

Waste crisis in australia

[Parts of the World](#), [Australia](#)



Changes imminent in Australia after shocking stats reveal significant growth in poverty and homeless population. Locals are rallying for changes to the country's safe food laws, and they're pointing to Sweden as the shining example of how it can work. Waste activists in Australia have been getting louder and louder in recent years, and the alarming amount of waste being produced, along with a rise in poverty and homelessness may have been the tipping point.

Australia is now one of the leading countries in waste production, with each Australian on average producing 1.5 tonnes of waste per year, combining for a whopping 52 mega tonnes of pollution and waste. Much of which can't be redistributed to feed the homeless population under the current food safety laws in Australia and goes into landfill.

Currently the food safety laws, outlined by the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) prohibit the re-distribution of "potentially hazardous food" to vulnerable persons such as those in financial crisis or the homeless.

The law deems foods which have been disposed of, after consumption (food waste), as unfit for even the most desperate people and prevents the processing and delivery of waste to the homeless population, or even third party distributors such as homeless shelters. According to the 2016 national census, Australia has taken several steps backwards in terms of poverty with new highs in homeless levels being reached with a 14% increase in homelessness in the last five years.

To add to its woes, Australia's population is seeing rapid growth with an expected 37.6 million people to occupy the nation by 2050, which means

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more rubbish and unfortunately more poverty. Peter Shmigel, CEO of the Australian Council of Recycling chimed into the issue, stating that “ It is time to transform the recycling and resource recovery industry so it can help transform our economy to a more competitive, sustainable and circular model that makes the best use of as many resources, including human resources, as possible in Australia.”

Advance Australia unfair?

Its ironic that we can all sing proudly in our national anthem “ advance Australia fair” but in fact behind closed doors we are the opposite and don’t truly embody our anthem. Many have questioned if we have strayed too far from the values that Australia is built on.

Laws are in place which prevent us being a fair country and undermine the fabric of our society. Of course, our governments will claim that these are in place for the safety and protection of its people, but risking the possibility of a few getting food poisoning to save so many? Seems worth it to me.

Our fundamental policies surrounding waste, and the implementation of homeless people in our community should be majorly over hauled, with a focus on the protection of the environment, and most importantly the needs of the public.

Mission Australia’s CEO says that the current homeless figures are an “ international embarrassment”, and they are exactly that. An embarrassment. We should be ashamed to stand proud in a county doesn’t

actively seek to do what's in the best interest of all of its people, not just select few.

It is unfair that those privileged enough can afford to throw away whatever food they want, while some don't even have a crumb to begin with. And yet how our food safety laws don't allow what would normally be thrown away to be given to the hungry is incomprehensible.

Australia has reached a new low, becoming the 5th largest household waste producer in the world, with its waste rate growing at double its population. On top of this it is now home to one of the largest homeless populations, but more strikingly it is its efforts, or lack there of, to combat these issues that has raised concerns for many across the globe.

It is expected that Australia will adopt methods from other leading countries in the industry, with the front runners Sweden and Japan setting the gold standard for a feasible solution to the issue.

A Model Country

Australia's Waste Crisis may see a shift towards the current approach taken by Sweden on the fast growing issue. Here's how it works. It has been a decade since Sweden banned rubbish and waste going into landfill, and since then they claim to recycle over 98% of waste which has seen reduced impact on the environment. Sweden recycles more waste than another other nation currently, with nearly 100% of household waste being recycled and reused as something else.

Of the 4.4 million tonnes of waste produced by Sweden, approximately half is converted into usable energy by a process called 'waste-to-energy' (WTE). Throughout homes, waste – including food waste – is separated and deposited into special containers within a block of flats which is then dropped off at special recycling or WTE stations.

Furnaces within WTE stations are filled with garbage and then burnt to generate steam, which is then used further to spin turbines and generate electricity. A modified version of this system could be adopted in some parts of Australia on a trial basis. At other stations, food waste along with other goods are prepared and tested from within the stations, which is then redistributed through organisations such as Allwin to those who are 'economically challenged'.

Whilst food safety laws are still in place they are a lot less strict and don't prohibit the re-distribution of food classified as waste but ensure that the food must be of a reasonable, safe standard and fit for human consumption. As a body we must move forward, we must protect our environment and we must change. Even if it is only one small step each day, I sincerely hope we can get there in the end and truly be a fair nation.