

Six R's to Minimise Waste

Loddon Mallee Waste and Resource Recovery Group

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Everybody in our community is aware that there are currently challenges confronting our waste and recycling industries. There are many things that we as community members can do to assist. The simplest measure is to make sure that we are only putting the correct items in the recycling bin and not contaminating that collection stream. But what else can we do? Let's have a look at the six R's of waste avoidance and consider for yourself if you can incorporate some or all of them into your routine. Those six are: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle and Rot. Let's have a look at how these principles can work in daily life.

Refuse

You can refuse to buy fruit and vegetables with excess packaging. Pick up the loose carrots instead of the packaged ones and put them in your own reusable mesh bag for weighing. When choosing between two brands of the same product, choose the one with minimal packaging that is recyclable. One easy item we can refuse is the relatively recent phenomenon of bottled water. Remember when we all used a flask! There are some great insulated drink bottles you can get many years of use from. Refuse takeaway coffee cups too by using your own travel cup or similar. Avoid products with packaging made from more than one material as these are less likely to be recyclable.

Reduce

The easiest way to reduce is to look at our avoidable food waste. Victorians waste 250,000 tonnes of food annually. This comes at an average cost of \$2,200 per household. Some is easily avoided by simply planning your meals for the week and making a shopping list. This will help you to be focused when shopping and minimise unnecessary purchases such as multi-buy specials and store promotions. Don't forget to factor in leftovers from that Sunday roast into your menu plan for the rest of the week. You can also look at the household items and clothing that you buy. Are they going to be durable and long lasting, or will it become next month's landfill, or next season's fashion faux pas? Go for the best quality that you can reasonably afford that will provide use for years to come.

Reuse

Maybe someone else in your local community could use that item before you throw it out. Try listing unwanted items on local buy and sell pages or holding a garage sale. Even if you might think something has minimal value you could try giving it away for free to avoid landfilling. Another great way to reuse something is to upcycle it. This means creating something new from old items by using them in a different way. Ever used a jam jar in the shed to store nails? That's upcycling. Get googling "upcycling" and a world of inspiration will open for you. Remember to check out other people's second-hand items for sale, you might find that gem you've been looking for.

Repair

Sadly, repairing is something that we do much less of today. Recently there has been some renewed interest with the arrival of Repair Cafes starting up. Volunteers come together monthly for community members to bring in goods for repair and a friendly cuppa'. Importantly Repair Café's emphasise that attendees should try to learn some new skills themselves so that they can complete repairs in future. Search online for locations and dates in the Loddon Mallee region.

When making big ticket purchases do some research to find out which brands produce goods that are serviceable and repairable over disposable.

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Recycle

Continue to recycle correctly. Find out how with the Loddon Mallee Waste App, simply go to your app store and search "Loddon Mallee Waste". Don't forget to check your local council's website for their advice and latest guides to recycling.

Rot

After minimising food waste as much as possible, you will still always have a bit of unavoidable wastage and spoilage. Add this to garden and lawn trimmings and you will have the ingredients for making a great compost. With a compost bin, an aerator tool and bit of research you can be successful in producing compost. Done right you won't have any issues with smells or yuck factor. If space is a problem or you just don't produce much food and garden waste, then a small worm farm might be the way to go. Some residents have council green/organic waste services provided. In that case follow your council's advice on what can and can't go in the bin.

There you have the Six R's to minimise your waste footprint. How many are you already doing? How many can you do? Make sure to share your successes with family and friends.

Caring for our environment by reducing waste to landfill.

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