



Event sustainability guidelines

Dedicated to a better Brisbane

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Waste and resource recovery

Reduce the amount of waste generated at your event and make recycling easy for all. A little forward planning and clever bin placement can really help.

Plan your waste management by understanding the waste that will be generated by the event, providing bins and organising collection of general waste, recycling and organic waste streams. Avoid the use of single-use items and encourage your stakeholders and patrons to work with you to reduce waste at your event.

There is a ban on single-use plastics in Queensland from 1 September 2021. Find further information on the [Queensland Government website](#).

Waste reduction

By reducing the amount of waste your event creates, you can minimise the impact on the environment and save time, energy and money.

Follow the [waste and resource recovery hierarchy](#) to plan your event.

Step	Considerations
Avoid	<p>Work with vendors and stall holders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• avoid using disposable or single-use items. Note the items included in the Queensland single-use plastic items ban• stipulate the waste types and single-use or disposable items that may be supplied by the event vendors and stall holders, for example avoiding the supply and use of single-use plastic items or specifying the serveware to be used at your event• avoid common rubbish items including balloons, single-use water bottles, plastic drink cups, single use mini condiments (such as for sauces, mayonnaise and butter) and disposable coffee cups• choose products with minimal packaging or recyclable packaging• set up a washing up station and provide reuseable cutlery and crockery (mugs, plates and bowls). Discuss crockery and cutlery suitability with vendors. Organise a team of volunteers to wash up and deliver clean crockery and cutlery to food vendors. Post signage and discuss with patrons to ensure they understand the washing up station and why.
Reduce	Encourage vendors and patrons to reduce food waste by catering accurately and ordering carefully.
Reuse	Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable shopping bags, water bottles, straws, cutlery and coffee cups.
Recycle	Provide recycling bins for items that cannot be reused e.g. plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard. Food waste and liquids in drink containers should not go in the recycling bin. Encourage food waste to be emptied into organics collection bins (if

Step	Considerations
	provided) and encourage liquids to be emptied from recyclable drink containers before placing the container in the recycling bin. Rinsing is not required - a small amount of residue is acceptable and will not ruin the whole load of recycling.

As well as the tips above, encourage vendors to:

- choose products made from cardboard or paper for single use coffee cups and serveware so that these items can be recycled in recycling bins
- choose good quality, multiple-use giveaways and merchandise
- produce maps and programs electronically, highlighting the location of bins, walking and bike paths, train stations, bus stops and water refill stations.

Waste types

Consider the waste items your event will generate before you order bins. Choosing the correct bins for your event will increase recycling and reduce waste to landfill, as well as potentially save money.

Use this table for guidance on identifying and planning how to dispose of different types of waste.

Types of waste	Guidelines
Organics	<p>Organic matter accounts for a large amount of waste sent to landfill from events. It can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit and vegetable scraps • coffee grinds • juice pulp • food scraps. <p>Organic materials are compostable and waste can be recovered by providing an organics service at your event. Visit Planet Ark Business Recycling to find a service provider. For smaller events, consider collecting food scraps and taking the scraps to a community composting hub located at sites around Brisbane.</p> <p>If you decide to have organic waste collected at your event, ensure you clearly communicate what type of serveware can be used. To simplify the streams for your patrons, request vendors all use the same type of serveware - cardboard or paper based serveware (preferable) is recyclable or choose compostable serveware - not a combination of both.</p> <p>Note that biodegradable items are not the same as compostable items. Biodegradable items such as cups and plates are made from bioplastics, derived from plant products, rather than petroleum. Bioplastic items do not readily break down like compostable materials and can only be composted through a specialist</p>

