

WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

Title: "A Guide to Plastic Free School Canteens"

Held: Tuesday 19 November 2019 - 6.30-8.30pm

Speaker: Sherene LaGasse

<start>

Hello, everybody.

We're just about ready to get started here. It's almost 6:30. We've got quite a lot of people already logged on, so we want to make sure that we start right away as we know

we've got dinnertime and a lot of things happening at home and work and other things.

So we really appreciate everybody logging in tonight, and we've had a really great response across the board from canteen managers to principals to P and C members to school parents, so really thrilled with the response.

Myself, I'm Sherene from Food Nasties and Plastic Nasties and the Northern Beaches Council and the Waste Team and the Swap for Good Team.

I'm very excited that you decided to take interest in this webinar tonight in helping schools rid themselves of single-use plastic and waste in general and food waste.

So we'll get started right now. So just a little bit of an overview on the Swap for Good business program.

The Swap for Good program was launched in June with the Council. The program provides information, education, resources, cross-promotion ideas for businesses to help give alternatives to single-use plastic.

So it's a really great initiative from the Northern Beaches Council. Alicia and Sasha from the Swap for Good Team and the Waste Team are fantastic in initiating programs and giving, soliciting advice and suggestions to local businesses, as well as school canteens.

Now, a few reasons why we should swap for good.

I'm pretty sure a lot of you are aware of a lot of these problems that we have with landfill, with litter polluting the ocean, microplastics that break down and become a massive problem, toxic chemicals and sustainability.

So this is, I want to see if you remember what the war on waste, the plastic footprint, do you remember how long it took Australian households to generate that much plastic?

One minute. And in one day, the entire South Steyne in Manly, North Steyne, Queenscliff beaches were covered in plastic in just one day.

So this is why it's imperative that wherever we can help and start, whether it's big or small, stop using single-use plastics any way we can to protect the ocean and the planet.

So I want to be kind of honest with you guys and say that this is about single-use plastic and it is about recycling, but really, we want to reuse as much as possible.

So when I go to canteens and schools and discuss how to implement a program of eliminating single-use plastic, it really starts with trying to reuse what they have or getting in products that are reusables.

Recycling is actually the last route we'd like to go to.

Obviously, recycling is fantastic and we need to continue the education of it and we need to do it, but the first R that we want to focus on is reusing and reducing.

So we want to reduce the amount of waste we create. We want to reuse containers, reuse any materials when possible before we actually recycle.

Now, just quickly before I keep going, we're going to have a large Q and A, obviously, for an hour after this.

So while I'm going through, please jot down any questions you have because I know there's going to be a lot and I may miss it, I may not develop the answer enough.

So please write it down and we'll get to it as soon as we finish the slides.

Okay, so as far as canteens are concerned, first thing I like to say is your goals.

What are our goals? Are they short term, are they long term? So we got to define the goals.

Do you want to be waste-free, plastic-free, single-use plastic free?

What do you want to do? Obviously, every school is going to be different.

We've got different populations of schools, from 200 kids to 700 kids.

We have different volunteer initiatives, and the amount of volunteers canteens might get are different.

Your goals will be different. Your budgets are going to be different.

Some schools will have lots of money to spend. Most schools will not have any money to spend.

What is your P and C involvement? And what is the school's stance on the canteen eliminating single-use plastic?

So define your goals first. And then from that, we decide what support do you have?

So as I mentioned, do you get volunteers? Is the principal behind the school, the canteen? Which is very important. Do you have some parents that might want to be part of the Green Team canteen committee? We've got to look at what support do you have to make this work. So, again, the school and P and C or P and F support, your volunteers.

And, as I mentioned, do you want to be single-use plastic free?

Do you want to be really completely waste-free and have reusables?

Do you want healthier food? Which kind of goes hand in hand with eliminating excessive packaging and excessive waste.

Do you want to attempt to reduce food waste? Which is hugely important in canteens. We generate lots of food waste. The children generate lots of food waste, which we know goes on to make lots of emissions, and we need to develop some kind of system to help with the food waste.

Then, is it something that you would like to attain the Ocean Friendly Certification? Which is a fantastic goal for any school's canteen to have, which means you eliminate plastic, such as plastic water bottles, straws, cutlery, things you might have already done to this day, and you can obtain a certification that makes the canteen feel proud, the students, the school, and it's recognized by the Surfrider Foundation.

And it's kind of a nice goal to set the canteen.

So some quick changes that I think are pretty easy. And, obviously, I know some of you listening have already implemented some of these, all of these, maybe only one of them.

But quick changes on plastic cutlery. It just needs to go.

There's obviously a solution of having reusable cutlery, whether it's titanium, or if you already have stainless steel there.

Also, bamboo. Those are obviously a better choice than having plastic.

Plastic straws. We all know now that you can get paper straws, you can get bamboo straws, you can have pasta as straws.

Or most schools really don't even need straws. I find a lot of schools that I work at, the kids don't even take a straw.

So there's other ways of just completely getting rid of the item, such as straws, or replacing it with a better sustainable option.

Plastic cups. This is a big one, but most schools don't use cups, anyway, but there is opportunity to have reusable.

Even if they are reusable plastic cups and you have them already for school programs, using those and having them be returned to the canteen.

There's rice husk cups, which are a natural product made from a natural fiber. Again, having to be returned.

So there's water bottles that will have a secure lid, there's stainless steel options, which are fantastic. So there's quite a few options for plastic cups.

I know of concern, we have this for the slushy machine. In the case of schools that still have slushy machines, my suggestion would be you would have to go to reusable cups. Again, a solution is the melamine cups.

Even a cheaper option would be polypropylene, which is a high-density plastic cup which has no BPA, no BPS.

They can be purchased at eBay, IKEA for literally about 30 cents a cup. Again, with that program, you will have to get a reusable bin so they get put into bins, or the children will have to bring them back to the canteen. But, again, that is an easy switch.

You just have to have the, have all your, I guess, implementation in order of how the cups will get back to the canteen, which we can touch on later because that is a tricky one, and everybody needs to be onboard with reusables.

So soy sauce fishes. Easy, get rid of 'em. A way to fix that is either to have soy sauce available at the canteen counters, which a lot of schools already do.

Send reusable sushi, soy sauce bottles to the classrooms in their baskets if you have that type of school that has baskets with all the food, putting the soy sauce in that.

But the majority of schools that I've spoken to, a lot of them don't even use soy sauce. It is available, as I mentioned, in the counter, in reusable bottles, but it is not something that has become an issue.

Kids actually just eat their sushi, and the fishes aren't really needed anymore, and they are one of the number one pollutants in the ocean and beaches, so it is very important to eliminate the soy sauce.

And all you need to do is tell your sushi provider that you don't want them anymore. It's very simple. So that's that.

The next one is the squeeze me sauces, and it's a similar concept that a lot of schools have the barbecue or the ketchup in the small little plastic containers.

Again, getting rid of those is a fantastic solution to help with the single-use plastic, and supplying reusable tomato sauce or barbecue bottles at the canteen window for the kids to use, if they would so choose, or to send it to classrooms, like the soy sauce.

But, again, I think you will find, in all my studies with other schools, the kids actually don't use it very much.

I do believe it's different in high school, but if you leave it available at the counter, you wash them out every few weeks, keep them clean.

At the end of each term, they get cleaned out and refilled. It's a very simple solution to rid yourself of that ongoing cost of constantly buying the squeeze mes, as well.

It's very cost-effective to buy the large container of tomato sauce or barbecue and to refill maybe the five that you have sitting at the counter, or if you buy 20 to go to all the classrooms, but it's a one-time investment, as opposed to an ongoing cost with the squeeze mes.

So, again, a very easy change for that.

Cling film, which is often used in several canteens and rampantly and a lot of them for everything.

I think a lot of people would know now that you can use beeswax. It is a fantastic cover to anything except for raw meat, as well as silicone wraps.

You can find them anywhere nowadays online or any of your good reusable stores, Flora & Fauna, Biome. So all of those.

Cling film. All the canteens that I've changed over and nobody uses cling film anymore.

It's just not a necessity, and it is an incredible pollutant and it doesn't break down.

So the easy switch for cling film is beeswax, silicone covers that you can reuse and reuse and reuse, or wraps.

And, again, it is an investment. You buy them. I think the ones that I've had have been lasting over two years.

Obviously, you're going to have some breakage, but silicone is a natural fiber that will break down, as opposed to plastic, so it is better for the environment, with no toxins, so it is a better choice.

So that's what I would suggest for cling film.

Baking paper, another common item that needs to be used when you're baking in a canteen.

But, again, I believe that a lot of you would know now that you can use a silicone baking mat.

Purchase those at any good cooking store, online.

And they, again, are an investment. You use them over and over and over again. So it's a very easy fix for baking paper.

Sushi without plastic.

I know I had a lot of people already email in about that, the sushi without plastic, and I'll go deeper into the sushi later, about ordering that from your local sushi provider, which is very simple.

Sushi can be wrapped in beeswax wrap. It can also be put into paper bags, which can be, obviously, recycled in your cardboard/paper.

So there's two options for sushi.

I know people are afraid of removing the plastic and the extra work, becoming time consuming, but I am going to be honest with you.

For a canteen to become sustainable, more eco-friendly, reducing waste, it does come with an extra effort, but the rewards are far better

when you reduce the waste, that you will see how much less waste is coming over that canteen and going into your bins if you reduce the plastic.

So beeswax wrap, which is a great fix for that, and small paper bags, like the lolly bag size, pop it in there, a little bit bigger if you've got more.

And easily recyclable because there's no waste on them from sushi.

They're not full of, say, like spaghetti sauce or tomato sauce, where it's hard to be recycled.

So paper bags.

Paper bags, there's good and bad with them. Obviously, it is waste, and this is what we're trying to eliminate.

Even though it can be recycled, we're trying to dial back the recycling.

So a reusable bag is best.

So there's, I think a lot of people are familiar with Stickybeaks.

They have a recyclable lunch bag that a lot of schools already use.

I developed a paper kraft bag that is a biodegradable bag that can be used, as well.

So there's other options than using the paper bags, which is a reusable bag, and it is a quick fix that will save you thousands of dollars and save thousands of pieces of paper that are going to go into the recycler.

So reusable bags are the first thing, if you've got the budget to change. You come back, you clean them.

They, obviously, are delivered back to the canteen. And we can touch on that a little bit later.

I just wanted to give everyone a quick snapshot of quick changes that you can do, and whether you do one or two or five, or you do all of these over a certain amount of time or right away, that's completely up to you and how far you want to take the canteen.

So one more is your plastic food containers, which is obviously the huge thing. I'll go into a little bit more of that later.

Obviously, using reusable containers, it is a bit tricky.

In a canteen, you want to try to tick all the boxes that a canteen needs, which is can they be microwaved?

