



SMARTER WAYS TO WASTE LESS

A WASTE HIERARCHY GUIDE



This project is supported by the Government of Western Australia



WHAT'S IN THE GUIDE?



WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S ENVIRONMENT IS BEAUTIFUL AND PRECIOUS.

Those of us lucky enough to call it home are blessed with unique inland and coastal landscapes. These places are worth protecting.

The choices we make every day—what we buy, use and throw away—matter.

WHAT IS CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

A circular economy is an economic system designed to keep products, materials, and resources in use for as long as possible by reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling, rather than discarding them as waste.

IN THIS GUIDE, SWITCH YOUR THINKING WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION ON:

- › Waste hierarchy fundamentals
- › Simple ways to waste less in everyday life
- › Tips to maximise recycling
- › Reuse and upcycling
- › **What happens to materials we don't or can't recover:**
 - › Landfill
 - › Waste to energy



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2023–24, WA recycled 65% of our waste, but **2.5 million tonnes still went to landfill** — meaning nearly 1 in 3 tonnes we generate is not being reused or recovered (Waste Authority Annual Report 2024–25).

They affect both our environment and our health.

Understanding what the waste hierarchy is and how it relates to our daily activities will help guide you in achieving this.

WHAT ARE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS?

Greenhouse gas emissions are gases released into the atmosphere—such as carbon dioxide and methane—that trap heat and contribute to global warming and climate change.

WASTE HIERARCHY FUNDAMENTALS

THE WASTE HIERARCHY OUTLINES THE LEAST-TO-MOST PREFERRED WAYS TO DEAL WITH WASTE IN A CIRCULAR ECONOMY.

It starts with avoiding waste altogether, which is the best option. If that's not possible, the next best choices are **reusing** items, **repairing** them, or **refurbishing** them so they can be used again.

Recycling is helpful, but it's better to keep things in use for as long as possible. **Energy recovery** is less preferred, and sending waste to **landfill** should be the last resort, used only when nothing else can be done.

The way we make and use products is one of the biggest drivers of climate change — responsible for around 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions (UNDP, 2024). In other words, it's not just cars and power plants heating our planet — it's the stuff we buy, use, and throw away.

Shifting to a circular economy could cut these emissions by up to 40 per cent by 2050 (Circularity Gap Report, 2023).

That's an enormous opportunity, and it starts with small everyday choices, like the ones in this guide.

Waste Hierarchy graphic: Waste Authority of Western Australia.



THE WASTE HIERARCHY EXPLAINS WHICH WASTE CHOICES ARE BETTER FOR THE PLANET. THE HIGHER THE OPTION, THE BETTER THE OUTCOME.



OVERCONSUMPTION

SIMPLE FACTS ABOUT OVERCONSUMPTION

- › People currently use natural resources faster than the Earth can renew them, which is called “ecological overshoot.”
- › Overconsumption drives resource depletion (like forests, water, and minerals) and increases pollution and greenhouse-gas emissions, worsening climate crisis.
- › It generates huge amounts of waste, including plastic, electronic waste, and textiles, much of which ends up in landfills or polluting oceans and communities.

OVERCONSUMPTION MEANS USING MORE RESOURCES, GOODS, AND SERVICES THAN WE ACTUALLY NEED — WHICH HARMS THE PLANET, AFFECTS COMMUNITIES, AND OFTEN UNDERMINES OUR OWN WELLBEING.



Australians waste about 7.6 million tonnes of food each year, which is roughly one-third of all the food produced in the country.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INJUSTICE

Wealthier countries and individuals consume far more than poorer ones, which can leave others with fewer resources and more pollution.



ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

Overconsumption damages ecosystems, reduces biodiversity, and lowers the planet's ability to support life over time.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Overconsuming food, material goods, or energy can lead to obesity, debt, stress, and a “throwaway” mindset that makes people feel less satisfied, even when they own more.

SIMPLE WAYS TO AVOID WASTE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

PAUSE BEFORE YOU BUY

Ask yourself: am I bored, stressed, or sad? Watch for a “convenience mindset” that pushes quick purchases. Try a 24–72 hour cool-off: if you still want it after a few days, it’s likely a considered choice, not an impulse.

BEWARE OF CLEVER MARKETING

Marketing can make you feel you need things you don’t. Learn common tricks like limited-time offers, “buy now” urgency, “must-have” language so you can spot them and choose more consciously.