Types of waste	Guidelines
	commercial provider, however, bioplastics are considered more sustainable than regular petroleum-based plastic.
Recycling	<p>Recycling is often referred to as 'comingled recycling'. Recycling bins can be identified by a yellow lid and should be clearly signed at events. All recyclables must be placed loose in the bin, not in plastic bags, otherwise they will be sent to landfill. The comingled recycling stream includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cardboard, glass jars and bottles, metal tins and cans (including aluminium cans) • plastic bottles and containers* • paper (including unsoiled paper plates and napkins, and only if organics collection is not supplied) • recyclable packaging and serveware*. <p>Note the items included in the Queensland single-use plastic items ban.</p>
Soft plastics	<p>Soft plastics include plastic wrap used for boxes on pallets, plastic bags and soft plastic packaging. They can be recycled using a special service. Discuss this option with your waste service provider.</p> <p>Soft plastics cannot be placed in yellow lid recycling bins, only firm plastics should be discarded in recycling bins, e.g. plastic bottles and containers.*</p>
Paper and cardboard	<p>Paper and cardboard can be recycled through comingled recycling bins. However, if your event is generating large amounts of paper and cardboard waste, you can provide a dedicated paper and cardboard recycling service. This may reduce your waste management costs. Discuss this option with your waste service provider.</p>
Rubbish (general waste)	<p>Rubbish bins should have a red lid and be clearly signed. The general waste stream includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ceramics and some types of glass, such as wine glasses • food and organics, including soiled paper towels and napkins (if an organics collection is not provided) • soft plastic packaging, unless a specialist soft plastics recycling service is provided • waxed cardboard which is not recyclable. It may be recycled by providing a specific recycling service. Ideally, return waxed cardboard boxes to the supplier for reuse.

* Note the items included in the [Queensland single-use plastic items ban](#).

Queensland single-use plastic items ban

From 1 September 2021, the [Queensland single-use plastic items ban](#), will apply to all events.

Banned single-use plastic items are detailed on the [Queensland government webpages](#).

For further information or assistance in implementing the requirements, contact the [National Retail Association](#).

Reusing or recycling signage

Printed plastic corflute signs can be recycled through a specialist waste stream (not comingled recycling), but only if it has not come into contact with any adhesives. Discuss options with your waste service provider.

Waste management

Ordering the right number and type of bins and positioning them effectively encourages people to dispose of waste correctly and can save money in landfill disposal, resource recovery, litter collection and cleaning.

This table includes waste management steps for events.

Steps	Guidelines
Make a waste plan	<p>Prepare a waste plan and share it with your suppliers, vendors, staff and volunteers. Include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• prohibited items including plastic straws, plastic cutlery, balloons, mini-condiments (ie sauces), single-use water bottles, plastic bags and other items included in the Queensland single-use plastic items ban• essential or preferred serveware that food and drink vendors are to use• availability and locations of water bubblers or water bottle refill stations for patrons to refill their water bottles• other services, where provided, such as a washing up station and the reusable mug, cup or serveware library• different waste streams which are being collected• what items should go in each bin• the location of waste stations and skips for back-of-house use• where spare empty bins will be kept• a roster and process for monitoring the correct use and replacement of bins• a plan for cleaning up litter• post-event storage and placement of bins for collection.

Steps	Guidelines
Estimate waste quantities	Use the amenities calculator to help you assess the number of waste and recycling bins required. Approximately one waste station is required per 100 attendees, but may vary depending on the food service and other event waste. If possible, add an organics collection bin to each station to prevent even more waste from going to landfill.
Order your bins	Search for waste providers at Planet Ark Business Recycling . Order bins at least four weeks prior to the event and ensure the waste and recycling services match the types of waste expected to be generated.
Position your waste stations effectively	<p>A waste station includes one bin from each of the streams being collected (e.g. one general waste, one recycling and one of each of the other streams being collected such as organics collection).</p> <p>Place waste stations approximately 25 metres apart (closer in food and beverage areas). Place bins at entry and exit points and on routes to and from transport stops in close proximity to the venue. If skips or specialist streams will be provided for vendors or back-of-house, ensure they are conveniently located.</p> <p>Place signs on and around bins, communicate your expectations to vendors and monitor compliance.</p>
Monitoring	<p>Assign volunteers to monitor bin stations if possible. They can assist and encourage patrons to separate their waste into the correct bin and monitor when bins are full.</p> <p>Bins in high-volume areas should be monitored frequently.</p> <p>Keep spare empty bins aside and use them to replace full bins. This will minimise litter and avoid bins overflowing.</p>
Communications	<p>Help your event attendees by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • putting signs on and around bins identifying what items go in what bin (include images) • having bins with colour-coded lids (e.g. rubbish – red, recycling – yellow, and organics – lime green) • having event volunteers to stand by the bins to help event patrons put the right item in the right bin. <p>Keep signs for reuse at future events.</p>