Can they be put in the oven or a pie warmer?

Can they be put in the freezer if you want to stock some food in the freezer?

And can they be put in the dishwasher?

So the answer to that is there are polypropylene containers, which is, again, the plastic, say like a Sistema, that I wouldn't recommend because it's plastic.

It can tick some of the those boxes, but heating food and keeping warm food in any plastic is not a good idea.

There are stainless steel containers, which are fantastic, but, again, they cannot go into the oven.

You do not want to burn a child on accident.

So there's a few things that are pros and cons with stainless steel.

Obviously, for salads, yogurt and fruit, certain items, are great.

Salads, sandwiches in stainless steel. That's a great option.

There's another product made out of rice husk that is fantastic.

It does tick all the boxes as far as what a canteen needs, and it can be composted naturally if something was to happen to the container.

And I can touch on more of that later, or if you have questions about the rice husk, let me know.

And it is a natural product that doesn't contain any BPA, any melamine, any BPS, any microplastics.

So we can talk about that later.

And then the last thing for a quick change is plastic labels, the stickers that we all put on the bags.

Now, if you use a reusable bag, for example, like this one that has a window, you can print it onto paper because, unfortunately, the sticker that a lot of people use, say, from FlexiSchools, it cannot be recycled, the top of it.

So printing it, guillotining it and putting it on paper and into the window is a fantastic way to save on the plastic label waste.

Another one is this other bag that I mentioned, there's a window back here.

So, again, plastic labels, I know that's not an easy fix for some people, but, again, down the line, maybe, when you get the reusable bags, it's something that you can switch to.

Okay, so a little bit more in depth about swapping this for that. And I think I've already said all this.

Cling film.

This just gives you a visual to look at.

Aluminum foil, which is another item that canteens tend to use a lot of, which is an unnecessary waste and difficult to be recycled.

And as some schools may not even have recycling that I'm speaking to tonight, you may not even have a commingling pickup at your school, which means everything that I've mentioned is going into a landfill.

You may not have a soft plastics, as well.

So, again, all of that stuff that can be recycled in its own separate bin, if you do not have a recycling program at your school, it's actually all going to landfill.

So I think we touched on most of that.

The only thing I wanted to mention was the purchasing of non-recyclable products.

That's the next step for canteens that want to be waste-free as possible is eliminating purchasing products that come in packaging, like confectioneries, like chips and muesli bars and other items like that.

It's actually looking for items that might be recyclable, if that's where you're at, but preferably purchasing items in bulk, and then putting them into reusables, like cups.

For example, maybe, like, a cup like this would have pretzels in it, or bulk crisps if you had crisps at your school, or fruit salad that was sold over the counter.

Maybe even a scoop of gelato.

I know Bilgola uses wonderful little silicone cups for all of their gelato, which come back to them.

Wheeler Heights uses egg cups made out of silicone that has their gelato come back to them.

Now, I want to be very clear, I know not everybody is going to have a canteen that can do everything right away.

So this is just an overview of what you can do, like I said, immediately or slowly down the line.

But for a lot of the food that you purchase, you need to look at, when you purchase it, can that be recycled, or can I find that in a bulk item and put it in a reusable where we're actually not giving waste over the counter?

So those are huge things.

So eliminating waste is, obviously, where we're tracking on this.

Okay, just another image to show you and little tips is Boomerang Bags. A lot of people have a Boomerang Bag chapter.

When you pick up your bread from the bakery, giving them the Boomerang Bag so you're eliminating bringing plastic bags back into the canteen.

These are just other things above and beyond servicing the food that you can do.

When you order Coles and Woolies, asking them for no plastic bags. When you're ordering your fruit and veg, asking your fruit provider do not put your one zucchini in a plastic bag.

Those are little things that the canteen manager and supervisors can actually do to eliminate waste within the canteen. So I just wanted to share that with you.

These are some more images about how to use reusables. So these are icy pole holders.

So these are actually ones that Wheeler Heights uses that they've had for about four years.

So, yes, they are plastic, this was long before we implemented that, but then again, this is a reusable plastic.

These are homemade icy poles with, obviously, a wooden stick that can be recycled in the compost or the cardboard and paper recycling.

That is an idea.

There's also stainless steel icy pole holders which can be bought on eBay, Amazon, anywhere, which is obviously a little bit, is more eco-friendly without

it being plastic.

However, if you already have these things, this is a great way to keep, to not bring in any icy pole waste 'cause a lot of icy poles in canteens come with packaging that can't be recycled, period, or it's a soft plastic and the stick, and if you don't have a soft plastic bin, it's not going anywhere but landfill.

So to purchase frozen treats for the children, the best is for them not to have any packaging.

Again, I think I mentioned gelato going into the silicone cups, as shown in the photo.

Maybe even in a cone, if schools wanted to do that. Obviously, there's no waste in that.

That's just an image of a small, I think, fruit salad that's served at a school in a reusable cup, so like a cupcake liner.

Okay, so as far as sushi, I know this is a massive concern for a lot of schools because sushi can be a really good revenue source, and, obviously, is healthy, but the problem is it does have a lot of plastic.

And it's not just the hand rolls, it's the bento boxes, it's the nigiri, which I know some schools sell.

So the first thing you can do is ask your sushi provider to provide them naked, which means without the plastic.

And you can either, as I mentioned, when you get them, you wrap them in the beeswax wrap, which have to be.

Just to touch on that, when you're done with them and they do come back to the canteen, they will need to be sanitized in lukewarm water and your sanitizer, and then you hang them to dry, and that's how you protect them.

They will need to be re-dipped every six to eight months, depending on the frequency of use and their look and feel.

The other option, if the beeswax wraps is out of your depth at the moment, is to use the paper bags that I mentioned, which a lot of people use for everything, but that's a great option we know that can be recycled.

So as far as the bento boxes and the small portions and, yeah, the baby bentos, this is a little bit more tricky. (coughs) Excuse me.

Ideally, I would love everyone to have reusables, which can be done and can be given to your sushi provider, and they can swap it in and out.

However, a lot of the sushi, a lot of the schools on the Northern Beaches, which is, obviously, what we're focused on in the sense that the provider sees a lot of these schools, and he has now, with the pressure that we've put on him to

stop using the single-use plastic containers, he's now creating cardboard boxes.

So he'll have small bento boxes, cardboard boxes that sushi will go into.

So if he's not your sushi provider, it is something you can ask from the sushi shop that you might get your sushi from.

Again, putting them, getting them in a container and putting them in a reusable is the dream.

However, it's obviously not going to be right for everybody at the moment, and maybe not for a while.

But, again, with cardboard being a known material that we can recycle, I would suggest putting on the pressure for that, to get that, or to get a container within the canteen to put your baby bentos, or not to serve them and to offer more options of the hand rolls.

So, again, it's how far you want to take it and where you want to stand on your canteen's, I guess, stance on sustainability.

So I guess it's an individual thing, but we'd like to see eliminating at least the plastic around the hand rolls and trying the paper bag.

And then, hopefully, down the line, doing the beeswax wraps to eliminate the waste of the paper.

I know there'll be more questions on that one, but that's a big one, so I just wanted to touch on that.

And that's what schools that are becoming waste-free or single-use plastic free, that is what they're doing.

Just some more images of how schools might eliminate the plastic cups.

So, obviously, there's two choices.

There's some water bottles there. The blue one was used by Wheeler Heights, which was a \$5 bottle from Target that was actually used to replace water in plastic, plastic water bottles, which was quite a while ago.

And at that time, it was an option for kids to borrow, not purchase, the water. But I would say now after a year 1/2, it's no longer allowed, not allowed, but we don't borrow it anymore. It's taken off the menu online.

Kids are responsible, as we all know, to bring their own water bottle.

There's bubblers. Some schools even have water filling stations.

So there's no reason why any school should be selling plastic water bottles.

Now, I know that there's money in that and that's a good revenue stream, but, again, this is where you need to decide where you want to be and where you want

to stand as far as being single-use plastic free.

That is the easiest thing to get rid of first is plastic water bottles.

You just don't need them. So, and maybe replacing it with another revenue source, whatever that might be, if you feel like that's going to lose the canteen money.

It's time to be creative and come up with some other ideas outside of plastic water bottles that the canteen can implement to offset that loss if they feel that that's going to be such a great loss.

But a lot of schools I know that actually still have 'em don't actually sell a lot of water bottles.

It's an afterthought where kids get to school and realize they've forgotten their water bottle, and they might sell a few.

I'm sure there are schools that sell tons of them, but that is the perfect opportunity to stop selling them and to implement either a water bottle borrowing system, which need to be returned to the canteen, or even if you'd like to charge people for that.

So if you'd like to charge a child \$2 to borrow that, which is what you might sell the water bottle for, then that's totally something your canteen can discuss.

And if they have no problem with that and think that that's a good thing to do, I think that's a fantastic way to offset the use of the single-use plastic bottles.

And remember that once you buy the water bottles, the stainless steel, preferably, that's an investment.

You'll have them for a long time.

You will keep them, I mean, fingers crossed, that they get returned, and we'll talk about how to help initiate the return of your reusables, but that is one thing that really should be the first thing that canteens need to get rid of is water bottles.

Now, there's obviously a keep cup in the middle. Again, that's perfect for smoothies, that's perfect for juices. It depends on how you distribute them.

Obviously, it all depends, every school's going to be different.

Some schools sell 50, some schools sell 10.

So it's whether or not you have the money.

I think those are from Kmart or Target, \$2 a keep cup.

Again, a very small investment to reduce waste, again, which you'll have over

and over and over again.

You can put labels on them that says please return to the canteen.

You can number them. You can allocate them to students so you know which student has taken which keep cup, is it number one through 50.

There's other things you can do if you'd like to keep more structure on where they're going and who has them, as far as getting them back to the canteen or to a bin that might be on the school property.

And then up at the top is a really nice leak-proof dual-haul, like, it's hot/cold that Bilgola Plateau purchased.

Again, a little bit more expensive, so this kind of gives you an overview, a look at what might be \$5, the one on the left, and then the Bilgola one, which was a little bit more than that, but they've got their logo on it, it's beautiful.

They get returned to the canteen. If they get taken home by mistake, parents know it belongs to the school 'cause it has their logo on it.

So that was a fantastic option for their juices and their hot chocolates, I think, at wintertime.

And I think they sell, they have iced teas.

So that's those images for you.

Again, the picture of the container, the bento box, is the rice husk made from rice hulls that I was talking about.

That's like a bento box. That would have anything in it for hot or cold.

The bag is a kraft compostable, washable, eco-friendly bag that is lined. That is an option for a reusable bag.

Those are something that I've created with, it's taken me quite a long time to find something that will suit canteens' needs and be as eco-friendly and sustainable as possible.

So those are just an option of that, and we can talk more about that, or you can email me about any of these things later and discuss them further.

