

**4.5 LANDFILL REDIRECTION: IMPROVING FOOD WASTE RECYCLING**

Responsible Director: Deb Cailles

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*****PURPOSE***

This report summarises the results of the community consultation undertaken regarding Council's intention to commence a weekly FOGO service and fortnightly landfill collection from August 2022 and explores initiatives to support the community through this change.

***KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES***

- In December 2021 Council resolved its intention to switch the frequency of the FOGO collections to weekly and landfill collections to fortnightly from August 2022, and directed officers to conduct extensive community consultation.
- Since then, over 7000 interactions were held with the community, providing feedback from a variety of perspectives and across a range of household circumstances. Officers considered the comprehensive feedback to develop solutions to address the most common concerns.
- Officers recommend an expansion of the landfill 240 litre bin Special Consideration criteria to include homes with 2 or more children in nappies. Officers also recommend a reduction in the annual cost for an additional 240 litre recycling bin.
- A letter and information pack will be sent to residents to provide further assistance with this change.
- The commitment to bin collection frequency change is a key initiative in achieving Council's commitment to landfill redirection and separating food waste from landfill.

***FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

The recommendations for community support will reduce Council funds approximately \$200,000 annually. This will be offset by less landfill expenses, approximately \$345,000 dependant on amount of food diverted away from the landfill bin. Savings through reduced landfill costs will also be used to invest in recycling and waste reduction initiatives to continue to support the community to reduce landfill and associated emissions.

***CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION***

That Council support the recommendations contained in this report.

**LANDFILL REDIRECTION: IMPROVING FOOD WASTE RECYCLING**

(Author: File No.)

Responsible Director: Deb Cailles

**RECOMMENDATION***That Council:*

*1. Confirms it will proceed with the collection frequency change of Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) (green) bins to weekly and Landfill (red) bins to fortnightly from August 2022;*

And to support the community through this change:

*2. Expands the special consideration to include eligibility for households with two or more children in nappies to obtain an upgraded (120L to 240L) waste bin at no additional cost.*

*3. Reduces the cost of obtaining an additional 240L recycling bin to \$65 in 2022/23.*

*4. Posts an information package that includes a letter from the Mayor, waste calendar, Waste and Recycling Guide, A-Z guide to recycling and disposal, information about liners and other information on waste reduction.*

*5. Continues community education programs to support all households to reduce waste; and*

*6. Notes that officers will continue to investigate, pursue and advocate for new waste reduction and resource recovery initiatives.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Since the introduction of a Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) bin collection service in July 2020, the current rate of food waste diverted from landfill is 20%. To meet our total landfill diversion targets of 60% by 2022 and 75% by 2027 as set in the Council's Waste Management Strategy 2017-2027, it is important to increase the diversion of food waste from landfill. Improving the food waste diversion rate can be achieved through increasing the collection frequency of the FOGO service to weekly and landfill bins to fortnightly.

**BACKGROUND**

To divert food waste from landfill, Council introduced a food and garden organics (FOGO) service in July 2020 to all residential properties with an existing garden organics/green bin service. To promote this change and support utilisation of the service, an 8 litre Kitchen Organics bin (Kitchen Caddy) and information package was delivered to over 65,000 households in July 2020. Approximately 30% of eligible households are currently putting food in the green bin, resulting in a 20% diversion of food waste from landfill. This contributed to our total landfill diversion rate of 56.4% in 2020-21. However, audits of our bin contents show significant volumes of food waste remains in the landfill bins.

To increase the diversion of food waste from landfill, and achieve our target of diverting 75% of total household waste from landfill by 2027, the collection frequency of the FOGO bin needs to be increased. At its meeting on 14 December 2021, It was resolved that Council:

- 1. notes the importance of diverting food waste away from landfill as part of climate change action.*
- 2. signals its intention to change the frequency of food and garden waste to a weekly collection and for garbage to be collected fortnightly from August 2022.*
- 3. notes that recyclables collection will remain at fortnightly collection.*
- 4. notes that the changes to frequency will not result in changes to collection days, nor increase the number of bins placed out for collection each week.*
- 5. directs officers to conduct extensive community consultation as outlined in this report, including writing to all households to inform residents of the intended change and to seek feedback on the changed service.*
- 6. requires officers to report back on the community feedback in April 2022*

The above applies to residential properties with an individual FOGO bin serviced by Council. Council-serviced multi-unit developments with shared bin services, and commercial and industrial properties would continue to have their landfill bins collected on a weekly basis.

Officers have completed the extensive community consultation as outlined in resolution 5 to seek feedback on the changed service. This report outlines the feedback received from the community with recommendations to address concerns raised.

## **CONSULTATION**

Following the Council resolution on 14 December 2021, officers conducted community consultation through a variety of channels.

To commence this consultation and notify the community of Council's intent to alter the bin collection frequencies, a total of 99,434 letters were sent to all residential properties and ratepayers on 28 January 2022. This letter outlined the changes and featured a QR code linked to the Shape Monash page where an opt-in survey could be completed. An information flyer on the changes to the service was also included with the letter.

Officers engaged JWS Research to conduct qualitative and quantitative research, including a telephone survey of 800 Monash residents and focus groups (4 sessions, 6-8 persons in each). The quantitative telephone survey conducted by JWS Research is from a representative sample of City of Monash demography, based on proportions from Australian Bureau of Statistics census data.

