

# Overloaded - Our Rubbish Problem

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For much of the HB population, there is no close and convenient recycling station near them to recycle plastic and other items. This can lead to illegal dumping as many people won't go out of their way to recycle. However, there is another problem here as well. The majority of plastic in HB is dumped into the Omarunui Landfill, which soon may reach its peak. The problem with landfills is that chemicals get out of landfills and into the soil. How do we solve this problem?



Omarunui Landfill in Hawkes Bay



One of HB's

few recycling stations.

We could make recycling easier by adding more recycling stations and having a better service to take care of our environment. This has been implemented in Napier and Hastings. They have added a service that takes all recycling that fits the categories of the recycling bins. However, the rural population does not have this service and a better solution is needed. To see what the Council does about these services, we talked to Environment Centre Hawkes Bay to see what they do about this. They supplied us with an interview they did with the Hastings Council. The Council recycles Number 1 and 2 plastic, but not number 5s, like plastic bottle tops and yoghurt containers. Currently, the Council do not recycle Number 5 since China closed its doors to other countries for recycling. They are looking at potentially collecting Number 5's as well as recycling them if there is a lift in the amount of use.

We also talked to Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister, to ask about the situation concerning HB's recycling. We asked: What do you think the state of recycling is in HB? She replied "I understand that Napier City Council and Hastings District Council are working closely together to improve recycling in Hawkes Bay. Recycling is collected in crates which means paper, metal and plastic, and glass can all be collected separately. This ensures it's of high quality. Most of the recycling then gets recycled here in New Zealand. The paper and cardboard go to a local company Hawk Packaging who turn them into fruit trays, the glass goes up to Auckland to make new bottles and some of the plastic goes to Wellington to be made into new products. Items which are hard to recycle at kerbsides such as batteries and e-waste can also be dropped off at the Environment Centre. So, Hawkes Bay is doing a pretty good job."

Ms Ardern also talked about how close HB's recycling relates to her goals of sustainability. She said "The councils in Hawkes Bay and the government are all working to reduce waste to landfill and to help all of us move to a low emissions circular economy. It's a journey but we are making good progress."

However, we believe that the problem of rubbish is not fully solved. New Zealand has a shocking problem with food waste, as well as other rubbish. New Zealanders now throw away 157,389 tonnes of waste every year, equivalent to \$1.2 billion of waste.<sup>2</sup> If we saved all this food, we could be feeding the population of Dunedin for 3 years! Also, nearly 300,000 tonnes of food waste rots in landfills. 52% of the waste in landfills is avoidable. This problem is unlike plastic, but it still poses a major waste threat and is something New Zealand has to solve. A way to solve this is through adding more worm farms or giving the waste to farms with pigs. The other problem with food and garden waste that links into the plastic waste problem is that the chemicals in the waste can mix with chemicals from the other waste, and create chemicals that are toxic and non-recyclable.

These rubbish problems affect Hawkes Bay massively, and a strong recycling system could easily solve the problem. Yes, Hawkes Bay has started to fix the problem but it's not enough. A better recycling system with more stations would definitely help solve our absolutely rubbish problem.

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.epa.gov/landfills>
2. <https://lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz/>

