

# Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan

2024–2026



Queensland  
Government



## Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan 2024-2026

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# Introduction

Department of Health (the department), as a state entity under the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011* (the Act), is required to produce a waste reduction and recycling plan to provide direction on waste management strategies.



The *Department of Health Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan 2024-2026* (the Plan) will support the department to:



Comply with relevant waste management legislation



Provide a safe and healthy environment for staff and the community



Contribute to the Queensland Government waste management strategies, actions and targets



Support departmental reporting requirements



Minimise the impact of waste on the environment



Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

The department is committed to ensuring that its waste management practices contribute to the successful delivery of the Queensland Government statewide waste reduction, diversion and recycling targets.

The Plan is developed in accordance with the Act, the *Queensland Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy* (the Strategy) and associated guiding documents. This Plan replaces the department of Health Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan 2021-2023.

A detailed action plan mapping deliverables, targets, responsibilities and milestones against the objectives and strategies will be developed in early 2024 to support the Plan.

# Scope

Queensland Health consists of the Department of Health, the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and 16 Hospital and Health Services (HHSs). The department provides leadership, direction and system governance, while working collaboratively with QAS and HHSs to deliver high quality public health services.

The Plan applies to all divisions within the department and QAS, noting that the management of clinical and related waste and hazardous waste are covered by separate arrangements. Construction and demolition

waste from the department's construction projects are reported separately by external contractors. Pathology waste is collected and reported by the relevant HHS facility and therefore not contained in this report.

The Plan does not include the HHSs as they are Planning Entities under the Act and are required to ensure that relevant waste is comprehensively addressed in accordance with requirements for Planning Entities.



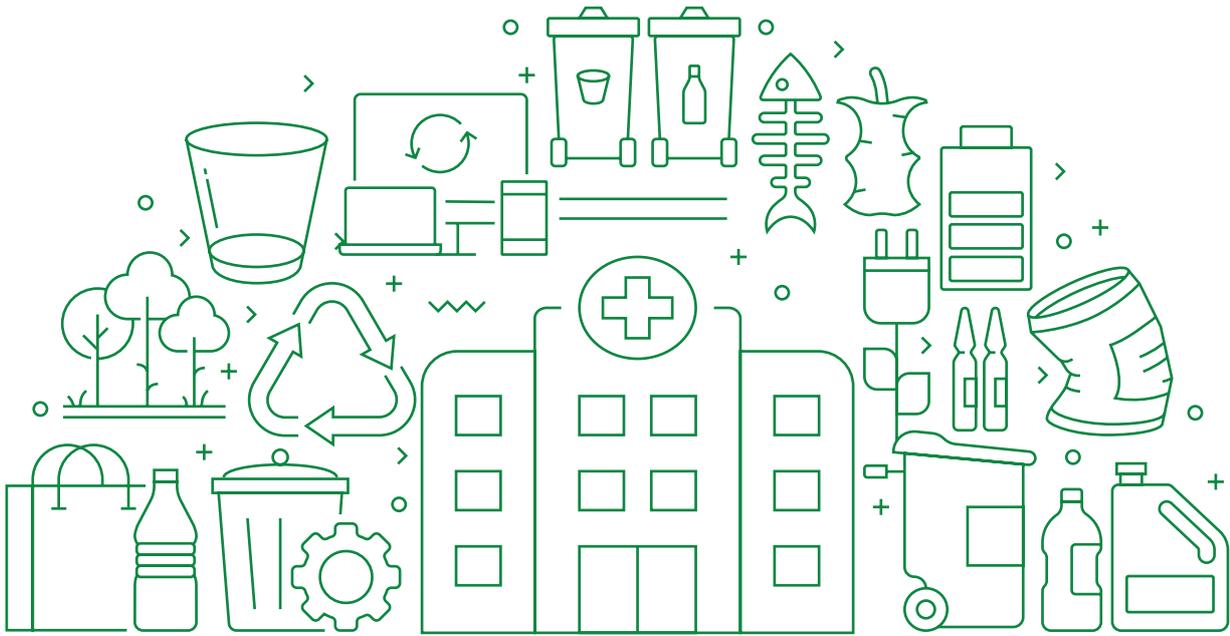
## Waste Reduction and Recycling Achievements 2021-2023

In line with the *Department of Health Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan 2021-2023*, there was a 9 per cent increase in recycling and a 7.5 per cent decrease in waste going to landfill (from 2020 levels). These targets were derived from the 2050 targets on a pro-rata basis.

