



Illawarra's Guide to Sustainable and Healthy Events.



Healthy Cities. Healthy People.



About Us.

Food Fairness Illawarra

Food Fairness Illawarra (FFI) is a community coalition that has worked together since 2005 to make healthy and sustainable food affordable and accessible for all. Guided by representatives from Healthy Cities Illawarra, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, Wollongong City Council, Shellharbour City Council, Kiama Municipal Council and the University of Wollongong, FFI has a wide network of over 1000 individuals, community groups, charities and non-government organisations, who recognise the need for collaboration between community, industry, and governments to unlock fairer food solutions.

Healthy Cities Illawarra

Healthy Cities Illawarra (HCI), the 'glocal' organisation working to create healthy environments and enable healthy choices for the people of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, NSW. Dedicated to addressing underlying social, economic and environmental causes of health inequality and working in partnership with local government, health care providers and other community organisations to deliver meaningful health and wellbeing outcomes for our community. HCI does this by designing, implementing and evaluating evidence-based and cost-effective programs for a range of issues and audiences. From fair food, healthy eating and cooking skills to walking programs, after-school youth programs and age friendly initiatives – we are here to help design the infrastructure of a healthy community and sustain positive behaviour change. HCI is inclusive, we believe in increasing individual and community control over the interactions in our communities which impact on our health and quality of life. Healthy Cities proudly hosts and governs Food Fairness Illawarra.

Ways to connect

Learn more and access our resources at [Food Fairness Illawarra](#) or [Healthy Cities Illawarra](#)

Join the online conversation at [Food Fairness Illawarra](#) and [Healthy Cities Illawarra](#)

Our work strongly aligns and supports the following United Nation Sustainable Development Goals:





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1. Introduction.

1.1 What is a sustainable & healthy event?

A sustainable and healthy event is one designed, organised and implemented in a way that minimises potential negative impacts on the environment and leaves a beneficial legacy for the host community and all involved. Events are beneficial for networking, furthering knowledge, sharing ideas and celebrating communities. However, any gathering of people can have the potential to have an adverse impact on the environment and can easily adopt unhealthy practices - from food miles, to energy and water consumption, to the consumption of unhealthy refreshments and the level of avoidable waste generated.

1.2 What are the benefits of hosting a sustainable and healthy event?

There are tons of benefits that come from being mindful about sustainability when planning an event, such as:

- **Save on cost** - conserving energy and water, reducing waste and purchasing local products can all result in money saved!
- **Stimulate our local community** - sourcing local products and services stimulates the local economy and increases opportunities for community involvement and social inclusion.
- **Positive reputation** - promoting your event as 'sustainable and healthy' will not only raise the profile of the event, but also grab the attention of potential participants that are aware of sustainability and health benefits.
- **An act of activism** - leading by example and making your event sustainable and healthy will motivate others to do the same! It is an excellent opportunity for raising awareness among participants, service providers and the local community of the importance of creating supportive environments.
- **Support community health and wellbeing** - providing healthy foods and beverages, encouraging physical activity, and focusing on sustainability at events provides opportunities to create a culture of health and well-being.
- **Reduce environmental impacts** - finally, the paramount reason for sustainability in event planning is the environmental outcomes! Less waste created, less energy and used and less food-miles equals one happy planet!

1.2 Different types of events

There are many different types of events, with aspects such as the number of people, and amount of food and space that is necessary. These details will determine the extent of the 'sustainability goal' and how it will be put into practice. For example, a home event of 25 people will require more food than a small in-office meeting of 10 people, however less than a large community event of 50 people.



At home event



Community event



In office meeting

2. Venue Selection.

When choosing a venue for your event, it is important to consider the number of people in attendance, the available options for getting there and if there are enough facilities such as bathrooms and disabled access.

2.1 Venue location

Transport is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, therefore active or shared transport options should be considered and promoted when organising your event.

- Choose a venue that is in close proximity to public transport and/or cycle and walking routes.
- Align event times with public transport timetable (where possible).
- Encourage participants to carpool/walk/catch public transport in the promotion/invitation of the event.