For eligible community events, Council can provide a limited number of waste and recycling bins free of charge. Contact your local [ward office](#) for more information.

Travel and transport

Getting people and goods to and from your event has the potential to create significant emissions. By selecting a well-positioned location and promoting active travel and public transport, you can considerably reduce emissions generated by your event.

Use this page to discover how to position your event to minimise the environmental impact of travel and transport and learn about the best sustainable travel options.

Event location

Choose a location:

- close to public transport or active travel options such as [pedestrian and bike paths](#) and/or [park 'n' ride](#).
- with onsite resources and infrastructure if possible. Having onsite resources such as toilets, water bubblers, bike racks, fencing, shade, internal pathways, end-of-trip facilities and power access will minimise costs and environmental impacts of hiring and transportation. View the [venues and catering guidelines](#) for more information on venue selection.

Sustainable travel strategies

Promote the most sustainable travel options and make information easily available in the lead up to the event.

Produce electronic maps and programs to avoid printing and include the location of bike racks and paths, pedestrian paths, bus stops, train stations, bins and water fill stations. Ensure directional signage is well-placed to direct people to and from public transport stops.

Use this table for guidelines on sustainable travel options.

Travel option (listed in order of most preferred to least preferred)	Guidelines
Encourage active travel	Encourage walking and cycling as they produce no or very low emissions. Supply bike racks and include the locations on electronic event maps.
Encourage public transport	Encourage attendees to use the Translink journey planner and include route and stop numbers in marketing material. Council buses run on low emissions fuels, and bus emissions are offset.
Limit driving	Single passenger vehicle travel is the least sustainable option and can be reduced by promoting sustainable options and applying disincentives such as limited parking. If people do choose to drive, encourage car share to maximise the number of people carried per trip.

Choose local

Minimise vendors transport by using local products and services where possible.

Other creative options for active travel

Other creative options for active travel include:

- bike valet parking
- pedicabs
- shuttle buses to and from nearby [park 'n' rides](#).

Water, waterways and natural environment

Brisbane's waterways are important for our environment, economy and livelihoods and provide important habitat for many animals and plants.

Use this page to help protect our water, waterways and natural environment as part of your event planning.

Drinking water, waterways and stormwater drains

This table includes guidelines for drinking water, as well as protecting our waterways and keeping [stormwater drains for rain only](#).

Water resource	Guidelines
Drinking water	<p>Provide drinking fountains or water stations for refilling water bottles and include the locations on electronic maps. Refill stations are available from some event hire companies.</p> <p>Promote the use of reusable water bottles over single-use bottles.</p>
Waterways	<p>Position food and other high-waste areas away from waterways to prevent rubbish entering them.</p> <p>Ensure recycling and general waste bins are readily available and limit the use of plastic packaging.</p> <p>Clean up the site/venue after your event, leaving no litter or waste other than in appropriate bins.</p>
Stormwater drains	<p>Keep stormwater drains just for rain. Most stormwater drains don't treat water so it is piped straight into local creeks, the Brisbane River and eventually, Moreton Bay.</p> <p>Do not put anything other than water down drains. Oils and chemicals should be disposed as per Council's recommendations.</p>

Erosion control

Where possible, position traffic areas to minimise sediment flowing into waterways during wet weather. Vehicle and pedestrian traffic could degrade the land surface and create mud, erosion and water flow issues.

