- Place bins in groups or 'bin stations' including one from each waste stream (organics/recycling/general waste). Standalone bins attract waste from other streams causing contamination.
- Establish bin stations numbers by marking positions on your site map. Spread evenly and place in easily accessible places like food areas, entrances, exits and toilets. Don't forget back of house areas like catering marquees, stages and artist areas etc.
- Larger events require an easy to access back of house waste yard(s). This will house your large equipment and is where waste sorting takes place. Be sure it's in a contained area, has good access for waste providers vehicles, has provisions for weather (eg. gazebo) and has lighting for evening events.
- Alcohol based events can lead to high volumes of litter in surrounding streets and neighbourhoods. Place external bins in these locations and get your waste team to service throughout the event.
- To capture all waste cover any permanent site bins (large black bin liners work well). It's good practice to place bin stations in front of permanent bins as it is common for attendees to pile waste around them even if they are covered.



TOP TIP: Ensure that your waste team know where everything is – bin stations, waste yards, emergency exits, external bins etc. Have a hand-out of this information.

Systems for success

For it all to come together on event day you'll need to develop a number of easy-to-follow systems so that everything runs smoothly.

Here's some key on-site systems that will make for a well-run event:

- **Site logistics** – consider how equipment, waste and your team will move around the site. Do you need to create schedules for bin servicing, organise back of house access passes, train Waste Removers on how to safely transport waste back to the waste yard? Be sure to send out information about systems pre-event so people understand their responsibilities. Signage is another great way to communicate on-site systems to your team.
- **Waste sorting processes** – to reduce contamination and streamline waste sorting create a waste sorting process. Think about where Waste Removers will put waste that requires sorting, what waste streams you will put in each bin type and what happens once a bin/skip is full. On-site training for Waste Sorters will also be needed.
- **Site clean-up plan** – event sites often require a post-event clean-up. Take a systems approach to litter by firstly removing all bins and large pieces of waste from around the site. Once all other infrastructure, (marquess, stages, food vendors etc), is off site conduct a litter sweep to collect smaller pieces of litter (for best results sweep the site in a line formation). Make provisions for detailed litter sweeps for alcohol-based, high attendee and concert style events. Some waste providers will have specialised infrastructure that can assist with site clean-up, which are a great option for larger event sites.
- **Health and safety considerations** – carry out a health and safety briefing with all members of your waste team. Include emergency evacuation procedures (how to get out and where to assemble), hazard management (how to identify and who to tell) and incident management (how to respond and first aid locations). You'll also want to think about creating a risk register for the waste yard area and waste equipment.



Paying for it

There are a number of ways that you can cover the cost of positive waste initiatives at your event:

TOP TIP: For smaller events check with your local Council to see if they have bins you can hire. For Selwyn District Council bin hire contact event.bins@selwyn.govt.nz for details.

- Approach corporate sponsors and offer your waste initiative in a sponsorship proposal. Create a sponsorship package outlining the benefits (social, environmental, economic) including opportunities for naming rights, on-site signage, activation opportunities, media coverage, hosting opportunities and anything else they might see value in. Be sure to approach corporate sponsors that are aligned with your events ethos; there's not much value in having a soft drink sponsor at a healthy living expo.
- Apply for local and national sustainability funds. Selwyn District Council's waste department has some funding available for event organisers who commit to sustainably managing waste at their events. Contact them via solid.waste@selwyn.govt.nz
- Check out other great sites for funding opportunities:
 - packagingforum.org.nz/grants/
 - doc.govt.nz/get-involved/funding/other-funding-organisations/
 - environment.govt.nz/what-you-can-do/funding/community-environment-fund/
 - communitymatters.govt.nz/lottery-environment-and-heritage/
- Apply for grants through organisations like the Rātā Foundation, Pub Charity, The Lions Foundation and The Rotary Foundation.