2.2 Venue facilities

Additional factors to consider when selecting a venue for your event:

- Does the venue have disabled access and toilet facilities?
- Does the venue offer reusable utensils e.g. cups, cutlery, and plates? If not, consider hiring them or using compostable alternatives.
 - Check out [Make-Do Library of Things](#) for reusable party packs.
 - Check out [Leisure Coast Hospitality and Packaging](#) in Wollongong for all of your EcoFood Packaging needs.
- Does the venue have water/energy conservation measures in place, or a green star rating? This would be nice to have, but is dependent on the availability in your local area.
- Does the venue have natural light? This will enable your day event to avoid electricity usage. If not, the use of LED lighting would be preferred.
- Does the venue have fans or windows that open? This would allow you to avoid using air conditioning and reduce the electricity / environmental costs.
- Does the venue have a waste management system in place for recycling and composting?
 - If not, see [Chapter 6](#) on Waste Management.

TIP.

See [Illawarra's Guide to Local Kitchen Facilities](#) for a list of great venues.

3. Food and Drink.

Food and drinks often play an important role at events. Use this opportunity to showcase healthy and sustainable dishes in an enticing manner.

- Choose locally grown, seasonal produce (where possible). Generally, the further food has to travel to your plate the more greenhouse gas emissions and pollution it produces in transport and storage. See Fair Food Field Guide's [Shopping Local](#) and [Buying Sustainably & Ethically Produced Food](#) for information on where and what to shop!
- Choose organic (where possible). Organic foods are grown without the use of synthetic pesticides or artificial fertilizers and therefore are better for the environment and your health.
- Reduce the amount of animal products (meat, dairy, and eggs).
- Choose only sustainable seafood. The fish we choose directly affects the health of our oceans. Demand for seafood is increasing, yet many populations of the fish we enjoy are over fished. See [Sustainable Seafood Guide](#) to choose wisely.
- Avoid packaged foods and recycle packaging if used.
- Use tap water instead of bottled water and ask participants to bring their own reusable water bottle. Provide water jugs to refill or for larger community events, consider borrowing the Healthy Cities Illawarra portable water bottle re-fill station.

By considering the above points, you will be helping to support the local community, stimulating our economy and actively reducing environmental impact!

3.1 Drinks

- **Water** - Tap water is best for sustainability and health (sugar, plastic & calorie free!). Add mint, orange or lemon for extra flavour.
- **Fruit Juice** - Unsweetened fruit juices (greater than 99% fruit juice).
- **Milk** - Offer reduced-fat or skim milk in preference to full-fat milk.
- **Tea & Coffee** - Include a station of regular and herbal tea as well as regular and decaffeinated coffee.

3.2 Catered events

You may choose to hire someone to cater your event. A few factors to consider include budget, event formality, length of event, number of guests and venue facilities such as kitchen and equipment.

Choosing a caterer that follows healthy and sustainable practices is important for reducing impact on the environment as well as supporting the health and wellbeing of participants.

Considerations when selecting a caterer:

- Do they use fresh, local and seasonal produce?
- If necessary, do they use compostable cutlery and packaging?
- Do they have menu options that offer healthy portion sizes?
- Do they recycle, or compost waste on site?
- Do they donate leftover food to food rescue organisations?



Use the [Fair Food Forager App](#) to search for sustainable food providers and caterers near you.

When choosing menu items with the caterer, check that:

- The menu offers a selection of nutritious foods from a variety of food groups e.g. fruit, vegetables, legumes, grains, protein and dairy.
- Vegetables and/or fruit are included in most menu items.
- Gluten free, dairy free, vegan, vegetarian and coeliac options are available or there is flexibility in the menu items to request alternatives.
- Wholegrain options are available e.g. wholegrain bread, brown rice, wholemeal pasta.
- Processed meats are avoided or kept to a minimum e.g. ham, salami, sausages, bacon.
- Meat alternatives are available e.g. legumes, egg, tofu.
- Cooking methods such as steaming, grilling, baking, poaching, and stir-frying are used. Avoid menu items that are "deep fried" or "battered".
- Portion sizes are appropriate e.g. one sandwich or wrap per person or one piece of fruit per person.

