Waste & recycling 101:

Navigating UNSW's updated system

April 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

UNSW respectfully acknowledges the Bidjigal clan of the Dharawal Nation, alongside the Biripai, Dharug, Gadigal, Gumbaynggirr, Ngunnawal and Wiradjuri peoples, on whose unceded lands we are privileged to learn, teach and work. We honour the Elders of these Nations, past and present, and recognise the broader Nations with whom we walk together. UNSW acknowledges the enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to culture, community and Country.

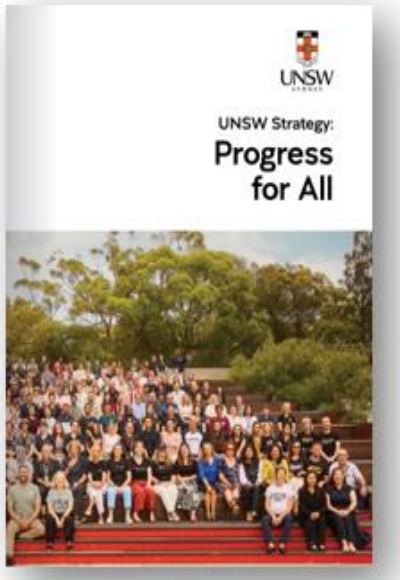
Agenda

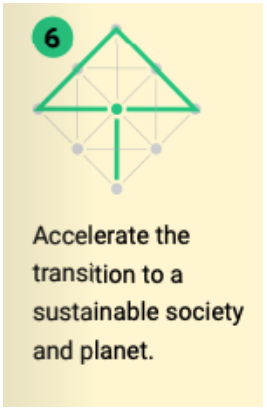
1. Why the change
2. What has changed
3. How to bin it right
4. Q&A

Why the change

- End of 2023: NSW EPA food organics restrictions banned compostable packaging and paper towels in food organics bins.

- Q1 2024: KENS waste audit at waste collection points
  - **43%** contamination of the yellow mixed recycling bins (paper, takeaway container, or soft plastic)
  - **20%** of general waste bins recoverable as food organics





