

MINIMISING MATERIAL WASTAGE:

A HANDBOOK FOR TRADE BUSINESS OWNERS



FOREWORD



This handbook will help you and your team learn about material wastage and how to limit its effects on your business profitability. You don't have to be a recycling expert to start benefitting from good material management, and the information that follows will help you start getting the most out of the materials that move through your business every day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

Material Wastage: A trade business profit sink

02

Material wastage: Some facts and figures

03

A breakdown of what's being wasted

04

Material wastage in 2024

05

Ten easy steps to start minimising material waste today

06

Limiting material waste with accurate estimates

07

Recycling what you can't use again

MATERIAL WASTAGE: A TRADE BUSINESS PROFIT SINK.

Did you know that construction and trade work accounts for roughly **44%** of Australia's total yearly waste generation, or around **27 million tonnes** of waste every year?

Most of this waste takes the form of off-cuts or material left over after a job is complete, and most of it is useful too, yet it still heads straight to landfill.

For your average trade business, the amount of material wasted on job sites every year bites heavily into profits, forcing professionals to take on the additional cost of storing and disposing of waste.

But it can be difficult to look at a pile of off-cuts or a pallet of unused material and see lost profits rather than something destined for the bin, and even harder to figure out how to start solving the problem.



MATERIAL WASTAGE: SOME FACTS AND FIGURES.



Australian trade businesses spend an average of **7.9 billion AUD** per year on wasted materials that end up in landfill or recycling.



Trade waste has risen by **32%** since 2012.



Landfill use costs trade businesses between **\$45-\$105 AUD** per tonne.



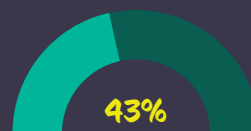
1 in 3 trade businesses don't track of their waste production.



Only **1 in 3** tradespeople know what waste disposal costs them each year.

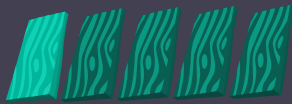


6 in 10 trade businesses in Australia don't have a waste action plan.

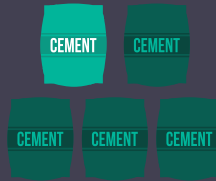


Of Australian trade businesses haven't fully implemented a recycling plan.

A BREAKDOWN OF WHAT'S BEING WASTED.



1 in 5 pieces of timber



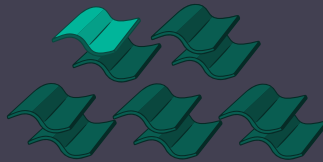
1 in 5 bags of concrete



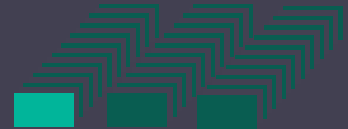
1 in 10 bricks



1 in 10 pieces of metal or wiring



1 in 10 tiles



1 in 30 sheets of plasterboard

How much profit do you think your business is losing on wasted material?

Use our wasted material calculator to find out.

Wasted materials are a trade business profit sink.

Calculate the estimated annual losses due to wastage in your trade business 🛠️

Enter your yearly spend on the materials below:

Timber \$185,000 0 ————— 500,000	Concrete \$285,500 0 ————— 500,000
Metal & Wiring \$6,500 0 ————— 500,000	Bricks \$84,500 0 ————— 500,000
Plasterboard \$60,500 0 ————— 500,000	Tiles \$53,500 0 ————— 500,000

Calculate Lost Revenue

MATERIAL WASTAGE IN 2024.

Decades ago it was much more cost-effective to throw away off-cut material rather than save it for the next job. Now it's a very different situation, with scarcer resources and more pressure on trade businesses to manage their use of materials carefully.

1

Material shortages

Recent shortages of materials such as timber and metals are forcing trade businesses to measure twice, cut once and keep what's left for a rainy day.

Shortages also extend job completion time, forcing tradies to wait for materials and suffer the consequences of missed job deadlines.

2

External pressure

The push to make Australia's business landscape more environmentally friendly has created many opportunities for tradies who embrace reducing, reusing and recycling.

The new frontier in eco-friendly trade business ownership is reclaiming materials before they reach the recycling plant, and tradies stand to gain the most by making their materials fit for multiple purposes.

3

Environmental concerns

Customers are searching for green businesses that share their environmental beliefs, and trade businesses have a unique opportunity to provide both products and services that meet this need.

Limiting material wastage can help set your trade business apart from the pack, creating valuable opportunities to pursue jobs that less eco-friendly tradies will miss out on.