MARK WHAT NEEDS EATING FIRST

OzHarvest’s “Use It Up” tape is a simple reminder to use food nearing expiry. Stick it on items or a shelf to guide what to eat first. Visual prompts like this can significantly reduce household food waste by helping you notice and prioritise what’s already in your kitchen.

BUY MEMORIES, NOT STUFF

Experiences like walks, meals with friends, or workshops often bring longer-lasting happiness than physical things, which can end up unused or in landfill. Choosing experiences can save money, reduce clutter, and lower your environmental footprint.

CHOOSE QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Look for well-made, durable items, even if they cost more upfront. Check materials, reviews, and warranties, and ask: “Will I still use this in 6–12 months?” Higher quality usually means fewer replacements and less waste.

MEAL PLANS & SHOPPING LISTS

Create a shopping list based on the meals you’ve planned for the week reduces impulse buys, prevents overbuying, and cuts food and packaging waste. And avoiding shopping when you’re hungry helps you buy only what you’ll actually use.

SHARE YOUR WASTE-AVOIDING TIPS

Email your waste-avoiding tips to mail@switchyourthinking.com to be in the running for a quarterly ‘experience’ prize!



REUSE



MINIMISE WASTE GENERATION THROUGH REUSE AND REPAIR AND MAINTAINING THE VALUE OF PRODUCTS AND MATERIALS FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. THE MOST SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT IS THE ONE YOU ALREADY OWN.



WHAT IS REUSE?

Reuse means using something again instead of throwing it away, like using a water bottle more than once, wearing clothes you already have, or turning an old jar into a pencil holder. It's a simple way to make things last longer and create less waste.



In WA, Reuse generates 62 times more jobs than recycling per tonne (WA Reuse Impact Study Executive Report 2026)

WHY REUSE MATTERS



REDUCES WASTE

A significant share of household waste can be avoided by reusing, repairing, or repurposing instead of throwing them away.

EVERYDAY ITEMS WITH MULTIPLE LIVES

- › **Containers & jars:** Keep them for pantry storage, lunch boxes, or organising your desk.
- › **Shopping bags & coffee cups:** Wash, refill and take them everywhere.
- › **Clothes & textiles:** Repair minor tears or try upcycling before using as rags.
- › **Furniture:** Refurbish or repair.



SAVES RESOURCES

Reusing and recycling items avoids the need for raw materials. For example, making glass from recycled material saves 74% of the energy needed to produce new glass (WA Waste Authority / Department of Environment and Conservation).



CUTS CARBON EMISSIONS

Repairing or reusing saves resources needed for new production, cutting emissions by spreading manufacturing impacts over extra years.

REPROCESSING & UPCYCLING

GIVE PRODUCTS AND MATERIALS A NEW PURPOSE OR LIFE THROUGH CREATIVE REUSE OR MATERIAL REPROCESSING, MAXIMISING THEIR VALUE BEFORE THEY REACH THE END OF THEIR LIFE.

UPCYCLING

Upcycling means turning something old or unwanted into a new, useful, or more creative item instead of throwing it away.

EXAMPLES OF UPCYCLING:

- › Old jars or bottles being cleaned and turned into storage containers, vases, or candle holders instead of being thrown away.
- › T-shirts being cut and sewn into tote bags, cushion covers, or cleaning rags instead of ending up in landfill.
- › Wooden pallets being sanded and repurposed into furniture like tables, benches, or shelving.
- › Wine corks being collected and turned into bulletin boards or trivets instead of being discarded.

The key is that the item keeps its value or becomes more functional/creative, without going through a full industrial reprocessing step.



REPROCESSING

Using an item or material that might otherwise become waste during the manufacturing or remanufacturing process.

EXAMPLES OF REPROCESSING:

- › Textile offcuts from a clothing factory being shredded and turned into insulation, padding, or stuffing instead of being thrown away.
- › Wood scraps from furniture making being planed or pressed into particleboard or chipboard for new furniture or construction.
- › Metal shavings from machining being melted and reformed into new parts.
- › Food and garden waste being composted at home to be reused in a garden.



Upcycling can save money and spark creativity — a fun way to give old items new life.

TIPS ON KEEPING THINGS IN CIRCULATION

KEEPING THINGS IN CIRCULATION MEANS USING ITEMS FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE INSTEAD OF THROWING THEM AWAY. IT SAVES RESOURCES, REDUCES WASTE, AND OFTEN SAVES MONEY, TOO.