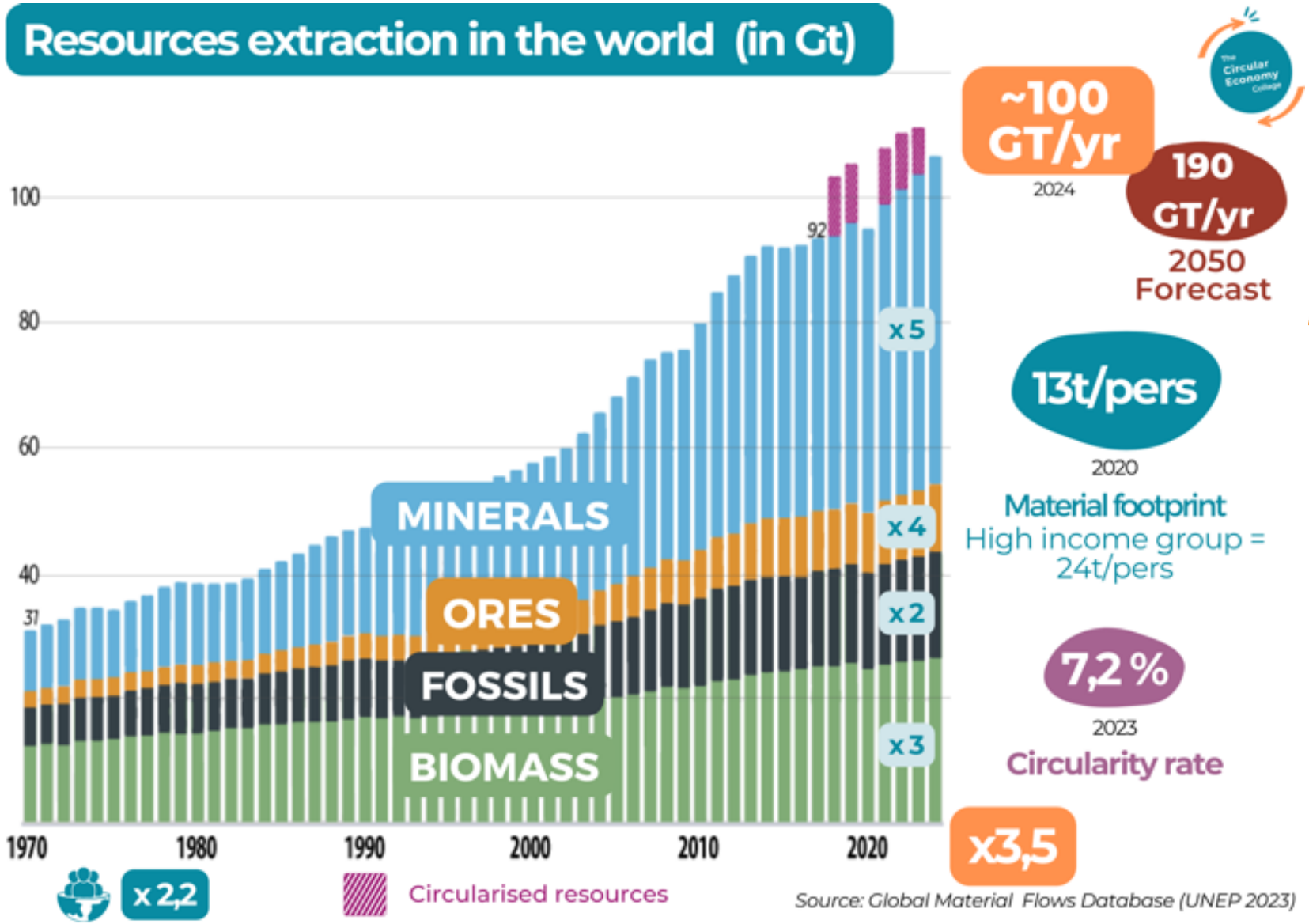
We will be leader in our contribution to the Societal Impact Goals:

- Achieve net zero emissions by 2050.[2]
- Restore 30% of ecosystems in areas of particular importance for biodiversity to improve planetary health.
- Reduce waste generation by 30% through prevention, recycling and reuse.

Objectives of this change:

- Reduce waste generation by incentivising waste avoidance or reuse practices
- Recover resources
- Keep waste out of landfill

Waste was once a resource



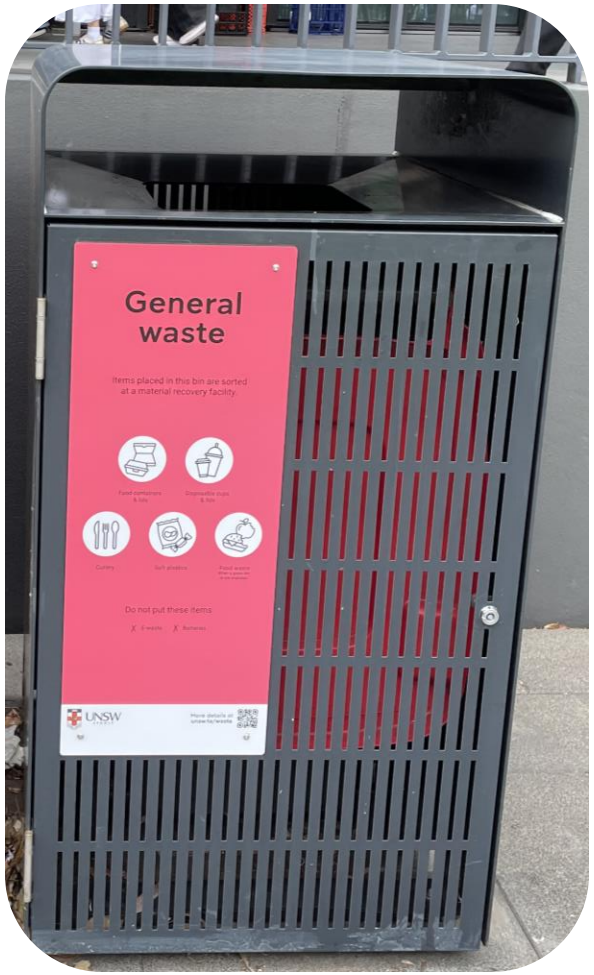
Equivalent to a **10 m wide and 250 m high wall** around the earth

Circular economy collage

What has changed?