The overall target of a 9 per cent increase in recycling to 31 December 2023 was mainly a result of the increased number of recycling waste streams at Southeast Queensland sites and e-waste recovery and recycling.

Due to changes in data collection since 2020, it is not possible to accurately determine achievement against the target of a 7.5 per cent decrease in waste going to landfill. However, the department has implemented a range of new waste management initiatives across multiple facilities during the 2021-2023 period. These include:

- 1 A new e-waste reuse and recycling scheme was introduced by eHealth and rolled out in specific departmental facilities.
- 2 The Health Technology Equipment Replacement (HTER) disposal program was introduced by the department for non-clinical equipment, including furniture and office equipment.
- 3 Organic waste, metal, plastic, paper coffee cups and containers for change recycling initiatives were introduced across the department.
- 4 The department Green Team was established in November 2021 to raise awareness, drive change and coordinate events.



## Department of Health Waste Profile

The Plan covers all departmental facilities, both the owned and leased, used by the eight divisions, as well as the QAS statewide operational facilities that generate waste.

The department aims to continuously improve waste resource management in the delivery of its services.

This includes support services provided to HHSs statewide, such as biomedical technology, clinical and forensic pathology, logistics warehousing and laundry and ambulance services.

Waste generated by the department by waste type and stream is listed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Department of Health Waste Profile

General Waste	Residual waste (landfill – non-recyclable)
Liquid Waste	Regulated and non-regulated
Clinical and Related Waste	For example, sharps and pharmaceuticals
Recycling and Resource Recovery	Batteries, bottle tops, cardboard, consumables, co-mingled recyclables, containers for change, disposable cups, e-waste, fluorescent tubes, furniture, hard plastic, linen, metal, mobile phones, office equipment, organic waste (food), pallets (timber), paper (including confidential), stationery, shrink wrap (soft plastic), styrofoam and toner cartridges.

# Waste Reduction, Recycling and Management

## Waste Reduction and Recycling Objectives

The department is committed to demonstrating effective, responsible and sustainable waste management practices.

In 2024-2026, the department will contribute to the Queensland Government waste priorities and targets by:



Minimising the generation of waste



Driving continuing improvement and transitioning to a circular economy by maximising the recovery and reuse of resources



Reducing the impact of waste on the environment



Minimising the impact on the health sector and the community



Driving cultural change

## Waste Management Targets 2024-2026

The department is committed to sustainable waste management practices and achieving the vision of Queensland becoming a zero-waste society where waste is avoided, reused and recycled to the greatest possible extent.

Continuing the gains made in the period up to 2023, the department targets for the next three-year period to 31 December 2026 are:



