

The Rules

Waste for Offices

Version 1.1 — June 2025



Cover photo: A person sorting a disposable coffee cup and lid into a three-bin office waste system.

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1 Introduction

1.1 General

The National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) is a performance-based rating system managed by the **National Administrator**.

A **NABERS Waste Rating** is an independent benchmark of a building's waste management performance expressed on a star rating scale. It assesses the environmental impact of **operational waste** materials leaving a building by rating the elements that an organisation has control over. This includes how well a building separates and diverts waste generated in the building into streams that can be re-used and recycled, and whether those materials are likely to go to a facility that will recover the materials.

NABERS rating	Performance comparison
6 stars ★★★★★★	Market leading waste management
5 stars ★★★★★	Excellent waste management
3 stars ★★★	Market average waste management

An accredited **NABERS Waste Rating** is awarded when the **National Administrator** certifies a rating completed by an **Assessor**. The **National Administrator** may independently audit the rating and assist in resolving complex technical issues.

This document contains **Rules** for **Assessors** conducting a **Waste Rating for Offices**. It is intended that this document be read alongside *NABERS The Rules — Waste*.

For the purpose of a NABERS rating, “offices” are understood as being commercial buildings whose primary use is for administrative, clerical, professional and similar information-based activities.

These **Rules** will supersede the *NABERS The Rules — Waste for Offices v1.0, January 2024*.

1.2 Interpretation of the Rules and Rulings

These **Rules** are to be read in conjunction with the respective NABERS **Rulings** as they apply to the specific building type. **Rulings** are used to address specific issues that may arise after the publication of the **Rules**.

Note: **Rules** texts are amended as required by additional **Rulings** which are published on the NABERS website at www.nabers.gov.au.

Where a conflict between these **Rules** and existing **Rulings** is present, the requirements of the **Rulings** take precedence over the **Rules**.

Assessments for an accredited rating must comply with the version of the **Rules** and any relevant **Rulings** current on the day the rating application is lodged to NABERS, unless the **National Administrator** has specifically approved otherwise in writing.

1.3 Situations not covered by the Rules

Assessors must comply with these **Rules** unless prior approval has been sought and approved by the **National Administrator**.

Where appropriate, **Assessors** may contact the **National Administrator** to propose an alternative methodology, outlining the circumstances and rationale. Prior approval for use is required and may be granted conditionally, on a case-by-case basis and at the **National Administrator**'s discretion.

Procedures not contained within these **Rules** may only be used for a particular rating with prior written approval from the **National Administrator**. Approval to use the same procedure must be sought from the **National Administrator** each time it is proposed to be used.


Approval is entirely at the discretion of the **National Administrator**. All written correspondence is required as evidence and should be collected prior to lodging the rating.

1.4 How to use this document

The term "**Rules**" refers to a body of works produced by NABERS that specify what must be examined, tested and documented when an **Assessor** conducts a rating. Wherever the term is used in this document from Chapter 3 onwards, it refers to this document, *NABERS The Rules — Waste for Offices*. Other **Rules** documents mentioned in the text are distinguished from the present document by the inclusion of their title.


Text appearing **teal** and **bold** is a defined term. Defined terms can be found in Chapter 2 of these **Rules** or in the terms and definitions chapter of the respective **Rules** document.

The following formatting conventions may appear in this text:

 Important requirements and/or instructions are highlighted by an information callout box.

Note: Text appearing with a grey background is explanatory text only and is not to be read as part of the **Rules**.

Example: Text appearing with a green background is intended to demonstrate a worked example of the respective **Rules** section or **Ruling** section.

 This is a documentation requirement callout box.

1.5 What is new in this version

The main change between this version (1.1) and the previous version (1.0) is that aggregation of floor-by-floor or tenant-by-tenant waste weight data is no longer permitted according to Section 6.2.

A detailed list of the changes made between this version and the previous version is given in Appendix A.

1.6 Related documents

The following documents, available from the NABERS website, provide further guidance on the **Rules** and **Assessor** responsibilities and should be considered when assessing a building for a NABERS rating:

- a) NABERS Waste calculation spreadsheet (available from the **National Administrator**).
- b) Waste data upload spreadsheet for the **NABERS Waste Platform**.
- c) For guidance on how to use the **NABERS Waste Platform**, refer to our user support documents.

The following documents have been referenced within these Rules:

- 1) *NABERS The Rules — Waste, v2.1, May 2025*

Assessors must use the latest version of NABERS Rules and **Rulings** that have been referenced within this document. All documents are available on the **NABERS website**.

2 Terms and definitions

This chapter lists the key terms, and their definitions, that are integral to the proper use of this document.

