23 December, 2021

**GREEN COLLECT AND ISUZU TEAM UP TO CREATE JOBS AND REDUCE WASTE**

Folios, document trays, paper clips, pens and unused stationery. What do these mundane office items have in common?

“There are so many things discarded in society that can be salvaged for reuse, but often end up in landfill, particularly in the office space,” explains Darren Andrews, Co-Founder and Executive Director of non-profit social enterprise, [Green Collect](https://www.greencollect.org/).

“We’re facing a growing waste problem here in Australia and in conjunction, a looming climate disaster.

“Our mission is working towards a world without a waste, and ensuring resources are used to their full potential.

“Many people are beginning to recognise how unsustainable the current ‘buy and dispose attitude’ is and are trying to break free of this model.”

**Say goodbye to unnecessary waste**

Part of Green Collect’s strategy is to convince local businesses to ditch this once acceptable linear model of consumption—buy, consume, dispose, repeat. They encourage and actively participate in a more circular economy: recycling, upcycling, reusing and rehoming items destined for Australia’s overflowing landfill sites.

And the Melbourne-based, non-profit social enterprise is keen on going one step further, also creating work opportunities for people with barriers to employment, including those who have faced homelessness, cultural exclusion or who hold refugee status.

The organisation got its first legs back in 2002 as a pilot project borne of a think tank session funded by BP Australia. After two years of successful incubation, in which they managed to divert 4.6 tonnes of cork from landfill, Green Collect was incorporated in 2005.

In its 15th year of operation last year, with a team of 35 employees, Green Collect salvaged office material earmarked for landfill to the tune of 125 tonnes.

They managed to find a new home for approximately 55 per cent of this volume and recycle approximately 45 per cent, with only a handful of items ending up as landfill waste.

“We have retail channels in Yarraville and Braybrook which provide a ‘new life’ for recycled and upcycled items, but we are always finding alternative homes for those items that would otherwise be scrapped,” said Darren.

“We supply a range of community groups that may not have the capital acquire materials, such as organisations helping kids returning to school from refugee backgrounds with stationery.

“But I want to stress that business have the power to make change, too. One of my favourite examples of the circular process is a company who sent us 700 used binder folders.

“We were able to turn these into branded notebooks that they then bought back from us, which was an excellent outcome for them, and a great outcome for the environment.”

**Transport challenge**

From its humble beginnings, Green Collect has gone from working with government departments and small kitchen hospitality and catering to collecting waste from over 200 businesses and corporate offices.

With the ever-increasing challenge of moving materials around Melbourne, they reached out to Australia’s most trusted transport brand, Isuzu Trucks, for assistance.

“To continue growing, we really needed a larger vehicle to increase what we could pick up in a single trip,” Darren explained.

“We were very grateful when Isuzu offered us their support… they listened to what our team needed—a fuel-efficient, manoeuvrable truck that was easy to use—and offered us a great deal on the [NNR 45-150 Vanpack](https://isuzu.com.au/applications/vanpack/).

**Smart city solution**

With its 4.3-metre-long, 2.2-metre-wide and 2.1-metre-high van-style body, the [NNR 45-150 Vanpack](https://isuzu.com.au/applications/vanpack/) can carry a substantial volume of office waste for the Green Collect team.

Sitting at a GVM of 4,500 kg (with a GCM of 8,000 kg), the Vanpack can be driven by any one of Green Collect’s employees with a standard car licence.

Safety features such as an Anti-Skid Regulator (ASR), Stability Control System (IESC), rear grab handles and step, and internal tie-down rails all appealed to Green Collect’s people-first priorities. Although the Isuzu Vanpack comes standard with rear barn doors, Green Collect have also specified additional features including a side door and a hydraulic tailgate, which makes for easy access and loading.

“The truck has excellent safety standards, great access to the side and rear doors as well as a handy tailgate lift,” Darren noted enthusiastically.

“The majority of our collection activities are in the CBD, and the Vanpack is perfect for driving through those small streets... it’s a very handy size for laneways and loading docks.

“The fact that it can also be driven on a driver’s licence is also a bonus for our staff, they are all very excited about having a go in the new truck.

“If we had a dream truck, the Vanpack was definitely it!”

**Covid impact**

Like many businesses operating in Victoria, Green Collect has seen its fair share of issues dealing with the pandemic. With the core focus of their enterprise on reducing corporate waste, when most offices have moved to working-from-home conditions… the compounding impact of the multiple lockdowns has created some evolving challenges, described Darren.

 “When the pandemic hit last year, there were no collections scheduled during lockdown and we had weeks on weeks where nothing could be processed.

“Then when the lockdown lifted, offices were clamouring to have materials collected and we had our busiest month ever.

“It’s been incredibly difficult to predict what will happen, especially with our staff team, and at the same time making sure we’re complying with new health directives and enforcements.”

There may be a silver lining to the sad tale of the pandemic in Melbourne though—as lockdowns have spurred many businesses to clean out their premises.

“We’re in survival mode at the moment, but once we return to a ‘COVID normal’ we have strategic plans to increase our growth and collections,” Darren said.

“Even with the uncertainties of lockdowns last year, we were able to maintain overall volumes.”

**Eyes to the future**

With the new Isuzu Vanpack generating considerable interest within the staff team, Darren noted that further fleet expansion and further driver training may also be on the cards for Green Collect.

“Skills development is important to us and there’s certainly things on our radar around how we can help to increase our staff’s employability and their career pathways,” he said.

“The staff have been pretty excited to learn the new safety procedures and the process of using the truck safely, site-specific practices and so forth.

“In time we will probably be looking at getting a heavier vehicle, which may play a part in upskilling our employees into a medium rigid or heavy licence.”

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**For further information, please contact:**  **For Isuzu Trucks releases and photos:**

Sam Gangemi Arkajon Communications

Isuzu Australia Limited Phone: 03 9867 5611

Phone: 03 9644 6666 Email: isuzu@arkajon.com.au