

# Rethinking School Resources

## SUSTAINABLE & ETHICAL PROCUREMENT, USE AND DISPOSAL OF SCHOOL RESOURCES

**RESOURCE DEFINITION:** *A stock or supply of money, materials, staff, and other assets that can be drawn on by a person or organization in order to function effectively.*

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/resource>

### TO CLARIFY

*The resources discussed within this document are Earth's natural resources which have been extracted and/or manufactured to create materials/products/services in order for schools to function effectively.*



### Protecting Our Life Preserving Natural Resources

Air, Soil and Water are the three natural resources that we **CANNOT** live without. Yet, unsustainable methods of extraction, manufacturing, transportation, use and disposal of many of Earth's natural resources (ie. coal, oil, gas, metals, plants etc.), are destabilising Earth's climate; causing untold environmental destruction, social and economic injustices and putting our life supporting resources at great risk.

There are natural resources that we **CAN** live without or at the very least, rethink how we acquire them, use them and then dispose of them at the end of their life cycle.

*We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations. (EARTH CHARTER, PREAMBLE)*

Within a School environment, there are many **products** (end products and services) that are utilised. They are created from either renewable or non-renewable resources. The life cycle of many of Earth's natural resources are likely to involve extraction, transportation and/or manufacturing in-order to create products to be used; some will be the result of the end service through different methods of generation (ie. energy).

Within a School environment the structures, products and services that are most likely to be utilised are:

- Buildings
- Gardens
- School Equipment & Products (made from plastic, wood, sand, metal, oil, coal, plants etc)
- Food (plant and animal)
- Energy (stationary and transport)

### School Resource Templates

The **Earth Action Plan** has created free templates for schools to complete so that they can easily identify the following:

1. Identifying resources they use
2. Where the resources are used
3. If the resources are a sustainable and ethical option
4. Recommendations for sustainable options/alternatives
5. Establishing a time frame for implementation of sustainable actions/initiatives

Find the templates at: <https://earthactionplan.com/more-free-stuff> under **Earth Action 10**, Sustainable School Resource Use

The **Resource Templates** attempt to offer ethical alternatives and information for REFUSING, REDUCING, REUSING, RECYCLING, RECOVERING or DISPOSAL. Contact your local council for specific details of recycling and disposal. The various categories of the templates include:

- Energy (electricity and transportation)
- Water
- Organics (food scraps, garden waste and clippings)
- Plastic (bags, soft plastic, bottles and containers)
- Paper/Cardboard/Liquid Paperboard
- Metals (cans, foil, packaging and other)
- Polystyrene
- Light Globes and Tubes (incandescent, halogen, fluorescents, LED, etc.)
- Oil (cooking and motor oil)
- Textiles (clothing, shoes, school bags, furniture, curtains, carpets)
- Appliances and Electronics
- Batteries (household, rechargeable, vehicle)
- E-Waste (televisions, computers, laptops, tablets, printers, keyboard, etc.)
- Print Cartridges

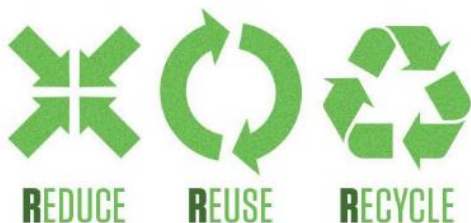
The following list shows additional resources/products that are also likely to be utilised within a school environment. Templates are not provided for the categories below, however, contact your local council for specific details of recycling and disposal.

- Chemical and Acids (paints, thinners, pesticides, machine oil, fertilisers and acids)
- Mobile Phones
- Glass (bottles and jars, glassware, windows and mirrors)
- Furniture
- Smoke Alarms
- Construction and Demolition
- Cookware, Crockery and Cutlery
- Concrete, Asphalt and Bitumen
- Fill, Soil and Sand (clean)
- Fire Extinguishers
- Wheels and Tyres (most likely to come from the school mower)
- Gas Bottles and Cylinders
- Hazardous Materials (asbestos, liquids)

We acknowledge every school is unique and will have different methods within their school to ensure they are purchasing, using and disposing of material resources in a sustainable manner. Please use the templates as a general guide only.

### RECYCLE is not the Top Dog

By now, you've probably heard of the 3 R's: Refuse, Reduce, Recycle **OR** the 4 R's: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle or some other version of that. You're also likely to have seen a multitude of icons, symbols and waste hierarchy pyramids.



Whether it's the 3R's or the 4R's, many Schools seem to jump straight to the **RECYCLE** with little focus, practice or education on the **REFUSE, REDUCE, and REUSE**. These first 3 R's of any waste hierarchy are the most important including that other "R" that is not always given airtime, and that is **RETHINK**.

### **It's Time to Reimagine and Rethink**

There are many things that we need to rethink and do, if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change, biodiversity loss and social and economic injustice. For a long time, humans have lived in a way where it was believed Earth's resources were here for us to use at the expense of the environment and others:

*If the resource runs dry, then we will develop a new technology or find new resources to take their place (we are already contemplating mining other planets).*

Decisions are often driven by economics.

*Our economy demands that we make consumption our way of life; that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals. (Economist Victor Lebow)*

It's time to have a rethink and redo on the many resources used on a daily basis within schools.

