

# Sustainable Events Guide

A practical guide to reducing the environmental impact of your event



Sustainability is important to our university and we're always trying to find ways to reduce our carbon footprint.

Hosting events with sustainability in mind is a great way to reduce our impact. Let us help you.



Questions or Feedback?  
Contact the Sustainability Team at  
[sustainability@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:sustainability@vuw.ac.nz)



# WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE EVENT AND WHY SHOULD I HOST ONE?



*A sustainable or "green" event refers to an occasion organised with a focus on environmental and social responsibility. Hosting events in a sustainable manner is the perfect way to help us look after the planet while still creating a successful and enjoyable function.*

By focusing on sustainability, these events cut down on waste, save resources, and keep our environment clean. They are also a great way to embrace the sustainable values and commitment that Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington has made to the environment.

Traditional events can produce a surprising amount of waste and consume substantial energy resources. However, by intentionally integrating sustainable practices like waste reduction, efficient use of resources, recycling, and composting, we can significantly reduce the negative impact on the environment.

This guide is packed with practical tips, useful resources, and checklists to make your next event successful and sustainable. All events look and work a little differently so this guide seeks to provide you a multitude of options to plan an event that meets the needs of your gathering while incorporating sustainable initiatives. Choose what's relevant, realistic, and appropriate for your event.



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF  
**WELLINGTON**  
TE HERENGA WAKA

**ZERO**  
**CARBON** BY 2030\*

# PLANNING YOUR EVENT

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## ▶▶ Food and Beverage

- Do you need venue with or near a kitchen for prep and clean up?
- Will you need a dishwasher for reusables? Make sure to reserve a kitchen for post-event.
- Are you going DIY with the food or beverages? Check out our ordering and shopping guide
- How many people are coming? Have you tried our email template with your catering order?
- Can you increase the amount of vegetarian/vegan food you order? See our email template for caterers
- Look for plant-based milks that come in recyclable packaging.
- Have you sent the caterer directions to the venue including what entrances/gates to use and arranged for someone to be there when the caterer arrives?
- Interested in using Auraki mugs to eliminate single use coffee cups? The Sustainability Team can help. Make sure to give them plenty of notice prior to your event - 12 weeks is ideal.
- Have you made plans for your leftovers? Check the attached Waste Guide on page 13.
- Can you borrow or hire instead of buying? The Events team also has tablecloths and wine glasses, and the Sustainability team has coffee mugs.
- Have you arranged a place with the caterer for them to collect their plates and dishes?
- Check food packaging before you buy – will you be able to recycle it? Check our waste guide on page 13 for what's recyclable.
- Can you ask your participants to BYO reusable cups, water bottles, or devices? Use our email template for participants.
- Use jugs and glasses for water or consider hiring a water cooler and asking participants to bring their own water bottles.

## ▶▶ Venue and Decor

- Can you find a venue to make the most of natural light (and maybe even warmth from the sun?) or shade in hotter weather?
- Book ground floor venues for increased accessibility and reduce the need for using lifts.
- Customise the email template for attendees so they can find your campus and venue easily and are prepared for your event.
- When you identify the nearest toilets, also remind attendees about paper towel only bins for composting paper towels.
- Consider hiring plants instead of buying flower arrangements, or arrange to donate arrangements after the event.
- Ask your neighbours – does another office or department have the equipment you need?
- Find alternatives to using balloons at balloonsblow.org.
- Unlaminated signage can be recycled, photographed and scanned (QR codes) easily - avoid using laminators.

# PLANNING YOUR EVENT

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## ▶▶ S.W.A.G./Giveaways

- Tradeaid.org.nz offers gift hampers and gift vouchers, while websites such as [chooice.co.nz](http://chooice.co.nz) or [felt.co.nz](http://felt.co.nz) feature the work of local designers.
- Wellington company [littleyellowbird.com](http://littleyellowbird.com) provide 100% fair trade organic t-shirts for branding
- Swap branded pens for pencils, swap lanyards for reusable nametags and collect after the event or ask staff to wear their own name tags.
- [Treesthatcount.co.nz](http://Treesthatcount.co.nz) allow you to gift trees to presenters which are planted on their behalf in reforestation projects.

## ▶▶ Miscellaneous

- Can you send out programmes, documents, surveys, etc. digitally before or after your event?
- Pick a 'human barometer' who knows how to work the heaters, air con, blinds and windows to keep the room comfortable.
- Have you found the nearest recycling bins? Hint: because of their size, they don't all fit inside the kitchen and may be in nearby service areas. See page 9 of this guide for where to look.
- If you have a multi-person event team, choose a person to wear your Sustainability Hat for the event and manage all things zero-waste and green.
- You can download our waste guide and leave it out for anyone helping at your event, so they know where and how to dispose of things. See page 13 of this guide.