1.

BORROW, HIRE OR SHARE

You don't need to own everything.

Before buying something you'll only use once or twice, see if you can borrow, hire or share it instead. Think tools, party items, camping gear or baby equipment.

- › Use tool libraries for drills, saws and gardening tools.
- › Join clothes swaps to refresh your wardrobe without buying new.
- › Share items with neighbours, friends or family.

Less buying = Less waste.



There are multiple tool libraries in WA — affordable places to borrow tools instead of buying them. For about the cost of buying a few tools, a membership will save you money and reduce waste through sharing equipment.



2.

CHOOSE REUSABLE ITEMS

Single-use items create waste fast. Reusables keep circulating for years.

EASY SWAPS INCLUDE:

- › Reusable shopping bags and produce bags.
- › Keep cups and water bottles.
- › Reusable containers and crockery.
- › Reusable straws.
- › Reusable nappies, where suitable for your family.

Start with one or two swaps — it doesn't have to be all or nothing. Then once you've got into a habit with those, look to making more swaps.

3.

REPAIR & MEND

If it's broken, try fixing it before replacing it.

- › Sew on buttons or mend small tears.
- › Fix broken furniture or appliances.
- › Visit a Repair Café, where volunteers help fix items for free or low-cost.

Repairing keeps skills alive and items in use for longer.

4.

BUY AND DONATE SECOND-HAND

Second-hand items already exist — using them again avoids new production.

- › Buy from op shops, markets and online platforms.
- › Gift items directly to the person who will use them next.
- › Use platforms like Marketplace and Buy Nothing groups to find a new home for your item first.
- › If that's not possible, then donate to op shops.

This helps avoid overwhelming charities with items they can't use.

5.

UPCYCLE AND GET CREATIVE

Upcycling means turning something old into something new.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- › Jars turned into storage containers or planters.
- › Old clothes turned into new clothing item or tote bags.
- › Furniture refreshed with paint or small repairs.



DID YOU KNOW?

There are more than 10 volunteer-run repair cafés and labs operating in Perth and regional WA — keeping broken items out of the bin and putting skills back in hands.



6.

PRESERVE FOOD AND USE LEFTOVERS

Food waste makes up a large portion of household waste. The good news is that it is also one of the easiest to reduce. Many people have found success by doing the following:

- › Preserve food and use leftovers.
- › Food waste is one of the biggest waste streams, but it's also one of the easiest to reduce.
- › Make jams, pickles or preserves from surplus fruit and vegetables.
- › Turn leftovers into soups, stocks or sauces.
- › Freeze what you can't eat straight away.



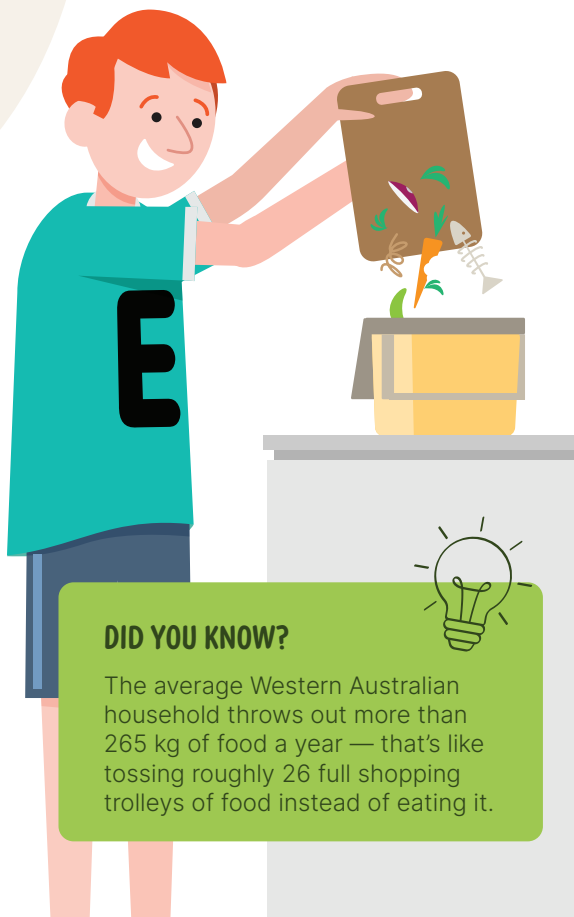
7.

