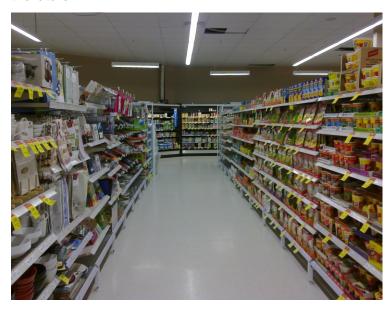# How to Minimise Waste in Your Household

In Australia, the average four person household throws out enough rubbish to fill a three bedroom house each year. When all this rubbish is placed in the general waste bin, it ends up as waste at landfill, at a significant financial and environmental cost.

The amount of household waste can be reduced through rethinking consumer choices. By thinking more about waste avoidance, and by making different decisions about the products that are purchased, households can significantly reduce the amount of waste they make. Making more environmentally conscious consumer choices can also help influence how companies package and sell their products in the future.

Some of the major consumer behaviours that result in excessive waste include:

- Using plastic bags at the checkout instead of reusable bags or baskets
- Putting fruit and vegetables in a plastic bag instead of directly into the basket
- Buying meat and other products in foam trays or wrapped in soft plastic
- Purchasing the newest version of a product (e.g. mobile phones) and throwing away an older product that still works.
- Discarding items in the bin that could have been reused, recycled or composted

The problem with packaging

The packaging used for consumer products has a number of important roles, ranging from hygiene to convenience. However, as the demand for shopping products has increased, so too has the amount of packaging associated with those products. In many instances, products are sold with excessive packaging for the purposes of branding. Whilst some of this packaging is recyclable, much of it (such as plastic film and polystyrene) cannot be disposed of easily, resulting in an unnecessary waste of resources and more rubbish to be disposed of at landfill.

Practical ways you can avoid making waste

Often waste can be avoided in the first place by thinking a little more about the products you purchase. Before buying new items, first ask yourself:

- Do I really need it? (new mobile phone)
- Can I borrow it? (clothes)
- Can I use something that I already own instead? (can you make something?)
- Can I buy a slightly more expensive product which will last a lot longer? (an electric razor instead of a disposable razor)
- Can I buy this with less packaging? (a whole rockmelon instead of half)
- Is the packaging reusable? (e.g plastic containers)
- Is the packaging disposable? (e.g polystyrene)
- How will I dispose of the packaging? (will it end up in landfill?)
- Can I buy something that is locally grown or made instead? (produce)