3.3 Self-catered events

While self-catering can be a considerable time commitment depending on the food and number of people, it can be extremely beneficial, cost-effective and kind to the planet. By providing your own food and drinks, you eliminate the cost of hiring a caterer while ensuring the food provided is seasonal, well-proportioned and ethically sourced. Here is an example of some dishes you may like to provide:

Snacks & Finger Food

- Seasonal sushi rolls.
- Lentil patties served with home-made chutneys.
- Falafels served with tzatziki dipping sauce.
- Seasonal fruit platter.
- Rice-paper rolls.

Breakfast Foods

- Whole grain cereal or muesli, served with seasonal fruit and low-fat milk or yoghurt.
- Healthy breakfast muffins.
- Frittata slices.

Lunch Foods

- Seasonal salad platters e.g.
 - Minted pea & potato salad for winter.
 - Tomato panzanella salad for summer.
- Salad sandwiches and rolls.
- Whole food and seasonal bowls.

Dinner Foods

- Hearty lentil pasta cooked with seasonal vegetables.
- Whole grain pesto pasta salad.
- Winter potato and broccoli soup.

Portion Sizes:

People tend to serve themselves more than they actually need.

The following tips prevent overeating as well as reducing waste and costs:

- Pre-cut and serve foods in individual portion sizes.
- Provide smaller plates and bowls.
- Serve spreads and condiments separately and use salt reduced options.
- Provide personnel to serve food to guests.

TIP.

For a full list of great food examples visit [SA Healthy Catering Ideas!](#)



TIP.

Serving sizes of the five food groups can be found at [Eat For Health](#)

3.4 Food safety

Food safety is important for both you and your guests! Food safety refers to the careful handling, storage and preparation of foods to reduce the risk of food poisoning. By following the requirements set out in the [Food Safety Standards](#) you can help to support the health and wellbeing of our community.

Suggestions to reduce the risk of food poisoning include:

- Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling food.
- Separate raw and cooked foods to avoid cross contamination.
- Use separate chopping boards and utensils for meat, salads, fish etc.
- Keep the fridge temperature at or below 4°C.
- Do not leave refrigerated food out of the fridge for more than 2 hours.
 - Food held between 5°C and 60°C for less than 2 hours can be used or put back in the refrigerator to use later.
 - Food held between 5°C and 60°C for 2-4 hours can still be used but can't be put back in the refrigerator.
 - Food held between 5°C and 60°C for 4 hours or more must be thrown away.
- Defrost food in the lower shelf of the fridge and cook immediately after thawing. Do not refreeze.
- Check use by and best before dates.

USE BY Food Safety

After the date, food is no longer safe to eat, usually meat and seafood.

TIP.

BEST BEFORE Quality

You can eat this food after the date, but it may not be at its best. Always smell and taste to check quality.

4. Event Promotion.

Sustainable and healthy efforts present a brand-building opportunity for your event so don't forget to weave messaging into your promotional activities. Sustainable efforts on your behalf will also inspire attendees to apply a sustainable approach to their everyday lives.

Promotional activities may include:

- Go paperless! Advertise the event online.
- Create a Facebook/website/social event page or App featuring all key event information.
- Send email invitations.
- Advertise the event as a 'healthy/sustainable/plastic free event'.
- Social Media messaging including inspirational fun facts that show the difference you're making by hosting a sustainable event.

"This is a sustainable & healthy event, limiting our environmental impact and leaving a beneficial legacy for the host community and all involved. Help us achieve this by (participation opportunity)."

- Promote how you can create positive change and flow on effects.