Minimise water use

Implement these measures to minimise event water use:

- use a broom, brush or rake to clean outdoor paths and paving
- use non-potable water to clean hard surfaces if needed
- choose venues and locations with dual-flush toilets and water stations

- arrange for water leaks to be fixed as soon as possible once identified.

Did you know recycling materials conserves water? Processing materials into new products needs less water than making products from raw materials. For example, producing paper from recycled material needs 99% less water than if produced from raw materials.

Use balloon alternatives

Helium balloons (when released) and non-helium balloons (when they become litter) can harm animals and damage our waterways. Latex balloons, though more biodegradable and less harmful than plastic balloons, still cause environmental damage as they can harm animals if consumed and are often tied with strings or plastic clips that do not decompose. The ideal environmental solution is to not use balloons for your event. Balloon alternatives include:

- air-dancers
- kites or pin wheels made from reused/recyclable and degradable materials
- face painting
- drumming
- bubbles
- decorations such as paper lanterns, bunting paper, pom-poms, streamers, colourful light-emitting diode (LED) lighting
- reusable signage/banners/flags.

Communication and marketing

Adopting sustainability principles when planning an event and highlighting these in event promotion could attract a broader audience.

The event industry in Brisbane has embraced the need to stage sustainable events, which in turn grows the market for sustainable products and services.

Discussing your event's sustainability goals with your suppliers engages them not only in positive outcomes for your event, but for their future business and creates a legacy of protecting the Brisbane environment.

When communicating with suppliers, follow the sustainability principles: avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle and consider the full life cycle of materials. Read more on [waste and resource recovery for events](#).

Communication	Guidelines
Communication with suppliers, staff, volunteers and venue managers	Provide guidelines for stakeholders to follow, including requirements for serveware materials, waste management expectations, and travel and transport options.
Promotion	<p>Consider using communication channels that reduce your environmental impact such as email, social media, radio and television. Where paper is required, use it sparingly and choose recycled stock and recycle any leftover materials.</p> <p>Promote your event with community groups that align with your sustainable choices, such as cycling groups and habitat and catchment groups.</p> <p>Communicate the sustainability actions you want event attendees to adopt, such as active travel, public transport, car share and bring-your-own coffee keep cup, water bottle, reusable straw and cutlery, hat and reusable carry bag.</p>
Site signage	<p>Consider using pre-loved materials such as wooden signs or hire options such as large screens or variable message signs.</p> <p>Minimise the use of materials by succinctly wording signs and consider placement to reduce the size and quantity required.</p> <p>Where materials cannot be avoided, opt for reusable and recyclable materials, and where possible, design signage with event-specific information so it can be over-printed for future events.</p> <p>Include information on site signage such as the location of water taps or re-fill stations, waste and recycling bins and public transport stops. For signs on waste bins, use images or examples of what items go in each bin.</p>

Corflute and vinyl

Standard corflute cannot be recycled in comingled recycling, but can be recycled via specialist services. If corflute has been re-skinned, it cannot be recycled through any method due to the adhesives used. Lightweight and durable recyclable options are increasingly becoming available, ask your supplier for the best options for the environment.

Vinyl is often used for its durability and can often be reused or repurposed, however it cannot be recycled.

Venues and catering

Choosing a venue or location suitable for the type of event, audience and event goals is important to the overall success of an event. Venue and location selection can also contribute to sustainable, social and economic outcomes.

Choosing a venue

Brisbane City Council has many venues available for use by the public, including [parks](#), [library meeting rooms](#), [Karawatha Forest Discovery Centre](#), [Downfall Creek Bushland Centre](#), [Community Halls](#), [Riverstage](#), [Brisbane Powerhouse](#), [Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium](#), [Valley Malls](#) and [SunPAC](#).

