

Case study

Outdoors
Victoria



Carey
Outdoor
Education

Waste Wise in the Wild

Intro

Carey Baptist Grammar School's Outdoor Education Department has developed a range of waste management initiatives that are embedded across all its Outdoor Education programs. These initiatives are closely aligned with the school's broader sustainability philosophy and environmental values on campus.

This case study outlines the various strategies used in the field, detailing the materials, processes, and end-of-program disposal systems that support waste goals. The intention of this case study is to provide a framework that can easily be adapted to the context of other programs to encourage good waste management practices in the outdoors.



“What we have found to be most important for the students is that the waste streams are recognisable across all programs (ours are sequential) so the students and staff easily become familiar with the systems.”

A key element of the success of the OE department has been consistency. Ensuring the same waste streams and colour-coded systems are used across the sequential programs. This helps students and staff quickly become familiar with the expectations and routines, no matter which program they're on.

Where things become more complex is in the backend logistics. The OE department works with different community partners across different locations. What's suitable for pigs in Gippsland may not be appropriate in Hattah, for example. Building strong relationships with these local farmers and understanding their specific needs has been essential. It allows staff to tailor the waste practices, communicate clearly with group leaders, and even adjust meal planning accordingly.

Signage and pre-program education, delivered by our staff, play a crucial role in gaining student buy-in. This supports not only the success of the waste system but also helps to maintain respectful and lasting partnerships with the local communities they work alongside.

What follows is a breakdown of each of Carey Grammars waste streams, explained by the staff who implement it:



Food Waste

Red bag with green label

On expedition programs, the red bag is used in combination with four small screw-top Nalgene containers to manage food waste. A larger 20L bucket is stored at base or restock sites for bulk collection. What can go into the food waste system depends on where the waste will be disposed of.

Groups collect food scraps in the Nalgene containers throughout the trip and empty them into the larger buckets at restock points. The backup staff monitors these buckets and collects them when full.

At the end of the program, the full buckets are delivered to local farms or community partners we've established arrangements with. In some cases, the waste is brought back to school or our Toonlook campus, where it can go into our Solar Cone composters, which accept all organic waste, including meat, dairy, and citrus.

When food waste is being donated to animals such as pigs, chickens, or even guinea pigs, we check with the owners beforehand and update our signage accordingly. Maintaining consistency in the use of containers across all programs is key to ensuring the system runs smoothly.

The red bag is designed to hold a few days' worth of soft plastics, such as muesli bar wrappers, cereal packaging, and wrap bags and is emptied at designated restock sites during all programs. The good news is that soft plastics are lightweight and easily compressible, so we've found the red bag comfortably holds enough for a full week-long program.

At restock points, groups have the opportunity to empty their red bag contents into larger collection bags. We use retired dry bags ready for pickup by the backup staff. The backup staff then transports the waste back to Melbourne for proper disposal through Recycle Smart.

At our Bulleen campus, we have two large wheelie bins that are filled with collected soft plastics post-program, and we schedule collection when full. The Outdoor Ed team is also exploring the use of vacuum-sealing bags to make transport even more efficient.



Soft Plastic Recycling

Red bag with blue label

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“Where it gets interesting is the back end, as we don’t work with the same pigs in Gippsland as we do at Hattah for example!”

Molly Dempsey, Carey Grammar



Our signage and education through our staff is very important for buy-in from the students to ensure we can maintain the integrity of our waste management, and our relationships with the local people we work with.



Mixed Recycling

Black One Planet bag and clear Ikea bag

The Outdoor Ed staff collaborated with One Planet to design a purpose-built waste bag that is both simple and field-friendly. The bag rolls down and clips closed like a traditional dry bag keeping animals out and rubbish contained. It’s designed to attach securely to the outside of student packs without swinging or throwing off balance.

At camp, the bag can easily be clipped around a tree or branch, keeping the site tidy and waste accessible to all. For recycling, there’s no need to line the bag, cardboard and paper can go in directly. Where appropriate, we burn cardboard onsite. Other recyclables are collected during the program and returned to Melbourne for local recycling.

The One Planet bag is made from durable canvas and can be hosed out between programs. We’ve found it important to have students clean bottles and tins before placing them in the bag. These are collected at restock points by backup staff. Using clear IKEA bags at the restock sites allows the backup team to quickly assess whether the bag needs replacing or can last another night or group.

Given the One Planet bag’s size, it’s also helpful to plan meals in line with restock points, dishes like massaman curry create lots of coconut milk tins that are bulky and hard to crush, which can quickly fill up the bin.

This stream requires a bin liner, but a roll of liners can be conveniently stored inside the bin itself for easy changeover. It’s important to remind students to place all landfill waste into the liner, otherwise, the bin can become unpleasant very quickly. As with the other waste streams, the filled liner is left at the designated restock point for the backup team to collect and dispose of at base.

Hard-to-Recycle Items

Blister packs, milk bottle tops, e-waste, batteries, and other unusual but frequently found items are collected as part of our soft plastics pickup through Recycle Smart.



Landfill

Black One Planet bag (red square)

Additional Notes

Where possible, we use waste disposal services that provide weight-based tracking, allowing us to monitor how much waste is generated during programs and where possible we try to minimize our waste where possible. We also stick to a familiar colour-coded system to align with what students use at school.

In our experience, one full waste bag set per group is sufficient. However, depending on group size or the number of days between restock points, you may find that having two of each stream per group works better for your context.

The One Planet bags have been designed so that you can use them or seal them while they are still hanging in a tree. The clip on the back of the bag is for hanging, and the roll top is for sealing from animals/weather. You can find the bags here [Trash Bag | ONE PLANET | Outdoor Education](#) and I have attached photos of the other types of bags/containers.



For more information about this Case Study, feel free to reach out to maddy.b@outdoorsvictoria.org.au