But I know some people won't be looking at this stuff now, and some people will.

So I also want to mention a really great reusable option, which I have to say do use at Wheeler Heights occasionally, as I know every canteen, every school, excuse me, has a lost and found.

So we might have in that lost and found bin at the end of two months 30, 40 containers, all different sizes and shapes, and we'll try to get them back to the kids.

And if they don't get back, some of them are given to the canteen, that we feel we could use.

They're sanitized, obviously, and we might use them for fruit salads, for putting something, a cookie in or putting banana bread in, without having to actually purchase that item.

We've actually reused it. Yes, it's plastic, we haven't purchased it, but the idea behind the canteen sustainability programs that I implement are reusing either what you have, what you can find locally, before we try to get something in that we have to recycle.

So another great way for those containers to not go to landfill is to actually reuse them for food that you might be serving over the counter to the kids when you're implementing a reusable program.

Okay, so this slide is really just to talk about, 'cause what we've talked about now is what the canteen can do as far as changes and how we can implement some of those.

We can't do any of that if we don't have a bin system on the school property.

Now, I know a lot of schools now, especially in the Northern Beaches, have a similar bin systems to the ones that we set up at Wheeler Heights a couple years ago, and other schools, schools like Bilgola Plateau, where we implemented a waste-free program, they actually have no bins on their property, which is absolutely fantastic.

And I'll talk a bit more and show you some images of that.

But we need to discuss how you, as a school, can get a bin system going if you don't have one, what bins you're going to need and kind of show you what they look like.

Now, the images I'm going to show you, they don't have to look like this.

You can buy your bins from Bunnings, you can borrow them, they could still be at the school in a shed and you can put signage on them.

They do not have to be new. They can be anything to help facilitate the canteen's program, which has to go with the school's bin slash compost recycling program, whatever you currently have or what you're going to need to implement.

So for your bin systems, ideally, you need a yellow bin, which a lot of us have at home.

Now, I know that a lot of schools do not have a commingling bin system that is picked up.

It is possible.

It is very inexpensive.

I think fortnightly, you can get your commingling picked up at a school, just like we can at home.

It'll cost a school \$18 to fortnight.

Another company might be \$28 a fortnight.

But if you're going to be recycling,

which, again, is our last hope

in eliminating plastic, but I understand

we have to start somewhere, you will need a yellow bin.

Now, that will take care of your drinks, your cans, your plastics, if you still have them, like your Emma & Tom's, your Nudie juices, which are Tetra Paks, which can be recycled.

And bear in mind, all of them can be returned and earned, as well, which can be another bin if you wanted to implement a return and earn program, which is fantastic.

There's several companies, like Rockdale, that will come out and pick up your bins. They will give you bins and they will pick up your bins, and they will deposit 100% of that money into the canteen account or the P and C account.

So returning and earning is fantastic way to offset the recycling of those cans and bottles and stuff that will go into a yellow.

There's some icy poles that can go, or frozen snacks that can go into the commingling, so you'll need that.

So then you'll need a soft plastic bin. That's mostly for the children that will be bringing their soft plastics from home.

I encourage every canteen to eliminate all soft plastics.

Most of the schools that I work at that we, obviously, transform the plastic side, we also transform the menu side to help with the plastics and help eliminate waste is by, obviously, not purchasing products, as I mentioned earlier, that are wasteful.

So crisps, cookies, mueslis, small snacks, yogurts, yogurts with a twist.

But kids will bring those from home, so the school needs to help, as well, to have these bins available for the children to be learning how to recycle their stuff properly,

whether it's from the canteen or from home.

So you have a soft plastics bin.

Composting is ideal.

So I know some schools don't have a compost system.

Even if you can just get one barrel, it's fantastic for all the waste from the canteen and the waste from the children's lunches that they can put in there and the waste from the canteen food that's coming out, that they can actually put into the compost bin and learn what to put in there.

And I'll show you some examples of that in a minute.

So composting really goes hand in hand with the canteen program, with the commingling.

Return and earn is a bonus, if we can do that. That's fair.

And, obviously, if you have a worm farm, that's just, apologies, I can see compost is in there twice.

The worm farm is another great option in addition to a compost or instead of, if you do not have room for a compost.

I know St. Cecelia's doesn't have room, in Balgowlah, they don't have room for a compost.

They have these amazing worm farms that are cylinders that have been put on the schools grounds 'cause they're a very small school, and all the compost that can go in a worm farm goes in there from the canteen, so it's absolutely fantastic.

So there's always options for everybody.

You've just got to figure out which one's going to best fit your school and how everything's going to get to these areas, which I'll touch on in a moment.

And then the last one is a canteen reusable bin, which is if you're going to implement reusables, you will need to either designate the reusables to come back to the canteen window, or to go to bins on the school grounds that will be brought back to the canteen.

That will, obviously, need to be cleaned daily.

So there's two options for that, but in order to do anything reasonable, even if it's only the cutlery or if it's only going to be cups in the beginning, you have to decide how you're going to implement that.

And ideally, for me, bringing everything back to the canteen is fantastic.

Bins are great, but I'm of belief that the less of the bins on the property, the better, the less option for the kids to throw things into the wrong bins.

And, obviously, it is, obviously, baby steps in the beginning. Things are going

to go missing.

Things are going to be found in the oval. Things are going to be found in the bush.

It's education, education, education. And that's where it's important for the school principal to be onboard, the P and C to be onboard, the teachers to be onboard and other students to help facilitate how this is all going to work.

So here's some images of school bins.

Now, this is just one example.

As I mentioned, they can be anything. There's a soft plastic, your commingling, your organics, so compost.

Your landfill, which in this case is a see-through bin, which was done on purpose so the children and everybody can see exactly what was going in there and how much waste was being accumulated, and also how much stuff was being thrown in the landfill that didn't belong in the landfill, that actually could be put into the other bins provided.

And then there's a paper bin to the right, a simple small square bin that a lot of classrooms use, and that's for paper/cardboard.

Bear in mind, at this particular school, paper and cardboard can go into the organics, so that's kind of why the paper is so small.

It is kind of shared between both so as not to overload the organics bin with too much paper, but it can be shredded and put in there and broken down.

Printed paper cannot.

And you can see that the images on the bins kind of show you exactly, and it shows the children, what can and cannot go in there.

So this is a really good way for the kids to understand what they should be putting in there and what they shouldn't be putting in there.

So, obviously, you can see in this photo how small the landfill is. That is after two days of school.

There's hardly anything in that landfill and that's 'cause, one, the canteen gives very little waste over the counter and they have a reusable program, and also the students, with their waste from home, their chips, their yogurt, all those things I mentioned that we talk about, their cling film, their Ziploc, all the stuff they still bring from home now can go into the designated recycling bins where we know it will be taken and recycled.

I've just done a separate image of the reusable.

So this is a sample of a canteen reusable bin.

And, again, like the other bins, it kind of explains what goes in there. I think this has changed over time, but water bottles, meaning the stainless steel water bottles, keep cups, all containers, (mumbles) containers, that everything goes into at that school comes back.

Their titanium sporks. That was the reusable cutlery.

And then the bags that were reusable that are brought back and rinsed out, if dirty. Otherwise, then shaken out and cleaned.

So that is an example.

But, again, I want to be very clear, it doesn't have to be a big plastic expensive bin. It can be anything that might be laying around that's correctly labeled and identified.

Maybe painted so the colors there that reflects what the reusable color should go to, the green for the compost, the red for the landfill, all of those.

I know many schools that I see images from, it's really simple.

You don't have to be extravagant with the bins.

So I just wanted to show you, this is an image from Bilgola Plateau.

So they, again, are a waste-free school and so their canteen does not sell anything over the counter that is packaged in any waste, that comes in any packaging. They have no icy poles that have any packaging.

Even the sticks that you would have saw on the other slide, they do not even have that.

So this school has no bins over the counter, or around the school, sorry. And this is how they set up in the beginning.

So, again, really simple.

Containers for going, kids came up, put their containers in there.

Material, at the time was material, could be beeswax now.

Food, they scraped their scraps in there they would take to compost.

And then their bags, which they'd shake out

into the food waste and their bags that would be put in there.

Now, so once these were full, the canteen would just take them straight into their dishwasher and clean them as the lunch was going on.

So halfway through, maybe at 1/2 bell, start with the cleaning so they could get it done in order to leave on time.

And then here's another slide of what they moved to.

So this was yellow bins that they already had, I think, in a cupboard somewhere. And I wanted to show you the messy photo because that's actually how it looks.

And so kids, again, would come and put their bags in the slot, material in a slot, their containers in a slot, which were, for them, a reusable system of containers with their logo on them.

And then everything else in another bin. There's bags in the bottom. There's a plastic side bin that all the food was scraped into.

So this is just practice and practice with the kids.

Occasionally, we'd find some cutlery around the grounds.

Kids would pick that up, bring it back.

So, yeah, so this is another way of looking at it, of how it might come back to the canteen.

And it's whatever would suit the school that you're in if you wanted to go this far.

Again, this is, they obviously did it straight away, took a couple months.

The principal's very hands-on there, so the canteen managers were very eager and their P and C members were very supportive.

So, again, you need all these things to kind of facilitate it.

If I go back to, actually, this school, in order to make their program work, they have a sustainability leadership program.

So what that means is they have 50 to 60 children that were elected or put their hands up to be in leadership program, similar to SRC. And they're on a roster.

And it might be these four kids this day, those four kids for recess and for lunch.

And they're on a roster for the term, and their job is to help man the bins, to return the bins to the compost, to put the recycling into a larger recycling bin to be picked up, to take the soft plastics and take them to the teacher that spearheads the sustainability program.

They have parent volunteers that take the soft plastics Monday through Thursday. The canteen takes the soft plastics on Friday to your REDcycle center, so like Coles and Woolies, if that's something you wanted to implement.

The reusables would come back to the canteen, and the kids, the children in the program help unload the bin.

So take the rubbish out, take the paper label out, take the spork out, shake

them out.

If they're dirty, obviously, the canteen team will sort that out, but help empty the bins.

That is part of their program.

That is how this reusable program works for them. The landfill is taken by the maintenance, the groundskeeper, he does that. And the paper is recycled in this school by year five.

So there's a program that works for this school, which can be implemented in any school, but you obviously need to have help from the school to allow for, whether it's the classroom roster, they must assist with sustainability in the canteen, or it might be a sustainability leadership program where it's actual children that are part of this program.

So I know other schools will do year three will do term two. All year four will do term five. And they do exactly the same thing, they manage the bins during recess and lunch, and implement it that way and assist the canteen.

And assist the school, really, because this is a school's program, as well as the canteen's program.

The canteen cannot function without the school assisting them with the program.

So I'll just go onto that.

So as far as canteen operation, which I'm very familiar with, so time management is key.