COMPOST YOUR ORGANICS

Don't let food and garden scraps go to waste! Many WA local governments now have FOGO (Food Organic Garden Organic) bins that make composting easy. If your council doesn't, you can learn to compost through workshops or online guides.

Methods include:

- › Traditional composting
- › Worm farms
- › Bokashi bins



DID YOU KNOW?

The average Western Australian household throws out more than 265 kg of food a year — that's like tossing roughly 26 full shopping trolleys of food instead of eating it.

MAXIMISING MATERIAL RECOVERY

IF YOU LIVE IN THE PERTH METROPOLITAN AREA OR A LARGE REGIONAL TOWN, YOU ARE LIKELY TO HAVE ACCESS TO A KERBSIDE RECYCLING BIN.

A (usually) yellow-lid bin is a convenient way to dispose of many recyclable items.

In Western Australia, recycling rules are generally consistent across participating councils.

The main items accepted in yellow-lid bins are **clean**, **empty**, and **loose**:

- › Paper (excluding shredded)
- › Cardboard
- › Cans (aluminium and steel)
- › Plastic bottles and containers (no soft plastics)
- › Glass bottles and jars

Some items should never go in your kerbside bin (see page 15 “Other drop-off points” for guidance).

Following these rules helps ensure materials are suitable for reprocessing, reduces **fire risks** associated with damage to collection vehicles and material recovery facilities, and protects waste management staff.



For more information, visit wastesorted.wa.gov.au/be-a-great-sort/



Recycle Right is an online tool which includes a detailed A-Z list of common household items and how and where to responsibly recycle or dispose of them.

For more information, visit www.recycleright.wa.gov.au

RECYCLING

RECYCLING DOESN'T NEED TO BE COMPLICATED—IT'S AN EASY, EVERYDAY ACTION THAT HELPS YOU PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTAL MINDFULNESS AND STAY CONNECTED TO WHAT MATTERS.

It starts by putting all these 5 material types into the recycling bin at home: that's **paper** (except for shredded paper), **cardboard** and **steel and aluminium cans** as well as **hard plastic** and **glass** (containers, bottles and jars). Nothing else - these 5 and only these 5.

WHAT HAPPENS TO RECYCLED ITEMS?

Once collected, separated and processed, recycled items become valuable materials that can be used to produce new products. Cans become cars, glass becomes roadbase, bottles become insulation or beanies, and so on!

Many materials are recycled back to their original purpose, such as plastic bottles and paper products – closing the loop of the product's life cycle.



Many West Aussies sort recycling in the kitchen using a tub next to the bin or in a cupboard. It makes it easy to separate, rinse and empty items as you go.



Others are transformed into completely new products such as furniture, car bumpers and shelving. Some materials, such as steel and aluminium cans, have no limit to the number of times they can be recycled back into new products.

Recycling significantly reduces the amount of materials sent to landfill.

TIPS ON BEING A GREAT SORT

RECYCLING ISN'T ABOUT BEING PERFECT — IT'S ABOUT KEEPING VALUABLE MATERIALS OUT OF LANDFILL AND IN CIRCULATION, WHERE THEY CAN BE USED AGAIN.

Your individual sorting efforts might feel small, but waste management systems only work when most people participate correctly. It's a bit like playing a team sport - your individual actions contribute to the outcomes of the group.

1.

TIP RECYCLABLES IN LOOSE

Recyclables should not be bagged. Tip items loose into your yellow lid recycling bin. Bagged items can't be sorted at the recycling facility and, unfortunately, won't be recycled.

2.

IF IN DOUBT, CHECK IT OUT

Not sure if it goes in the yellow bin? You can check *Recycle Right* or your council's website.



3.

SMALLER THAN YOUR PALM? IT GOES IN YOUR GENERAL WASTE BIN

Tiny items fall through the sorting machines, jamming the process, so everything smaller than your palm should go in general waste.

4.

SOFT PLASTICS DON'T BELONG IN THE RECYCLING BIN

Things like chip packets, cling wrap, and bread bags shouldn't go in recycling — they should go in general waste or to a drop-off point, if available.

OTHER DROP-OFF POINTS

DROP-OFF COLLECTION POINTS COMPLEMENT KERBSIDE RECYCLING BY TARGETING MATERIALS THAT REQUIRE SPECIAL HANDLING AND HELP REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL HARM WHILE PROMOTING CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRACTICES.

