

The Green Beans Report

Has the increase in local business affected school rubbish?

Consumerism with Alexis Newey and Grace Forrest Year 7

WHATS THE PROBLEM?

Flagstone as an area has seen a massive increase in shops and businesses in the last 24 months.

In 2019 the first area on Wild Mint Drive brought us 7 Eleven, IGA and burger restaurant Mondaze. Later in early 2020 we were given Coles, McDonalds and in September 2020 a new section in Flagstone Central with Woolworths and 5 new restaurants.

The McDonalds and 7-eleven has been particularly popular with students at Flagstone State Community College with its Slurpee's and fast food restaurants and this has had an impact on the litter observed around school. Just across the road from Flagstone State Community College we have a 7 eleven. As you may imagine, this means that students go before, during and after school to by Slurpee's, lollies and various other food and drinks. Of course, they bring it back into the school and it gets dropped on the ground. So, this obviously largely contributes to the amount of litter here.

During Term 3 the "Green Beans" conducted a series of litter surveys as part of the Litter Legends Campaign. In these surveys litter was categorised into organic, recyclable, non-recyclable or landfill. We investigated which category drinks cups, straws and card takeaway boxes would fit into and found that these made up 40% of the waste and was in the category of landfill items non-recyclable items.

If these items were card or plastic, why aren't they recyclable? Most card drinks cups are lined with a thin coating of plastic that cannot be easily separated during the recycling process. Card boxes and paper for chips and burgers are also lined with a greaseproof lining so the card does not absorb fats. Straws are also unrecyclable and in some countries they are banned. Straws at these outlets are also packaged in a soft plastic cover that used to be paper.



School bags outside class with McDonalds coffee cup (above) Slurpee cups and straws in garden beds (below). Taken at FSCC



So what can WE do?

The main principles we focus on at the school are the closed loop REDUCE, REUSE, and RECYCLE approach. How do these ideas relate to this problem?

REDUCE – As an individual we could make healthier food choices and avoid high sugar frozen drinks and fast food. **REFUSE** – We could choose to ask for an alternative to single use packaging. If we eat in at a coffee shop for a drink in a real cup or use reusable silicone, bamboo or metal straws.

REUSE – Some stores welcome reusable options such as bottles, cups etc.

RECYCLE – There are alternative options at some stores that can be recycled. Clear plastic drinks containers and drinks cups lids can be easily recycled in general recycling and brown paper bags and card can be composted with organic waste.

What can THEY do?

It is important for large companies to take responsibility for the waste they produce and have sustainable alternative ways to reduce the use of resources and protect the environment.

Locally, we have major businesses that use good recycling ideas. Coles and Woolworths for example use a REDCycle soft plastic program, IGA source foods locally reducing transportation.

As the main source of the waste focus in this investigation has been fast food waste we researched the solutions the companies plan for the future;

7-Eleven

This company has been working with **simply cups** to collect cups and containers at their outlets to recycle waste with a #CUPRESCUE campaign. <https://www.simplycups.com.au/how-it-works>

“7-Eleven acknowledges reusable is always the best option, and it’s important we continue to work towards creating less waste in the first place. 7-Eleven continues to encourage Australia to think reusable first. At all 7-Eleven stores reusable coffee cups and Slurpee bottles are welcomed”

McDonalds

McDonalds are also working with Simply Cups to divert their drinks containers from landfill. They have also decided to remove their plastic straws from Australian restaurants by the end of 2020. They also use renewable materials in their packaging and have made a commitment to recycle guest packaging in 100% of their restaurants by 2025.

“McDonald’s has been a sponsor of Clean Up Australia and its major annual event, Clean Up Australia Day, since its inception in 1989. Each year, McDonald’s crew and managers join their local communities to help clean up rubbish in the area”

As a school we can raise awareness of these businesses, their progress and ways to responsibly dispose of waste with our annual Clean Up Australia Schools Day (Co-sponsored by McDonalds) and installing a Simply cups collection station at recycle points around school grounds.

