

INFORMAL SIX-MONTH REVIEW: RESOURCE RECOVERY AND WASTE SERVICES POLICY

Report Author: Executive Officer – Resource Recovery
Responsible Officer: Director Planning & Sustainable Futures
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidential information is contained in Attachment 2 to this report. This information relates to contractual matters and contains commercially sensitive information.

Any disclosure of the information included within the confidential report could be prejudicial to the interests of the Council or other parties. Report is confidential in accordance with Section 3(1)(g)(i)(g)(ii) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. This report provides details regarding approval to award a contract that complies with the Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

SUMMARY

On 8 August 2023, Council resolved to adopt a Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy with an informal review to occur at six months.

A key aim of the Policy is to meet State legislated environmental targets, principally related to landfill diversion.

The approach underpinning improving diversion rates is through a combination of increasing waste segregation and recycling options, whilst simultaneously decreasing landfill disposal.

The review commenced in October 2023 to align with changes to service delivery has been informed by six months of data, as well as feedback from the community. Data from the six months was then compiled and reviewed in April/May to inform the review.

To review the outcomes of the new service, Council:

- Monitored and investigated customer feedback, through requests, complaints, petitions, submissions, presentations to Council and broader sentiment shared on social media.
- Investigated bin capacity and contamination, including through physical audits of each bin stream.
- Monitored the volume changes of all waste streams.

The service review is contained in Attachment 1.

In summary, the first six-months of the Yarra Ranges service has shown that:

- Material progress toward State legislated targets has occurred with diversion of waste from landfill across all collection streams increasing from 46% to 73%, just below the 75% Council target for 2025.
 - Contamination rates of Food Organics and Green Organics (FOGO) bins are 0.49%.
 - Diverting waste from landfill to composting has avoided more than 3,127 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.
 - An additional 9,037 tonnes of organic material have been composted into usable products.
- During the transition period of June 2023 to February 2024, there was significant resistance to the services changes, particularly regarding the shift to fortnightly rubbish collections and the introduction of the universal FOGO bin.
- There has been no noticeable increase in dumped rubbish activity or increase in volumes within our street and park litterbin collections.
- The main residual requests following the transition period relate to opting out of the FOGO service and a return to weekly rubbish collection (particularly coming from households with a higher number of occupants as well as households with children in nappies).
- Other than FOGO liner requests, the average number of customer waste requests has reduced close to pre-transition levels.
- The service, in its current form and based on evidence of data, is functioning effectively for the large part of the community.

On balance of impact and outcome, this report recommends expanding bin size choice for community and prioritising behaviour change efforts for those facing difficulties in adjusting to the new services.

In addition, it recommends delaying the rollout of a glass service from 1 July 2025 to commence on 1 July 2026 (2026-2027 Financial year), based on:

- Assisting the community with current cost-of-living pressures.
- Enabling a stronger focus on the recent service changes (Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) service and reduced rubbish collection frequency).
- Providing an opportunity to assess the impact of the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) on the glass collection service.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

- 1. Notes the findings and recommendations of the six-month review.*
- 2. Maintains the fortnightly rubbish collection frequency and though contract variation discussions progress the provision of additional bin size options for each waste stream.*
- 3. Progress investigations for alternative options for Multi-Unit Developments with limited storage space, including shared user arrangements and/or 240L bins.*
- 4. Endorse a deferral of the Glass Collection service to commence in July 2026.*
- 5. Hold consideration of an individual property opt-out option for FOGO for properties that have systems in place to manage FOGO on the property until state service standards for municipal collections are finalised.*
- 6. Support the extension of the reusable nappy workshop program for a further 12 months.*
- 7. Advocates to the Government for improved outcomes for managing soft plastics.*

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

- Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan adopted by Council on 13 June 2023.
- Adoption of Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy on 8 August 2023.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

This report responds to an informal review of Council's Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy 2023 in accordance with the Council resolution of 8th August 2023.

The report details the effectiveness of the service in achieving its stated aim via increasing the diversion of waste from landfill and increasing organic matter reuse and addresses feedback regarding the impacts of the service changes raised by the community.

The service review is provided as Attachment 1.

Background

The complete service review, including detail of resident feedback, performance data and costs is contained in Attachment 1. This section outlines:

- The current State context, including draft State Government Service Standards
- The strategic and policy context relevant to Yarra Ranges Council
- The broader context with respect to other councils waste services
- The National Best Practice Approach for Optimising Waste Recovery Rates.

The Current State Context

State legislation requires councils to provide residents with a four-stream waste collection service by 2030, including:

- Rubbish service
- Food & Garden Organic (FOGO) service
- Recycling service
- Glass service.