DROP-OFF LOCATIONS

Some notable drop-off locations in WA:

- › **Officeworks:** Many Officeworks stores have drop-off bins for printer cartridges, data storage equipment and many other items.
- › **Local council facilities:** Many councils provide drop-off points at libraries, community centres or waste transfer stations.
- › **Retail partners and recycling hubs:** Some supermarkets and hardware stores also accept specific items like plastics or batteries.

ACCEPTED ITEMS

Common items accepted at drop-off collection points include:

- › Batteries (household and rechargeable).
- › E-waste (small electronics like phones, chargers, and cables).
- › Fluorescent light bulbs and tubes.
- › Mobile phones and accessories.
- › Printer cartridges.
- › Soft plastics (some locations).
- › Household chemicals and paints (at specialised facilities).



DID YOU KNOW?



Electronic waste (e-waste) is anything with a plug or battery that is no longer working, such as phones, laptops, TVs, chargers and other small appliances. They can't go in your household bins.

ON-DEMAND AND KERBSIDE COLLECTION

Many WA councils use two main systems for bulky household waste (furniture, white goods, mattresses, e-waste):

- › **Pre-booked collections:** Residents book online/phone for a skip bin, whitegoods, mattress, or e-waste pickup at a time that suits them. This system offers flexibility but requires advance booking.
- › **Scheduled kerbside collections:** Council announces dates (e.g. March/September); residents put items on verge for pickup.

Important: For both systems, never put bulky items out without instruction - it's illegal dumping, attracts fines, and can cause negative environmental impacts.

Always check ahead - confirm your local centre accepts your item before heading out.



KEEP WASTE TRUCKS SAFE DON'T BIN E-WASTE AND OTHER HHW

E-waste and some HHW such as **batteries** and **aerosol cans** frequently causes fires in waste trucks and facilities, which is why they should never go in household bins and must be taken to a designated drop-off point.

HAZARDOUS WASTE THE THINGS YOU JUST CAN'T BIN

We all use hazardous chemicals and products in our homes every day – **batteries, paint, household chemicals, aerosol cans** and **gas canisters** – usually without thinking twice! When these items (known as household hazardous waste or HHW) reach the end of their useful lives, we need to take special care to dispose of them properly.

They are often **flammable, toxic, explosive** or **corrosive** and cannot be disposed of in household bins.

Many people find it helpful to collect these items in separate crates or boxes at home and drop them to a special drop-off point when out and about.

Batteries, paint, household chemicals, aerosol cans and gas cylinders can all be taken to your local HHW facility. For more information, visit wastenet.net.au/hhw.



FIND YOUR NEAREST RECYCLING CENTRE

Scan the QR code to find your nearest recycling centre or drop-off centre in the Perth metro and regional areas, or visit wastesorted.wa.gov.au/be-a-great-sort/take

CONTAINERS FOR CHANGE

OPERATING SINCE 2020, CONTAINERS FOR CHANGE IS PROUD TO BE WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME.

From Kalumburu to Albany, Western Australians have already saved over 5 billion 10¢ containers. Despite this, hundreds of millions of 10¢ containers still end up in general waste each year, mostly when people are out-and-about.

When you return your containers, they're recycled to live another life, and you earn a 10¢ refund — yours to keep or donate to a good cause.

Visit a Depot or Self-serve Kiosk, simply Drop & Go, book a collection with Containers for Change Collect, or look out for a Container Exchange Point. No matter how you do it, there's a return option to fit your routine.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR 10¢ CONTAINERS AFTER YOU HAVE RETURNED THEM?

Every accepted container returned to Containers for Change is recycled, turning otherwise discarded materials into new products, including new bottles and cans.

Recycling 10¢ containers through Containers for Change ensures resources such as plastics, aluminium, steel, and glass can be used again and again, reinforcing a commitment to the environment, to community, and to Country.

WHAT'S ACCEPTED?

In WA, most plastic and glass bottles, drink cartons, cans, and pouches between 150ml and 3L are accepted.

- › Plastic bottles include water, soft drinks, juice, flavoured milk, and sports drinks.
- › Glass bottles include water, beer, pre-mixed spirits, and soft drinks.
- › Cans include soft drinks, carbonated beverages, energy drinks, beer, and pre-mixed spirits.
- › Drink cartons include flavoured milk, juice cartons, juice boxes, and boxed water.
- › Other containers like juice pouches and water casks are accepted too.