# Ordering and Shopping Guide

PRODUCT	PRICE	NXP CODE
<b>INSTANT COFFEE</b>		
Trade Aid Instant Coffee 500g (also avail. in 200g)	\$48.10	18779133
<b>GROUND COFFEE</b>		
Trade Aid Ground Coffee 1kg (also avail. in 200g)	\$52.67	18779122
Prima Fair Trade Organic Ground Coffee 1kg	\$50.53	66664109
L'affare Organic Fair Trade Ground Coffee 200g	\$14.85	33336012
<b>BLACK TEA</b>		
Trade Aid English Breakfast Tea Bags	\$36.99 (500)	18779127
Scarborough Fair, English Breakfast Tea Bags	\$53.86 (500)	18888551
<b>SUGAR</b>		
Trade Aid Golden Cane Sugar 1.5kg	\$9.49	18779129
<b>GREEN AND HERBAL TEAS</b>		
Scarborough Fair Organic Green Tea Bags	\$9.04 (50)	18730629

## PRODUCT

## STORES

### FAIR TRADE, PLASTIC-FREE TEA BAGS

Scarborough Fair  
Trade Aid  
Pukka Herbal Teas (Note: They are individually wrapped in recyclable paper wraps)

New World, Countdown  
Trade Aid  
New World, Countdown

### PLASTIC-FREE TEA BAGS

tagless Dilmah Tea Bags (All other Dilmah bags contain plastic)  
Healtheries  
Red Seal  
Chanui

New World, Countdown  
New World, Countdown  
New World, Countdown  
New World, Countdown

### OTHER FAIR TRADE

Trade Aid Sugar, Hot Chocolate

New World, Countdown

### PLANT MILKS

*Look for plant milks in recyclable #1 or #2 plastic bottles or glass bottles.  
Tetra Paks are NOT easily recyclable.*

Little Island Organic plant-based milks from the chiller  
Sanitarium Almond or Soy Milk from the chiller  
Boring Oat milk from the shelf (with the UHT milks)

New World, Larger Countdowns  
New World, Metro Countdowns  
New World, Countdown



Common tea brands that contain plastic: Dilmah (with tags),  
Choysa, Lipton, Bell, Bushells, Harney and Sons, Nerada,  
Teteley

# CATERING

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Let us simplify the task of finding a sustainable caterer for you. While we continually seek caterers aligning with our sustainability criteria, we've compiled a list of questions to pose to your preferred caterer as well as a list of caterers that meet our sustainability standards. While waste reduction has historically been our biggest challenge, we also prioritise initiatives like fair trade, local sourcing and ensuring fair wages.

Informing your caterer early in the planning process about your commitment to waste reduction is crucial, as they can assist you in crafting a low-waste menu, such as incorporating finger foods and avoiding single serving items.

## ► Some criteria to look for in a caterer:

- Are they a living wage provider? (see if they've signed on at [www.livingwage.org.nz](http://www.livingwage.org.nz))
- Do they use Fair Trade products?
  - Fair Trade products are not only ethically and sustainably produced, but also ensure that the producers are paid a fair wage for their work.
- Do they use seasonal and/or local foods?
  - Local and seasonal foods tend to be fresher, healthier, and use less packaging. The lack of distance that local foods must travel creates a much smaller carbon footprint while supporting the growers and producers in the area.
- Do they have a wide variety of vegetarian and/or vegan options available?
  - Raising livestock generates roughly 15% of global carbon emissions and utilises nearly 20% of the world's freshwater resources. Incorporating a wide variety of vegetarian and/or vegan products significantly reduces the impact of your catered meal while also accommodating attendees various religious and/or health dietary restrictions. Delicious - and makes your ordering easier!
- Are they a member of a food reuse programme like Kaibosh, Kai to Compost, The Free Store, or Kaicycle?
  - Diverting food from the landfill is a crucial way to reduce emissions. When organic matter, such as food, decomposes in the landfill, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. Kaibosh and The Free Store seek to redistribute food to those in need, while Kai to Compost and Kaicycle redirect food to composting facilities that would otherwise end up in the landfill.
- Can they supply food cling wrap free (i.e. in boxes, baskets, containers)?
  - Reducing food cling wrap is a huge win in catering since it's not recyclable! There are numerous menu items that could be delivered in a basket covered with a tea towel, like muffins or scones. See what options your caterer could deliver without cling wrap. Please note that you may have to allot time for transferring food upon reaching its destination.
- Do they have low-waste food options?
  - There are a lot of easy wins in the low-waste catering world, like avoiding foods that come in single-serving cups or containers (yoghurts, mousses, mueslis etc.) or foods held together with toothpicks. Plant milks in recyclable bottles and plastic-free tagless tea bags are a great way to reduce waste at your next event.