Waste going to landfill



Average recovery rate from all waste streams



Organic waste recycling

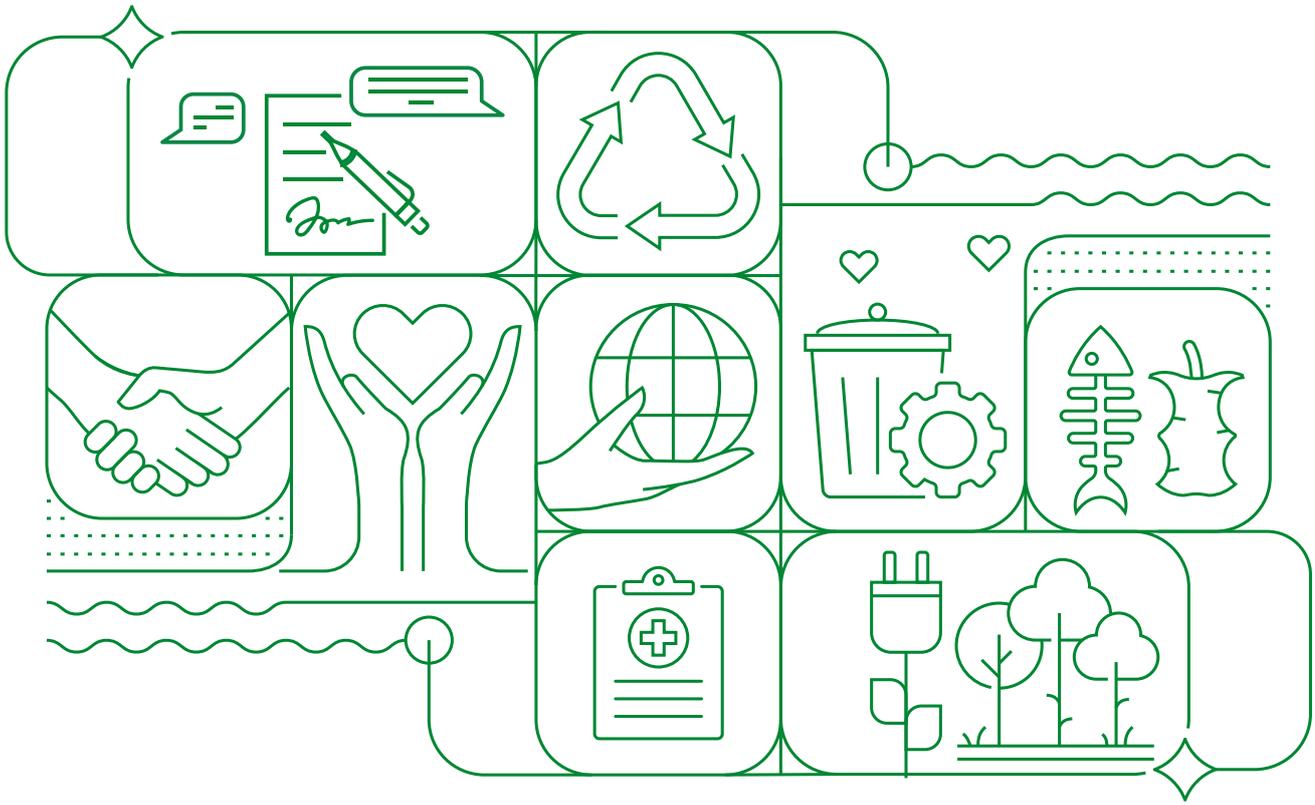
Targets for this period are designed to ensure Queensland Health achieves the Queensland Government interim and long-term targets of 90 per cent of waste being recovered and not going to landfill and 75 per cent recycling rates across all waste types.

# Key Strategies and Deliverables

The department's commitments to support the implementation of the Queensland Government waste strategies, actions and targets are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategy and Actions 2024 - 2026

Objectives	Strategies	Deliverables
1. Minimising the generation of waste	1.1 Prevent waste through voluntary programs and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand and improve existing waste diversion programs and initiatives across departmental and QAS facilities</li> <li>Target materials: food waste, single-use items, surplus items, packaging and reusable materials</li> </ul>
	1.2 Maximise waste source separation, reuse, repurposing and recycling	
2. Driving continuous improvement and transition to a circular economy by maximising the recovery and reuse of resources	2.1 Support a cost-effective and environmentally responsible waste and resource recovery system, based on the principles of the circular economy and waste hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish new waste diversion programs and initiatives by leveraging and maximising waste resource, recovery and circular initiative opportunities, through the new Standing Offer Arrangement (SOA) for waste management</li> <li>Investigate options to extract the highest value from recycled resources</li> </ul>
	2.2 Engage with industry and the academic sector to gain insights and identify innovation and best practice	
3. Reducing the impact of waste on the environment	3.1 Identify priority actions and investigate an integrated approach to energy, waste and water, based on reducing risks to human health, wildlife and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locally source reprocessing, procurement and recycled content products, where possible</li> <li>Develop and implement actions to minimise the environmental impacts of the department's operations and provide environmental leadership</li> </ul>
4. Minimising the impact on the health sector and the community	4.1 Strengthen data collection, monitoring, utilisation and reporting across Queensland Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement an energy and environmental reporting system (including waste) across Queensland Health in 2024</li> <li>Introduce greenhouse gas emission calculations derived from waste generation</li> <li>Model optimal waste reduction, diversion and sound disposal practices through pilot projects</li> </ul>
5. Driving cultural change	5.1 Provide leadership in supporting innovation, behaviour change and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve, promote and deliver training that encourages best practice through events, information, signage and staff training</li> </ul>
	5.2 Raise awareness and foster stewardship among staff to be part of the solution in improving waste management	



## Responsibilities

All staff within the department and external agencies working on behalf of the department have an equal responsibility to comply with processes in place to reduce waste, optimise recycling and resource recovery, and comply with legal and regulatory obligations to reduce environmental impacts.

All levels of management are required to demonstrate leadership and commitment to continuous improvement in the reduction of waste and optimisation of recycling and resource recovery.

