

# Low Waste Lunch



## A Guide for Schools

### INTRODUCTION

#### What is a Low Waste Lunch?

Low Waste Lunches involve students bringing lunches with little or no packaging. The aim is to develop a greater awareness of how students and parents can minimise waste through reducing and reusing.

To prepare a Low Waste Lunch parents need to follow these simple guidelines:

- Pack food in reusable containers
- Use refillable drinks bottles
- If packaging is necessary, choose types that are reusable, recyclable or compostable

#### Why hold a Low Waste Lunch?

Much of the volume of waste generated in schools comes from food packaging and wrappers, such as snap lock bags and cling wrap, and wrappers of pre-packaged foods such as chips and muesli bars.

A Low Waste Lunch will encourage parents and students to think about what goes into their lunchbox.

It can also encourage school and their canteen coordinators to consider their canteen menu and provide low waste options.

Held regularly, low waste lunches will encourage a change in behaviour of students, parents and schools, and ultimately reduce waste to landfill and lower school waste disposal costs.

Low waste foods are often healthier, less processed and cheaper than the pre-packaged alternatives.

Low waste lunches are cheaper!

The following table details the costs of pre-packaged goods compared to the same products purchased and then packed in a low waste form (by buying in bulk or larger packages).

| Typical Lunch                      | Price per unit | Individual serving price | Low waste lunch         | Price per unit | Individual serving price |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Bottled Water                      | \$1.49 /L      | \$0.50                   | Tap Water               | \$0.00/L       | \$0.00                   |
| Orange Juice Poppers               | \$3.49/L       | \$0.70                   | 1L Bottle of Juice      | \$1.99/L       | \$0.40                   |
| Apple Fruit Sticks                 | \$23/L         | \$0.57                   | Individual Apple        | \$3.98/kg      | \$0.10                   |
| Diced Pear Tub                     | \$8.76/kg      | \$1.33                   | Individual Pear         | \$2.42/kg      | \$0.40                   |
| Sultana Packets                    | \$11.63/kg     | \$0.47                   | Bulk Packet of Sultanas | \$5.53/kg      | \$0.21                   |
| Cheese Sticks                      | \$29.10/kg     | \$0.41                   | Cheese Block            | \$8.99/kg      | \$0.10                   |
| Individually Wrapped Biscuits      | \$15.90/kg     | \$0.39                   | Packet of Biscuits      | \$14.50/kg     | \$0.37                   |
| Individually Wrapped Rice Crackers | \$27.70/kg     | \$0.42                   | Packet of Rice Crackers | \$19.50/kg     | \$0.29                   |
| Single-serve Yogurt Tubs           | \$6.10/kg      | \$0.60                   | Bulk Yoghurt Tub        | \$3.98/kg      | \$0.40                   |
| <b>DAILY COST</b>                  |                | <b>\$5.53</b>            |                         |                | <b>\$2.37</b>            |

**Low Waste Lunch daily savings = average \$2.09**

If the low waste lunch was adopted every day, each student could potentially **save \$418 per year!**

## ORGANISING YOUR LOW WASTE LUNCH

When you start organising a Low Waste Lunch there are lots of questions you need to ask such as –

- Who will coordinate the program?
- How often and when will they be held?
- Who will be involved?

Council has developed a Low Waste Lunch planning sheet (attached) to help you consider these questions and plan your program.

When you start planning consider the level of school support available in your school and who can help you implement the program (the Principal, the P & C Committee, School Environment Team, canteen manager, teachers, parents and students).

Communicate with teachers and brainstorm ideas for making it work. Encourage all teachers and the P & C Committee to become involved.

Low Waste Lunches can be held as a one off, annually, once a term, as a weekly event or as an everyday policy. This frequency will depend on the size of your school, the level of support and other priorities within the school. If your school is participating in a healthy eating programs link the Low Waste Lunches to that program.

For large schools holding frequent Low Waste Lunch may be challenging, so consider starting out with a Stage or Year level.

Using environment events like World Environment Day or National Recycling Week can be good times to hold an annual or one off event or launch an ongoing program.

Continue the momentum, by holding Low Waste Lunches more often until they become a part of a normal school practice.

You will also need to consider if the canteen will be involved or be closed for the day. If the canteen is involved you may choose to sell completely low waste items or have a small number of low waste options available. Ask your canteen coordinator to consider purchasing more low waste items or products with recyclable packaging.