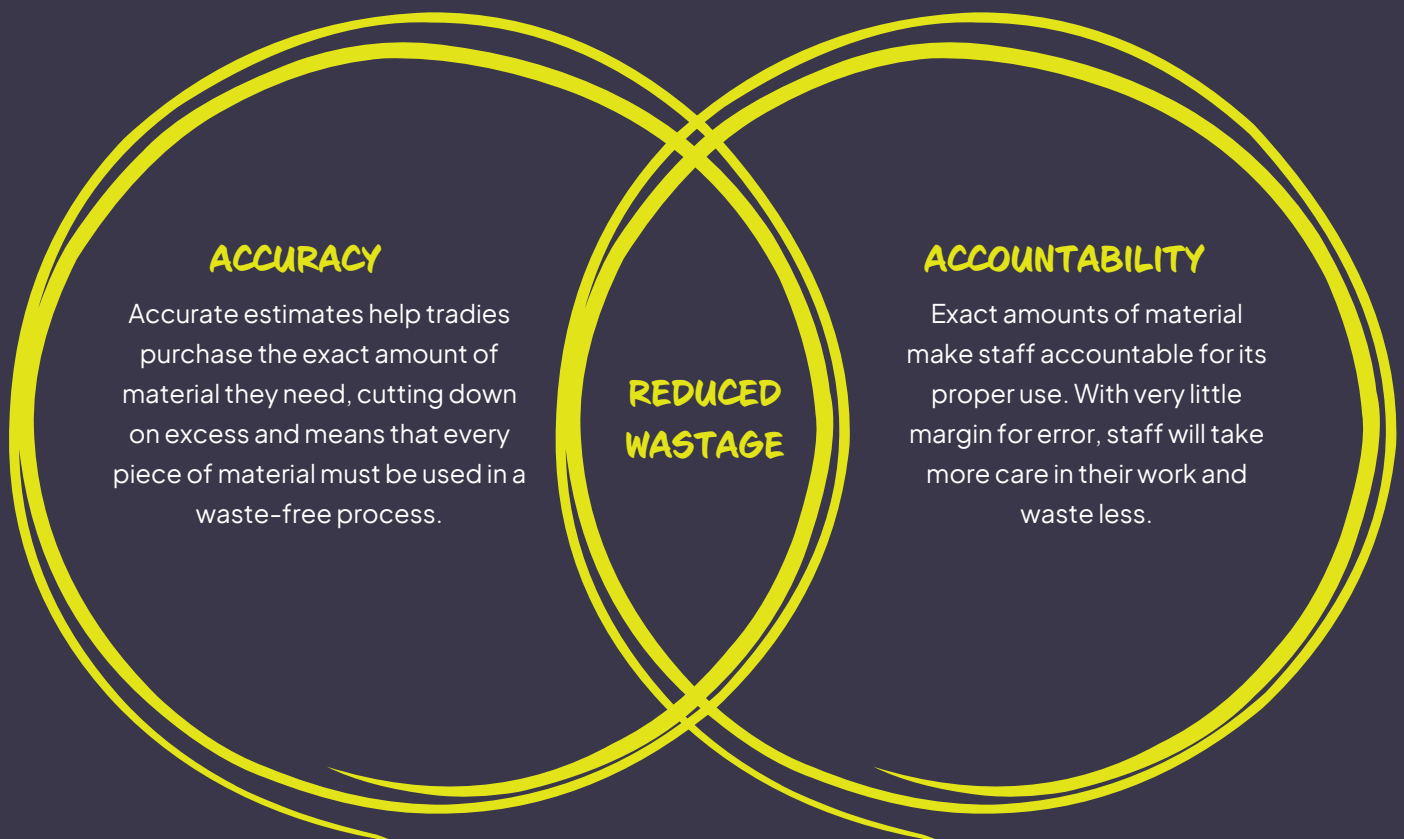
TEN STEPS TO MINIMISE MATERIAL WASTE **TODAY.**

- 1** **Download** or print this handbook and share it with your employees.
- 2** **Create** a complete list of the materials your business uses and where material wastage commonly occurs.
- 3** **Note** down potential uses for offcuts and reusable material in the jobs you complete often.
- 4** **Build** a waste minimisation plan and get your staff engaged with making the most out of every material.
- 5** **Contact** your suppliers and ask about their reclamation services or material takebacks for any extra material you can't find a use for.
- 6** **Get** your contractors involved and start teaching them about minimising material waste in their work.
- 7** **Start** prioritising subcontractors who value good material management and are willing to actively minimise the amount of material they waste.
- 8** **Include** a waste minimisation agreement with trackable performance measures in contracts or agreements with third parties.
- 9** **Engage** with local council and government initiatives to help make reclaiming or recycling materials more financially viable.
- 10** **Continue** to monitor material usage and find new ways to utilise material that would otherwise go to waste.

Download this as a checklist



LIMITING MATERIAL WASTE WITH THE TWO A'S OF ESTIMATING



Learn more about accuracy & accountability estimating with ex-tradie Craig Pearman from Groundplan



 **groundplan**

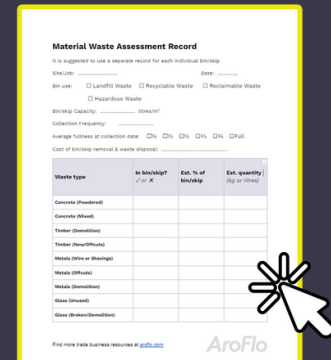
[Check out Groundplan's podcast on Material Accuracy](#)

RECYCLING WHAT YOU CAN'T USE AGAIN.

Minimising material wastage isn't just about limiting lost profits. It can also be a valuable source of additional revenue, provided you take advantage of the many incentives that exist for savvy trade business owners.

Excess materials you can't find a use for will often be taken by reclamation companies who pay you a standard rate for materials that still have potential use in other industries without the need for recycling.

Off-cuts and odd pieces of material that can't be reused can be always recycled too. But don't believe the myth that recycling building materials costs businesses money. Recycling services are often provided **free of charge** and many government bodies offer additional rebates to businesses who sign up for recycling programs and schemes.

A screenshot of a 'Material Waste Assessment Record' form. The form includes fields for 'Bin Code', 'Date', 'Bin use' (with checkboxes for Landfill Waste, Recyclable Waste, and Reclaimable Waste), 'Waste type', 'Collection frequency', 'Average fullness at collection date', and 'Cost of binning removal & waste disposal'. Below these fields is a table with columns: 'Waste type', 'Is binning? / or X', 'Est. % of binning', and 'Est. quantity (kg or litres)'. The table lists various waste types such as Concrete (Precast), Concrete (Cast), Timber (Sawn/Planed), Timber (Sawn/Unplaned), Masonry (Brick or Stone), Masonry (Concrete), Glass (Clear), and Glass (Coloured/Decorative). A cursor icon is pointing at the bottom right of the form. The AroFlo logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the form.

[Download our waste assessment record sheet.](#)



[Find a recycler for niche or hazardous materials.](#)