

Opinion Piece

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Ever seen the recycling symbol and wondered what it means? You're not alone and welcome to 80% of Australians.

We all know that managing our waste is crucial, especially in Australia. I won't bore you with the reasons; you probably have your own list of ways to make it better. But how many of us actually know the basics of proper waste disposal? Not many, I bet. In this blog, I'll dive into why Australians are aware of the importance of waste management but often lack the know-how to do it right. And don't worry, I'll wrap up with some practical solutions.

Ready for a surprising fact? A recent report revealed that while most Australians think recycling is important, only 38% are confident they're doing it right. Another 44% say they can't find clear instructions. But you know what? There are now platforms like [Recyclopaedia](#) that aim to educate us on this very issue. Let's say you have a tea bag in your hand and are thinking whether it should go in a red or yellow bin. You go to the website [Recyclopaedia](#). Search with the word "tea bag" and you will get this result.

[Home](#) > [Tea bags](#)

Tea bags



Tea bags

Many tea bags can be composted however some are made and sealed with plastic. Unfortunately knowing which tea bags can go in the compost is not as simple as you might think. As consumers voice their concerns over plastic, more brands are moving towards plastic-free tea bags. To avoid contaminating your compost with plastic, research plastic-free tea bags or use loose leaf tea.

Disposal options

- Compost, bokashi or worm farm
- Rubbish bin


Why?


When food waste gets sent to landfill it decomposes without oxygen. This produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Composting is an aerobic (with oxygen) process which reduces methane production and is a natural alternative to chemical fertiliser, (the excess of which runs into waterways and can be harmful to fish and other aquatic species). It will increase nutrients in your soil, wards off plant diseases and improves soil structure.


Related keywords

tea; tea leaves; tea strainer; tea bags

Disposal type

 Landfill

 Other




Can't find what you are looking for? [Get in touch.](#)

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Let's try another example. Let's say you want to throw away a pen. You search and this is what you will get.

Home > Pens and pencils

Pens and pencils



Pens and pencils

Pens and pencils are made from mixed materials and cannot be recycled in ACT recycling bins.

Disposal options

- If pencils and pens are in good condition, donate to someone who can use them such as a daycare facility or school
- For large quantities, consider purchasing a [TerraCycle Pens, pencils and Markers Zero Waste Box](#)
- [Officeworks](#) (Fyshwick store only) have a pen recycling box for pens, highlighters and colouring markers
- Pencil shavings can go into the compost bin or worm farm
- Rubbish bin

Why?


Our Materials Recovery Facility processes paper, cardboard and empty household containers and packaging only.


Related keywords


pens; pencils; wooden pencils; plastic pens; reusable pens; refillable cartridge pens; textas; markers; highlighters; sharpies


ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Disposal type

 Landfill

 Reuse

 Other



Can't find what you are looking for? [Get in touch.](#)

You might be thinking, "This sounds like a great resource, so what's the issue?" Here is the cause of the problem: when you're about to toss something, you usually spend less than a minute on the decision. If you have to pull out your phone, search for the item, and scroll through a page to find the right disposal method, chances are you'll just give up and toss it in any bin, right? The inconvenience outweighs the good intention, and that's where the system falls short.

Our goal is to enhance waste management in Australia by making education more accessible. We aim to bridge the disconnect between people and existing educational platforms. Our proposed solution? A government policy that integrates these platforms directly into schools and organizations. By bringing the knowledge to where people are, rather than expecting them to seek it out, we can fill this crucial gap and make responsible waste management second nature for Australians.

In order to achieve that goal, there are three main players: individuals, organizations and governments. Educational platforms should regularly host sessions or workshops to teach, demonstrate, and engage in open dialogue. This gives students and employees a hands-on opportunity to learn from experts. Additionally, mandatory assessments for participants can ensure the information sticks. These workshops also serve as a platform for people to voice their concerns and offer suggestions, creating a feedback loop that benefits everyone involved.

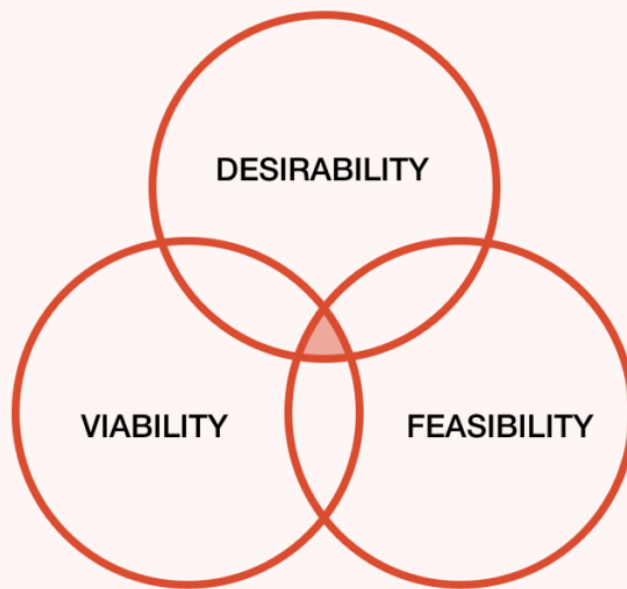
This method will not only improve people's understanding of waste management but also encourage transparency and build trust within the community. Think about it. How would you

feel if people from educational platforms come to you and support you to learn how to do recycling properly. It sounds nice right?

Exactly! Imagine if experts from educational platforms came right to your school or workplace to teach you about recycling. No more guessing which bin to use for your tea bag or pen. You'd not only get the hang of waste management but also feel like you're part of a community that cares. Trust builds, and everyone's on the same page.

In terms of implementation, let's break this down together using the framework called Desirability, Feasibility and Viability. Is this idea desirable? Obviously yes! According to a study by the WWF and Plastic Free Foundation, people are practically shouting for organizations to take waste management such as recycling more seriously. Moreover, people also thought that the government should be more involved in making Australia more sustainable. Simply put, more proactive.

IDEO's Desirability, Viability, Feasibility Framework



Make:Iterate

Next up, is this viable? Of course, it is! The good news is that this solution uses what we already have. We don't create any new innovative technology but we're taking what's already out there, from educational platforms and bringing them straight to the people. Since the core solution is to build a connection between people and educational resources, the additional cost would be operation cost such as area fee, snack and learning material. Moreover, the cost of generating these activities is relatively low compared to the overall budget per year for waste management. So, financially speaking, this sounds good to go and no need for a multi-million budget.

Lastly, is this feasible? Absolutely yes! Setting up a workshop doesn't require technical knowledge or fancy learning materials. All we're talking about is managing a time slot and finding a spot to host the event. It is as simple as that. So, when you put everything together, this plan is the right one.

In summary, tackling sustainable waste management means addressing issues step by step, and the biggie here is education. So let's hit the problem where it lives—educational platforms need to step up their game, and they need a boost from the government to do it. Over time, as these platforms get closer to the people they're meant to serve, that knowledge gap shrinks. And what do we get? A waste management system that's not just functioning, but thriving. So let's make it happen together guys!

Reference

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