



MEDIA RELEASE

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How Green Connect uses education to work towards zero waste **ROBERT SERVINE**

Australians generated an estimated 75.8 million tonnes (Mt) of waste in 2020-2021, up 3 per cent from the year prior, according to the latest [National Waste Report](#). That's equivalent to around 1,435 Sydney Harbour Bridges worth of waste – in a single year, in a single country.

It's an overwhelming number, and with World Environment Day on the horizon (June 5), the future of our planet weighs heavily on our minds. However, as we contemplate the world our children will inherit, it is the best-case scenarios that drive us at Green Connect. We hope that through collaborative efforts, we can reduce waste, restore our ecosystems, and foster a greener, fairer way of life.

Our zero waste philosophy

Green Connect's mission extends far beyond the boundaries of our Illawarra permaculture farm. While cultivating food in an ethical and sustainable environment remains a focus, we actively engage in a range of initiatives aimed at safeguarding future generations. Chief among these efforts is our commitment to tackle the mounting tide of mismanaged waste and toxic pollution that afflicts our land and waterways through our [Zero Waste services](#).

As our organisation has grown, providing employment opportunities to over a hundred former refugees and individuals facing barriers to employment, we have made it a priority to minimise resource waste and divert materials from landfills.

Landfill isn't the answer

Landfills pose severe threats to water reserves, soil integrity and air quality; as organic matter decomposes, it releases harmful toxins and creates greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, wreaking havoc on our ecosystems and our health. It's not an acceptable solution for our children's future.

This is why we actively collaborate with businesses and councils, forging impactful partnerships to combat waste-related challenges. Our waste audits improve waste management systems. By meticulously counting and categorising waste in landfill bins, we gain crucial insights into people's habits and behaviours.

Recently, our Zero Waste team conducted audits at four beaches across the Illawarra region, including Thirroul, Austinmer, Windang and Port Kembla. The results were eye-opening, revealing the urgency of implementing better waste management practices during the summer season.

In addition to waste audits, we organise Zero Waste events where we bring our waste management tools on-site, diverting waste generated at music festivals and conferences away from landfills. With a clear waste management plan and efficient recycling systems in place, minimising waste is very possible.

The problem with plastic

Global production of plastic [has soared since the 1950s](#) when it was first mass-produced, with the latest figures estimating that we produce 390 million tonnes of plastic globally each year. According to the [UN Environment Programme](#), the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic is dumped into our ocean every minute, making up [80 per cent of all marine debris](#).

Given its ability to alter habitats and natural processes, plastic pollution is a significant hazard to our planet. It destroys ocean life, threatens food safety and quality, and contributes to climate change. Nano- and microplastics may directly impact our children's health, with [some studies finding exposure to microplastics](#) and other plastic additives during the critical stages of life induces numerous health changes, which may have long-term health effects.

While researchers explore potential solutions like algae and plastic-eating bugs, the reality remains: plastic does not biodegrade. By following the principles of "reduce, reuse, recycle," we can work towards a greener future. It starts with refusing single-use plastics and opting for sustainable alternatives. Reusing and repurposing items extends their lifespan, while recycling should be a last resort.

At Green Connect, we help organisations reduce the amount of plastic they use, reuse what they have, and recycle the rest. Perhaps most importantly, we provide waste education to help staff continue this pattern once our services have been delivered – it's this education and collaboration that will help us achieve the green, fair future we all have within our sights.

Together, we can embrace a lifestyle that respects our planet and drives change, pushing industries and policymakers towards more sustainable practices.

A plastic-free, zero waste future

Let's say no to plastic and prioritise reducing and reusing, inspiring others to do the same.

We practice what we preach across our business: our fruit and veg boxes are plastic-free and grown using organic methods at our Warrawong farm, and we stick to our zero waste philosophy while we grow, harvest and pack your order. It's farm-fresh, seasonal food without the waste. Find out more about our fruit and veg boxes and Zero Waste services [at green-connect.com.au](https://www.green-connect.com.au).

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