BRIDGING CASE STUDY

# Reducing food waste starts with everyday decisions

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| SERVICE | One Tree Wickham Children's Service |
| SERVICE TYPE | Long day care |
| MEAL PROVISION MODEL | All meals provided on-site |
| BUSINESS MODEL | Private, not-for-profit |
| AGE RANGE | Birth to 5 years |
| NUMBER OF APPROVED PLACES | 46 |
| REMOTENESS AREA CLASSIFICATION | Remote |

LOCATION

Wickham, WA



## Problem statement

Food waste is a significant issue in ECEC services mostly due to uneaten meals when trying out new menus with children unfamiliar with new foods and texture. It can also be due to incorrect portion sizes, busy or distracting mealtime environment and excessive food preparation.

## Background to managing food waste in the service

At One Tree Wickham, the Service Cook conducts several menu trials before introducing new meals to the regular menu. By the third trial, the cook has a clear understanding of how much food needs to be prepared and whether the meal is suitable for ongoing inclusion.

Educators provide practical feedback during this process – for example, noting when children find meat cuts difficult to chew and suggesting smaller cuts, or observing that the way fruit is cut can influence how easily different age groups are able to eat it.

## How do you manage the food waste

The service manages food waste through a combination of safe storage practices, repurposing of suitable food items, and sustainable recycling initiatives.

- Daily untouched leftovers are portioned, labelled, and stored in the fridge for staff to access. This supports educators who may not have packed lunch.
- The cook uses safe, creative methods to transform suitable excess ingredients into different dishes. For example, excess yoghurt can be turned into 2 ingredient pizza dough or frozen yoghurt for afternoon tea, and excess vegetables get blended into a smooth, flavourful sauce that can be used for meals such as Mac and Cheese.
- Leftover fruits and other food offerings are reoffered throughout the day, provided they have been stored safely, kept covered, and checked before serving, ensuring children have ongoing access to nutritious options until late afternoon.
- Fruit scraps are sent to Kindy Room's Worm Farm. The worm farm produces worm juice, which is bottled using recycled sauce jars and offered to families for use in their home gardens.

## Challenges and considerations and how these were overcome

- One of the main challenges during mealtimes in remote areas is managing flies, particularly in warmer weather. The team works proactively to minimise their presence by keeping food covered, maintaining clean eating spaces, and encouraging children to eat indoors where possible. These practices help reduce contamination risks, lower food waste, support safe food handling, and create a more comfortable mealtime environment for children and educators.
- Another challenge is that children often eat only small amounts because the scheduled mealtimes are very close together. To address this, educators have introduced progressive mealtimes, allowing children to eat when they are genuinely hungry rather than at a fixed time. This approach has supported hunger and 'had enough' cues, reduced pressure during meals, and helped children engage more positively with food.