### **Let's Talk About School Lunches**

A typical school lunch can contain a lot of packaging and most of that packaging is usually soft or hard plastic.

**Scrunch test> The easy way to tell if plastic is soft or hard is the scrunch test. If it scrunches into a ball it's soft, if it holds its shape it's hard.**

If schools provide recycle bins for children to use, it's relatively easy to educate children to identify hard plastics, such as yogurt tubs, to be put into the comingled recycle bin. However, soft plastics (ie. plastic wrap, silver lined food packaging, wrappers etc.) are very problematic in that they cannot be put into the school's recycling bins. Soft plastics are a recyclable material, but they are not collected or sorted by most council recycling services.

If schools were to collect their soft plastics, they could be taken to a REDcycle drop-off point (<https://www.redcycle.net.au/>) located at Coles and Woolworths, however, it is very difficult to effectively sort soft plastics from a school's waste stream, especially from large schools. Check out the REDcycle website for a full comprehensive list of soft plastics for recycling if you are considering sorting out the school's soft plastics.

A likely outcome at many schools is that their soft plastics will either end up in the landfill or recycle bins or will drift away as litter within and outside the school grounds.

**POINT IN CASE**> The soft plastic wrapper on popper straws are a major culprit of litter within school grounds. They can easily find their way into drains, the nearby streets and natural waterways.

**A suggestion would be to ban soft plastics in school lunches.**

**Or go hard and put a policy in place for Zero Waste Lunches: No packaging at all.**

**GO NUDE FOOD!**



**HOW TO PACK A NUDE FOOD LUNCH**

The Nude Food Warriors have created a step-by-step guide to make packing a Nude Food Lunch easy as 1, 2, 3!

**STEP 1**  
Choose the main lunch item, it may be something from the list below or a Nude Food creation of your own

- Sandwich/ Roll
- Wrap/Pita
- Frittata/Quiche
- Pasta/Pasta Salad
- Sa ad
- Sushi/Rice Paper Rolls
- Noodles
- Stir Fry
- Egg Muffins

**STEP 2**  
Select your fruit

- Apple
- Orange
- Banana
- Grapes
- Watermelon
- Berries
- Fruit Salad
- Pear
- Mandarin
- Kwi Fruit

**STEP 3**  
Pick a nutritious Nude Food snack

- Yoghurt
- Vegetable Sticks and dip
- Cheese and crackers
- Popcorn (natural)
- Rice Crackers
- Vege chips (homemade)
- Pretzels

**STEP 4**  
Dont Forget Hydration!

Fill your favourite reusable drink bottle with filtered of tap water! Remember to refill throughout the day to make sure you stay hydrated!

Stuck on what to pack your Nude Food Lunch in? Turn over for some great storage ideas!

**NUDE FOOD DAY**

Join the Nude Food **MOVEMENT**

Nutrition Australia  
Eco-Schools  
Keep Australia Beautiful

Even though recycling soft plastics is an option that can produce some incredible new products, the best option would be to simply REFUSE. Choosing to refuse soft plastics, will mean having to rethink and reimagine what a school lunch will look like.

Banning soft plastics in school lunch boxes may be an unpopular decision, however, consultation with parents/guardians explaining why the school is taking a hardline stance on soft plastic will ensure schools can successfully transition to Zero Waste Lunches (Nude Food), or at the very least Zero Soft Plastic Lunches.

Zero Waste definitely sounds better, why not make that your goal!

The following sites are great sources of information for rethinking school lunches.

Nude Food,  
<https://www.nudefoodday.com.au/>

Wipe Out Waste (WOW), <http://www.wow.sa.gov.au/>

## Top 10 reasons why soft plastics should be banned from school lunch boxes:

1. Most soft plastics end up in the school's general waste or recycle bin, which will ultimately end up in landfill.
2. Soft plastics are the main form of litter found within and just outside school grounds
3. Even if all soft plastics were recycled at a REDcycle point, they would not be made into new *direct contact food packaging*. Often, soft plastic packaging made for direct contact with food is made with virgin plastic (brand new plastic)
4. The extraction of resources, transportation, manufacturing and disposal of soft plastic has a large carbon footprint causing social and ecological harm.
5. Continuing to purchase food wrapped in soft plastic does not put pressure on food companies to change their packaging methods, thus continuing the extraction of oil to make soft plastic packaging.
6. In-order to avoid global climate collapse, Australia is transitioning, along with other countries under the Paris Agreement, to a low carbon economy. This means Australia has committed to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC's) to reduce GHG emissions with a goal of net zero emissions by 2050. Fossil resources are unlikely to play a major role in this transition.
7. There are many cleverly designed lunch boxes to avoid packaging altogether. There are also wonderful alternatives to using soft plastic packaging so it's now easier than ever to eliminate soft plastic from school lunches.
8. A lunch box containing zero packaging or at the very least, zero soft plastic, is likely to be a healthier lunch, as alternative food options have to be sourced (ie. A packaged fruit wrap is likely to be replaced by a piece of fruit)
9. More packaging on food usually equates to more cost, so a lunchbox containing zero soft plastic or zero packaging of any kind is likely to cost less money in the long run.

### AND NUMBER 10....

It makes us adults awesome role models and shows our kids that we care for their future; that we are willing to make the changes required for a healthy stable planet.