# CATERERS WE CURRENTLY RECOMMEND

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## Blue Carrot

[bluecarrot.co.nz/going-green](http://bluecarrot.co.nz/going-green)

Blue Carrot is a living wage provider based in Petone with one electric vehicle that they usually use for Wellington deliveries. They use fair trade and free range ingredients but have limited vegetarian and vegan options. They can provide food cling film free on request, remember to ask them in your first email so they can suggest menu items that will travel best without cling film.



## The Canape Company

[www.canapecompany.co.nz](http://www.canapecompany.co.nz)

The Canape Company is a living wage employer with a commitment to low waste catering. They use local, fair trade and seasonal food where possible and strive for at least half of their menu to be plant-based. Food scraps are composted in worm farms and cooking oil is recycled. Any food left from cancelled orders is delivered to the local fire station and ambulance dispatch center. They can deliver cling wrap free on request - include it in the comments when you order. Their website also allows you to sort through their offerings by vegan/vegetarian options making ordering easy.



## Dusted and Delicious

[www.dustedanddelicious.co.nz](http://www.dustedanddelicious.co.nz)

Dusted and Delicious has an electric delivery van, recycles their fryer oil and uses Kai to Compost and The Free Store for excess food. They can provide food cling wrap free on request, remember to ask them in your first email so they can suggest menu items that will travel best without cling wrap.



## Sweet Release

[www.sweetrelease.co.nz](http://www.sweetrelease.co.nz)

Sweet Release specialise in allergy friendly comfort food and bakery goods. Their kitchen is egg, dairy, and nut free, as well as vegan. They can do zero waste catering on request with at least 10 days notice for a minimal charge. Sweet Release is a living wage employer. They offer delivery and pick up options from their cafe in Manners Street.



## Belén Vegan Bakery

[www.belenveganbakery.com](http://www.belenveganbakery.com)

Belén Vegan Bakery is a living wage company that is committed to using fair-trade, local, and organic products where possible. They compost their food scraps through Kaicycle, donate extra food through The Free Store, and recycle their tetrapaks through saveBOARD. They offer a delivery through Nocar Cargo bike delivery as well as a pickup up option.



## New World

[www.newworld.co.nz/discover/in-store/catering](http://www.newworld.co.nz/discover/in-store/catering)

New New World Thorndon and Willis Street offer a variety of catering options from veg platters to bakery items and hot food. Most come in cardboard boxes (except the sushi which comes in a plastic container). The baker at Thorndon will make (delicious!) vegan chocolate cupcakes - just put the request in the text box with the order. They can also print a logo/design onto edible icing and put it on your cupcakes for an extra cost (about \$20?)- ask in store. Great for conferences or open day! Each store has different options and they're all pick-up only. Handy for Pipitea and Te Aro campuses catering on a budget.

# PAPER DILEMMAS!

## WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

- **BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)**

If sending documents in advance isn't an option, you can use a shortened URL or QR code for participants to download materials day of. Participants can also email documents to their e-readers for more comfortable reading (tips at bottom of page).

- **Use Scannable Posters with Links Rather than Flyers**

This works great for surveys, email/newsletter signups, giving people more information, and sharing website or blog links. Anything with a website link can be made into a QR code of shortened URL.

- **Make an Amnesty Box for Returning Printer Paper**

Collecting back programmes, menus, brochures, booklets, etc. provides an opportunity to reuse at a future event or ensures that they are properly recycled.

- **Make a Point**

Most events need directional signage, so make yourself a set of big, brightly coloured card stock arrows to blutack above your event posters to make way-finding easier (you can get as fancy as you'd like with faculty logos, names, etc). Save them to reuse again and again. Once they get a bit shabby, they can go in the cardboard recycling.

- **Get Feedback with Hashtags**

Choose a hashtag for your event or invent one, then encourage attendees to provide feedback by utilizing it across social media platforms (be sure to specify which channels to utilise). Rather than sifting through stacks of paper, simply click a few buttons to access what participants have shared, whether it's comments, photos, or GIFs. This method works for managing competition entries-assign numbers to each entrant and use a random number generator to select the winner.