You may also like to decide to go 'binless' for the day. This involves putting playground bins away for the day so that

any waste brought into the school is sent home with the students. This can further promote the message of reducing waste to parents.

### Promotion and Education Activities

Good communication with parents is essential for a successful Low Waste Lunch. Let them know what to do and what to expect. Promotion can include a letter to parents (example attached), stories in your schools newsletter, notice on school message board, posters on noticeboards, and messages at the school assemblies. You can get the students involved by holding a poster competition to promote the event.

It is important to think about what educational activities will be held with students in the lead up and on the day of the Low Waste Lunch. Encourage all teachers to talk to their students about the problems associated with the amount of waste we create and if possible, do one of the class activities provided. Other activities could include writing a story, designing posters or having Council staff visit and talk about waste.

A good activity to hold on the day can be getting students to score their lunch (scoring activity sheet attached). Prizes could be given to students or classes with the best low waste lunch box and most innovative ways of reducing waste.

Consider planning a waste audit before and on the day of the Low Waste Lunch to measure the reduction in waste produced and determine the potential savings to be made for the school from lower waste disposal costs over the year. Council can assist with the audit or provide tools and resources.



# Low Waste Lunch

## LOW WASTE LUNCH PLAN

Take this sheet to a staff, class and/or parent meeting to develop your Low Waste Lunch program.

You may want to begin by brainstorming a list of ideas and then narrowing it down to those items you feel are achievable based on your school size, the school's attitude toward the environment, the level of participation, and the amount of time you have.

Who will coordinate the program?

How often will the low waste lunches be held? (*weekly, each term, one off*)

When will the low waste lunch(es) be held?

Who will be involved? (Whole school, stage, staff)

Will the canteen involved or closed on the day?

Will bins be available on the day?

How will it be promoted? (*letter, newsletter article, poster competition*)

# Low Waste Lunch

What education will occur before the event and on the day?

Will lunches be checked / scored on the day?

Will there be competitions / prizes?

Will you do a waste audit prior to and/or on the day?

Will other activities be held on the day?

# Low Waste Lunch

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

(School Name) School is holding a Low Waste Lunch Day on (date).

We are encouraging all families to participate in the Low Waste Lunch Day by bringing a packed lunch to school that has little or no packaging or waste.

For a Low Waste Lunch, think:

- ✓ Reusable lunchboxes and containers
- ✓ Reusable drink bottles
- ✓ Reusable cutlery
- ✓ Appropriate portion sizes
- × No pre-packaged foods such as muesli bars, chips, fruit cups
- × No cling wrap, foil or snap lock bags
- × No poppers or juice cartons

By packing a low waste lunch, parents can save up to \$10 per child per week on the cost of pre-packaged foods. That's a saving of \$400 per year!

- Choose a lunch box that has different compartments and reusable containers within the one box.
- Pack a sandwich in a tight fitting reusable container to avoid the need for cling wrap or foil.
- Buy or make your child's favourite snack foods in bulk or in larger packets and portion into individual containers, such as:
  - Chips, crackers or savoury biscuits
  - Sweet biscuits
  - Tinned fruits, jelly and yoghurt
  - Whole cake sliced and stored in freezer
  - Dried fruit such as apricots, sultanas and dates
  - Large block of cheese cut into sticks
- Pack drinks in reusable containers. Buy 1-2 litre bottles of juice or other drink and pour into a reusable drink bottle.
- Put leftovers from last night's dinner straight into a lunch box. It saves time and costs little to make.
- Preparation is the key. Plan in advance and prepare the lunchbox the night before and store in the refrigerator.
- Encourage your children to help plan, prepare and pack their own lunches.
- Take note of what is getting left in the lunchbox and ask your child if it was too much or if they no longer like the food type.

Typical Lunch



Low Waste Lunch



# Low Waste Lunch

## Scoring your 'Low Waste Lunch'

Take the test and work out how 'low waste' your lunch is today.