So implementing this program, you need to know, obviously, how you're going to manage it.

Are you going to fit it in those six hours or five 1/2 or whatever you're allocated as a manager at your school?

How it's going to work, and that might determine your steps.

So that might determine your baby steps with your reusable program, with switching to more homemade food to eliminate bringing in waste, with cleaning of the dishes, which is obviously going to take some more time.

So time management is key.

You'll need the principal and your teachers' support of the canteen, and the P and C, of this process.

100% hands down, you cannot do it without the school onboard.

And student sustainability program, I just touched on that.

If you can initiate that, it is a fantastic support system for the canteen and

for the compost, which, obviously, doesn't belong to the canteen, for the soft plastics and the commingling, which belongs to everybody.

So the leadership program or the classroom sustainability program is for the entire school.

So it's not just a canteen program, as I mentioned.

So you need all these other programs to help facilitate everything.

So how is your canteen volunteer program?

Most schools that I work at over the last seven years, it's not that good.

So how are you going to get more volunteers?

Will you get more just because you're now more eco-friendly and sustainable?

Some parents really appreciate that, and you'll find you will get more volunteers because of that.

Or will you not?

Do you need to get a new online signup roster system?

Do you need more classrooms involved where you actually allocate classrooms to be part of term one and this week, and term two that week, and designate classrooms?

You will need help from your canteen subcommittee to help make sure you have help in the canteen, especially when the program is just beginning, especially when you're deciding what you want to do.

But that's really when the reusable program kicks off. As far as eliminating straws and cutlery and plastic bottles, that's a no-brainer.

That's not going to take you any more time.

Eliminating soy sauce fishes, eliminating squeeze mes, that's not going to take you more time.

So it's the big stuff that's going to take you more time, and it's when you're eliminating the food and packaging, that's when you're going to need help.

But in the beginning, the implementation of the single-use plastic, your volunteers are not going to be needed for that.

And then the parent green team. A lot of schools have green teams, and it's, obviously, encouraging them to help you more when you need to, help cleaning bags, help doing just more time in the canteen.

So another question I get, that I was asked, is how do we purchase the products?

And I guess the first thing I ask is do you need that item?

Crisps are a big question.

Do you really need to sell crisps at school?

Yes, I realize they're a money maker.

I guess you need to decide where you're going to draw the line about what you're going to sell, and A, is it nutritious?

And does it come in packaging? Can I buy that in bulk? Can we put crisps in here, if it's a necessity? Or can I swap it out for something that might be a little bit healthier? Or can I take it away all together and, yeah, maybe make something from scratch that is, obviously, going to be healthier?

'Cause most things are, if you're looking at your nutrition, and it's going to be more cost-effective because it's homemade.

And anytime you make something from scratch, it's going to be more cost-effective than buying anything in bulk.

Okay. So, then, again, obviously, I mentioned it, limit your products in packaging. Just stop buying them.

Like, everyone asks me, "How do you do it?" You just stop buying them.

Do you need nine frozen treats at a school canteen?

Do you?

I mean, again, this goes back to nutrition and what's really needed.

And maybe just dialing it back a bit and seeing what exactly you need.

Instead of buying, maybe, the icy pole with the wrapper and the stick, making the homemade icy poles with the cardboard stick in a reusable container.

You're going to make a lot more money and it's more cost-effective and it's better for the environment, and you can, obviously, make it more nutritious.

You can add fruit, you can take away a lot of the juice and add water.

There's all those tricks you can do that are actually going to tick a lot of boxes.

A lot of questions I get about is how are we going to wash all this reusable stuff if we go down that route?

So I think there was a little bit of misunderstanding and communication from, maybe, the Food Standards Board Council about commercial dishwashers.

So it was my understanding for a while that it was a necessity to have reusable

items in the canteen, you had to have a commercial dishwasher.

So, exciting news is you don't.

So the bonuses with the commercial dishwasher is you know they're being sanitized at that high degree of heat with the sanitizer in there.

It is also a key with time management. If you've got 700 kids at a school and you're doing reusables and you're going to wash them in 90 seconds to a minute or two minutes, that is key to a reusable program so a canteen manager isn't there 'til five o'clock at night washing dishes, okay?

So that is the massive bonus with the commercial dishwasher.

However, if that is not in your budget, because they are anywhere from 3,000 to \$5,000, which is a massive expense, you can have a double-bowl sink.

So a lot of canteens have two sinks. So you'll have one for washing, one for sanitizing. It can be used for reusables, which is fantastic news.

I just want to make it very clear this is Northern Beaches Council, but that is a food and health and safety standard for all of Australia, that you can have a double-bowl sink, but you must be able to show council when they come in that you know how to use it properly.

So that's how much water, the heat, the sanitizer, the type of sanitizer, the dish washing liquid and how you wash your containers.

So, again, having a commercial dishwasher takes all that stress out of it, but if you can't afford it, a double-bowl sink is doable and fine, but you also must have a hand sink.

So you cannot be washing your hands in the same sink that you're sanitizing in.

So I know a lot of canteens do have a smaller hand sink, but if you don't, that's what you're going to need to have.

I just put under there, for the commercial dishwasher, which, as far as me being a canteen manager, it's fantastic to have, when you're washing, you need that time, you need to do it quickly, you don't want to be there all day, so look for a used one.

Look at GraysOnline. Look for secondhand. Maybe a parent, a builder at school.

I know another school just got one off a parent that's a builder, and that's why I wrote that, that found one on the property.

Ask around, look for school funding. Most canteens are P and C funded.

That does sound like a good school cost to me, so maybe negotiate with the school principal that if that's going to be implemented into the program, in order for it to work, you're going to need some help to purchase a commercial dishwasher.

Now, if you can't at this time, start with a double-bowl sink, and then do some funding and see how you go.

So, and also don't forget to recycle within the canteen.

You need to have compost in the canteen. You need to be doing your yellow commingling within the canteen because, clearly, there's products that you bring in, that, your cheeses, your milks, your juices, other things that you might have in bulk that you're going to need to recycle yourself.

So you are going to have to make sure that, in the canteen, you do your own recycling.

So you've got your chicken food if you have chickens, you've got your compost if you have compost, your yellow bin, and that you're recycling all your paper and cardboard.

So just make sure you've got that set up within the canteen, as well as around the school.

So I know this is a lot of information, so we're getting near the end.

So I just wanted to give you some ideas 'cause I know the biggest question is how can we afford this?

Now, again, it comes back to how much do you want to do, baby steps, set yourself your goals, what's going to cost you, where your budget is.

Remember, this is an investment. This will eliminate reoccurring cost, the takeaway containers you order every month, the cutlery you order every month or every two weeks or however you do your purchasing.

With the reusable program, it is an investment. All the paper bags that you're ordering all the time, that you're sending out with the kids and that are maybe getting recycled, maybe not, having reusable bags.

All the reusables are an investment, so you've got to remember that when you're trying to find, get funding from the P and C or get funding from the school.

This is an investment in the school, in the planet, so it's not a reoccurring cost that you're currently getting.

So help from your school. Obviously, just mentioned that. Help from your P and F or your P and C.

Fundraising opportunities. A lot of canteens don't do fundraising. I work on a lot of them that do.

Some sell the Entertainment Book to help offset their sustainability program, some do Tea Towels, some do cookbooks.

Bilgola Plateau did a fantastic cookbook a while ago.

Maybe it's recipes that you get from school parents, but all the money, you put it together with your subcommittee and all that money comes back to help purchase that commercial dishwasher.

Maybe you have a Dads Day. Wheeler Heights has a fantastic Dads Day where, on one day, they'll make enough money to purchase reusable bags that they purchased a year ago, kind of offset that cost.

Grandparents Day. Let's get the grandparents involved. There's a lot of grand. I know we're always looking for help in the canteen. This is a perfect way.

Get them in there to bake, to try to start making some homemade items that you're now going to implement because you're not going to buy the muesli bars that come in packaging, which are full of sugar and artificial colors and flavors, or lollies or whatever you might have.

But have them come in and support the school and get involved.

There's several other out-of-the-box ideas that you can think of, but this is what canteens, I think, are becoming, and P and Cs are realizing it.

Your subcommittees are going to be, you're going to need them more than ever to help with the fundraising.

There's also, I know some schools have been looking at their before and after school program.

So some schools own them, their own (mumbles), some do not, but asking them for a donation.

I know one school just got a nice donation. They wanted to help with the sustainability program.

A lot of their after school care programs have a lot of money, and they want to donate it to something that's important to 'em, and why not the program that's within the school that they're in?

So that's just an idea. These are just ideas.

They might fit your school, and they may not.

Grants, there's loads of grants out there. You just have to look.

There's a nude food grant that's going all the time.

There's a brand new New South Wales government grant, which is a \$15,000 sustainability grant that's just been launched.

There's all little tiny ones.

There's a fantastic Facebook page called Sustainability Schools New South Wales that she always has grants available, information available. It might be 2,000,

it might be 15,000.

If you need help with that, maybe put it out there in the school newsletter. Get a parent that's familiar with grants. There's information on the Northern Beaches Council website.

There's classes you can take on how to write grants.

So there's other things. I know it seems like a lot, but these are ways that you can help offset the costs that you might incur to implement this program.

So we went through this already. So that's just the basics of, the little things that you might need to get started, so I won't really go into that.

I just wanted to touch on your current menu 'cause we did touch on that.

It kind of goes hand in hand with a sustainability program is healthy food because eliminating waste, you eliminate buying packaged and processed food.

So I just wanted to remind everyone the assessment's coming soon, in December.

Consider what you're buying. Consider what they're coming in. Consider what the ingredients is. And don't forget, that's due in December.

And try not to, when you look, if you can't be completely waste-free, have a look at what you're purchasing and please make sure it's recyclable.

A lot of products, you look at it and you think it might be, it's not.

Call the supplier, and if they do not know, call the manufacturer of the product. Very easy to do to find out if what you're selling is recyclable.

Oh, it's just a sample menu if anyone wants to see it. I just wanted to show you some food that is actually made and sold in a completely reusable canteen, that it is easy to do, that things are recyclable that are on this menu, or they're returned and earned.

All the food that's served in the daily specials are in reusable containers.

All the recess and over the counter are all homemade and served in either cups or silicone or paper bags.

Everything's reusable.

All the frozen items are made on the school property or in reusables.

So that's just a snapshot. If anyone wants to see that at a greater length, I'm happy to send it to you privately.

So this is just a snapshot about what Food Nasties and Plastic Nasties, what I do when I come into a school, into a canteen and assist, and how to make the program, implement the program from either a couple items to a full-scale waste-free overhaul.

So it's as big or it's as little as you want, but I'll leave that there for you to have a look at, but I know we're nearly at 7:30 and I'm pretty sure there's lots of questions, so I might just go over to the Q and A now and get started.