- **Swap Laminated Paper for Reusable Options**

Laminated paper cannot be recycled and is highly reflective, making it difficult for phones to scan. A more sustainable option would be to put refillable pockets and/or display holders to use instead. There are probably a few floating around the office already.

glossy paper, lamination, big print runs, one-off banners,

plastic display envelopes, perspex display holders, black+white, double sided prints

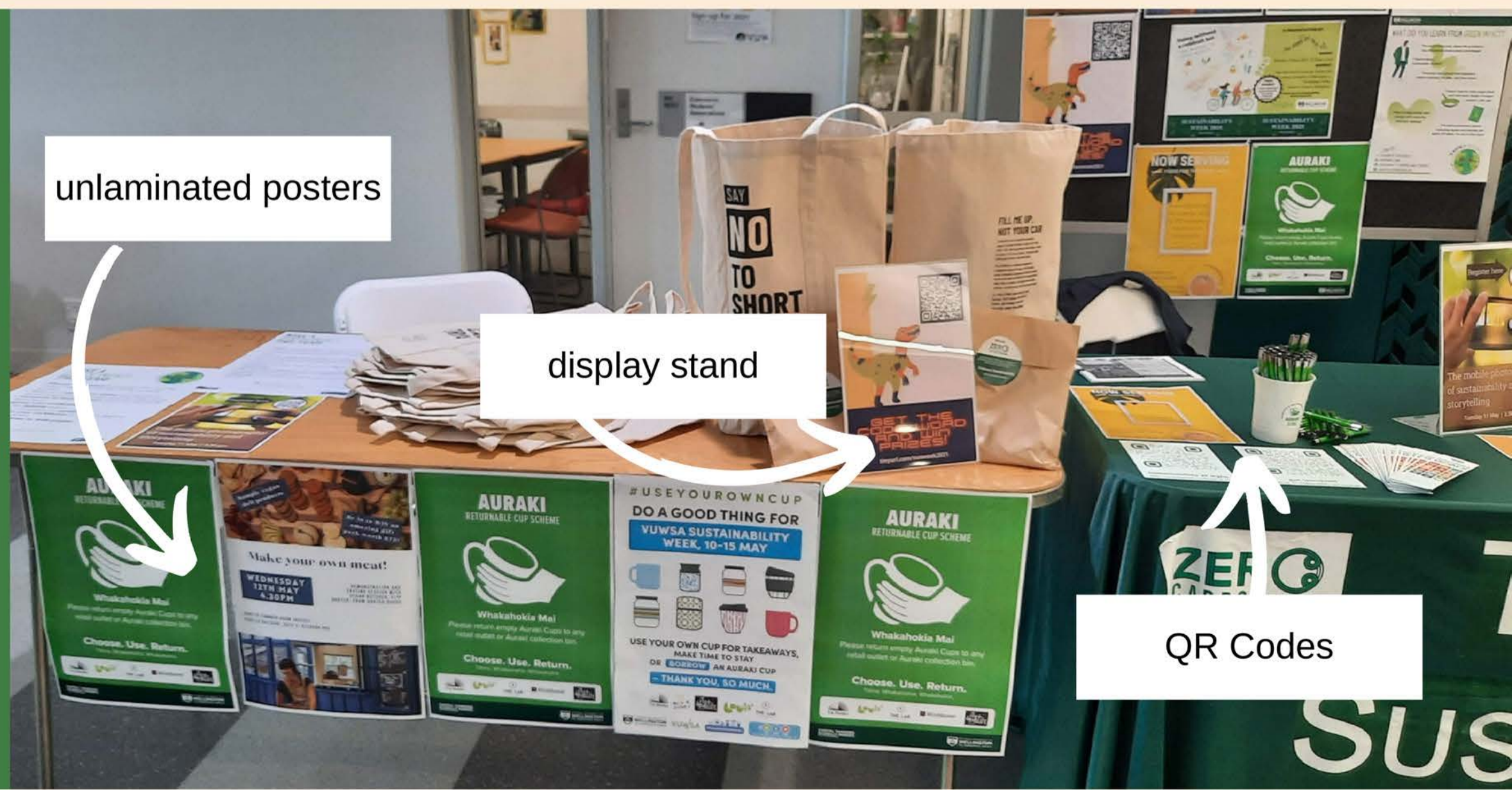
DIDs, emails, digital devices, QR codes, tiny urls, social media, reusable paper or cardboard posters

