

Sustainability Checklist

Waste Management

This checklist highlights practical actions ranging from simple, easy-to-implement steps to more advanced solutions that may require longer-term planning. There is no set order in which the actions need to be completed. Whether your practice is just beginning its sustainability journey or looking to build on existing initiatives, this checklist is designed to guide and support meaningful progress.

Better-practice waste management is one of the most practical and impactful ways for the health industry to improve sustainability. The waste hierarchy (see below) guides this approach by ranking waste management strategies based on their environmental impact and cost-effectiveness. Items at the top of the hierarchy are most preferred and lead to better outcomes.

Effective waste management helps to reduce landfill volumes, lower business costs, and support the circular economy. It also provides valuable opportunities to engage staff and patients in sustainability practices, building awareness and a sense of shared responsibility.

From simple actions such as clear signage and well-placed bins to more advanced initiatives like introducing new waste streams (e.g., green organics service), every step contributes to better environmental outcomes.

The Waste Management Hierarchy

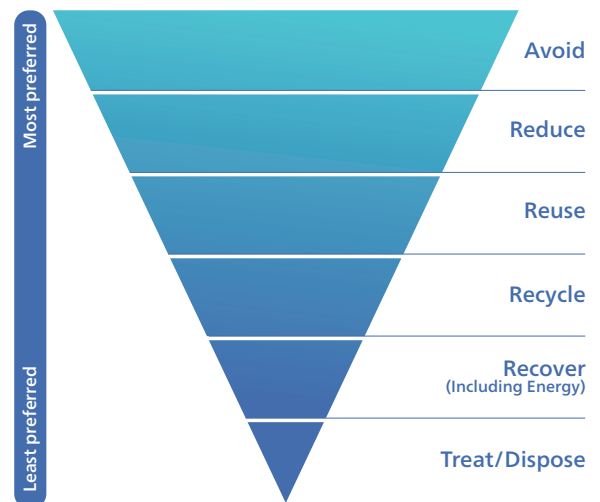


Figure 1: The Waste Management Hierarchy.

Source: Green Industries SA

Waste Reduction

WM.1

Are you aware of the main types of non-hazardous waste generated at your practice?

The first step in effective waste reduction is understanding what waste streams are being generated. By identifying problematic or frequent waste streams, you can prioritise areas for action and develop practical solutions.

Additional: List the main types of waste generated at your practice, and determine which bin is most appropriate for that material.



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<p>WM.2</p>	<p>Has your business embedded waste reduction practices into everyday operations over the last 12 months?</p> <p>Integrating waste reduction into operations helps minimise costs, improve efficiency, and lower environmental impact. Since almost every activity generates waste, it's important to consider opportunities to reduce it in day-to-day actions.</p> <p>Examples of some waste reduction practices can include printing on both sides of paper to reduce paper waste or using reusable coffee cups instead of disposable ones.</p> <p>Additional: List the waste reduction initiatives that have been incorporated into your usual operations over the past year.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>WM.3</p>	<p>Are giveaways and complimentary items optional at your practice?</p> <p>Although they are a thoughtful gesture, unwanted gifts can create a burden. Allowing patients to choose helps minimise this risk. It reduces the number of items given away, decreases waste generated outside the practice, and can also lead to business savings.</p> <p>If your practice offers giveaways, consider using reusable bags, like totes. They're practical, sustainable, and can feature your logo.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>WM.4</p>	<p>Are waste reduction efforts communicated to your patients?</p> <p>Sharing your waste reduction initiatives with patients builds trust and buy-in. It also reduces resistance to changes in your business model (like moving to digital form systems) by showcasing your commitment to sustainability.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>WM.5</p>	<p>Do you use refillable systems for consumables (e.g., cleaning products)?</p> <p>Refilling systems minimise the use of single-use containers and reduce waste associated with packaging. Purchasing bulk items can also save business costs in the long term.</p> <p>Additional: If refillable systems are used ensure containers are cleaned appropriately between refills.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>WM.6</p>	<p>Is a digital system used for all patient records, forms, and communications?</p> <p>Digitalisation is an effective way for health practices to reduce printing and paper waste. Software can be used to manage forms and records, while additional information or flyers can be shared via SMS or email.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Bin Management</p>		
<p>WM.7</p>	<p>Are bins clearly and correctly labelled, and colour coded with the standard colours?</p> <p>Clearly labelling bins and using standard colours helps reduce confusion, improve resource recovery, and lower contamination rates. Standard colours are: red for general waste, yellow for comingled recycling, and green for organics.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>WM.8</p>	<p>Are clear, informative signs placed on and around internal waste bins for both staff and patients?</p> <p>Signage that shows what belongs in each bin makes correct disposal easier. Include examples of common items from your practice (e.g., paper towels, cardboard, soft plastics) for each waste stream.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>WM.9</p>	<p>Is a recycling service available at your practice (yellow bin collection)?</p> <p>Recycling bins can be used for common delivery materials such as hard plastics and cardboard. In South Australia, businesses may also opt for a 'dry waste' service, which accepts many of the same materials as council recycling. Instead of being recycled, these materials are converted into fuel for industry, reducing reliance on natural gas.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>WM.10</p>	<p>Is an organic recycling service available at your practice (green bin collection)?</p> <p>Introducing an organics service can reduce landfill, improve resource recovery, and lower costs associated with general waste collections. An organics bin can accept items like paper towels and food scraps, and adding a kitchen caddy in staff areas can make disposal even easier.</p>	<input type="radio"/>