*"PLASTIC FREE EVENT We all have an opportunity to influence change. Estimates show that one 500ml plastic bottle of water has a total carbon footprint equal to 82.8 grams of carbon dioxide. Going plastic free enabled us to reduce our carbon footprint by about (# attendees * 82.8 grams) of carbon dioxide at our last event."*

- In the lead up to the event, promote your like-minded partners and supporters. Share their stories. This is also a good way to cross-promote and increase engagement.

"We're proud to partner with Healthy Cities Illawarra to reduce plastic waste at our event. Healthy Cities will be providing their water re-fill stations. Remember to bring your own water bottle! #SustainableEvents #PlasticFree"



TIP.

Share this guide with your colleagues, friends and attendees, to motivate them to follow your lead and together grow a sustainable and healthy event culture.

Call for attendees' participation:

- Send a reminder to participants and provide them with the option to opt-out, so that your catering numbers are as accurate as possible. This will keep food waste to a minimum.
- Encourage participants to bring a container for leftovers and a water bottle to refill throughout the day.
- Offer people the option to join the event virtually.
- Encourage participants to travel to the event in a sustainable manner - walk, cycle, use public transport or carpool.
- Provide an attendance checklist prior to the event that includes reminders for attendees to plan their travel if using public/active transport; bring their own bottle or container.

<NAME>

YOU'RE INVITED

<Insert event information e.g. what event is for/about, will there be food and drinks>

WE LOVE OUR HEALTH AND OUR ENVIRONMENT SO HELP US BY BEING YOUR BEST SUSTAINABLE SELVES!

LOCATION: <insert location>

- It would be great if you could carpool/walk/catch public transport to reduce your carbon footprint.
- <Include any information on how to get to the location>

WHEN: <Insert date and time>

PLEASE BRING: <Insert items to bring e.g. reusable water bottle, reusable container>

Please **RSVP** by <Insert date> to <Insert name> via <Insert contact details> to confirm your attendance.

WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU THERE!



**HELP US
REDUCE
FOOD WASTE
#BYOC
#TAKEHOME**

TIP.

Create your own stunning event designs for free with easy-to-use [Canva](#).

Or, use some of our [images and attachments](#) in this guide!

BRING YOUR OWN BOTTLE #BYOB #PLASTICFREE



A SIMPLE SWAP CAN REDUCE:





5. Event Decor.

Decorations

When it comes to styling your event this is your chance to get creative! By incorporating one sustainable practice or switching a few elements, you will be saving on both cost and waste.

Some suggestions and tips:

- Borrow or rent reusable banners and bunting, check out [Make-Do Library of Things](#).
- Make your own confetti using leaves with a hole puncher.
- Use living plants, flowers, foliage or herbs for table decorations and centrepieces - scavenge through your own backyard, community or veggie garden!
- Use upcycled bottles or jars for flower vases or candle holders.
- Use soy candles. Guests can take them home.
- Hang string and attach photos with wooden pegs.
- Get crafty with tablecloths by providing compostable paper cloths that guests can write on.