Outdoor areas

From three to two bins



Why no large food organics or recycling bins?

- High risk of contamination with takeaway packaging.
- 5% maximum contamination allowed. If higher, the entire bin content goes to landfill.

What has changed?

In the office

From "Food and compostable packaging" to "Food organics"

Why only 7L?

- Only for unpackaged food leftovers, fruit or vegetable scraps and coffee ground
- Prevent contamination with packaging
- Similar format to what Councils provide

Updated labels for clearer instructions

Bin it right poster

Bin it right - in the office

Food organics

Unsure? Use the red bin.

Yes

- Food leftovers unpackaged
- Fruit & vegetable scraps
- Coffee grounds
- Meat & dairy

No

- Disposable cups & lids
- All packaging & cutlery
- Tea Bags
- Napkins

NO

NO

Takeaway packaging (red bin)

Paper towels, serviettes

Tea bags

Where does it go?

Anaerobic digestion at Earth Power in Western Sydney to produce electricity and soil improver.

More details at **unsw.to/waste**

Bin it right - in the office

Glass, metal & plastic containers

Unsure? Use the red bin.

Yes

Steel & aluminum cans | Glass bottles & jars | Plastic bottles

No

Paper & cardboard | Soft plastics | Disposable cups & lids | Food waste

NO

NO

Biscuit sachets (red bin)

Takeaway packaging (red bin)

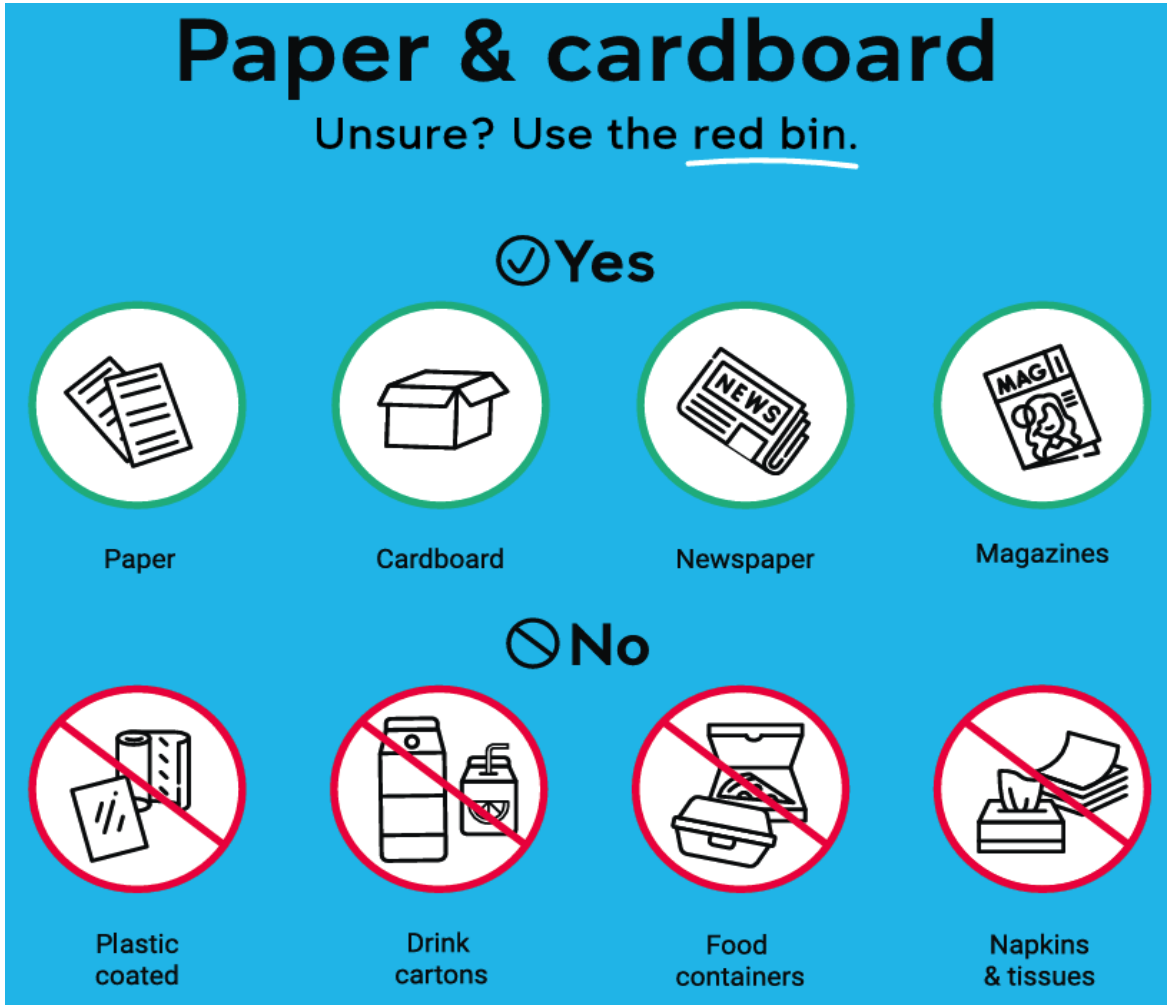
Paper and cardboard (blue bin)