Okay. All right, so, water bottles are. (whispering)

Okay, there's a question from Min, and she's asking about water bottles, are refillable interpreted.

I'm not quite sure 100% what she means, but when I'm talking about the stainless steel water bottles, we want to eliminate single-use plastic, replace them with that.

If your school does not feel comfortable with replacing, with losing the cost of the plastic bottles, then you can charge a fee for them online, the same fee, and they can refill them at the bubbler.

Down the line, which I did mention, now they're just borrowed at some schools, but actually, they're not even borrowed anymore because kids bring their own.

Yeah, so the water bottles, we want to get rid of single-use plastic and we want to initiate with stainless steel water bottles.

If you feel that your canteen needs to keep offering water as a revenue source or just to your kids, but I think the children nowadays should know to bring their own water bottle.

Okay, so I've got a question from Kathy. "What does that school use to collect the soft plastics in?"

Okay, so that school uses a, I'm not sure of the brand, to be honest. I can probably find out for you. It is a compostable bag.

And they buy that online. I can email you later.

And then, so they put that in that. And then when they take it to Woolies and Coles, they empty it into that. A lot of times, they keep the bag. A lot of times, sometimes, depends on the parent, the volunteer that's doing it, they'll put the compostable bag in there.

Now, again, let's be clear about compostable stuff. It's only going to be composted if you've got the correct composter. And, as well as biodegradable.

We got to be careful when we're biodegrading microplastics, it's still going to break down into plastic tiny bits.

So neither are the answer.

I would suggest with soft plastics is when you take it to Coles or Woolies, it's just literally, which is what we do on Friday at the canteen, is emptying the plastic bag, the contents, into the REDcycle bin which is at grocery stores. So we're actually taking it out and putting it in.

So I know you can. I will have a look, Kathy, if there's a better answer, but my answer would be to go ahead and just dump the soft plastics into your REDcycle center bins.

There's already a plastic liner in there, so it's not a necessity to actually have the plastic in there, if that makes sense. And then just keep reusing the plastic bag.

So hope that answered your question.

This is from Alexandra. "How would you clean reusable bags? I don't suppose they could go into commercial."

Okay, so, great question.

It depends on the bag that you have. So Stickybeaks, which is a popular one, it can go into a dishwasher. It does wear and tear them a lot quicker than they would like 'cause I know from experience.

So a lot of times, at Wheeler Heights, I can only speak, and for Bilgola, they can be rinsed out, obviously, with soapy water.

And we put up a air dry system, which was just made with old rods that they had in the maintenance shed, where we put them over to air dry. We line dry them with a clothesline, clothespins, stainless steel. They are dried that way.

There is a few that I have that are made with, that have a lining, and Stickybeaks has a lining. It's mostly just wiped out.

So what happens is the logo comes off on their bag and it kind of goes everywhere, and it actually makes their bags look dirty,

but they're not dirty. So I, unfortunately, would say hand washing is the way to go.

Now, I have put them in the washing machine on a gentle cycle. And, again, the logo does tend to go, but it does clean them very well and it doesn't destroy the bags.

So I don't know about, a commercial dishwasher would probably do the same, but, again, it's just the lifespan of the bag that you're taking, but it can be done, but you will see them deteriorate faster than they probably should.

So I hope that answered your question.

We'll try to find the perfect bag down the line which can go into a commercial dishwasher or a washing machine that comes out perfect, I'm sure.

Okay, Jan. "How do you secure a paper label from Flexischools to a paper bag?"

Okay, so, I did have a phone call with Kimbriki, and, again, Northern Beaches Council tip and some other cardboard recycling manufacturers, they did not seem

to have a problem with the food label being on the paper bag. So, again, you do get different conversations from people, but they use it as an example.

If you're using a cardboard box and you're mailing that overseas and that had a label on it, or you're mailing it anywhere and it has a label on it, that can be recycled.

So the plastic tag on a Flexischools label onto the paper bag can be recycled, from what I've been told.

Again, it depends on who's taking your cardboard and recycling 'cause everyone's got different plants that it goes to, and I don't know what school you're from, so you have to find out 100% if it can.

Now, if it can't, the best thing to do is to go reusable because then you can print the Flexischool labels onto an A4 sheet, you can guillotine them, cut them and they go right into the slot into the reusable bags that I talked about.

So, again, and it eliminates the paper bag. So for me, again, it's kind of a no-brainer. If you can get the reusable bags, it eliminates two things: the waste of the bag and the waste of the sticker.

So, and the back of the sticker can't be recycled, so there's a lot of reasons to stop using the sticker. I know it's convenient, but it's really not that much different when you start guillotining and shoving it in.

For PSSA, for the kids that leave the property, they do not leave with a reusable bag. They leave, at some schools, with a paper bag, obviously, because the reusables won't come back.

A sticky tape is used. And, again, it's a very small amount with the paper label to secure it, and that shouldn't affect the recycling of the bag.

So I hope that answered your question, Jan.

Okay, let's see. This is from anonymous. "Okay, we already have implemented keep cups, but people don't actually use them."

Okay, so this is a good one. Coffee cups, which we all know is a terrible pollutant and cannot be recycled. And the only thing I can say is to stop using coffee cups.

I'm not sure if you're serving coffee in them, because I think only some high schools do that, is you're just going to have to get a reusable cup (laughs) because coffee cups, it's just straight to landfill and it's just as bad as single-use plastic.

So, again, it's using a cup, here's a rice husk one, that has the silicone, which is biodegradable, which is eco-friendly. I can tell you how to get this if you want to speak to me.

If you don't need to have a lid on it and you want to put stuff in it, that can be a melamine cup that we see at every cafe.

Now, melamine's not my favorite, but it's fantastic and it can be reused and reused and reused and reused, and you can reuse them to put popcorn in them, you can put pretzels, you can put fruit salads you can put juice. It all depends on what exactly you want to put in them.

So if you want to email me later at my email and tell me exactly what you want to use it for, I might be able to give you a more specific solution, but a reusable cup is going to be your option. And, again, even if that is a reusable cup that you get, the colored ones from IKEA.

I don't encourage buying polypropylene or plastic, but I understand you've got to start somewhere, and you can use them for a hundred different reasons. Okay, hope that helps.

Let's see. Stephanie. "Do you have any advice on how to get the school community onboard?"

No, and I say that because it isn't as easy as you think, which is, I'm sure, why you're asking. The majority think it's great, love what you're doing, but it's never, you're never going to get the entire school community onboard about anything that happens in a school,

whether that's what events you're doing for fundraising, what sports program you're running, how many air conditioners you need and definitely about a sustainability program at a school canteen and the school. But I definitely think it's happening right now, they can't avoid it. It is the state of the planet.

All you can do is keep showing them, I guess, progress, and what that might be is landfill, decreasing the landfill from X amount to X amount, showing them the rewards of what the canteen's doing, the children are doing, the school's doing, the goals that you're picking. 'Cause I'll tell you what, the students really embrace this program.

They love to recycle. They will go home and tell their parents how to recycle. They are proud of what their school's doing. With the teachers onboard and implementing, maybe, education behind the program and making it fun for the kids.

Yeah, I guess it's really just showing, explaining why you're doing it.

Now, why are we doing this? Because right now, our canteen is selling 500 water bottles a month. What does that equate to?

Showing them figures and sizes and the waste, doing waste audits, doing trash audits at your school and showing that visually to the school community in the newsletter, on your websites, so they can see how much waste at your beautiful school you're generating.

And then how many, how you've decreased those numbers and how proud the kids are.

And I think with those, bit by bit, you'll get more and more school community behind you, but it is hard, and it's going to be hard in the beginning, but you've got to latch on to the people that support you and use them and help facilitate them on positive reinforcement and ideas.

So I hope that helps, Steph.

"Apparently the new healthy canteen guidelines specify low-fat, not regular milk."

Okay. So, Annalise, I am not a proponent that much of the New South Wales guidelines, so I guess I'm not going to tell you what you should and shouldn't do in the canteen, but there's ways around everything.

And I think if common sense is telling you that that's probably not the most nutritious item, I think that it becomes an occasional food, and there's ways to not use that.

I've been in about eight schools in the last couple weeks, and none of them sell low-fat milk and none of them use margarine.

So I'll just leave that with you to kind of, yeah. You facilitate what you think is nutritious.

And if that means that you need to say you have those things, or not have those things and not have anything to replace them, that's your call.

"Can cutlery be washed in the dishwasher and still meet?"

Yes, most definitely, in a commercial dishwasher and in your double-bowl sink.

Everything that's reusable can be washed.

I know people heard that rumor for a while about the titanium and that it couldn't be washed in a domestic dishwasher.

I have to be very clear, domestic dishwashers are not allowed to wash utensils or containers in a school canteen. It needs to be done in the double-bowl sink the correct way, which you can get all that information on the Food and Healthy Standard website on how to sanitize properly.

And I would suggest to have it on your wall so everyone knows how to do it, even the volunteers when they come in, and everyone knows how much to put in each thing and how you should be doing it properly. But absolutely in a commercial dishwasher, they're completely fine to wash.

Kate, "Are BioPak a good company?"

BioPak is a fantastic company. We're not going to knock anyone that's trying to eliminate plastic. In its core, a single use.

But I have to be very clear, which I did mention earlier, BioPak does make a bioplastic, and bioplastics are not the best choice for recycling and for

breaking down and ending up in the ocean and the beaches.

So it is definitely not a choice I would suggest. It is also very expensive. They also have requirements for their compostability.

So a lot of their items they sell cannot be composted in a school composter or domestic.

It means a commercial composter. And you're going to have to get that to the correct facility to break it down.

So BioPak does offer straws, and, obviously, things without the microplastics.

Please make sure if you can actually correctly compost it if you've got something or if it's going to biodegrade the way they say it will, 90 days in a domestic composter, in a school compost garden.

I would suggest you try it. But my advice would be to avoid the microplastics at all costs.

The cornstarches, all those that are going to break down, the cutlery that are going to break down into little bits. So, unfortunately, reusable is the best way to go, or cardboard and paper only because we know it can be recycled in its truest form.

So I hope that helped, Kate.

Susie. "What is the best way to clean a silicone baking mat? So I use them and found that I (mumbles)."

Yeah, unfortunately, Susie, I do find they do become greasy. Baking soda, I found, was really good in cleaning. Like, I think an old cleaning tip from way back.

That did help, sanitizing them properly in the correct sanitizer and the baking soda, but I think that's just a natural compound of the silicone. It does have that film, but it's not dirty if you're cleaning it properly.

So I do the baking soda, hot water, scrub them, and we hang dry them instead of stacking them on top of each other. We find it does tend to get a little bit greasy, as well.

But they're a fantastic alternate to baking paper that cannot be recycled. Baking paper isn't good.

