

WE PLEDGE TO UNBAG OUR RECYCLABLES

Case Study

To help improve resource recovery outcomes, the City of Canada Bay trialled an evidence-based contamination management program targeting recycling bins in apartment buildings. Four different interventions were trialled across 18 buildings, with each strategy formulated to address key behavioural barriers that may prevent individuals from following correct recycling practices. All the strategies that were implemented showed an improvement in comparison to baseline data with an overall average reduction of 34% in recycling contamination. However, one intervention stood out and had the most success in reducing contamination rates out of the four behaviour change strategies that were trialled.

The 'Commitment' approach showed significant improvement in average contamination rates with a 69.1% reduction.

This intervention entailed asking residents for a public pledge to unbag their recycling from a plastic bag before placing it inside the communal bins. This behaviour change strategy drew on McKenzie Moore's (2020) theory of commitment, which suggests that public commitments can motivate pro-environmental behaviour among residents due to the emphasis it places on group identity and social norms.

Instructional letters and blank markable stickers were letterboxed to residents within selected trial buildings. Once signed, residents were encouraged to place their sticker on a corresponding pledge poster conveniently installed in the building's elevator. Pledge posters read 'We Pledge to Unbag Our Recyclables' with an illustrated design indicating where residents can place their pledge. Installing pledge posters in a visible common area with daily foot traffic allowed for high visibility among residents and encouraged group identity, as residents incrementally engaged with the material.

Due to the success of this program and as part of Council's ongoing effort to improve recycling recovery in apartment buildings, the project has been adapted and will continue to operate across all apartment complexes in the City of Canada Bay. The interventions and support available will be adapted to suit varied building requirements and characteristics, such as level and type of contamination, size of building, and level of engagement from building managers and cleaners.



3rd March 2021
14-18 Canada Bay Crescent
CANADA BAY NSW 2046

Dear Resident,

Improving recycling in apartments

The City of Canada Bay Council is trialling an exciting recycling project with a select number of apartment buildings. This trial is intended to support apartment-living residents to better recycle and reduce contamination within their yellow lid recycling bins.

Did you know the most common contaminant found in 14-18 Canada Bay Crescent's yellow-lidded bins is bagged recyclables? Recyclable items such as bottles, cans and cardboard must be removed from plastic bags before disposing, or they won't be recycled. Plastic bags damage the machinery at the recycling facility and impair the recycling stream.

We're asking you to think before you throw and join your neighbours in pledging to unbag your recyclables before disposing. To make the pledge, write your name on the stickers provided and place on the nearest pledge poster located in your building.

To make the pledge:



- 1** Write your name on the sticker provided.
- 2** Place it on the nearest pledge poster located in your building.
- 3** Always unbag your recyclables before disposing them in the yellow bin.

The illustration shows a man with a beard and brown hair, wearing a red t-shirt and grey trousers, standing next to a yellow recycling bin. A hand is shown placing a sticker with the name 'Joe' on a poster titled 'WE PLEDGE TO UNBAG OUR RECYCLABLES'. The poster has a grid of names, with 'Cathy' and 'Joe' visible. The poster also features logos for the City of Canada Bay and a QR code.