Term	Definition
Assessor	An accredited person authorised by the National Administrator to conduct NABERS Waste Ratings .
base building	<p>Elements that are within the control of the building owner, for the benefit of all tenants.</p> <p>For the purposes of a NABERS Waste Rating or Verification, the concept of base building means only those waste streams—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) that are managed by the building owner or management company; andb) where bins for that waste stream are provided to most tenants in the building; <p>can be included in the rating.</p>
bin service	<p>Each combination of waste stream, equipment type, equipment size and allocated dock, for the bins in a waste collection contract. These are the bins containing the materials that are presented for collection by the waste collector.</p> <div><p>Example:</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Eight 240 L [size] general waste [waste stream] bins [equipment type] collected from a site is one bin service.b) Two 660 L general waste bins collected from the same site is a different bin service.</div>
contamination	Any material found in recycling streams that is not where it should be.
contamination audit	An audit of one collection of materials generated on-site for a bin service that is not going to landfill.
contamination rate	The ratio of the weight of contamination in a waste stream to total weight of that waste stream .

Term	Definition
Material Recovery Score (MRS)	A measure of the quality of the end-of-life outcome of waste leaving a commercial building. It is calculated according to the Material Recovery Values that have been applied to bin services included in the recycling calculation.
Material Recovery Value	A value between zero and six that is evaluated for each bin service based on the criteria of material stream separation, recovery outcome quality and pollution potential.
NABERS Waste Platform	The online digital service provided by NABERS for the purpose of tracking customers' waste data. Used by facilities managers to validate building performance over time and by Assessors in the calculation of accredited NABERS Waste Ratings .
NABERS Waste Rating	An independent benchmark, according to the system overseen by the National Administrator , of a building's recycling rate as determined by the weight of all materials managed by the building owners (or their representatives) that leave the site .
National Administrator	<p>The body responsible for administering NABERS, in particular the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Establishing and maintaining the standards and procedures to be followed in all aspects of the operation of the system. b) Determining issues that arise during the operation of the system and the making of ratings. c) Accrediting Assessors and awarding accredited ratings in accordance with NABERS standards and procedures. <p>The functions of the National Administrator are undertaken by the NSW Government.</p>
Net Lettable Area (NLA)	<p>The floor area, in m², that can be rented to tenants in a commercial office building.</p> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Note: Common methods for measuring NLA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Property Council of Australia (PCA), Method of Measurement: Commercial, 2008 (1997 reprint). b) Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), Method of Measurement, 1989 or 2017. c) Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), Method of Measurement (Net Rentable Area), 1985 or 2017. </div>

Term	Definition
operational control	<p>Where the building owner or manager is ultimately responsible for managing a given waste stream through their contracts and on-site management practices. Where the owner or manager has a direct or indirect contract with a company to manage a waste stream, they have influence over whether items are likely to be diverted from disposal or go to the best possible re-use.</p> <p>They do not have control over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The commodities market. b) Regulation of the waste industry. c) Where facilities are located. d) Whether a facility has capacity to accept their waste on a given day.
operational waste	Waste generated on-site during the normal operations of a building.
rating period	The 12-month base period for the rating, requiring at least 12 continuous months of acceptable data upon which the rating is based.
recovery	Any end-of-life management process wherein materials that have become waste are prepared to fulfill a purpose in place of new materials that would otherwise have been used for that purpose. In the context of recycling rates , this includes waste-to-energy.
recycling	Reprocessing of products or components of products that have become waste, to make new materials.
recycling rate	The ratio of Total Recovered Materials to Total Materials Generated expressed as a percentage.
Rules	Authoritative document produced by the National Administrator that specifies what must be covered by an Assessor in order to produce a rating.
Ruling	An authoritative decision by the National Administrator which acts as an addition or amendment to the Rules .
site	The legal boundary of a building that meets the requirements for a specific rating type.

Term	Definition
Total Materials Generated	The mass in kilograms, of the contents of every bin, compactor or other waste vessel on site , measured at the point of collection prior to removal from the building.
Total Recovered Materials	The mass in kilograms, of the contents of every bin, compactor or other waste vessel on site except those which have landfill as a primary disposal outcome, measured at the point of collection prior to removal from the building. This figure is adjusted through a contamination rate .
waste	Defined according to the legislation at the site , but otherwise anything that the holder discards, intends to discard, or is required to discard. Note: For reasons of readability, this term is not highlighted throughout this document.
waste collector	The party responsible for removal of waste items from the building and transporting them from the point of collection to the collection destination.
Waste Rating for Offices	A NABERS Waste Rating for an office base building or whole building . For the purpose of a NABERS rating, “offices” are understood as being commercial buildings whose primary use is for administrative, clerical, professional and similar information-based activities.
waste stream	In the context of waste sorting, this refers to a collection of items or materials that have been gathered together as a category, to facilitate efficient transport towards a common destination facility or material outcome.
whole building	A rating that assesses the entire operations and impact of the building, including the impact of tenants. For the purposes of a NABERS Waste Rating , the concept of whole building means any waste stream in the building can be included in the rating if it meets the measurement criteria.