Where does it go?

Recycled at Visy Recycling (Smithfield)

More details at **unsw.to/waste**

Bin it right - in the office



NO

NO

Takeaway packaging (red bin)

Paper towels, serviettes

Milk or juice cartons

Where does it go?

Recycled at a paper mill in Botany Bay

More details at **unsw.to/waste**

Bin it right - in the office

General waste

Unsure? Use this bin.

Yes

Food containers & lids

Soft plastics

Disposable cups, lids & cutlery

Non-recyclable items

No

Food waste
Unless no green bin.

Paper & cardboard
Unless no blue bin.

E-waste

Batteries

Items placed in this bin are sorted at a material recovery facility.

NO

NO

Batteries

E-waste

Where does it go?

Sorted into three streams at a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) operated by Doyle Bros in Fairfield East.

- Recycling streams:
  - paper and cardboard
  - hard plastics
  - metals
- Processed Engineered Fuel (PEF)
- Landfill

More details at **unsw.to/waste**

Reuse and recycling streams on campus

Reuse schemes available on campus

- Furniture reuse program (office only)
- Arc eReuse for computers and phones
- Arc Stationery reuse centre

Other recycling streams available on campus

- Clear soft plastic
- Polystyrene
- Batteries
- E-waste
- Fluorescent tubes and bulbs
- Toner cartridges