There is a compostable, biodegradable paper from, I believe it's Alpha Foods, that is a lot better than actual baking paper, so you might want to look into that.

And if you need more information on that, just give me a call, but I would suggest trying the silicone and maybe trying different mats.

I know there's some called Agreea that are a little bit thinly, but they don't

get as greasy. They do wind up, like, in a little ball, but they don't get as greasy as some of the thick silicone mats that people can buy. So it might just be trying to find the right product. But try one more time 'cause, yeah, baking paper is a pretty wasteful item.

But thank you so much for asking, Susie.

All right, Sophie. "Can you tell me more about the rice husks? Also, existing products are made?"

Okay, so just briefly because I think this is a conversation I can have if you'd like to email me,

I have been developing these for about a year, trying to come up with a product that can tick boxes for canteen managers.

So the rice husk looks like, it actually looks like plastic. It's not, it's made from the hull of rice. And if you want to Google rice husk and what it's made from, do it so you can understand a little bit more about it.

This is an example of the bento box. So you can put hot/cold in there. It goes to 120 degrees. It can be put in the freezer. It can be put in the dishwasher. It can be put in the pie warmer. Can be put in your oven if you keep it at about 80 degrees.

So what I wanted to do was have something what went, that ticked all of our boxes as canteen managers, where you can have things hot, cold, clean them quickly.

They go in the commercial dishwasher. And this is the product that I found that is the best. If it breaks, cracks for some reason, you can bury it.

It will biodegrade naturally in six to nine months. It doesn't leak any toxins.

But this is a private product that I have had made, and it does have everything with it, like the cutlery, the cups, small boxes, small round containers, so for maybe yogurts, fruit salads, whatever else you might sell.

It all just depends. Every canteen's going to be different and have different needs.

So I have found this to be the best product being eco-friendly and ticking all the boxes that we need.

So, yeah, so maybe just email me and I can give you more information about that and how schools, and the packs. There's kits for schools.

Obviously, you don't have to buy everything, or maybe you want to start with just the cutlery. There's a couple different options. And that's what they look like.

So happy to share any of that information and more information about the rice husks privately just because there's so many questions right now.

Hope that's okay. Thank you, Sophie.

Let's see, Jay Fry. "I think we talk about recycling as much as we can, but most of the items, like soft plastics and paper, get covered in food. I thought items had to be clean to be recycled."

Yeah, well, they do, but inside a canteen, if you're doing your soft, if you're doing your commingling, obviously, anything that we have, jars of mayonnaise, cans of, say, butter chicken sauce, posada, all of those can be cleaned out on our end and recycled properly.

We can only do so much for the kids.

Soft plastics are generally not too messy. I deal with them all the time. It's usually mueslis and crisps and everything.

But I think we need to be clear that you have to be recycling. So even though it's not our first choice, we can't teach kids not to recycle, so if something's got something on it on the school grounds, say, a yogurt, it has to be recycled anyway.

So I guess we'll leave that with the recycling plants. It may not get recycled. It's when you dump lots of food in the commingling.

Say, food gets dumped, it goes across everything and it gets contaminated, ya have an issue. But it's a really tricky one because ya can't not recycle.

We have to recycle, and ya have to do the best ya can, and we have to teach the kids to do the best they can.

I guess this is kind of what touches on why I love no bins in school, because if kids are bringing yogurt tubs and squeeze me yogurts, whatever, anything else that might be messy, they should be taking that home to their (laughs) house and being responsible for their own waste, as opposed to dumping it in the school recycling and possibly contaminating what we're trying to do, which is recycle correctly.

So it's a tough one, but I think at the end of the day, yes, if it's covered with food, it's not going to get recycled and it's going to contaminate it, but you've got to try and you've got to teach them, the soft plastics, you've got to teach them to recycle it anyway, and let the REDcycle centers and the recycling plants handle that situation.

As far as paper, most paper can be recycled, even if it's soiled a little. Now, if it's saturated with food, no, it's not going to be recycled.

And, again, these are both great questions because it's why we should be reusing everything, because once we soil them, it's very unlikely, they will not be recycled.

So if we are reusing everything and selling items in reusable containers that can be easily cleaned, and if we're not offering packaged food items that can be

messy, then there's no problem.

So, again, it goes back to that's really where we want to focus, is on reusing and eliminating as much use of paper as possible, and eliminating as much use of soft plastics coming from the canteen.

I know you can't change what's coming from home, and that's why I'd like kids to take their soft plastics home with them in their lunchbox and not contaminate the school's stuff with it or not to have them at all because if a canteen's not selling any soft plastics, I'm not sure why the canteen or the school should be responsible for taking all of the children's rubbish to the REDcycle center.

So, again, every school's different, every opinion's different, but I feel that if they're going to bring rubbish to school, they should take rubbish home and recycle it into their own recycling systems.

So I hope that answered your question. Reusing is just always better.

Okay, "Do you know of schools that have their own washing stations where students can bring their own waste-free options?"

I did a seminar. I do believe there is a small Catholic school, and I can't, to be honest, remember the name, and they bring their own containers,

but that's the only one I've ever heard of.

So, again, I think that depends.

I don't believe a big school could do that. Maybe a school of 250. I think this school's only opened two days a week. Might have 200.

Maybe only 40 kids order from the canteen. It is doable, where they have their container there.

Again, that's just up to the canteen, I guess, if they want to facilitate that, if they can.

Obviously, everything has to come back and be sanitized properly, but it's definitely a reusing option that is fantastic.

If it suits your school, I guess, if they're bringing you a bunch of plastic containers, are you putting hot food in it? Is it leaching toxins? Can it go into the pie warmer? Probably not.

It depends on, yeah, what type of container it is and how you're going to keep that food warm. Like a spaghetti, I don't really know how that's going to work.

Even if it's a stainless steel, I guess you, as a canteen manager, are going to have to go straight from oven to container, and hope that it's not going to affect the children as far as temperature and stuff.

So it is a bit of a tricky one. I would think that it won't work at most schools.

Hope that helped, thanks.

"Is it more difficult to implement these changes if your canteen?"

Okay, so this is anonymous. They want to know about a third-party tender.

I would say most definitely it's going to be tricky because if you've got a canteen that is a tender, so it's a lease, and they're already there, it's going to be very tricky to implement it halfway through their lease.

So, I guess in this case, you may have to wait 'til the tender runs out.

And I'm in the process of working with a high school that is doing the same thing.

And what is happening is in their tender agreement, they have put in it what they, the lessee, will have to do to meet these sustainability requirements.

So whether that is to reuse reusables, whether that is to use only recyclable materials or cardboard, bamboo, or to implement a company, like Pack360, which is a company that you buy all the containers from them.

They supply your bins. They pick up all the compostable material. They take it all to their plant. They compost it. It all gets composted ethically, responsibly, without any microplastics.

And I only mention them because it's one that I'm familiar with.

And another company called Waste Ninja. And they're both, both companies are part of the Swap for Good program. That the Waste Ninja will pick up waste for them, as well, like your compost and stuff.

So it is possible, but it will incur a cost to them, or it's how you offset the cost.

Is the school going to pay for them to use the sustainable, a better company and these containers? Or is the cost go to them?

It's going to be very tricky in the interim while they're there, but I think if you implement it when the tender's up, you just, hopefully, have to find the right person that will take the tender. So I hope that helps.

Vonda. "What about juice, flavored milk? How canteen replace them?"

Okay, so, yeah, so, again, it depends, I think it's Vonda, what you want to do about your juice and your milk.

So if you don't want to be a waste-free canteen, you just want to get rid of plastic, you say you have juice like Nudie juice, unfortunately, they have a straw, so a lot of containers have stopped using them.

We've been putting pressure and pressure on them to remove the straw altogether

and let canteens just give the students a paper straw, or to not use a straw.

I'm having the same conversation with Emma & Tom's, as well, which is the best flavored milk, I think, on the market 'cause it's naturally flavored.

A lot of schools that I work at, don't have flavored milk that's artificially flavored.

So Emma & Tom's are very eager to probably eliminate the straw, and leave it up to the canteen to have a straw available, being a paper straw or reusable straw, for the children to take or to not take.

I think you'll find some kids just drink it right out of it, but otherwise, you can put the paper straw in the bag with the drink.

Or if you don't want to have any waste, it's using the leak-proof drinks, so the stainless steel drink cups or any type of, I say leak-proof because, obviously, you're going to have to fill them and put them in a basket or on a counter, and tipping over, you've got to be very careful.

So the leak-proof is important. So you're either going to use a leak-proof reusable cup, which is ideal, or you're going to use recyclable containers.

Nudie, I love their juice, but I'm not a proponent of their straws, so I'm hoping they're going to work that out soon, but they are return and earn and they are recyclable, so they do have a positive, and same with Emma & Tom's.

But it's very hard to find juice, any type of pop or any time of juice that doesn't come with a plastic straw. So that is why schools tend to go with the no-leak cup, because you just can't find it without the straw at the moment.

So I encourage anyone that's interested, email Nudie, email Emma & Tom's, ask them to develop it.

They both know that canteen managers are canceling them left, right and center that are trying to eliminate that plastic straw because if you don't have plastic straws in a canteen, but then you've got a Nudie juice, you're kind of sending the wrong message.

You're contradicting yourself with the kids, and they're pretty well aware of it, and they will come up and say, "How come I got a straw when you're telling us not to use a straw?"

So they've really got to try to figure out how you're going to eliminate that juice.

And then, I guess, the last thing is, is that does your school really need the juice? I know they're money makers for the canteen.

However, some schools that we've implemented these programs at, they don't even sell juice anymore.

Their decision is do kids really need juice at school?

They might sell the Parmalat milk with the paper straw, and let them have water.

So, again, this is what happens when you're thinking about these ideas.

You have to ask yourself, is it nutritionally viable? Do they really need it?

And if your answer is yes, how can you replace it with the most sustainable option possible? So I hope that helps.

Sophie. "What are the benefits of using silicone in reusable containers?"

I'm not sure, silicone in reusable containers. I'm not quite sure what that means exactly, Sophie, but I wouldn't necessarily say there's benefits, it's just better than using plastics because there are no toxins in it and it breaks down naturally and doesn't emit toxins when you're done with the silicone.

It is a better choice than plastic.

So I wouldn't necessarily, there's no benefits except for you're not using plastic, which is toxic and doesn't break down.

So that's why a lot of the options.

Oh, I think you mean for, like, the cupcake liners. I think that's why a lot of schools have opted for that.

One, it can be very inexpensive. Some of them are dual purpose.

So when schools use those cupcake liners, they put ice cream in it, they put frozen juice in it, they put fruit cups in it, popcorn in them.

They're cheap and they're just more eco-friendly. And, obviously, they come back.

So that is, I guess, the benefit to it, instead of using plastic.