Here's an easy-to-follow checklist summarising the key actions from this guide:

KEY TASK	INDIVIDUAL STEPS	✓
Establish your commitment	Engage with your event team and establish your waste commitments and waste initiatives	
	Write an action plan	
	Carry out the action plan	
	Communicate your waste commitments to stakeholders, well in advance	
Identify equipment needs	Identify waste that will be generated by engaging with exhibitors, vendors and sponsors	
	Decide on waste streams and waste sorting options	
	Finalise equipment needs	
	Check the composting regulations with your local Council Events Team	
Apply for funding/ sponsorship	Investigate local and national funding/grant opportunities and apply	
	Write a sponsorship proposal and approach suitable corporate sponsors	
Engage with waste providers	Request 2–3 quotes and review as a team (get provider to advise on equipment needs if required)	
	Choose waste provider	
	Request post-event diversion statistics from the waste provider	
	Plan pack in/out logistics	
Exhibitors Management	Communicate food packaging requirements in writing	
	Run a food vendor packaging workshop (where applicable)	
	On event day conduct a pre-event exhibitors check to ensure they comply with any requirements e.g. product and packaging types	
Site set-up	Organise waste yard set up and purchase any equipment required e.g. first aid kits, PPE	
	Plan front and back of house bin placement and plot on site map	
	Identify signage needs, arrange design, manufacture and installation	
	Plan pack in/out of waste equipment	
Plan staff/ volunteers	Identify roles and numbers required	
	Create schedules and supporting documentation (e.g. info sheets, H&S docs)	
	Recruit	
	Plan and carry out training	

We want to thank you for showing a commitment to delivering a sustainable event. Planning for event waste can be a daunting task so we want to offer further support as you embark on your sustainability journey. We can provide assistance for simple queries relating to this guide and put you in touch with an external event waste specialist for more in-depth advice.

Get in touch with our partners Sustainably for details on how you can get support
 — info@sustainably.co.nz

Appendix **Waste provider directory:**

The following is a list of event waste service providers servicing the Canterbury region.

(Canterbury Councils do not endorse or guarantee any included providers)

Sustainably

We're passionate about minimising the impact of waste on our planet and within our communities, so we're providing Event Waste Consultancy Services to event organisers throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Our team has extensive experience within both the waste and event industry so understand the complexities of events and the challenges of waste. We tailor our solutions to your needs and aim to minimise both your environmental and financial costs. Contact us to start your sustainability journey.

0800 454 121 | info@sustainably.co.nz | www.sustainably.co.nz

WasteCo

Waste provider offering event waste equipment and event waste sorting services in one. WasteCo will make the process easy with tailored solutions for your event no matter the size. Get in touch to discuss your event waste needs and diversion targets.

0800 341 11 11 | dispatch@wasteco.co.nz | www.wasteco.co.nz

Ellesmere Bins

Provides waste and some recycling services to local events.

021 530 2472 | ellesmerebins@gmail.com | www.selwynconnect.co.nz/new-zealand/southbridge/business/ellesmere-bins

EnviroWaste

Provides comprehensive waste and recycling services for events.

0800 240 120 | christchurch@envirowaste.co.nz | www.envirowaste.co.nz

Malvern Waste Solutions

Provides waste and some recycling services to local events.

03 318 7407 | info@mws.co.nz | www.mws.co.nz

Closed Loop

Closed Loop are experts in event waste management, sustainability and the circular economy. Our staff are trained, professional and uniformed and know what it takes to ensure the highest possible diversion of waste from landfill. We'll keep your event clean, while helping you achieve your environmental and sustainability goals.

info@closedloop.co.nz | 0277619713 | www.closedloop.co.nz

Without Waste

Without Waste specialises in on-site waste sorting, waste auditing, diversion opportunity analysis, planning, and education. Our goal is to collaborate with events and businesses to develop customised zero-waste plans and identify tailored solutions that meet the specific needs of each event.

kate@withoutwaste.co.nz | (+64) 021 238 1853 | www.withoutwaste.co.nz

Hydration Station

For commercial hire servicing both Selwyn and Christchurch.

info@hydrationstation.co.nz | 021 0270 1498 | <https://hydrationstation.co.nz>

Waste Management

Provides comprehensive waste and recycling services for events.

0800 10 10 10 | orders@wastemanagement.co.nz | www.wastemanagement.co.nz