**URL Shorteners:**  
[tinyurl.com](http://tinyurl.com), [bitly.com](http://bitly.com),  
[shorturl.at](http://shorturl.at)

**QR Code Generator:**  
<https://www.qrcode-monkey.com>

**Kobo Help:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/helpkobo>

**Kindle Help:**  
<https://www.amazon.com/gp/sendtokindle/email>





# MORE INFORMATION

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## ▶▶ Help with Organising an event:

<https://intranet.wgtn.ac.nz/staff/services-resources/development-office/organising-events>

## ▶▶ Events Team Info

including hiring tablecloths and wine glasses:

<https://intranet.wgtn.ac.nz/staff/services-resources/development-office/organising-events>

## ▶▶ Images of the Larger Kitchen Spaces:

<https://intranet.wgtn.ac.nz/staff/services-resources/development-office/organising-events/downloads/kitchen-spaces.pdf>

## ▶▶ Waste and Cleaning Information

including bin locations:

<https://intranet.wgtn.ac.nz/staff/services-resources/property-services/facilities-management/cleaning>

To book extra cleaning, bins, or extra bin emptying, refer to the bin guides above and log a BEIMS request for what you need.



Te Taiako Student Learning put out glasses next to their water cooler for staff and visitors to use, and wash them in their staffroom dishwasher

## ▶▶ Why is it important to make events sustainable?

- By focusing on creating events with sustainability in mind, we are able to cut down on waste and efficiently utilise our resources. Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington has embraced sustainable values and committed to reducing our impact, primarily through our Zero Carbon Plan. Planning events through a sustainability lens will assist the university in working towards our net-zero target by 2030.

Read more: <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/sustainability/our-campus/carbon-footprint>

## ▶▶ How does more vegetarian/vegan catering help?

- Vegetarian and vegan food utilises less carbon and water supplies, reducing the university's carbon footprint, while also being healthier than red meat. Plant-based foods are better for our food waste system as they are more likely to go to our worm farms (worms don't like meat!) reducing the waste generated on campus. Ordering more vegetarian and vegan catering makes your life easier too as it reduce the amount of special meals you need to order to accomodate dietary restrictions. Vegan food is an excellent choice for individuals what are lactose intolerant or have Halal or Kosher dietary restrictions. There are so many delicious, creative vegetarian/vegan catering options out there. Chances are, people won't even notice they are eating meat-free!

Read more: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/food>

## ▶▶ Why worry about rehoming leftovers? Can't I just bin them?

- One third of food produced globally wasted - that amounts to 1.3 billion tonnes of food that is never eaten. In New Zealand alone, that number is upwards of 100,000 tonnes of food - enough to feed to feed the entire population of Dunedin for **three** years! While food waste occurs at all stages of the supply chain, in developed countries most food waste occurs after purchase. When food wastage occurs, all of the resources expended to create that food go to waste. Consider this, 25% of all freshwater consumed and 300 million barrels of oil are used to produce food that goes to waste **yearly**. Additionally, food that ends up in the landfill decomposes without oxygen, generating methane, a harmful greenhouse gas, and increasing emissions.

Read more at: <https://lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz/food-waste/the-global-issue/>

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## ▶▶ Are reusables really *that* important?

- YES! Around 295 **million** cups are thrown away every year in New Zealand - none of which can be recycled. Greenwashing is prolific in the area of single use product packaging at the moment. There are a lot of claims of recyclable or compostable products/packaging but unfortunately, the vast majority don't live up to their promise. The best option is always to avoid the creation of waste by asking attendees to bring their own cup, hiring reusables from your caterer, or borrowing from the Events or Sustainability Teams. Waste generation is a significant contribution to the overall carbon emissions of the university therefore, reducing waste is always a win!

Read more: <https://comcom.govt.nz/news-and-media/media-releases/2021/hot-drink-cup-company-warned-for-misleading-recycling-claims>

# FAQ

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## ▶▶ Why worry about the room temperature?

- It's evident that excessively heating the room and then cooling it down by opening windows is not only inefficient, but a great way to make your attendees uncomfortable. Consider factors like the time of day, sunlight patterns, and weather conditions when selecting your venue, if possible.

## ▶▶ Why is turning everything off important?

- Many electronics consume energy even when they are not actively turned “on”. It's called phantom energy, and in addition to being a waste of electricity, it can add as much as 10 percent to electricity usage and increase the risk of fires. As we transition to using more solar power, saving electricity is becoming an essential part of running the university and an easy way to reduce our environmental impact. Ensure that someone is responsible for turning off all lights, heaters, and electrical equipment at the end of your event.