If your lunch is in a reusable lunchbox, give yourself 5 points \_\_\_\_\_

Give yourself 2 points for each of the following items that you have

| Item                        | Plus 2 points |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Reusable sandwich container |               |
| Reusable drink container    |               |
| Piece of fruit not wrapped  |               |
| Reusable snack container    |               |
| <b>Total</b>                |               |

Take away 1 point for each of the following items that you have

| Item                        | Minus 1 point |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Chip or biscuit packet      |               |
| Popper or pop top           |               |
| Lolly wrapper               |               |
| Sandwich bag                |               |
| Glad wrap or aluminium foil |               |
| Muesli bar wrapper          |               |
| Other throwaway containers  |               |
| <b>Total</b>                |               |

### Add up your scores

Lunch box / 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Plus items / 8 \_\_\_\_\_

Minus items / 7 \_\_\_\_\_

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_

**Over 12 - Excellent**

**9 to 12 - Good start**

**Up to 9 - Not so good**

# Low Waste Lunch

## INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

### Background

- Waste, litter and waste are all names we give to things that we have used and don't want anymore. They may be things that are broken or just old. They can be things like food scraps, old clothes, newspapers or broken toys.
- Our general waste goes to a landfill. At the landfill the waste is tipped into a large hole in the ground and covered up with soil each day.
- To make sure that we have landfill space for the future, we have to look at the amount and type of waste that we make.
- To help us save space in the landfill, we can look at ways to reduce the amount of waste we create, like reusing items, and recycling those items we can't reuse again.



- The waste hierarchy (see below) presents the options for waste management, from most sustainable (avoid) to least sustainable (landfill disposal).
- To help save the environment, firstly we can reduce amount of things we use. For example, if we borrow a book from the library, not buying it will save the paper for something else, reducing our paper use.
- The next best thing to do is to reuse the things we already have. Instead of buying the new book, we can borrow one from the library, sharing the book with everyone else.
- Recycling lets us turn old objects into something new again, so once the book is too old to use, we can recycle it into a new book.
- Finally, if an item cannot be reused or recycled, the last option is disposal. Disposal often results in the item being buried as landfill, wasting the unrecovered resources.
- Another benefit of recycling and avoiding waste is the minimising the use of natural resources such as trees, sand, oil, metals and plant fibres as most of our things are made up of materials from nature.
- For example, a glass jar is made from melted sand, while plastic is made from crude oil. To make sure that we have clean oceans, beaches and forests in the future, we must reduce, reuse and recycle all that we can.

### Ideas

- Talk to the students about why the school has decided to introduce a Low Waste Lunch.
- Discuss with students the life of a landfill and the options we use to make sure that the landfill is viable for the future (Waste Hierarchy- Reduce, Reuse and Recycle).
- Discuss where foods come from and how much packaging it has and why.
- Complete the classroom activities provided.
- Encourage students to write articles for the school newsletter about the low waste lunch and its benefits for the environment.
- Contact Council to see if you can organise a tour of the Landfill or Recycling Centre.
- Ask families for recipes that use leftovers or common pantry items to make cheap, low waste lunches.

# Low Waste Lunch

## CLASS ACTIVITY

### My Lunch Box Rules

#### Stage: 1 to 3

**Aim:** This activity aims to develop children's ideas on how lunches can be made without packaging. Using their imagination students will create their own lunch ideas, focusing on options that reduce the amount of lunch packaging they throw away.

#### Instructions

1. Talk through why waste is bad for the environment.
2. Ask them to think about how much waste (including recycling) they make every day.
3. Ask how much waste they have in their lunchboxes and what it is (eg can it be recycled or reused?).
4. Explain that individual packaged items produce more waste and often cost more.
5. Hand out the My Lunch Box Rules Worksheet.
6. Using the Worksheet, explain that they can pick any food to develop at low waste. Get students to then draw their own lunch in the spaces provided.
7. Students can compare lunches and discuss the amount of waste they can save. They can take the sheet home and ask if they can make their lunch box in the future.

### The Price of Packaging

#### Stage: 3

**Aim:** This activity will visually compare the amount of waste created from buying individual packaged servings and items that are bought in bulk.

#### Instructions

1. This activity can be done in groups or as a whole class.
2. Purchase for each class or group the below items of similar weight (eg Tiny Teddys, potato chips, rice crackers etc):
  - 1 x packet of individually wrapped biscuits or sweets
  - 1 x bulk pack of the same biscuits or sweets
3. Retain the receipt for use in the activity.
4. For each group or class provide:
  - 1 x packet of individually wrapped biscuits or sweets
  - 1 x bulk pack of the same biscuits or sweets
  - 2 bowls to hold the food
5. Get students to open packets and place food from individually wrapped products in one bowl and food from the bulk packet in another- if you are going to eat the products, consider hygiene.
6. Keep packaging in the two separate piles (individually wrapped versus bulk).
7. Handout the Price of Packaging Worksheet.
8. Ask the group or class to discuss the questions and complete the worksheet.
9. If completed in small groups, compare the results.
10. Enjoy morning tea!