3 Key concepts and procedures

3.1 Information required for a Waste Rating for Offices

In addition to the information required in *NABERS The Rules – Waste*, the following information is required, as a minimum, for a **Waste Rating for Offices**:

- a) The building's total **net lettable area (NLA)**.
- b) The number, size and type of bin for each **waste stream** service presented for collection.

3.2 Roles and responsibilities

Refer to *NABERS The Rules — Waste* for information on roles and responsibilities. There are no additional roles or responsibilities for **Waste Ratings for Offices**.

4 Waste Rating for Offices types and buildings

4.1 Currently available rating types

NABERS ratings are founded on industry-wide benchmarks, so that similar buildings can be fairly compared. The **Waste Rating for Offices** benchmarking process produced the results in Table 4.1.

The following rating scopes are available under these **Rules**:

Table 4.1: Currently available rating scopes

Rating scope	Benchmark based on	Benchmark bands
Office buildings (base building)	Verified waste score of building managed waste streams only (see Section 5.1.2)	6 stars > 74% 5.5 stars > 67% 5 stars > 60% 4.5 stars > 53% 4 stars > 46% 3.5 stars > 39% 3 stars > 32% 2.5 stars > 25% 2 stars > 18% 1.5 stars > 11% 1 star > 4% 0 stars > 0 - 4%
Office buildings (whole building)	Verified waste score of any waste stream from the building that can be reliably measured (see Section 5.1.3)	6 stars > 84% 5.5 stars > 76% 5 stars > 68% 4.5 stars > 60% 4 stars > 52% 3.5 stars > 44% 3 stars > 36% 2.5 stars > 28%

		2 stars > 20% 1.5 stars > 12% 1 star > 4% 0 stars > 0 - 4%
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4.2 Managing non-office waste

Where possible, non-office spaces should be excluded from a **Waste Rating for Offices**. If this is not possible, small areas of non-office space can be included in the boundary of the building, for example, lobby café. The rating also covers any spaces on the property provided for sole use of office building occupants (e.g. a restricted courtyard attached to an office tower).

In the case of buildings with a significant proportion of non-office space, **Assessors** should contact the **National Administrator**.

4.3 Precincts of office buildings

NABERS prefers to rate single buildings to ensure the rating reflects the operational efficiency of individual buildings. This may not, however, always be possible due to the waste dock design. For precincts, the following should be applied, in order of feasibility:

- Each building is rated separately.
- The minimum possible number of combined buildings are rated as a single entity.
- The entire precinct is rated as a single entity.

Example: A precinct with six office buildings may have two discrete waste docks. In this scenario, bins from buildings A, B and E might use the first dock and would get a combined rating, whilst buildings C, D and F that use the second dock would get a different combined rating. Buildings of the same type should be preferentially combined before creating mixed-use ratings.

For situations b) and c), the **Assessor** must record why the preferred option is not possible, and what steps the precinct is taking to trial individual building allocation in the future, for example, tagging bins that are removed from specific buildings.

The order of priority in Section 4.2 applies to buildings in a precinct.

This concept only applies to the **Waste Rating for Offices**. For other ratings, if you encounter a scenario which requires multiple buildings to be included in a single rating, contact the **National Administrator** for approval.

5 Waste streams

5.1 Waste types by rating scope

5.1.1 General

The **Waste Rating for Offices** rates buildings in two categories:

- a) **Whole building** – All **waste streams** leaving the building that can be reliably measured.
- b) **Base building** – Only those **waste streams** that are managed by the building owner or manager.

The reliability of the data and contract arrangements determine whether a **waste stream** is in scope for a particular rating type.

5.1.2 Managed waste streams

A **waste stream** that is managed by the building owner or manager is one where they have a direct or indirect contract with a company to manage that **waste stream**. Any **waste stream** deemed to be general waste must be included to ensure a fair rating.

5.1.3 Reliably measured waste streams

Waste streams that are not managed under a direct or indirect contract with the building owner or manager can be included in a **whole building** rating where the stream is reliably measured. Examples of such streams often include secure paper, printer cartridges and so forth. This means the **Assessor** is confident the data is as reasonable as other data provided for building managed **waste streams**.

5.2 Optional items

The **NABERS Waste Platform** allows for the measurement of over 50 different waste types. Most of these types can be included in a **Waste Rating for Offices**, if the building maintains **operational control** over the **waste streams** and the materials can be reliably measured. If the building is configured to have bins for these waste types and data is uploaded to the platform and is not excluded under Section 5.3 of these **Rules**, it will form part of the rating calculation. The inclusion of these items will improve the **recycling rate**, so the inclusion of these items is encouraged. Refer to *NABERS The Rules — Waste* for more information on **waste streams**.

