

Optimising Waste through Cost Intelligence

The client

An Australian university with eight widely dispersed campuses, more than 2,000 staff and approximately 35,000 students. Its waste management requirements are complex, encompassing dozens of suppliers and approximately 450 different waste streams across its operations.

The challenge

The university was managing a highly fragmented waste portfolio, with multiple suppliers, inconsistent service standards and limited visibility across approximately 450 waste streams. Expenditure was increasing without clear performance benchmarks, while unreliable collections and frequent contamination of waste streams by students added further complexity.

At the same time, the university faced increasingly stringent regulatory, ESG and Sustainable Development Goal reporting requirements. Waste streams were subject to state-based Environmental Protection Acts, the National Waste Policy Action Plan, product stewardship and landfill diversion targets, as well as growing requirements around waste tracking and hazardous waste reporting.

Certain waste streams also required strict handling, storage and disposal procedures under biosecurity and environmental regulations. The fragmented supplier base and varying levels of reporting maturity made it difficult for the university to accurately assess value for money, demonstrate compliance and establish reliable ESG reporting.



The solution

ERA Group applied its Cost Intelligence methodology to create greater transparency, accountability and consistency across the university's waste management operations. ERA consolidated the supplier footprint across campuses and introduced benchmarking based on cost per cubic metre and cost per kilogram, providing a foundation for continuous improvement. The team also established a defensible ESG baseline aligned with relevant legislative requirements.

Rather than treating the project as a one-time procurement exercise, ERA incorporated ongoing monitoring and continual "right-sizing" of services. This allowed the university to continually evaluate its waste requirements and performance while responding to changing costs, regulations and operational needs.

The result

ERA Group's approach transformed a fragmented waste portfolio into a more transparent, compliant and continuously optimized system.

Through ongoing optimization and monitoring, the university achieved:

- **39.8% total savings, exceeding initial pricing projections by 13.19%**
- **34% reduction in waste volume (m³)**
- **Improved diversion from landfill and separation at source**
- **Greater visibility and accountability across waste management services**
- **A stronger foundation for ESG reporting and ongoing regulatory compliance**

Despite rising fuel costs, wages, legislative costs and landfill fees, the university's cost per kilogram of waste has continued on a downward trend over the past six years.