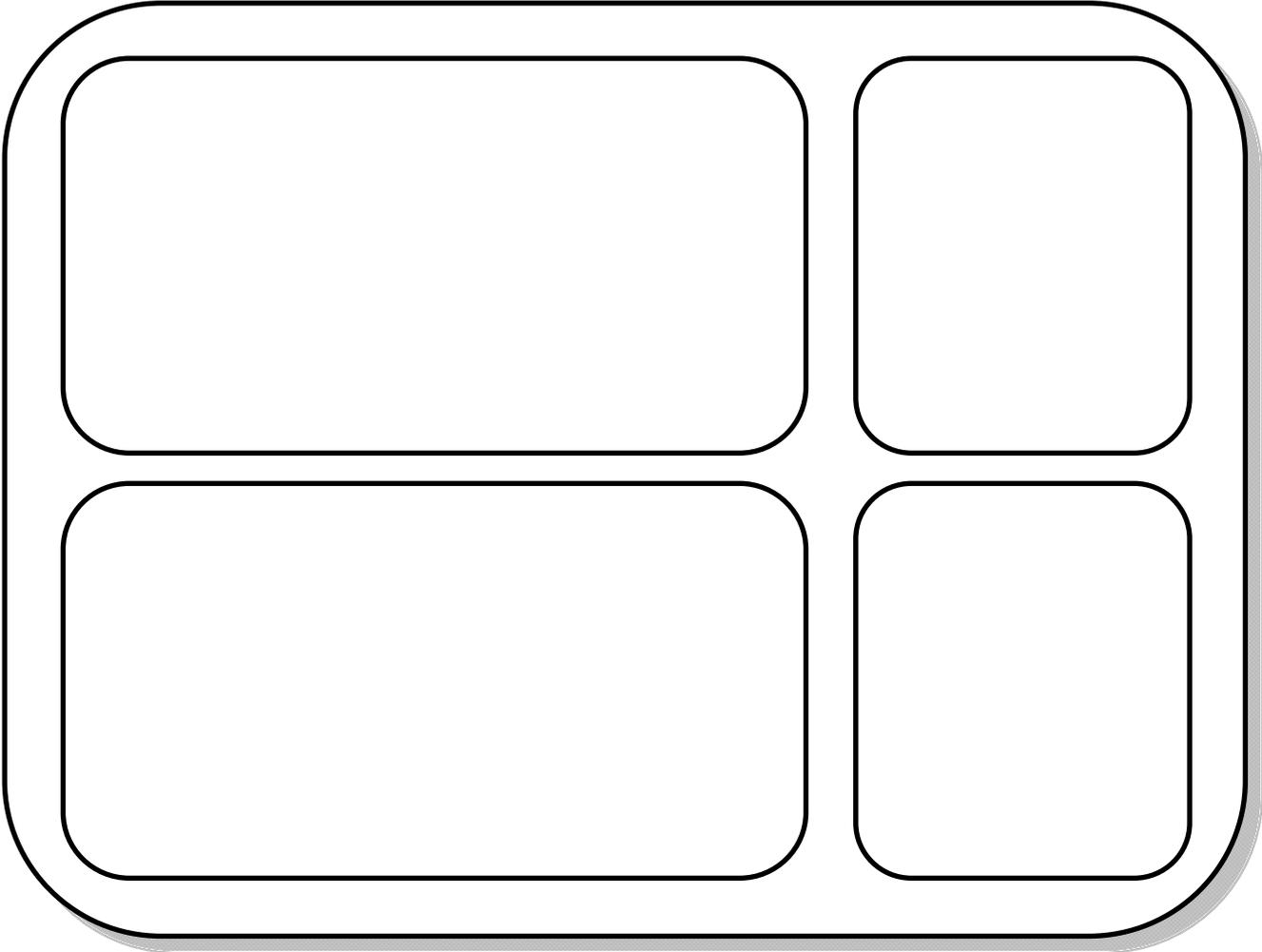
# My Lunch Box Rules

My favourite snack:

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My most imaginative sandwich:

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How can I make this a Low Waste Lunch?

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## The Price of Packaging

Open your packets and answer the following questions.

1. Which packet is biggest in size?

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2. Which packet contains the most food?

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3. Which packet contains the most packaging waste?

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4. Which packet costs the most?

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5. Which packet gives you the best value?

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6. Why is it a good idea to buy items in bulk rather than individually packaged?

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