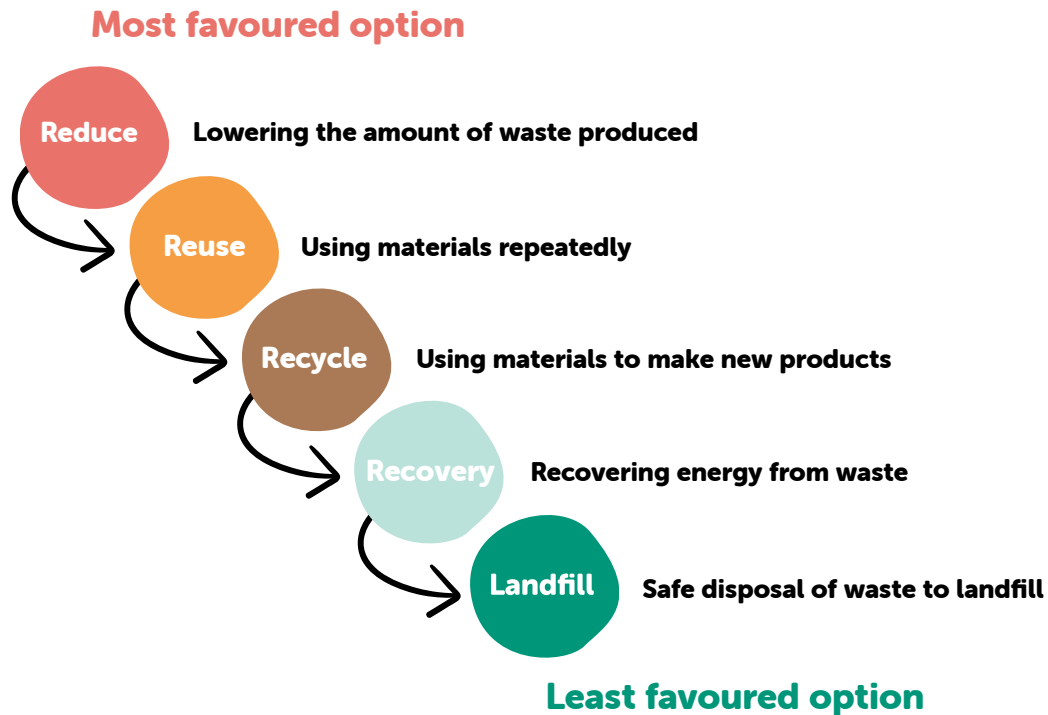


6. Waste Management.

Events have always been seen as waste generators, however, we have the opportunity to change this! The waste hierarchy shown below is a great tool, follow these simple steps to ensure you reduce waste and environmental impact.

6.1 Pre-event

Make use of the waste hierarchy:



- Try to reduce the use of paper.
 - Ask attendees to bring their smartphone or iPad to take notes.
 - Reuse paper or buy recycled paper.
 - Send the event agenda or any other supporting materials by email prior to the event.
- Encourage stall-holders, caterers and participants to avoid using plastic.
- Make a plan for recycling, compost and general waste based on the venue requirements.
- To keep food waste to a minimum:
 - Correctly calculate numbers for catering.
 - For free events, order food for 70% of those who RSVP.

6.2 During event

- Ensure there are recycling, compost and general waste options at your event, including sufficient signage.
- For larger community events, consider hiring [Green Connect Zero Waste Services](#) to support the waste diversion during your event.
- Use paper towels and dispose of them in compost bins.
- Provide signage to encourage participants to take home any catering leftovers (see attachment 1).

6.3 Post-event

- Leftover food (if any) can be taken home by participants (provide container/BYO), OR food can be redistributed!





6.4 Redistributing leftovers

Hopefully once guests fill their containers there won't be any food leftover, but if there is, food redistribution can provide many economic, environmental and social benefits including;

- Saving on waste disposal costs.
- Provide food to those in need.
- Reducing the amount of food in landfill.
- Helping the community achieve sustainable practices.

If you have excess food, why not redistribute it instead of sending it to landfill? In the Illawarra there are a many organisations that will accept food leftovers, providing they have been safely handed and are still suitable for consumption. [See 3.4 Food Safety](#)

For regular donations:

Wollongong Homeless Hub (drop-off only)

Located at 75-79 Keira Street, Wollongong

Open for donations Monday - Friday 8.30am to 4pm

Call (02) 4228 0955

Hopestreet Community Service Port Kembla (drop-off only)

(Previously Darcy House) Located at 27-29 Wentworth St, Port Kembla

Open for donations Monday - Friday 8.30am to 4pm

Call (02) 4298 2800

OzHarvest (pick-up only)

Operates 5 days a week in the Illawarra and will accept quality perishable food and deliver it free of charge to charities assisting vulnerable people.

Call (02) 9516 3877

Email sydney.info@ozharvest.org

TIP.

Check out the [Guide to donating food in the Illawarra](#) to connect with other service providers!