Individual local government authorities are responsible for transitioning to the new system as well as determining levels of service based on individual contract arrangements and local context. As part of the draft guidelines the state has indicated that the above timelines for implementation may be bought forward.

Table 1. Targets from Recycling Victoria: A New Economy Policy

<i>Diversion from landfill</i>	<i>Waste Generation Reduction</i>	<i>Organics to landfill reduction</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 72% by 2025• 80% by 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15% per capita by 2030 from 2020 levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20% reduction by 2025• 50% reduction by 2030

Proposed Household Waste and Recycling Service Standard

The State Government has recently released for public feedback a proposed Household Waste and Recycling Service Standard. The basis of the standard is to include direction on:

- The acceptable service arrangements a council must provide

- What waste items can be included in each bin type
- Whether liners in FOGO bins will be accepted or encouraged
- An option for households to opt out of the FOGO service providing there are effective controls in place by the council to ensure FOGO material does not enter the general rubbish stream. This could include allowing home composting and re-use of compost on the property.

The consultation period closes on 14 August 2024 and a submission on the proposed service standard along with the new regulations and regulatory impact statement will be prepared.

Yarra Ranges Council Context:

Yarra Ranges Council provides a range of waste services to meet regulatory requirements and community needs. The service encourages avoidance, reuse and recycling with an objective of minimising disposal of waste to landfill. The costs of the services are recovered through the Waste Service Charge.

Yarra Ranges Council's Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2023-2030 (CWRRP) responds to the State legislated four-stream waste service requirements. The Plan which is available on Councils website, identifies reduction and recovery targets as well as service levels to achieve these targets.

Table 2. Council's waste reduction targets from the CWRRP.

<i>Diversion from landfill</i>	<i>Waste Generation Reduction</i>	<i>Organics to landfill reduction</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% by 2025 • 90% by 2030 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% per capita by 2030 from 2020 levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% reduction by 2025 • 60% reduction by 2030

The 2023 Yarra Ranges Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy sets out significant changes to waste collection services to comply with the following:

- *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*
- *Recycling Victoria A New Economy Policy 2020*
- *Local Government Act 1989 & 2020.*

The Policy details how the waste charges are applied, the bin types and bin sizes for Councils kerbside collection services and the targets for waste reduction and material recovery.

Council provides kerbside collection services to approximately 62,000 residential properties plus a further approximately 2,500 non-residential services. The costs of the services are recovered through the Waste Service Charge.

Prior to the Policy, Council offered a municipal wide weekly rubbish collection, fortnightly recycling collection and an optional fortnightly garden organic service to most of the municipality.

Broader context with respect to other Councils waste services

Out of 79 Local Governments in Victoria, 52 have a rubbish, recycling and universal FOGO service. Further to this:

- There are 24 other councils with weekly FOGO and fortnightly rubbish collections.
- There are 28 councils that have a weekly rubbish collection and universal (every household) FOGO collection.
- Four councils have an 'Opt Out' option for FOGO. Two are general opt-outs (with set criteria), one is for Building Managers and Owners Corporations properties only, and one is for properties less than 400m².
- Eight councils currently have an Opt-In model.

Knox City Council considered and adopted a decision at the 25 March 2024 Knox Council Meeting to revert to weekly rubbish collection. This decision was then [rescinded at the 22 April 2024 Council Meeting](#) and the original position of service delivery levels upheld which consists of a weekly FOGO and fortnightly rubbish collection service.

Nillumbik Shire Council provides a weekly FOGO and fortnightly landfill and recycling collection service, which has been in place for approximately a decade.

National Best Practice for Optimising Waste Recovery Rates

Achieving the State and Council targets requires a combination of policy measures and community behaviour change. A key strategic objective for Sustainability Victoria's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan is 'Drive the uptake of key circular behaviours in our communities'. A means of achieving this is to make circular actions easy for citizens and to tackle the top behaviours identified to drive waste avoidance.

As considered in the National Waste Report 2022, the accepted best practice for high diversion rates is:

- Weekly collection of FOGO waste
- Fortnightly collection of rubbish
- Fortnightly collection of recycling.

Research by Monash University's Behaviour Works Unit has highlighted that consistency is the key to fostering positive behaviour change. By making the right action convenient and habitual, the community is supported to separate waste effectively, efficiently and for the greatest environmental impact.

Council's Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan emphasises waste reduction options, with landfill disposal as the last resort (Figure 1).

By adopting best practice service frequencies and emphasising waste education, the community can conveniently prioritise higher ranked alternatives from the waste hierarchy, contributing to the Council and State's diversion and reduction targets.