To ensure delivery of the Strategy, the following governance arrangements are in place:

- The Health Protection and Regulation Branch is responsible for the department’s waste reporting requirements and regulations.
- The department’s facility teams are responsible for the roll-out of waste recycling and recovery initiatives and programs, with support from the Office of Hospital Sustainability (OHS). The facility teams are also responsible for ensuring waste reduction and recycling requirements are specified in all new and renewed lease agreements.
- The department’s System Procurement is responsible for contract management of the overarching SOA for Waste Management.
- eHealth is responsible for the ICT equipment disposal program for e-waste.
- HTER team is responsible for Health Technology Disposal Program of medical and non-medical equipment.
- The Supply Chain Surety Branch is responsible for the stock exit scheme and linen recycling.
- QAS is responsible for the roll-out of waste recycling and recovery initiatives and programs across QAS sites, with support from OHS.
- The OHS and the department’s Green Team are responsible for the development of initiatives to raise staff awareness of good waste management practices, events, and for developing and disseminating educational materials.

# Monitoring and Reporting

Under the Act, the department as a 'State Entity' is required to prepare a three-year waste reduction and recycling plan and report on its progress on an annual basis to the Department of Environment and Science within two months after the end of each financial year.

The department's current Plan can be reviewed and updated as required in response to emerging priorities and opportunities or operational changes.

Measuring progress and reporting are important to ensure the department remains on track, continues to make improvements and provides transparency.

As part of the department's commitment to continuous improvement, the success of the Plan will be monitored through a separate action plan to ensure its objectives are measured and targets are being met. The action plan will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and updated as required in response to emerging priorities and opportunities or operational changes.

# Queensland Government Waste

The department is required to meet the Queensland Government waste priorities and targets.

*The Queensland Government Queensland Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy* outlines how waste will be managed now and into the future. It aims to protect the environment through alignment with the Queensland Government vision that Queensland will become a zero-waste society, where waste is avoided, reused and recycled to the greatest extent possible.

*The Queensland Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy* outlines three strategic priorities for adopting the principles of a circular economy and zero-waste society:

- Reducing the impact of waste on the environment
- Transitioning to a circular economy for waste
- Building economic opportunity.

## Queensland Government Targets

The Queensland Government has set long-term and interim targets for waste reduction, diversion and recycling to drive market growth and deliver the benefits associated with improved waste management.



Interim targets for 2025, 2030 and 2040 have been set for waste reduction, waste diversion and recycling for specific streams, as outlined in Tables 3, 4 and 5 below.

Table 3 – Waste Reduction Targets for Households

Waste Reduction Targets for Households (per capita)				
Stream	Baseline (2018)	2025	2030	2040
MSW	0.54t	10%	15%	20%

Table 4 – Waste Diversion from Landfill

Waste Diversion from Landfill (recovery rate as per centage of total waste)				
Stream	Baseline (2018)	2025	2030	2040
MSW	32.4%	55%	70%	90%
CandI	47.3%	65%	80%	90%
CandD	50.9%	75%	85%	85%
<b>Overall</b>	45.4%	65%	80%	85%

Table 5 – Recycling Rates

Recycling Rates (as per centage of total waste)				
Stream	Baseline (2018)	2025	2030	2040
MSW	31.1%	50%	60%	70%
CandL	46.5%	55%	60%	>65%
CandD	50.9%	75%	80%	>80%
<b>Overall</b>	44.9%	60%	65%	70%

Municipal Solid Waste (MSW)  
 Commercial and Industrial (CandI)  
 Construction and Demolition (CandD)

