

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

Rearranging the deck chairs or time for change? Opportunities for embedding EfS within waste education.

Katherine Gaschk, Murdoch University

Abstract

While there has recently been clear acknowledgement in the public sphere that the way society deals with waste must change, there has been little change in the way 'information' or 'education' about how to separate household waste is delivered. Current practice remains primarily entrenched in one-way communication strategies. This practice is driven by assumptions made by waste managers and educators that if 'the information is available' people will read and understand it and separate correctly unless they do not care. This research explored the accuracy of this assumption for a sample of residents within the southern region of Perth. A survey and interviews were conducted to examine how participants separate 19 common household waste items, why they make their choices, and what barriers and motivators they believe influence their decisions.

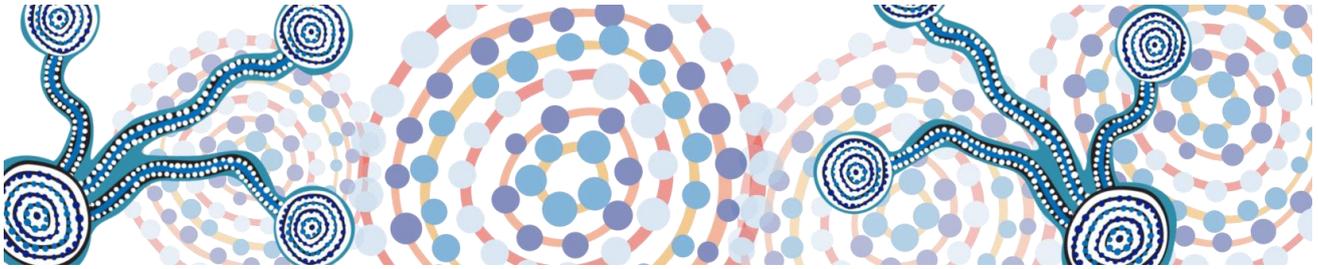
Results showed that despite positive attitudes, there was a low level of knowledge and accuracy in the separation of household waste items varied. The most consistently used information source was the Council Recycling calendar, while uptake of online information sources was poor. The most significant barriers identified by participants were limited knowledge and bin size/collection rates. Main motivators desired by participants were consistent with the barriers identified. Residents indicated a desire to correctly separate their waste and a need for change in the way information is provided. This has important implications for future education and engagement strategies that include the need for residents to more deeply understand waste management processes beyond a static list of 'recycling rules'. It will be argued that opportunities exist for embedding EfS within waste education that develops individuals' understanding of waste management systems and encourages them to think critically about the impact of their own waste behaviours within these systems.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet and pays respects to their Elders past and present.

Speaker Profile

Ms Katherine Gaschk



Katherine has a passion for environmental and waste education. She has worked as a waste education officer for a local authority, as well as developing waste behaviour initiatives within a number of AAEEWA programs that aim to reduce participants' waste generation and improve recycling. With an undergraduate science degree in Australian Environmental Studies and a Graduate Diploma in Environmental Quality, Katherine is currently completing the thesis component of a Doctor of Education at Murdoch University, exploring the barriers and motivators to waste separation behaviour in the home.

Dr Catherine Baudains

Catherine is an experienced and passionate EfS practitioner. As an adjunct lecturer with Murdoch University she is involved in a wide number of EfS projects, continues to supervise postgraduate research students and maintains an active involvement with the WA Chapter of the Australian Association for Environmental Education. Her interests focus on fostering voluntary changes in human behaviour through education in order to achieve a sustainable environmental outcome. Her research includes work in the fields of transport choices, urban biodiversity (aquatic and terrestrial), waste management behaviour, environmental and lifestyle education programs, evaluation of environmental education, and Sustainable Schools WA.

Website links