7. Final Checklist.

Venue Selection (if applicable)

- ☐ Is the venue close to public transport?
- ☐ Is the venue accessible via walking or cycling?
- ☐ Is the venue accessible for all guests?
- ☐ Does the venue have kitchen facilities?
- ☐ Does the venue provide utensils such as plates, cutlery, cups?
- ☐ Can your event be located outside? If not:
 - ☐ Does the venue have natural light?
 - ☐ Is your event being held during the day to avoid using lighting?
 - ☐ If lighting is required will LED lighting be used?
 - ☐ Can you avoid using an air conditioner or heater?

Food and Drinks

- ☐ Does the event require food? If so:
- ☐ Do you require a private caterer?
 - ☐ If yes, does your caterer follow healthy and sustainable practices?
- ☐ Are fresh fruits and vegetables included in the menu?
- ☐ Is the food sourced locally?
- ☐ Is it organic?
- ☐ Are there whole grain sources of breads/cereals?
- ☐ Have diets/allergies been considered?
- ☐ Have you reduced the amount of animal products?
- ☐ Have you avoided the use of packaged foods?
- ☐ Will food be served in smaller portion sizes?
- ☐ Does the amount of food ordered correspond to the number of participants?
- ☐ If it's a free event have you ordered food for 70% of the participants?
- ☐ Will leftover food be taken home or donated?
 - ☐ Do you have reusable containers to provide or have you advertised BYO containers?

Promotion and Invitations

- ☐ Have you advertised your event online?
- ☐ Have you advised participants that this is a healthy and sustainable event?
- ☐ Will sustainable decorations be used?
- ☐ Will the use of electricity be kept to a minimum?

Waste

- ☐ Does the venue have waste and recycling systems in place?
- ☐ Has plastic and packaging been kept to a minimum?
- ☐ Will food scraps be composted or redistributed?
- ☐ Will environmentally friendly cleaning products be used?
- ☐ Will tap water be provided and will participants be bringing their own reusable bottles?

Pre-event/Setup

- ☐ Go through the menu and organise an appropriate time for the food to be served.
 - ☐ For dietary restrictions make sure you are aware of participants' names.
- ☐ Have water/beverages ready for participants' arrival.
- ☐ Position signs, flags, and banners.
- ☐ Set up all decorations/equipment required.
- ☐ Set out tables and chairs.
- ☐ Gather cutlery, plates and cups and ensure the area is clean.
- ☐ Set up electronics and equipment such as PowerPoint and ensure all is working properly.
- ☐ Check lighting and sound systems.
- ☐ Ensure garbage, compost and recycling bins are in place and visible with signage.

Post-event/Pack down

- ☐ Have enough people been allocated to pack up?
- ☐ Ensure all rubbish is disposed of correctly.
- ☐ Ensure leftover food goes to compost or organised for food rescue pick-up or drop-off.

References. United Nations Environment Programme UNEP 2012, Sustainable Events Guide, accessed 8th October 2019, http://www.ajsosteniblebcn.cat/sustainable-events-guide_63369.pdf



8. Attachments: Useful Signage.



**HELP US REDUCE
FOOD WASTE**

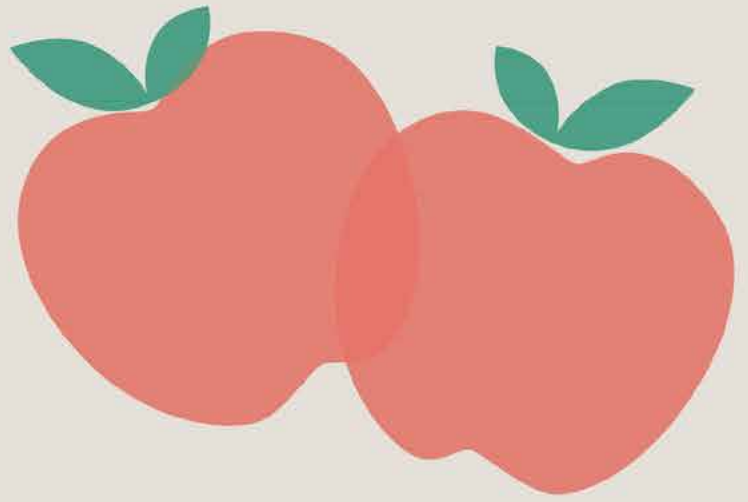
#BYOC

#TAKEHOME

BYO CONTAINER



Illawarra's Guide
to **Sustainable** and
Healthy Events.