# Guiding Frameworks

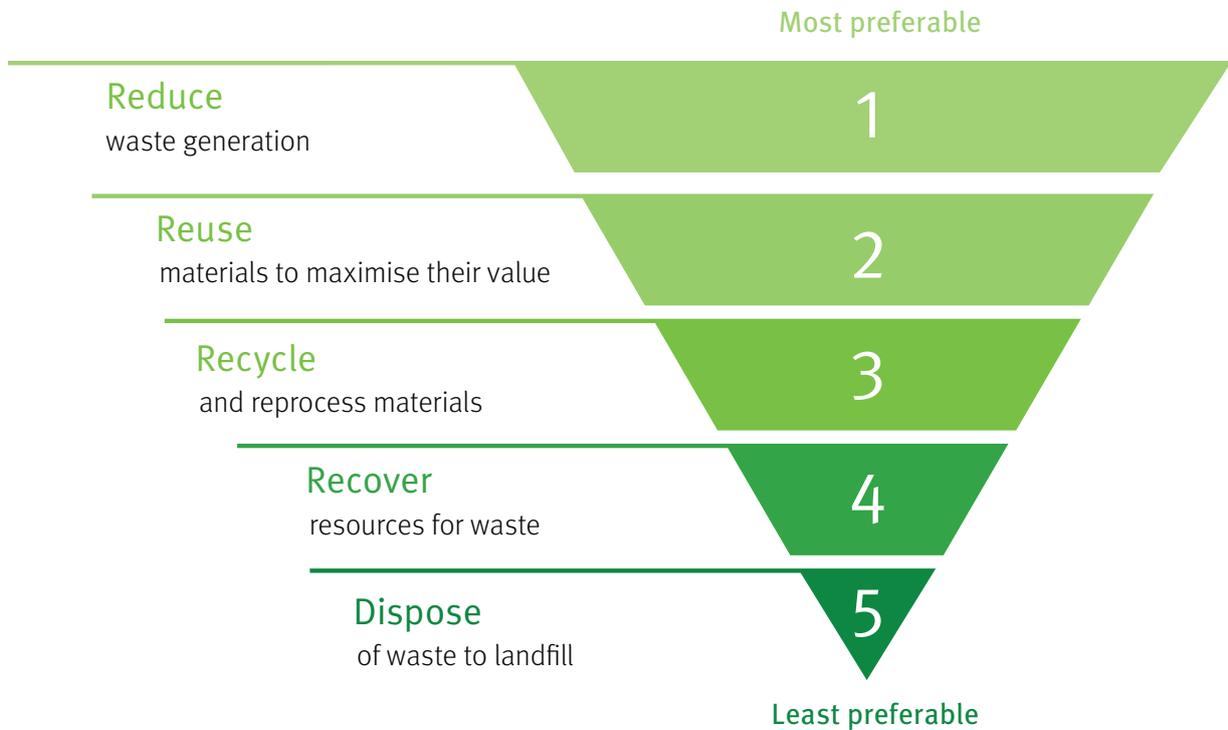
The Act requires the department's Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan to consider:

- ▶ The waste and resource management hierarchy
- ▶ Circular economy and resource management principles.

## Waste Hierarchy

The waste hierarchy is a guiding concept that ranks waste management options in order of their general environmental desirability.

Diagram 1 - Waste Hierarchy



The waste hierarchy is based on lifecycle assessment that considers the total environmental impacts of different management options, including the direct and indirect impacts of material use, and water and energy consumption.

The first priority is to avoid or minimise the generation of waste. Secondly, reuse and recycling options should be explored. Then, recovery options to reduce the amount of waste that requires disposal should be considered. Finally, once these options have been exhausted, disposal of waste to landfill needs to occur.

# Circular Economy and Resource Management Principles

Transitioning to a circular economy is a way of achieving sustainable production and consumption, together with environmental and social benefits. By reusing and recycling products to the greatest possible extent, more value is gained from the material, generating a more sustainable economy, and achieving social benefits for current and future generations.

Diagram 2 – The Circular Economy



Under the Act, the following principles are applicable:

## The Circular Economy Principle

is a principle that aims to ensure that products and materials are used efficiently to minimise the amount of waste created. This can be achieved by promoting waste avoidance and minimising the impact of waste on the environment and human health. By doing this, all products and materials are kept within the economy for as long as they have value or remain useful.

## The User Pays Principle

ensures that costs associated with the use of a resource are included in the prices of the goods and services.

## The Proximity Principle

is the principle that waste and recovered resources should be managed as close as possible to the source from which they are generated.

## The Product Stewardship Principle

is a shared responsibility between all persons who are involved in the life cycle of a product for managing the environmental, social and economic impact of the product. This means that everyone involved in the design, manufacturing and selling of products is responsible for ensuring those products and their packaging do not harm the environment or have negative impacts on human health or safety.

# Supporting Documentation

Associated guiding documents to support the Queensland Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy and transition include:

[Queensland Resource Recovery Industries 10- year Roadmap and Action Plan](#)

[Queensland Organic Strategy and Action Plan](#)

[Queensland's Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan](#)

[Respecting Country – A Sustainable Waste Strategy for First Nations Communities](#)

[Energy from Waste Policy and Guidelines](#)





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