Jan, "Any suggestions for sustainable ice blocks? A thousands students, and we sell about 500 a day."

Okay, (laughs) so, in a perfect world, you would make homemade icy poles in the trays for those students with the sticks.

Gelato is another great one. Again, that would be 500 scoops a day.

You can scoop them, pre-scoop them, freeze them, have them ready when you have volunteers in there.

That's a great option. I'm just trying to think. The other thing is if you can't get away from that, making sure what you have is recyclable.

So if you've got an icy pole, like a lemonade icy pole that has the cover on it with the stick, that can be recycled in the soft plastics, and the stick can be

in compost or in can be in paper/cardboard.

Smoozes, which I'm on the fence about because they can be recycled in the yellow recycling, but they do, when you cut them, have that little end that we put in the yellow bin anyway.

That's a tricky one, but it can be recycled.

I know juicees, which come, like, clippo style, and clippos cannot be recycled. So a lot of ice creams that have that wax lining cannot be recycled.

So, obviously, anything homemade is the way to go.

However, if you want to make sure that, then if you can't get rid of things, just check with the manufacturer if they can be recycled.

That's really all I can suggest.

The other thing is scooping the ice cream onto cones, but, obviously, you're going to need to have volunteers for that.

So everything has to kind of fit your school's needs. I hope that helped.

It is a tricky one with icy poles.

That's a lot of students, a thousand and 100, so I think my best suggestion is if you can't do the homemade ice blocks, you can do them small, you can do them big, you can invest in the stainless steel, make icy pole makers, but you're obviously going to have to have a freezer to put them in.

Is to make sure what you're serving can be recycled.

So hope that helped. It is a bit of a tricky one. Okay, good question.

"How many extra hours would the canteen manager need per day to implement these changes?"

So I have to be honest and say it's going to be different for everybody because it depends on what you're implementing, how many hours you're already given.

Most canteen managers, I think, have five to six hours.

So how fast you work, how many volunteers you get, what exactly you're doing. Do you have a commercial dishwasher? So it's going to vary.

I'm definitely going to say you're going to need your full six hours.

Do you have a sustainability team that's helping you bring in stuff? Are you using bins? Are they bringing them to the counter?

So if this is something you're seriously thinking about, it's probably an email question to me.

I need to know how many students you have, I need to know what you're thinking of doing, how many lunches you do a day, how many specials you have.

So there's a lot of variable questions for how many hours is this going to take.

Something that might take me five hours, it might take someone that I work with six 1/2.

Maybe I have volunteers that day, maybe I don't, but 100%, it will take you six hours, and probably a little bit more until you get everything dialed down, but there's lots of variables that go into that for me to be able to help answer that specifically for you.

Yeah, so if you're just implementing, getting rid of single-use plastic, like the basic stuff, it's not going to make a difference.

But once you start using reusables, it's going to make a difference, but that's why you need the support from everybody else, and probably extra help until that happens from your P and C convener, from your subcommittee, from volunteers, letting them know that you're implementing this program.

Yeah, so email me separately if you're serious about it, and that goes for everybody 'cause it's on a case to case basis in order for me to answer that 100%. Kathy.

"Thank you, that did answer." (laughs)

"I'm just concerned about dropping off at the supermarket."

Yeah, "Recycle bin is full." True, yep, good point, Kathy. (laughs) I don't know what to say.

If it is full, then you might have to come back. But email me and give me a chance to kind of research it a bit better, but I do feel like I'm going to come up with that answer.

But if you want to go with the compostable bag, the more eco-friendly bag, I'll get you the link for that.

And I know that's been asked before on Sustainable New South Wales' Facebook page.

So let me look into that, but just email me to remind me.

But otherwise, yeah, I know.

And I've been driving around for weeks sometimes with soft plastics in my car, waiting for that bin to go down. (laughs)

So it is a tricky one, so. Let's see.

Hope everyone's still hanging in there. (laughs)

"Do you have any suggestions on how to encourage parents who pack their children's lunch to take a similar approach to the canteen?"

"Even if the canteen do what they can, parents still," correct.

So biggest nightmare in the world, I totally agree.

Parents pack so much waste.

And, again, that's why I go back to why I feel it's very important for kids to take home their own rubbish and show their parents exactly how much rubbish they're accumulating.

Because when the school provides a bin system, parents don't get to see all the waste that we're accumulating on the school property because we're taking care of it.

So that is a huge reason why I really want schools to focus on a no-bin system, or start with a bin system and then kind of peter out of that and slowly break away from that, especially soft plastics.

But, what was I going to say about that?

The only thing I've done in the past is I've taken photos of all the Ziploc bags in my landfill

because the kids will hide their full sandwiches, which are commonly in a Ziploc bag or cling film, and hide it in landfill, right?

Because they don't want anyone to know that they're throwing it away, and they don't take it home 'cause they don't want to get in trouble. So common sense stuff.

So I have taken it all out and taken photos, posted it in our newsletter, posted it in our canteen Facebook page to show parents what's happening with their beautiful sandwiches in a non-recyclable item and how they're being wasted. So I do that a lot.

I do do informational newsletter content talking about food waste, talking about soft plastic. Photos of the soft plastics on a Friday, which can just be in a massive pile.

It's just sharing that information, letting parents know, getting the schools to do waste-free Wednesdays, which I know a lot of schools do, some have stopped. Maybe doing more of those. But, I guess, it's just education.

And, unfortunately, parents, it is an easy thing and we're all guilty of it, grabbing the cookies in a thing that come in 10 different bags, as opposed to buying them in bulk and putting them in a reusable thing or a bento box with little containers.

So I guess it's just education and trying to show them all the waste with images.

So parents never see what we see, so maybe it's laying out all the yogurt pouches that are predominantly uneaten, all the sandwiches, all the waste, doing the waste audit, as I suggested, and showing all the rubbish that they are bringing to the school, and give them tips on how to eliminate that.

So you can find tips like that all over the internet. I've done a lot of articles like that, just popping in the school newsletter. So that's all I can kind of suggest, and it's a tough one. Thanks for that question.

Okay, Kathy, about milkshakes in schools.

So I think I kind of touched on that earlier, but keep cups, perfect.

That's the only really, they come, you can get keep cups, I think, in 250 ml, 350 ml, 550 ml. And they are perfect for milkshakes. So they've got a closed lid on them.

Not all of them have an open spout, some of them have that closed lid. If it becomes a problem where there's spilling, it might be something where milkshakes need to be picked up at the canteen window. If not, it's just trial and error to see what cups work.

As I mentioned before, there are leak-proof cups. You just kind of have to search for them.

I can give you clues on them if you want to email me.

But, yeah, that's an easy fix, milkshakes.

Depends on how many you do, but it just has to be a leak-proof reusable cup. But the cheapest way are the \$2 keep cups from Target, Kmart, things like that. Okay, "Keen to know what other schools use for making their own icy poles that is healthy and cost-effective."

Okay, so I can only speak for the schools that I know. So I know a lot of schools use your generic 100% juice with no added sugar and they water it down so it becomes very diluted, 1/2 and 1/2. A lot of them put fresh berries in them.

Some other schools will use organic or non-organic coconut milk with berries in it, with coconut in it. I mean, really, honestly, you can think of anything.

Or at some schools that have a bigger canteen budget will use organic juice, will do green juices, will use, some schools even squeeze their own juices.

So it's wherever you stand with your budget and how much you can spend in your purchasing.

You can go from as low scale to a \$2 bottle of 100% natural juice, no artificial colors, flavors, no added sugar, and dilute 1/2 of that, it literally makes an icy pole about eight cents each.

And then you can pack it with blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, whatever you want, frozen berries to cut costs, fresh berries.

So with icy poles, you can pretty much do whatever you want.

I know some people do coconut milk with cacao to make it chocolate, fresh strawberries with milk, blended in a blender.

Then you've got strawberry, natural flavored strawberry icy poles.

I know some schools use flavored milk.

Unfortunately, not my favorite go-to thing, but, and they pour that into their icy pole holders.

So, yeah, I think there's quite a few options there, but really, you can just do anything, and it is extremely cost-effective.

That is a fantastic money maker.

If you sell the small ones, you can sell them for 50 cents to a dollar.

Get the larger, the bigger icy poles, sell them for two, \$3.

And your cost to make that would probably be anywhere from 20 cents to 80 cents, depending on what you're putting in it.

Okay, I just go down, there's a few more. Okay. Sorry, okay.

"Have you tried reusable stainless steel lunchboxes with names the kids buy and bring into the canteen and take home for cleaning each day?"

No, I have not. Good idea, most definitely.

Do I think they'll remember to bring them back? Probably not. So a few hiccups with that one, but if you implement that, I love it, but I'm not sure what you're putting in them.

If it's just a sandwich, it doesn't have sections. Or 'cause hot food, it's tricky with stainless steel. Stainless steel cannot go into a dishwasher, either.

It gets scratched up terribly, so they will need to be hand washed.

I was using stainless steel for the sushi, baby bentos for a while as a trial, which works great 'cause they're cold.

So anything cold that's going to go into them is fantastic.

I'm not quite sure about putting hot stuff in them.

If you have a program that you can implement, like, at the beginning of the year, and every student is responsible to bring one,

I'm not sure, with their name on it, you will probably get a child that orders lunch that doesn't have one, so you might have to have a spare, which isn't that big of a deal.

But, yeah, the cleaning is a bit of a. If they take it home to clean, I guess that's fine.

These are all great ideas, I'm just not sure what you're serving in them and if it's going to suit all your needs, but it might.

So, yeah, I'm not 100% sure. I'd have to see exactly what you're going to use that for. I like the idea of them purchasing it.

Another way to offset your cost of buying reusable bags and reusable containers is to implement a sustainability levy, a cost on.

Flexischools, we have one on Flexischools that when you go on, before you order your first lunch, you pay for that bag to use it all year, so there's a certain fee.

You could do the same for a container, or you can just make it all one price to use everything that you're implementing every year.

Now, let's be clear that once they pay that year, they'll pay next year, and you're still using the same products, so now you're making money, hopefully, on what you've invested.

So it's a fantastic way to recoup your cost of all the reusable items that you've purchased. So that's a very easy way.

There's also a sustainability levy that you could put into your P and C that can offset costs of the reusable program, as well.

Obviously, that has to be approved by the school and P and C, but I know some schools are doing that now and talking about doing that.

I know some parents would be happy to pay for that, as opposed to pay for something else, a P and C magazine that they might pay \$15 for.

They might be happy to donate \$25, or as part of their school fees, to offset the cost to run this program.

Yeah, so, I guess, digressed a bit, but on the stainless steel, yeah, I'm just not sure if you would fit everything in it.

Like, if Tom ordered a sandwich with a fruit salad, with a banana bread, if it's all going to fit in that container. If it's all going to get mashed together, how ya going to separate it? Or is he going to have two containers? And stainless steel can be kind of expensive.