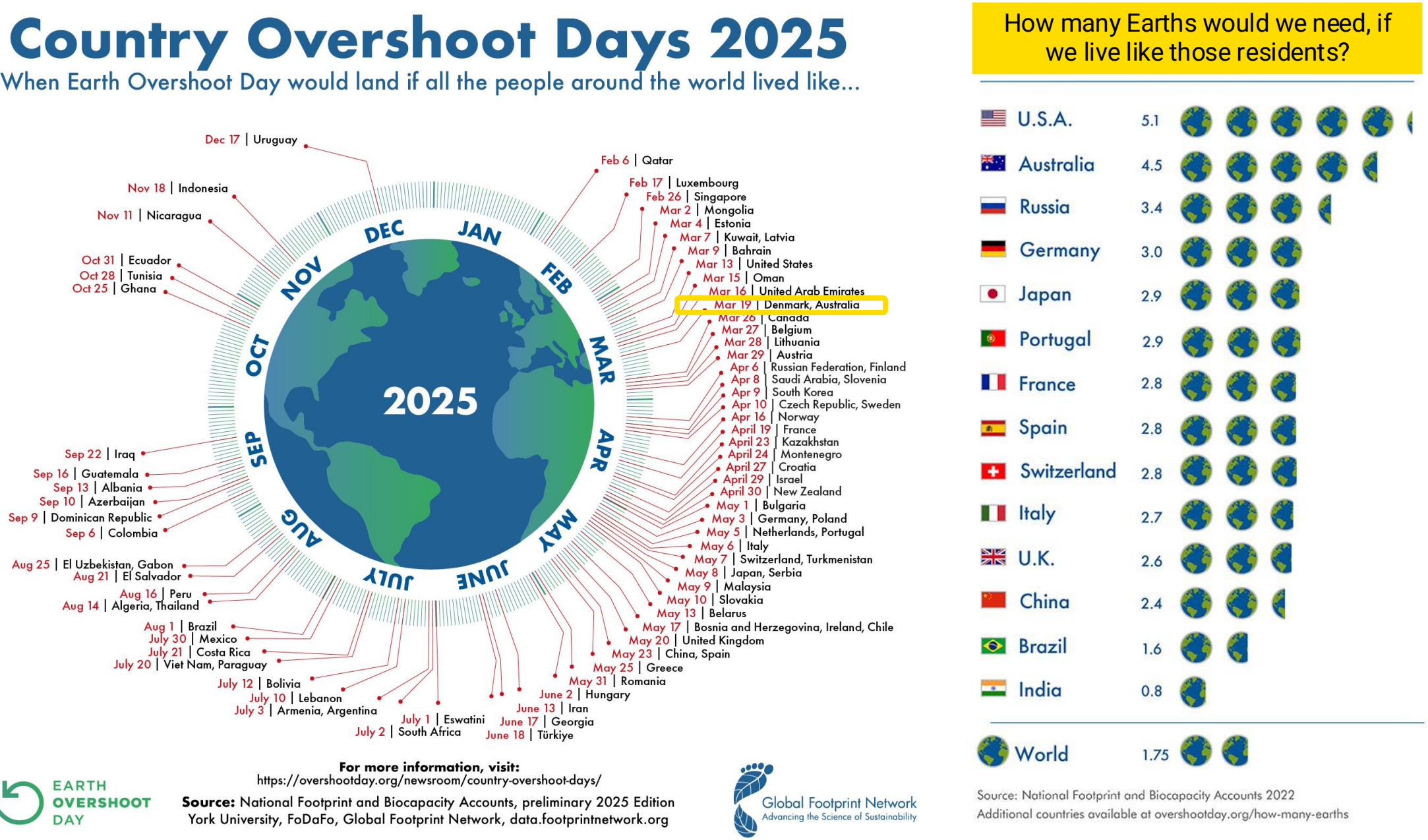
The best waste is no waste!

"Refuse and Reduce" before *"Reuse and Recycle"*

Ask yourself:

- Do I really need this, or can I do without it?
- Can I go packaging-free?
- How much do I really need?
- Can I borrow or find a second-hand alternative for my next purchase?
- Can I repurpose something I have to serve this purpose?

Let's push Earth's overshoot day back!



For more information, visit:
https://overshootday.org/newsroom/country-overshoot-days/

Source: National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts, preliminary 2025 Edition
York University, FoDaFo, Global Footprint Network, data.footprintnetwork.org

EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY

Global Footprint Network
Advancing the Science of Sustainability

How many Earths would we need, if we live like those residents?

Source: National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts 2022
Additional countries available at overshootday.org/how-many-earths

UNSW SYDNEY

A collaborative effort

General Services - waste

Environmental Sustainability

General Services - cleaning

Transformation (Hayley Blease)

Any questions?

Thank you!

sustainability@unsw.edu.au