WASTE TO ENERGY (WTE)



WTE FACILITIES ARE INTENDED FOR THE BURNING OF NON-RECYCLABLE RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE THAT WOULD OTHERWISE GO TO LANDFILL.

A waste to energy (WtE) plant burns waste at very high temperatures using moving grate combustion technology to generate electricity.

Heat from burning waste turns water into steam → the steam spins a turbine → electricity is produced.

Metals are recovered from the bottom ash which is treated and can be reused in construction materials like road base and bricks. Fly ash must be disposed of in a special type of landfill. Emissions are minimised through the use of filters and scrubbers and are tightly controlled.



WASTE TO ENERGY IN WA

Rather than sending the contents of a general waste bin to landfill, some councils send it to a waste to energy facility.

There are two WtE facilities located in Perth's metropolitan region - one in operation in **Kwinana** and one currently under construction in **East Rockingham**.

WHY WE NEED TO LIMIT WTE

Waste to energy reduces landfill use but should only be a last resort after reducing, reusing, and recycling.



LOST MATERIALS

When waste is burned, valuable recyclable materials are destroyed and cannot be recovered. Sorting waste correctly helps keep these materials in use.



ORGANIC NUTRIENTS

Instead of being burned, food and garden waste contain nutrients that should be used to support healthy soils.

LANDFILLS



**LANDFILL IS THE LAST RESORT—
MATERIALS SENT THERE ARE LOST
FOREVER. FOOD AND ORGANIC WASTE
BREAK DOWN WITHOUT OXYGEN IN
LANDFILL, PRODUCING METHANE, A
POWERFUL GREENHOUSE GAS**

In WA, landfill space is limited and expensive, which is why avoiding waste, reusing, recycling and composting first is so important — landfill should only be used for what truly can't be recovered.

Buried waste can stay intact for centuries! Plastics take 450+ years to break down, while food waste ferments into climate-heating gases.



DID YOU KNOW?

2.5 million tonnes of waste was sent to Western Australian landfills in 2023–24. The WA Government's goal is to cut that to just 15% of total waste by 2030 (WA Waste Strategy 2030).

Check your local council website to find out where your waste goes and how it's managed.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF LANDFILLS?

When a landfill closes, it is capped (covered with clay and soil) to seal it, then it is monitored for at least thirty years to manage methane gas, leachate (polluted liquid) and potential groundwater contamination.

Capped landfills slowly compact and stabilise over time. Eventually, they can be reused as parks, sports fields, or open space — but can't support buildings for many more decades because the waste underneath keeps breaking down.

WA's waste strategy aims to retain landfills only as a last resort for hazardous or emergency waste that can't be processed elsewhere. More sustainable solutions—such as waste-to-energy, composting, and recycling—are prioritised to divert most residual waste.

BE PART OF THE WASTE SOLUTION!

GOOD NEWS—GREAT THINGS ARE ALREADY HAPPENING, AND YOU'RE PROBABLY PART OF IT!

Repair cafés, tool libraries and swap markets are growing in availability.

"Buy Nothing" Facebook groups make it easy to give, receive and borrow pre-loved items, and many not-for-profit organisations are helping keep products in use for longer.

Every time you choose to **refuse, reuse, repair** or **recycle**, you're helping protect Western Australia's beautiful environment we all enjoy.

REMEMBER — YOU DON'T NEED TO BE PERFECT — YOU JUST NEED TO START.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- › Find more resources at: switchyourthinking.com/resources
- › Find your nearest drop-off at: recycleright.wa.gov.au
- › Return containers at: containersforchange.com.au/wa
- › Discover how waste is managed in WA: wasteauthority.wa.gov.au

YOUR 7-DAY WASTE-LESS CHALLENGE!

Check off one small action each day this week:



MONDAY

Check your recycling bin: are your recyclables loose, clean and empty?



TUESDAY

Plan your meals and write a shopping list before you shop.



WEDNESDAY

Find your nearest Containers for Change drop-off point.



THURSDAY

Repair, donate or rehome one item instead of binning it.



FRIDAY

Swap one single-use item for a reusable alternative.



SATURDAY

Start a compost, worm farm, or use your FOGO bin.



SUNDAY

Share a waste tip with a friend or family member.



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SWITCH YOUR THINKING
WITH HELP FROM **DONUT WASTE**



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