So price-wise, it could be a bit tricky.

So if you want to talk to me more about that, definitely email me privately and let me know more in depth what you want to use it for.

Let me just see if I've missed some here. So I hope that answered that question.

"I'm a student. My school is not entirely onboard with all the sustainable option. I have talked with teachers and leadership councils, but haven't been able to progress, due to financial problems, I'm assuming. How do I encourage my school to implement even basic sustainable options?"

This is anonymous.

You know, it's hard. I can give all the suggestions I've already given.

The only way for schools to get onboard is for you to go to P and C meetings, for you to show statistics, for you to show solutions, I guess, and numbers.

So that means you doing a little bit of research and saying how much this might cost, how you might be able to help with those costs or some ideas for fundraising. But really, it's just keeping up emails to the school, suggestions.

Yeah, it's a real hard one when you're a student, but it's really ya just need to get the school onboard, and I guess it's just keep knocking on doors, sending emails, suggestions and helping them with ideas to implement it.

But I feel bad, like I can't answer that one fully, but it's just really just to keep persisting and persisting and persisting.

And giving them solutions because they probably don't know how to fix the problem, but if you can give 'em a solution to the problem and the benefits of doing it, whether that's financial or environmental, then I think eventually they're going to have to, hopefully, come to the party.

That's all I can say. Sorry. Hope that helps.

Okay, oh, let's see if that's going up.

"So do you know the brand of the lovely clear landfill bin? It's not one I've seen, and looks nifty."

Okay, yes, I do know the brand.

It is from Queensland from a company called Rud. A lot of schools. Those were from Wheeler Heights.

And when, about two years ago, we had about 33 schools come to do a tour of Wheeler Heights and the program 'cause at the time we were the first one to implement anything like that.

Those bins we purchased for a lot of different reasons, one being that the birds can't get in it. They're very sturdy, they were color coordinated.

They were guaranteed, warranty, et cetera, and most importantly, they have that

see-through bin, which is what it's called.

And when I was doing a lot of work with the Environmental Coastal Center and their waste team, it was suggested that we show the kids just how much waste they were generating on a daily basis.

Now, as you can see in that photo, there's not a lot, which is absolutely fantastic, but at the time, it was horrendous.

So their name is Rud, R-U-D, Queensland, and that is a see-through bin.

And a lot of schools I know in the Northern Beaches have that exact same bin system set up, so hope that helps.

Let's see. Choo-choo-choo-choo-choo.

"Do you have?" Okay. Sarah's asking, "Do you have suggestions for things like fruit salads or yogurt and muesli that go into lunch bags (mumbles)?"

Okay, so reusable containers.

Now, I'll go from, like, the really low end, which is the one sitting in the (laughs) lost and found right now that we've cleaned. We put fruit salads in those at certain schools.

Fruit salads, yogurts, all that stuff, anything that needs a lid easily can go into those small containers that are left behind months after we tried to find the owner.

And we write return to the canteen or a sticker goes on it, return to the canteen, the property of the canteen, property of Wheeler Heights or Bilgola, wherever it might be.

However, there's also small containers like that that would be perfect. These are the ones made out of the rice husk.

If you're interested, let me know. Food Nasties is the only one that has these.

You can go to stores, obviously, and get plastic containers. I would urge you not to, only because of they'll be here for 500 years. However, any container with a lid's going to do.

Reusing what you have already there in the canteen or in lost and found or implementing these eco-friendly rice husks ones, which come in different sizes, or whatever fits your budget.

So, again, if you want to contact me privately.

If you have to go a certain direction for a certain reason, then I can discuss with you, but there's definitely an option out there for you to use, 100%.

Because, actually, well, just let me think while I'm talking, a lot of the containers, if you wanted to use cardboard, they will soak, especially with

yogurt.

They're not be any good. And then a lot of them that are food grade will have that wax lining that a lot of people buy, and they think that 'cause it's cardboard that it's recyclable.

And even if you put, say, popcorn in it, because of that wax lining, it's not recyclable.

So be very careful when you're looking at paper, cardboard, compostable, biodegradable, that you research your product because most likely, it's not going to break down the way you think it is.

So, yeah, anyway, let me know, Sarah Smith, email me and we can talk about what you want to get for those items. Okay, Sarah.

"Our canteen serves rolls with fillings, tuna, egg, mayo. We currently wrap in cling wrap. To put in the tubs. Suggestions for alternatives?"

Okay, fantastic suggestion is beeswax wraps, 100%, okay? They last forever if you treat them correctly.

You can re-dip them every six months or whenever you need to. Yeah, that's a fantastic solution.

Or if you need to put 'em in a reusable container, if you've got containers.

You can put 'em into a reusable bento box.

But cheapest, easiest way, call your local Boomerang Bag, see if they've got any extra fabric lying around.

You can get beeswax all over the place now.

Call the Environment Coastal Center. Google it. They'll help you. Council might even have ideas.

Get some moms, dads, grandparents around. Dip your cloths, do your beeswax. It's actually quite fun. And that is the perfect solution to cling film.

You do not need cling film anymore. It's a terrible nuisance. It cannot be broken down.

Yeah, so, if you cannot, for some reason, do the beeswax wraps,

I'd put 'em in a paper bag. So you can get paper bags that are that length, like a wrap length, like sausage in a bun length, or squares.

You can get a hundred different sizes of paper bags, and I would be putting them in that.

But my first suggestion would, obviously, be to make the beeswax wraps. Super simple, very cost-effective. Sanitize it properly.

At the end of the day, you're going to have to get it back, so you're going to have to implement how you're going to get that back, and it's going to be a little tricky in the beginning.

But if you're going to get rid of cling film, you can use beeswax wraps to wrap everything. Your banana bread, if you make scrolls, your garlic breads, your cookies, your muffins, literally everything.

So, thanks, Sarah, great question.

Okay, let's see.

"From your experience."

This is from from Vonda again.

"From your experience, with the schools using reusable systems, does it all come back or is it scattered around the playground?"

Great question, and, no, it does not all come back in the beginning, and it is definitely trial and error.

And every school is different. The children are different at every school.

Principals are different, teachers are different in the sense, what I mean by that is how they help facilitate the program.

I have to say at Bilgola Plateau, they did very well. They've had, I'm sure, some loss, but it's very minimal compared to, say, example, Wheeler Heights in the beginning.

Kids were throwing stuff in the bin to hide that they didn't eat it. They were using the sporks for digging in the ground. They were using cups to dig in the ground.

So when it's very important to have the principal onboard to support the program, to let the children know if they do not put things in the correct bin, if you have bins, if they do not return them to the canteen properly, A, they will, something will happen.

They may have to pick up trash during recess and lunch.

They may be rewarded for doing the right thing, or they may be reprimanded for doing the wrong thing. That's however the school wants to take it.

But, yes, I would be lying if I said don't expect to lose a percentage of your stuff in the beginning because you're learning, they're learning, but education is key.

Giving them time to understand what you're doing and why you're doing it, where it should go.

And that if they don't do it correctly, there'll be consequences. Or if they do do it correctly, they'll be rewarded.

Whether that's a canteen voucher or an icy pole in the beginning until they learn, or however your school wants to run it.

But, again, I strongly feel the less bins you have on the property, the less opportunity they have to throw anything away in the wrong bin. I think all reusables should come straight to the canteen.

We get it faster, you can wash it quicker, you can clean it better the quicker you get it to the canteen, as opposed to waiting for the bins to come in.

It just becomes second nature for kids. They should be taking their label out. They should be shaking their bags. They should be scraping their food plates.

They should be doing all these things anyway, hopefully, at home, but ideally, they should be doing all of that. It'll make your job easier and it's just how it should work.

It's similar to, I guess I could say, to, like, the U.K, to America, to other schools in Asia where they have cafeteria style.

So that's all it is, when they bring everything back, they take it all out.

You guys wash it, put it back in. But you will see some loss, but, yes, the less things, the better. None is great. If that's not a possibility, teachers need to enforce it.

If they see somebody dropping a container on the ground, a cup on the ground, digging in the ground with the fork, they need to back the canteen, the program,, the investment that you've all put into this stuff, and the kids need to either be reprimanded, and, again, or rewarded for bringing everything back in the beginning.

So, yeah, you will see some loss, but, hopefully, it's practice, practice, practice, practice.

Okay, and one more.

"We currently serve roughly a hundred pasta bowls per day. They are takeaway plastic containers that can be frozen and sit in the pie warmer. We also use similar containers for wedges, soup, fried rice, et cetera. We are struggling to find alternatives."

Again, that's a lot. You would have to invest into a container that can do what you want, which is I did mention the rice husk.

It can be polypropylene, like high-density plastic that doesn't leak anything.

I don't want to go down that route, but I understand not everybody can buy everything in the beginning.

Wedges, I don't know why those can't be served in, maybe, a paper bag. They don't need to really be in a container.

Fried rice. You might be able to look for something for fried rice. It can probably go into a cardboard box that's not lined, that's food grade.

It's not going to leach that much if you're not able to do everything reusable. Pasta bowls, unfortunately, I think that you would have to invest in reusable containers. And if that takes, say, roughly 200 containers a day, that's what'd you'd have.

And you'd have them that go into the freezer, the ones that go into the pie warmer that the kids would have to return them into a reusable system that you'd have. Yeah, the pasta bowl one, there's nothing that is.

There's compostable ones, but, again, unless you've got a compost, a commercial composter or someone that's going to pick them up.

You could implement, like I said earlier, a company like Pack360, and there's several other ones, that will give you all the containers, but this is going to be at a cost, an ongoing cost. You're going to have to pay for bins, pay for pickup.

So going with the reusables is going to be a way better way to go. But the wedges, I think you can get bags if you can't.

Obviously, they might have a little bit of grease in them, but this is when it become tricky.

When you design a menu, you have to also design a menu that's going to fit your sustainability needs.

So you might have to cut things out, A, that are not as nutritious as, not that nutritious, they should probably go first.

And secondly, do you need all that food? Can you make all that food with this new program?

So a menu overhaul is almost 99% needed every time a sustainability program is put into place at schools.

So, again, I'd love to talk to you more about it. I can kind of look at your menu, give you some better ideas.

If anyone wants to email me after, please do so.

If you want to know more about the containers and what they're made of and how much they cost, or anything else that I might be able to do to help you, please let me know.

And I hope you've enjoyed the webinar. Really appreciate the Council. They're going to send you a survey straight now right after I'm done. The Swap for Good Team will send you a survey. Please fill it out. We'd love to hear what you have

to say.

If there's something I missed, I'm sure there is, please let me know. But please email me because every school's really specific, so I probably just need to know a little bit more about you if I didn't answer it correctly.

Thanks so much, really appreciate your time.

Thank you, everybody.

<end>