

# The Green Beans Report

## How does the issue of rubbish and litter influence local wildlife and animals

### Does student behaviour encourage the crows? By Jorja Forrest Year 8

What came first, the rubbish or the crows? When students are asked which animal they see around the school more often, it is the number of crows that are a nuisance around public areas. Damage of bags, tearing of rubbish and picking out of bins.

Part of an investigation into the recycling practice around school has found that students usually bring in items that are "lunchbox snacks" or tuck shop packaging. Crows are not very selective when it comes to food and would scavenge for chips, biscuits, sandwiches, all of which are eaten and their packaging discarded, but is it how the packaging is disposed of the problem?

I looked and found there are 40+ bins around school and the main areas of rubbish was in the middle school (Year 7/8) and tuck shop areas. This is where the majority of crow activity happens. More than 1 bin is within a 10 metre radius of each other so they are readily available to walk to.



The causes for littering in this area are a number of factors; Bin locality and availability, pride in areas, lack of empathy in terms of cleaners, education.

A survey of teachers on playground when asked what they believed the main cause to be was that students tend to drop litter where they sit rather than walk to bins. Since changes in the cleanliness of school areas and the frequency of cleaning staff, they have seen that children would leave areas littered for someone else to pick up.

Crows expect this and hang around areas waiting for students to leave at the end of breaks, when they have picked through rubbish, they then move on to unattended bags left outside class during lesson time. The bins have a dome design which means crows don't tend to pick at the rubbish in them unless it is close to the top



## So what can we do?

As a group we have looked at the principles of sustainability in a closed loop environment. **REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE....** How do these relate to changes we can make at the school?

**REDUCE** – We could encourage a rubbish take home plan. Students would take their waste packaging home. After a period of time, we could see if there is a reduction of attacks on bags from crows.

**REUSE** - Other alternatives to packaging would be Bento box, Tupperware, beeswax wraps. A large proportion of rubbish was sandwich bags and chip packets, Reusing items of packaging would help the reduction of litter

**RECYCLE**- Recycling waste and responsibly disposing of items would prevent rubbish blowing away out of bins and into communal areas. As the majority of the packaging was soft plastic which could be Redcycled, or hard plastic which could be generally recycled, dedicated bins would raise awareness for this.

Awareness and education especially in middle school grades would be key to encouraging the three "R"s in the school in an attempt to reduce waste and see if there is a reduction in damage from birds. A community awareness day and poster campaign is set to be trialled in the area in 2021

### What birds are found at FSCC?

Although the focus of this investigation has been primarily focused on crows and how their activity is increased on school grounds due to the access to bins, attraction of bags and rubbish dropped by students, there are other birds in the area that have been identified on the school grounds that compete with the crows for food availability;

What do crows eat? They eat almost everything. Their diet is favoured with breads, wholegrains, fruits also chips and grain bars and biscuits. Everything you can find in a lunchbox. They are opportunistic scavengers and are considered extremely clever and so have been seen unzipping school bags, removing lunchboxes and bashing them on the concrete to obtain the contents within. They are not scared and will use their beaks to open bags and boxes when students are in class

Magpies – Second most frequent bird at the school and main competition for crows. Do not damage bags and can be friendly although at end of term 3 they can swoop in numbers during nesting season. They do scavenge for scraps but their diet is selective in different seasons, they like meats from sandwiches etc. and fruits. Like crows they come down from trees regularly.

Kookaburras – Meat eaters, tend to eat insects

Rainbow and Scaly breasted Lorikeets – fruits and blossoms, stay high in flowering trees.

Galah and Sulphur Crested Cockatoo – Usually in the more wooded bushland areas at the back of school, they come out onto the oval to eat seeds, leaf buds and roots. Do not come into student areas often.

Crested pigeon – Weeds and small insects, sometimes found coming down from trees to the garden beds.