## ▶▶ Why provide detailed directions to caterers?

- Lost caterers means increased fuel burned and frustration generated. Late food is stressful for everyone. That's why it's a good idea to give detailed directions regardless of whether you've worked with that particular catering company before. They may have a new delivery driver who isn't familiar with all the routes and drop-off locations yet. Remember, if the event is outside of business hours, or on a different campus than the one you work on, you may also need to arrange access with campus security well ahead of the event.

We are excited to collaborate with you for catering services at Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington. As a university, we've made a dedicated commitment to sustainability through our Net Zero by 2030 target. We are focused on implementing eco-friendly practices across our operations, from reducing waste and energy consumption to sourcing locally. We strive to minimise our environmental footprint and contribute positively to the planet. As we embark on this partnership, we kindly request your cooperation in supporting our sustainability initiatives.

## Waste Minimisation

Reducing waste is a high priority, especially when hosting our events. We encourage all vendors to support our attendees use of their own reusable items, such as cups and water bottles. Wherever possible, we would like to avoid these products being used on campus by vendors:

- Single use takeaway cups (We have coffee mugs available for use.)
- Single use plastic beverage containers, such as iced tea, soda, bottled water, etc. (We prefer attendees bring their own cups/bottles for water and other beverages are served into reusable cups.)
- Food cling wrap (Baskets covered with tea towels and transferring food items from reusable containers to platters on site have worked well for previous catered events.)
- Single serving items, such as disposable utensils, condiments, yoghurt, muesli (Finger foods always work best.)
- Non-recyclable flyers - laminated, glossy print
- Any compostable or biodegradable packaging. Our waste collector does not have the ability to compost any of these items and therefore, they head to landfill. (Cardboard with greaseproof paper is best for us.)
- Non-recyclable plastics - #4, #6, and #7 are not recyclable in New Zealand
- Giveaways that will be thrown out after one use, such as balloons and glowsticks

## Sustainable Menu Planning

Incorporating sustainability food sources into the menu planning process is of high importance.

- We encourage the use of locally sourced, seasonal ingredients whenever possible.
- Providing vegetarian or vegan options is appreciated to promote sustainable food choices and reduce our environmental footprint.
- We would appreciate your assistance in creating a menu that reduces or eliminates single serving containers, cling wrap, and excess plastic waste.

**Use this guide to find your nearest recycling and waste facilities and what to put in them**

<https://intranet.wgtn.ac.nz/staff/services-resources/property-services/facilities-management/cleaning>

## ▶▶ Glass

- Glass milk bottles from **Eketahuna Country Milk**: please rinse bottle with cold water, then wash with warm, soapy water, dry and leave in the wooden milk crate. These get returned to the farm for refilling. Put the lids in the lid recycling bins (marked) or general waste.
- Other **Glass**: Rinse, put the lids in general waste and the glass in:  
specify location of your nearest blue glass bin

## ▶▶ Plastic

- #1, #2, and #5 plastics: Rinse, put the lids in general waste and the glass in:  
specify location of your nearest blue glass bin

## ▶▶ Paper and Cardboard

- Clean **paper and cardboard** including
  - food packaging (make sure it doesn't have a plastic lining or window)
  - pizza boxes (remove pizza scraps and cheese residue, grease stains are ok)
  - NO paper towels or serviettes.
- Put paper and cardboard in:  
specify location of your nearest blue glass bin



## ▶▶ Edible, leftover food

- Please take leftover food to:  
VUWSA (9am-3pm)  
Staffroom: *please specify location*  
Other: *please specify location*

## ▶▶ Food Scraps

- Food scraps can go in the Worm Farm caddy (delete if you don't have a worm farm collection at your venue). Otherwise, food scraps go in the red general waste bin.
  - The worm farm takes:
    - most fruit and veg
    - tea bags
    - egg shells
  - The worm farms cannot take:
    - citrus
    - meat and fish
    - dairy and oils
    - onions, garlic, and spicy food

## ▶▶ General Waste

- All single use cups, paper napkins, paper towels, any plastic or paper plates, cutlery, cups etc. Any plastic numbered 3, 4, 6, or 7. All cling film. Any biodegradable, degradable, oxo degradable, sugar plastic, eco friendly etc. single use cups or serving ware. All takeaway coffee cups and lids. Milk and juice tetra paks. All lids (even off recyclable containers and bottles).