

DECEMBER 13 | 2010

YOUR
COMMUNITY
VOICE

CASEY WEEKLY

CRANBOURNE

Fairfax Media

incorporating
Cranbourne
Journal

SECOND CHANCE

Everything old is new
again for keen recyclers

PEST ALERT

Farmers brace for locusts

caseyweeklycranbourne.com.au

SECOND TIME AROUND

Kristy, Outlook Environmental worker

Each year more than 46,000 tonnes of waste goes to landfill in Casey. How much of it can still be salvaged and put to use? Sam Bolitho and Tristan Maddocks separate the bottles from the trash to find out.

Photographs by Ted Kloszynski

After 13 years working at Hampton Park tip, nothing surprises Kerry Truscot. He has seen Rolex watches, gold jewellery and what he euphemistically calls 'personal toys'.

"We've actually had someone's ashes come through here one day. Oh, and then there was the headstone..."

Mr Truscot manages a team of 26 workers who salvage valuable goods from the landfill. They are part of Outlook Environmental, a not-for-profit group that provides opportunities for disadvantaged people through employment, training and social integration.

Workers at the tip are assigned different tasks to suit their ability. Most have worked there for more than 10 years and are now specialists in their field, be it lawnmower repairs or computer dismantling. Others work in the pit finding items that can be sold at the market on-site or to metal buyers.

Much of the valuable waste comes from companies that throw out products with damaged packaging.

"All our office equipment, you name it in the way of stationery, we get it coming in – brand new. We rarely have to buy anything."

Plumbers and electricians throw out a lot of stuff too.

"They'll clear out their work site and you'll get brand new plumbing and electrical fittings [coming into the tip]. Nuts, bolts, screws. You're not getting the odd one, you get a whole box – brand new."

Mr Truscot admits he can't help himself when it comes to recycling. "I really can't. It's not about saving the planet or anything – it's just the waste. I see a lot of useful things."

He said people often threw out things that were easy to fix. He attributed this to a generational change.

"The skills are just not there in younger people. A lot of lawn mowers get thrown out now. It's because they don't know how they work."

For the workers, it might be as simple as cleaning out a carburettor to get the mower running again.

"See that lawnmower, that's a \$300 lawnmower," he said, pointing to an abandoned red Victa. "Give it a clean and it's perfect."

Computers are another item that should never make it to the tip, says Hampton Park computer recycler Sanaulla Khan. He believes too few people know how to efficiently dispose of their outdated computers.

"There needs to be more awareness," he said.

"Normally, people put stuff on their nature strip for hard rubbish collection and it ends up in landfill. It's not a good way to do it. If you just give a local computer recycler a call, we can come and pick it up."

Mr Khan's biggest customers are schools and offices that need to get rid of hardware en masse, and often in short timeframes. "When their technology is getting updated, they need to get rid of their old systems. I pick it up from them, take it to my warehouse and sort it out."

Some systems are modern enough to be on-sold to computer refurbishers, while the remainder are stripped and sorted.

"We separate them into plastic and metal. The computers have different categories of metal: aluminum, stainless steel, and in circuit boards there is copper and sometimes gold and silver."

To the right buyer, of course, each of these elements is valuable.

More problematic than computers, however, are the monitors that usually accompany them. Once in landfill, they become serious health and environmental hazards.

"Monitors have lead and mercury in them. If they end up in landfill, they might get crushed and leak poisonous gases. It's very dangerous."

Casey Council is in the midst of updating its waste management strategy, which aims to increase the amount of landfill waste diverted to recyclers from 56 per cent to 65 per cent by 2014.

A 2007 audit of the council's kerbside garbage collections found each Casey tenancy generated 10.34 kilograms of garbage per week.

"Of this, almost 50 per cent could be recovered through better recycling and by diverting organic food waste to compost or worm farms," the draft waste management strategy states.

According to the director of Waste Converters/Smart Recycling, Ward Petherbridge, compost is one facet of recycling that should be more embraced. The Dandenong South-based facility recycles wood pallets, green waste, concrete, building and demolition waste and timber waste.