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WM.11	<p>Can your disposable instruments be recycled through your current waste services?</p> <p>Some instruments may not have reusable alternatives, but they must be disposed of correctly. Compostable items are only effective if your practice has access to an organics service, and the same applies to plastics and metals. Without a suitable recycling stream, these items will go to landfill. Always confirm with your recycling service providers which materials can be recovered.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
WM.12	<p>Do you seek information from your recycling provider on processes and end product availability?</p> <p>Understanding the full process behind recycling services ensures transparency and accountability. It helps confirm that materials are genuinely recycled into useful products rather than sent to landfill or offshore. Knowing whether end products are available for purchase also supports closing the loop and reinforces circular economy principles.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
WM.13	<p>Do you conduct regular reviews of your waste service providers?</p> <p>Waste service needs can change over time, and different providers may offer more cost-effective or sustainable options. Regularly reviewing the market helps ensure your practice receives the best value while also supporting providers that prioritise recycling, resource recovery, and reduced landfill.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
WM.14	<p>Beyond the 3-bin system, does your practice provide the minimum standard services for recycling?</p> <p>Minimum standard services should be available in all metropolitan areas and cover common waste streams and items banned from landfill. Excluding the 3-bin system, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper and cardboard recycling • Toner cartridge recycling • Fluorescent light recycling • E-waste recycling <p>E-waste is banned from landfill and is known for causing fires in waste facilities. E-waste must be disposed of through the appropriate pathways.</p> <p>More information can be found in the Government office waste: Strategy and better-practice guide (2024).</p>	<input type="radio"/>
WM.15	<p>Does your practice provide better-practice services for recycling?</p> <p>Better-practice recycling options include additional disposal options beyond minimum standard services. Better practice services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battery recycling • Hard waste recycling • Soft plastics recycling <p>Batteries are banned from landfills and are known for causing fires in waste facilities. These items must be disposed of through the appropriate pathways.</p> <p>More information can be found in the Government office waste: Strategy and better-practice guide (2024).</p>	<input type="radio"/>
General		
WM.16	<p>Do you have an internal waste management policy and/or strategy?</p> <p>A clear waste management policy ensures compliance with regulations and demonstrates your commitment to sustainability. Pairing this with a waste management strategy helps set measurable goals, establish trackable metrics, and create an action plan with timelines for continuous improvement. Goals might include reducing single-use plastics, improving recycling rates, or cutting overall waste volumes.</p>	<input type="radio"/>

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WM.17	Do you provide staff training on waste management? Providing ongoing training or training during induction will ensure that staff are on board with your waste management systems and goals. Consider training staff on waste reduction, source separation, and familiarising them with the bin system. This serves as a great engagement and learning opportunity.	○
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This checklist has been developed by Rawtec and 2XE for the Australian Dental Association – South Australia (ADASA) as part of Lead-Educate-Assist-Promote (LEAP) grant provided by Green Industries SA (GISA). It is one of three sustainability checklists made publicly available.

Periodically revisit this checklist, record your current score, and set your organisation 3 new, priority actions to implement:

Date	Initial	Score	3 Priority actions to implement		
12/09/2025	J. Smith	6/17	Communicate (WM.4)	Digital System (WM.6)	Policy/Strategy (WM.16)



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