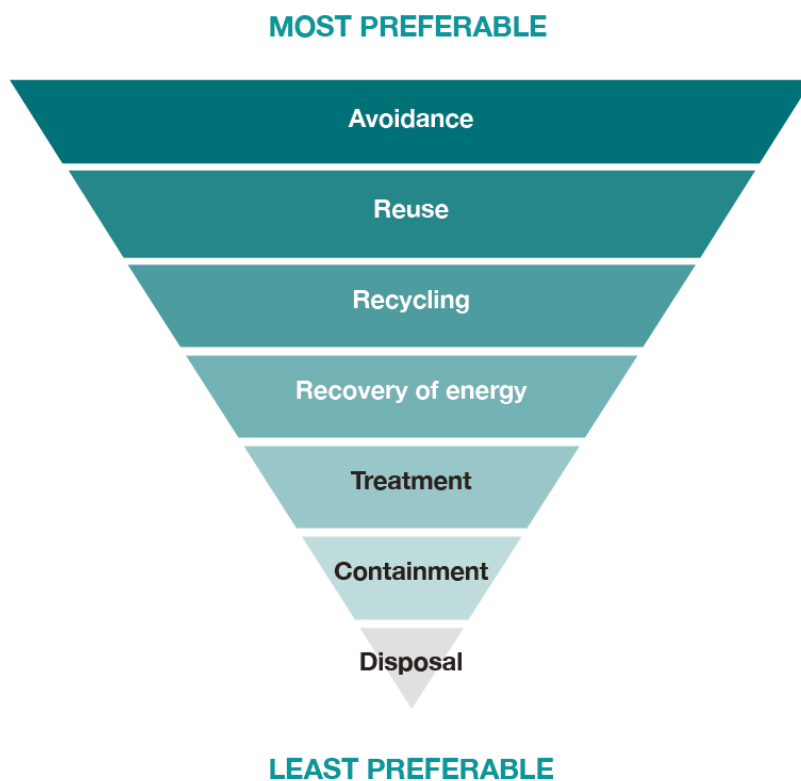


Figure 1. Waste Management Hierarchy from Council's CWRR Plan.

Options considered

Service options and corresponding analysis is contained in section 3 of the review (Attachment 1).

Options have been considered against:

- Key areas of community concern

- Existing options already in place for residents
- Potential impact on diversion targets
- Potential impact on waste charge (both quantum and equity).

In response to community feedback, the recommended options to progress under each waste stream are as follows:

Rubbish:

- A wider range of bin size options including larger 240L bins as the base service.
- Alternative additional bin options, such as 2 x 80L or additional 80L bin.
- Continuation of the re-usable nappy trial for a further 12 months.
- Investigate alternative options for users with limited storage space for shared bins (relevant to all waste streams).

Reverting to weekly rubbish collection is not recommended based on impact on diversion targets and additional cost imposed onto the majority of the community.

FOGO

- A deferral of the decision for an 'opt-out' until state guidelines released.
- Offer additional bin size options including 80L as a base bin size and 80L or 120L as the additional bin size (120L or 80L)

Glass

- Introducing another major change with the commencement of the Glass collection service from 1 July 2025 will increase the change fatigue of community.
- Deferring the glass collection service will assist the community with cost-of-living pressures and enable a stronger focus on the Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) service and reduced rubbish collection frequency. The delay will also provide an opportunity to assess the impact of the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) on the glass collection service.

This suite of recommendations minimises the increases to the waste service charge for 2025/2026. There are some unavoidable increases due to the EPA landfill levy increase and rising costs of landfill disposal. However, by focusing on behaviour change to support high diversion rates, this increase will be offset by cost savings from the cheaper organic processing costs.

Advocacy

Separate to this review, the resource recovery team will identify advocacy items to be raised with state government to improve services and reduce waste generation.

Items will include but not limited to:

- The production, use and recycling of soft plastics
- Participate in the state government's Household Waste and Recycling Service Standard document consultation

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Consideration needs to be given to the following:

- Changing from a fortnightly to a weekly Rubbish collection would increase the service cost to the community, resulting from doubling the number of rubbish trucks, fuel and labour required to increase service frequency.
- Introducing an Opt-out option for FOGO would see the cost for residents who continue to use the service increase as the main costs of trucks, fuel and labour will still apply and need to be covered. There will also be costs associated with implementing and monitoring an opt-out model which would include property and bin inspections/audits which would be more than the savings of individual properties opting out of the service. Inspections and audits are required to ensure properties are using the services the way they are intended and not putting food waste in the rubbish bin. This is also required to ensure we are meeting landfill diversion targets set by council and the state government.