**This is a
sustainable &
healthy event.**

**Thank you for
being your best
sustainable selves!**



**Illawarra's Guide
to Sustainable and
Healthy Events.**

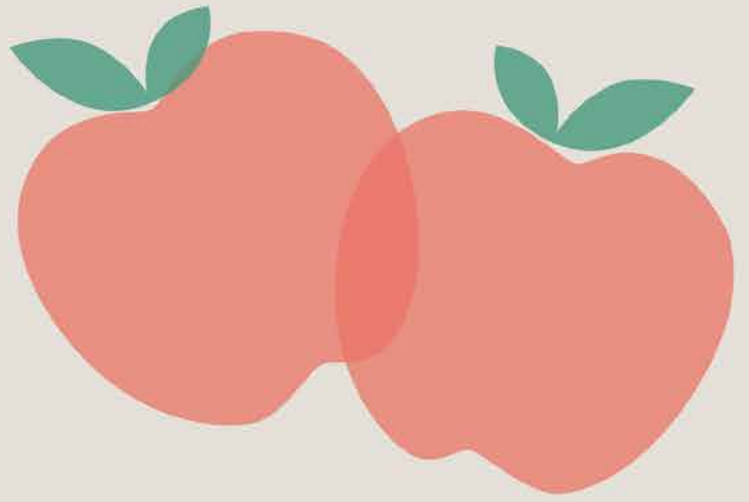
THIS IS A PLASTIC FREE EVENT

**#BYOB
#PLASTIC FREE**

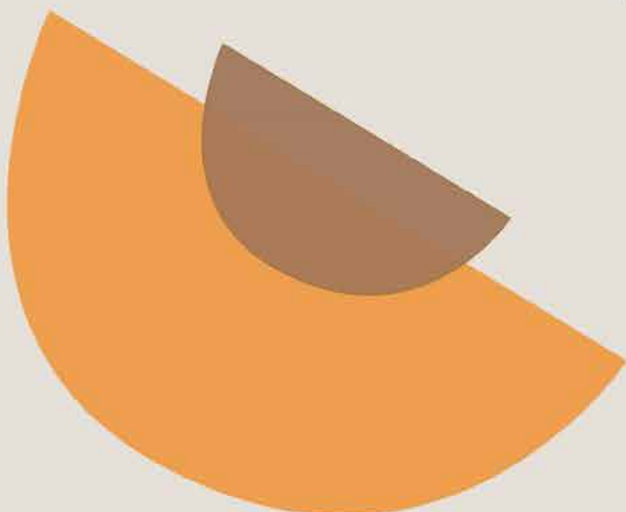
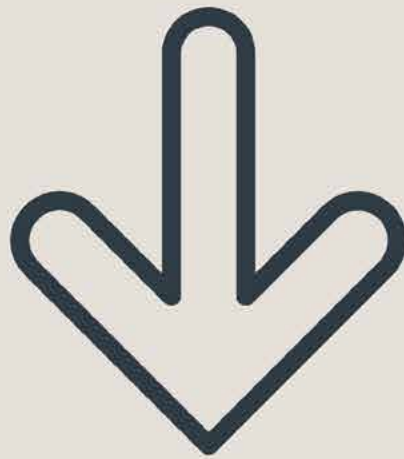


Illawarra's Guide
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**HELP US
REDUCE
FOOD WASTE
#BYOC
#TAKEHOME**



**WE RECYCLE
& COMPOST**



**Illawarra's Guide
to Sustainable and
Healthy Events.**

**LEFTOVERS
FOR LUNCH
#LOVEFOOD
#HATEWASTE
#BYOC**

DID YOU **BYO CONTAINER?**

**FEEL FREE TO TAKE HOME
ANY LEFTOVERS**



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