



Arts SA's Ian Ferguson with Kath Button from the State Library of SA

## Case Study

# UPCLOSE

Zero Waste SA Industry Program

Arts SA

## Collaboration for sustainable waste management

Recycling among key South Australian Government arts and cultural organisations more than doubled in three months following the roll-out of a new sustainability initiative.

The outcome highlights the benefits of a coordinated response to common issues across different sites. Among the lessons learned is that it is not always easy gaining consensus among staff when implementing change.

Five separate organisations form the Arts SA cultural precinct on Adelaide's North Terrace: State Library of SA, SA Museum, Art Gallery of SA, Artlab Australia and Migration Museum.

All five are funded by Arts SA, a division of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, but each is managed separately and has its own unique identity and work culture.

What they do share is a combined external bin system – a site where all waste is stored until it goes to landfill or for recycling.

Until recently there was very little of the latter. Only about 20% of waste was being recycled, mostly cardboard and paper; the remainder – an estimated 125 tonnes a year – ended up in landfill.

In 2009, Zero Waste SA funded a sustainability review under its Industry Program which recommended a coordinated approach to turn the performance around. Within months a new recycling program had pushed the rate to 45%.

This equates to a 42% improvement – well ahead of the State Government's statewide target for a 25% reduction in waste to landfill by 2014.

“It soon became clear that each organisation had its own idiosyncrasies, cultures and way of doing things. But being arts and cultural organisations there was strong support for the waste program – mostly we were preaching to the converted.”

**Ian Ferguson**

Arts SA

Asset and Contracts Manager



**Government of South Australia**

Zero Waste SA

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“The Arts SA North Terrace Precinct has achieved a significant improvement in waste and recycling performance, now recycling 45% of the waste stream, up from 20%... This is an excellent result and places the sites in the high performers for waste and recycling.”

**Arts SA Waste and Recycling Performance Review**  
May 2010

### VITAL SUPPORT ROLE

Roll-out of the Arts SA recycling program was timed to coincide with the hiring of a new cleaning contractor – a decision that has proved invaluable.

Recycling support was written into the new contract with the cleaners who are taking a vital monitoring role. They meet frequently with each organisation to give feedback to management on issues such as contaminated bins.

Their support goes beyond their normal duties: they sort material from desk bins into the correct recycling and waste streams.

“It’s not their role to do that but they have been very committed to making sure the recycling program succeeds,” says Mr Ferguson. “Overall the input from the cleaners has been fantastic.”

## Sustainability objectives

Working collaboratively to implement a new waste management and recycling program across five different organisations.

## Outcomes

- ^ effective collaboration across disparate organisations
- ^ proven leadership in waste management
- ^ extensive improvements in recycling
- ^ new cleaning contract with additional support from cleaners
- ^ major reduction in waste to landfill

## Zero Waste SA support

- ^ North Terrace Sustainability Precinct Scoping Review
- ^ Arts SA Waste and Recycling Performance Review
- ^ advice on waste management and recycling initiatives
- ^ development of a case study

## Estimated annual savings

Material	Original review (May/June 09)	Follow-up review (May 2010)
<b>General waste to landfill</b>	125 tonnes (79.8%)	72.2 tonnes (54.9%) 42% improvement
<b>Total recycling</b>	31.5 tonnes (20.2%)	59.3 tonnes (45.1%) 88% improvement
<b>Total waste generation</b>	156.2 tonnes	131.5 tonnes 16% improvement
<b>Recycling*</b>		
<b>Paper/cardboard</b>	12.7%	27.8%
<b>Organics</b>	4.4%	9.1%
<b>Mixed plastics/polystyrene</b>	0%	1%

\* Not all recycling streams included



Syd Bower, Manager Operations, Art Gallery of SA

## North Terrace Sustainability Precinct

The Arts SA waste management and recycling program is the result of a July 2009 Zero Waste SA scoping review of the North Terrace Sustainability Precinct.

Six State Government-controlled buildings were assessed to identify existing recycling and waste management performance, common issues and impediments to improved performance.

The sites reviewed were:

- ^ State Library of SA
- ^ SA Museum
- ^ Art Gallery of SA
- ^ Artlab Australia
- ^ Royal Adelaide Hospital (separate case study)
- ^ Government House.

According to the review, all six have made significant improvements to overall sustainability since 2004.

Across all sites, estimated waste recycling rates ranged from 18% to 38%. The arts and cultural organisations were near the lower end.

The report noted that their 125 tonnes a year to landfill could be significantly reduced by introducing recycling for food and vegetation (organics) and co-mingled items such as plastics, glass, bottles, tins and newspapers.

Government House introduced its own co-mingled recycling scheme and reduced general waste by at least half.