Any costs associated with changes to the waste services as outlined in this report would increase the cost of providing the service and increase the waste service charge. All costs need to be covered through the Resource Recovery budget and recovered through the Waste Service Charge which is a separate charge to properties on the Rates notice.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

Protected & Enhanced Natural Environment - A healthier environment for future generations.

High Performing Organisation - An innovative, responsive organisation that listens and delivers quality, value for money services to our community.

This report also contributes to the following plans:

Councils Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan (CWRRP)

RELEVANT LAW

The outcomes associated with this report relate directly to the requirements outlined in the State Government's Recycling Victoria Policy – A new Economy and are related to the *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 and the Local Government Act 1989 & 2020*.

Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)

In 2021 a comprehensive community survey was undertaken to gain information about all waste services offered by Council at the time, and feedback on some proposed changes and options to those services.

People with different requirements all access these waste services. The current waste services are flexible, allowing customers to choose the bin size combination that suits their waste needs best. They can choose between a 120L or 240L FOGO and recycling bins, and an 80L or 120L rubbish bin. They may also choose to have an additional bin in any of the waste streams – the charge is for the cost of that bin and its annual collection.

There are some extra accommodations made within the waste services offered for mobility, manual handling and medical needs including:

- Wheel-in and wheel-out service (for mobility impacted residents) where in agreement with the resident and contractor, bins can be left at the property boundary and the waste collection drivers will get the bins for collection and return them to the property boundary.
- Medical needs waste service allows for a free rubbish or recycling bin (subsidised by other waste service fees) via an application process for a person with a medical condition, disability or illness that generates unavoidable additional waste.
- In some locations where the terrain is difficult or unsafe there are Common Collection Points where residents' bins can remain permanently, and the contractor will empty bins at these agreed locations.

For people who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and for vision impaired people there are some limitations with the service offered. The information and supporting material associated with the waste services is only available in English.

There is some awareness to provide images as well as text in the education materials. Some other councils have added braille to their bin lids to assist visually impaired customers use the correct bins – there is more Yarra Ranges could be doing in this space.

Research from Sustainability Victoria (SV) has found the people most likely to be managing household rubbish, sorting recycling and FOGO into the correct bins are young and middle-aged women. SV has been working to target men and older men and women in their marketing campaigns for improved recycling. To date Yarra Ranges Council has had considerably more 'one size fits all' approach and not gender targeted any of the waste services communications.

However, Council has an existing advisory committee that would be a good reference point for future reviews of the waste services and of the Policy.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The review supports the municipal wide service that recovers waste material, diverts waste from landfill, avoids unnecessary generation of harmful greenhouse-gas emissions and will assist in the strengthening of a circular economy and a reduction of natural resource use.

By reusing material that is currently in our economy, we see greater value in products due to a sustainable footing for growth over the long term. Economic impacts have been considered as part of finalisation of the Community Waste Plan.

Social Implications

The review outlines a fair and equitable system for allocation of costs for waste collection services provided by Council for all residential customers and optional services for non-residential customers.

Environmental Implications

Environmental impacts of the new waste collection service are outlined in detail in Section 3 of the review (Attachment 1) The six-month review demonstrates that changes to waste collection services have reduced environmental impacts by reducing waste to landfill, increasing resource recovery resulting in a reduction of the community's greenhouse gas emissions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The review (Attachment 1) considered feedback received and an analysis of customer requests and correspondence since the introduction of the service changes and Policy update.

After the completion of the service review, Council received correspondence from Council Watch which had two petitions attached. The sentiment in the petitions was similar to other feedback Council has received from Community which was to establish an opt out for FOGO and bring back weekly rubbish collections. The petition included signatures from both residents who live in Yarra Ranges and residents who did not live in the municipality.

One petition was undertaken prior to the Waste Services Policy being adopted and when changes were announced, and the other was undertaken more recently.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The six-month review has undertaken benchmarking with other council waste services, to identify options to modify Councils Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy and service delivery to maximise benefits to Yarra Ranges residents and businesses as well as achieve broader environmental goals.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The kerbside collection services provided to the Yarra Ranges community is for residential and non-residentially rated properties.

The recommendations in this report are consistent with State standards and continue to maximise diversion from landfill.

Making any major change to service provision prior to the adoption of the State Government Service Standard would increase Council risks in having to make further changes once the standards are released. Premature changes, that may need to be reversed will also create undue confusion for community.

Changing services now could also undermine the behaviour change program in place which may have flow on impacts on the recovery rates already achieved in the first six months of this service.

Financial Risks

Making changes to the current rubbish bin collection frequency and or implementing a FOGO opt-out option will have contract variations that will need further consideration, both from a waste charge quantum and equity perspective.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Resource Recovery and Waste Services Six Month Informal Review
2. Confidential Attachment