Use the following table to maximise your event's sustainability and minimise environmental impacts when selecting a venue.

Topic	Things to consider
Catering	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local suppliers, seasonal produce and vegetarian options are offeredThe type of serveware to be used - reusable, compostable or recyclable[^]Left-over food is provided to food recycling organisations.
Clean air, energy and carbon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enough well-positioned power points.Energy efficient lighting and other appliances.100% onsite renewable energy or 100% GreenPower.Separate event metering (if possible).Natural ventilation and light.
Onsite resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Onsite resources such as toilets, water stations, bike racks, fencing and power access. This will minimise costs and environmental impacts of hiring and transportation.
Travel and transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Centrally located to attendees and vendors.Close to active and public transport routes.Local suppliers considered to minimise transportation.
Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none">On-site bins for separation of rubbish and general recycling.Layout and site features enable easy bin replacement when full.The type of serveware to be used. If single-use serveware is provided onsite, then this will increase waste volumes. [^]

Topic	Things to consider
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are enough well-positioned taps or bubblers for cleaning and drinking. • Venue has low-flow fixtures and dual-flush toilets. • Separate event metering (if possible). • Sink facilities for washing up, where feasible.
Purchasing and procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local suppliers are provided as options. • Consider the full lifecycle impacts of products (economic, environmental and social). • Avoid single-use and overly packaged items.

^ Note single use plastic cutlery, plates and bowls are included in the Queensland single-use plastics ban which begins on 1 September 2021. Find further information on the [Queensland Government website](#).

Sustainable catering options

Where possible, choose caterers who commit to the event sustainability goals, who take sustainable actions such as supplying compliant serveware, who collect [organics](#) and [recycle](#).

Clean air and energy

When planning an event it is important to consider how it may affect air quality. The type and amount of energy used, as well as transport can all have impacts on air quality, but small changes can be made to reduce emissions.

The [waste hierarchy](#) outlines that the first priority for energy use is to avoid using energy and then reduce the amount used (which also reduces costs) prior to considering offsets.

Use the table for advice on how to reduce air impacts and the amount of energy used by your event.

Energy source	Guidelines
On-site solar supported by batteries	Using on-site solar means no greenhouse gas emissions will be generated from that power source.
Mains power - 100% GreenPower	<p>Mains power usage for events at Brisbane City Council sites is 100% GreenPower (i.e. from 100% renewable sources) and therefore will not create any greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>At privately-owned venues, ask the venue manager if they use 100% GreenPower, or if they are able to individually meter the event.</p> <p>Where possible, opt for the highest possible percentage of GreenPower.</p>
Generators	<p>Diesel generators are not preferred as they emit noise and pollutants that are harmful to health. If diesel generators are unavoidable, place them as far away as possible from where people will gather or walk, and from neighbouring residents.</p> <p>Generator carbon dioxide emissions can be reduced using biodiesel mixes. Request that suppliers provide the most efficient and lowest greenhouse gas emitting option.</p> <p>Calculate your energy use accurately. Use the full rated load of generators and avoid wasting unused energy which is lost through heat and friction.</p>
Mains power	Measure or calculate your energy usage at GreenPower and arrange carbon offsets.

Vehicle emissions

Consider the following ways to reduce vehicle emissions:

- Use the smallest vehicle fit for purpose.
- Keep vehicles well maintained.
- Use eco-driving techniques.
- Use electric or hybrid vehicles when suitable.

- Select ethanol, biodiesel fuel mixes or LPG.
- Consider vehicle use in the planning and delivery of the event and plan well to minimise the number and length of trips.
- Visit the [Green Vehicle Guide](#) for further advice on low emission vehicles.

Carbon offsets

Once the above methods have been explored, you can offset your event's emissions through carbon offsets such as tree planting. The [National Carbon Offset Standard](#) provides guidelines for measuring carbon emissions and advice on credible offset units.