Additional **operational waste** types may be added. To request a new waste type, contact the **National Administrator**. There is a significant lead time on reviewing requests and adding a new waste type.

5.3 Waste streams excluded from a Waste Rating for Offices

The purpose of the rating is to fairly compare **operational waste** from building to building. To meet this objective the following **waste streams** are excluded:

- a) Waste that is not part of the day-to-day operation of the building, including construction and fit-out waste, or any items brought onto **site** as part of employee engagement philanthropic campaigns (e.g. food drives or clothing collections).
- b) Waste generated from non-office space, such as retail tenancies within the building. If non-office waste cannot be separated due to building operation, then see Section 4.2.
- c) Any waste type listed as clinical or hazardous on the **NABERS Waste Platform**.
- d) Grease trap waste.

6 Calculating the rating

6.1 General

The fundamental calculation for a **Waste Rating for Offices** is the **recycling rate**:

$$\text{Recycling rate (\%)} = \frac{\text{Total Recovered Materials (kg)}}{\text{Total Materials Generated (kg)}}$$

Total Materials Generated is the mass, in kilograms, of the contents of every bin, compactor or other waste vessel that leaves the **site**.

Total Recovered Materials is the sum, in kilograms, of the contents of every bin, compactor or other waste vessel that leaves the **site**, except any bin, compactor or other waste vessel which contains waste sent directly to landfill. This figure is adjusted through a **contamination rate** (refer to *NABERS The Rules — Waste*).

Other factors included in the rating are the data quality score (required for **Waste Ratings for Offices**) and the **Material Recovery Score** (voluntary for **Waste Ratings for Offices**). Refer to *NABERS The Rules — Waste* for information on how these are calculated.

6.2 Floor-by-floor or tenant waste weighing process

In a property where the waste is weighed by floor or by tenant, the point of measurement will continue to be the point at which bins or other equipment are presented ready for a waste truck to collect. Cleaners may continue to weigh the outputs from each tenancy separately (and are encouraged to do so to report individual tenant performance), however this information cannot be used as primary data to represent building performance for a building-wide **Waste Rating for Offices**.

The primary weight data used to report the waste leaving the building must be the total weight of each **bin service** presented for collection, after being filled by the cleaners and before being emptied by the **waste collector**. The bin count will be the number of bins the **waste collector** empties.

This ensures a consistent approach across all NABERS ratings and reduces the opportunity for manual handling errors.

The process for the **contamination audit** and composition audit is outlined in *NABERS The Rules — Waste*. The **Assessor** is to carry out the audit at point of pick-up once the cleaners have put the waste in the bins. The **Assessor** will still need to confirm two sources of bin count for the data verification.

7 Waste audit methods

7.1 Waste streams by audit type

Some **waste streams** are excluded from a particular type of audit, usually because the **contamination rates** for that waste are very low, or the rating requires a weight to be entered on the **NABERS Waste Platform**.

Refer to *NABERS The Rules — Waste* for more information on **waste streams** by audit type.

7.2 Exclusion periods

The **Assessor** must confirm that the day of auditing will be a normal operational day for that property. A normal operational day is a day where the occupancy is representative of the average occupancy of the **rating period**. Confirmation from the operators or managers of the property is required to fulfill this requirement.

The following periods are unacceptable for conducting any type of waste audit:

- a) Two weeks before or after the end of the financial year.
- b) Public holidays and public school holidays relevant to the location of the building.
- c) During January.
- d) In the last two weeks of December.
- e) Any other unusual operating day.

Note: The audit exclusion periods do not impact the 120 days. For example if the **Assessor** were to carry out the audit in February, the January exclusion period does not get added to the 120 days.

Appendix A List of changes

The following table lists the changes to the content of *NABERS The Rules — Waste for Offices v1.0 (January 2024)* in order to produce this version 1.1.

Overview		
Version 2.0 (old version)	Version 2.1 (current version)	Changes made
1.1 General		Updated in line with NABERS template.
1.2 Interpretation of the Rules and Rulings		Updated in line with NABERS template.
1.3 Situations not covered by the Rules		Updated in line with NABERS template.
1.4 How to use this document		Updated in line with NABERS template.
1.5 What is new in this version		Included latest changes.
1.6 Related documents		Updated in line with NABERS template.
2 Terms and definitions		Added definitions for Assessor and Waste Rating for Offices. Removed unused definitions. Included contract in the definition of bin service.
5.2 Optional items		Minor modifications to ensure consistency with Section 5.3.
6.2 Floor-by-floor or tenant waste weighing process		Deleted references to previously allowed manual handling data aggregation technique and clarified that tenant-by-tenant data is now deemed inappropriate for use as primary data to extrapolate building-wide results.
N/A	Appendix A List of changes	Included latest changes.

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