A key recommendation for a single sustainability committee to coordinate an expanded recycling program at all Arts SA organisations made sense. They all share the same cleaning and facilities contractors, and use the same bin compound on North Terrace. The Migration Museum was invited to join the coordinated sustainability program.

Arts SA Asset and Contracts Manager Ian Ferguson was given the responsibility for overseeing the new committee, with the facilities managers from each organisation also represented.

## Recycling program has immediate impact

After reviewing the precinct, Zero Waste SA worked closely with the new sustainability committee on introducing new recycling processes.

Additional bins were installed at the shared compound for:

- ^ co-mingled dry recyclables
- ^ polystyrene
- ^ newspapers
- ^ paper and cardboard
- ^ general waste.

In the offices a three-bin system was rolled out for general waste, organics and co-mingled. Cornstarch bin liners were used because they decompose quickly and they are being purchased in bulk to offset the higher costs.

In other cost saving measures, one of two three-cubic metre general waste bins was removed from the compound and bins are being emptied less often (apart from organic containers because of their potential to attract vermin and create odour).

“There were some minor teething problems such as the lack of handles on the lids of the organics bins,” Mr Ferguson said. “Handles have since been installed because some staff had concerns over hygiene.”

In May 2010, Zero Waste SA funded a follow-up review to assess progress. The results were encouraging.

In just three months, recycling had effectively doubled from an estimated 31.5 tonnes a year to 59.3 tonnes; and annual waste to landfill had dropped from 125 tonnes to 72 tonnes. Overall, the annual fall in waste generated was 25 tonnes.

## Desk bin removal makes a difference

Personal desk bins can have a surprisingly large impact on the final outcome of a waste reduction program.

The Arts SA North Terrace organisations have been working on effective strategies to remove the bins without alienating staff.

They have discovered that such a step needs to be carefully planned and well-communicated with endorsement by senior management.

The State Library of SA, which has about 145 staff and a similar number of volunteers, initially mandated the removal of desk bins but switched to a voluntary system because of concerns of some staff.

Initially about 30% of staff retained their bins but this figure has been gradually increasing. It's a trend that has the potential to undermine the overall recycling program, so the library is now considering reinstating the ban.

"It's these little bits of rubbish that when combined make a mountain of rubbish," says Kath Button, State Library of SA's Manager of Resources and Infrastructure.

"By participating in this initiative we are certainly reducing our impact on the amount of waste going to landfill and have the opportunity to further reduce this by gaining more widespread acceptance by library staff and volunteers."

### Cornstarch bag option

Other Arts SA organisations have been developing their own schemes to address the desk bin issue with varying levels of success.

"Under-desk bins are our biggest problem without question," says Syd Bower, Operations Manager at the Art Gallery of SA. "We introduced a voluntary system but we must revisit this because about 80% of staff have refused to let go. It's a clear case of people resisting change."

SA Museum has opted for a phased approach and is confident of a smoother transition.

"At the moment we are getting people into the habit of using the various recycling bins and separating their waste, and then we are going to withdraw desk bins," says Selina Clark, Manager of Corporate Operations.

"It's a stepped approach and is mostly about behavioural change. We've now got to the stage where people have almost stopped using their under-desk bins so it shouldn't be majorly disruptive when they are finally removed."

A recurring message from staff who object to the removal of desk bins is hygiene. For example, many want to know how they can dispose of used tissues.

One solution has been the use of paper or cornstarch bags, which can be placed, with contents, in the organics bin for composting.

## Expanding the sustainability program

Organisations in the Arts SA Precinct have been progressively adding more materials to the list of recyclables, which now includes electronic and electrical equipment, fluoro tubes, wooden pallets and waste metals. Additional organics bins are also being considered to cater for all garden waste.

Now that recycling is well established in staff areas, the next step is to expand the system to the catering operations in these buildings. With over 2.3 million visitors last year, the big challenge will be establishing public recycling services.

Other issues include waste left by caterers and measures to improve external recycling by people visiting the public institutions and grounds of Arts SA buildings.

Next on the agenda are ways to continue to improve the energy and water efficiency. Previous work has included lighting upgrades for areas of the State Library of SA and SA Museum, and an air conditioning upgrade for 2 wings of the Art Gallery of SA, as well as conversion of some cisterns to dual-flush.

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## Arts SA Cultural Precinct

Five State Government arts and cultural organisations on Adelaide's North Terrace are working together on a combined sustainability program. The State Library of SA, SA Museum, Art Gallery of SA, Artlab Australia and Migration Museum come under the direction of Arts SA.

[www.arts.sa.gov.au](http://www.arts.sa.gov.au)

## Zero Waste SA

A South Australian Government agency that advances improved waste management policies and the development of resource recovery and recycling. The Zero Waste SA Industry Program advises and supports companies to achieve sustainability goals in waste, water and energy.

[www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au](http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au)



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