Mr Petherbridge said up to 3000 wood pallets were delivered to the facility each week. Some are repaired but most are ground into fine pieces to be used as compost.

Mr Petherbridge said a lot of the mulch was sold locally to residents but not enough local farmers were taking advantage of the recycled material.

Compost puts carbon back in the soil and helps make it more drought-resistant because it soaks in and retains rain water. It fell out of favour with farmers after World War II when chemicals were cheaper to use. But with the price of oil rising, compost is now a much cheaper alternative, he said.

"We view waste not as discarded material that needs to be disposed of, but rather as an important resource that can be transformed into a multitude of useful products."

WASTE NOT...

RECYCLING

- Do not put plastic bags in the recycling bin
- Tear or fold up any large bits of cardboard
- Make sure there are no food scraps in containers or pizza boxes

GREEN WASTE

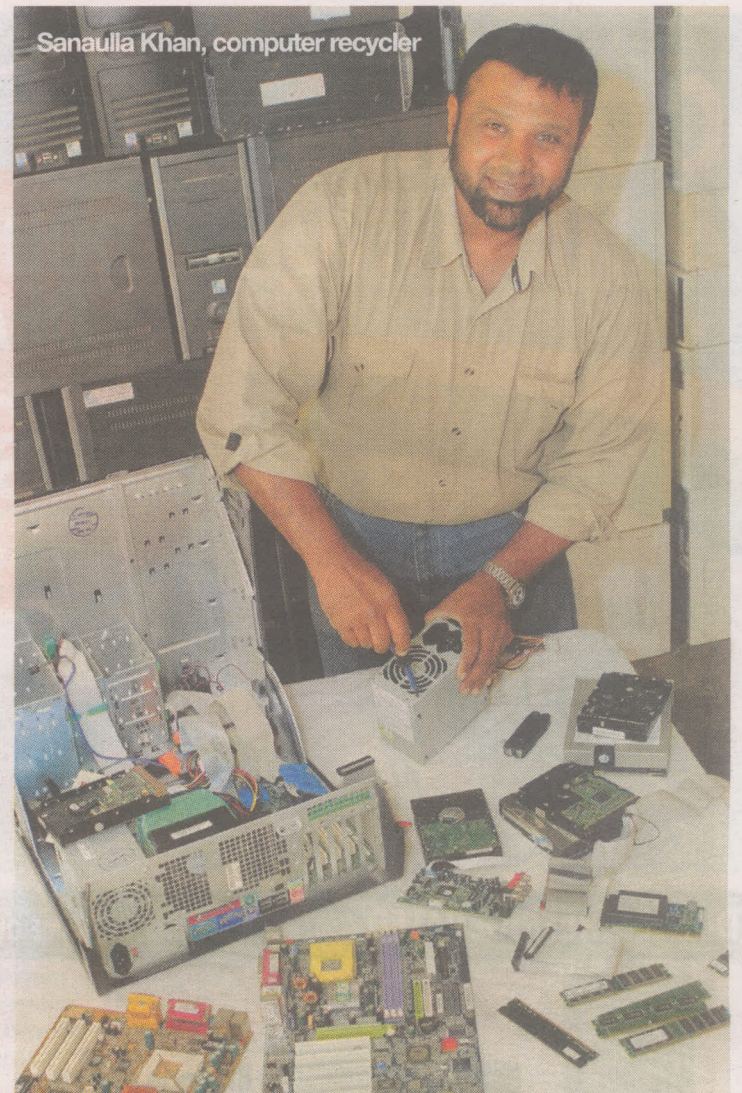
- Remove bricks, logs and other garden items
- Chop up prunings so the bin empties easily

REUSE

- Reuse shopping bags by taking them back to the supermarket
- Use egg cartons to grow seeds
- Use old large containers or tubs to plant in
- Shred paper to put in the compost bin
- Use newspaper under mulch in the garden for weed control
- Use cloth nappies, not disposables
- Buy products made from recycled materials

Source: Casey Council

Sanaulla Khan, computer recycler



Ward Petherbridge, WasteConverters