An online, opt-in survey was available through Shape Monash from 31 January 2022 – 25 March 2022. Hard copy surveys were mailed to residents upon request and recorded in the online survey by an officer. At the conclusion of the survey, there was a total of 4,371 complete survey responses. JWS Research conducted the data analysis on the survey responses related to residents with individual bins. A report containing a summary and detailed findings of the results of these surveys and focus groups is available in Attachment 1 "Waste Collection Community Perceptions"

Council officers hosted a number of face-to-face engagements throughout the consultation period. A total of 1,518 residents spoke with officers at 29 pop-up stalls held in 18 unique location across the municipality, with a further 55 residents connecting via Zoom for Q&A and Information Sessions. In addition, a significant volume of calls were answered to by the customer service team. With Sustainable Monash responding directly to 135 emails, 123 telephone calls and 108 questions on Shape Monash.

In total, over 7000 interactions were recorded over this consultation period, providing feedback from a variety of perspectives and across a range of household circumstances.

This community consultation sought to identify perceived barriers to recycled food waste, measure community sentiment relating to the intended change, ascertain potential solutions to overcome perceived barriers and to identify preferred inclusions for a support pack to help residents manage the change.

From audits of bin contents, we know approximately 30% of Monash households are currently using the FOGO bin to divert food waste. JWS Research used qualitative and quantitative research to explore why this participation is not higher amongst Monash residents. Of the residents in the telephone survey who are not currently using their FOGO bin, 33% of respondents say they are already composting food scraps at home, 27% of those not currently using the FOGO bin responded that they are concerned about the smells of a fortnightly food waste collection and 15% were concerned about the hygiene of a fortnightly food waste collection. In addition, 6% stated there is not enough space in their FOGO bin for food scraps. Therefore, increasing the collection frequency of FOGO bins from fortnightly to weekly supports an increased utilisation of the food and organics service, resulting in higher diversion from landfill.

In the representative telephone survey undertaken by JWS Research, the overall support and opposition to the change of collection frequency for food and garden waste bins to weekly and landfill bins to fortnightly is fairly balanced (37% support, 39% oppose and 23% neutral). Households with children in nappies, those where someone has a medical condition, and large households (5 or more persons) are more likely to oppose the change and shared concerns with hygiene and not having enough space in their landfill bin to last two weeks.

In the telephone survey, 63% of respondents believe compostable liners would help residents to recycle food, with 22% already using liners. Furthermore, majority of respondents (54%) say they are likely to buy certified compostable liners to bag food waste before putting it into the food and garden waste bin, in order to manage the change. There are many compostable liner products on the market from a variety of manufacturers. Unfortunately, there are some imitation products which are marketed to appear suitable, however they do not meet the Australian Standard (AS4736) needed by our composting facilities. This can make purchasing the correct liners confusing for the community.

Other concerns raised included concerns of smells with fortnightly collection and issues with insects and pests.

Throughout this consultation, we also received feedback on the other waste and recycling services offered by council. In the online survey 35% of respondents indicated that their recycling bin is overfull on bin night. This is supported by the research undertaken by JWS Research, with some respondents commenting that they need to 'store' additional recycling that cannot fit into the bin for collection.

In summary, the key community concerns were bin size, smell, access to liners and information.

### **DISCUSSION**

As a result of the findings, officers recommend the following measures to be made available to the community to support the change:

#### **1. Increasing landfill bin size for large families**

Council currently offers financial relief for certain community members with respect to waste. Councils offer an upgraded (240L) landfill bin at no additional cost to the household ('Special Consideration') where there is a medical condition that generates additional waste and large families (6 or more person) with demonstrated financial hardship (Australian Government pension or concession card). Based on the feedback received through the community consultation process, officers anticipate the number of 'Special Consideration' requests (and approvals) for the existing criteria to increase. Under the existing arrangements, the average number of approved 'Special Consideration' requests is approximately 10 per annum since 2010. Since the intent to change the frequency was announced in December 2021, officers have approved 11 requests to upgrade the landfill bin from 120L to 240L. In the same period, there have been numerous requests received that have been denied as they do not meet the existing criteria. Majority of these requests have been from families with children in nappies, concerned about the impacts of the bin frequency change.

Based on the feedback received through the community consultation, officers propose expanding the 'Special Consideration' criteria to include households with two or more children in nappies.

Investigations to expand the Special Consideration criteria for large families (6+) to receive an upgraded landfill bin (240L) at no cost without need to demonstrate financial hardship has been undertaken. Based on existing households (2000) in Monash with 6 or more occupants should 1800 of these households take up this option this would cost approximately \$220,000 per annum and substantially reduce Councils ability to achieve landfill redirection and food waste recycling targets. For these reasons it is not recommended. Rather, it is proposed to provide targeted education for large families to assist with their waste reduction and recycling needs.

It is also not recommended that Council take action to address nappy smell. Smell is a perceived issue, with research showing the odour from nappies does not increase over time or with increased volume (Lake Macquarie City Council, 2014), unlike food that decomposes. With just under half of households using nappies (46%) say they are likely (either very or somewhat) to double bag nappies before putting them into the bin, education will be the primary way to address smell concerns with the community.

## **2. Recycling bin capacity**

In the online survey 35% of respondents indicated that their recycling bin is overfull on bin night. This is supported by the research undertaken by JWS Research, with some respondents commenting that they need to 'store' additional recycling that cannot fit into the bin for collection. Based on this, officers recommend Council reduces the cost of obtaining an additional 240L recycling bin to \$65.00pa in 2022/23. This reduction will extend to properties with existing additional recycling services (including commercial and industrial premises).

Consideration was given to providing a weekly collection of recycling bins rather than providing additional bins. Based on current collection costs, this could cost over \$1M per annum regardless of the number of bins collected as extra collection trucks would need to be added to undertake an additional collection run. In addition this would substantially increase truck movements and resultant emissions. For these reasons a weekly collection of recycling bins was not recommended.

Whilst commingled recycling will remain free of charge at the Monash Recycling and Waste Centre, reducing the cost of additional recycling bins should increase service uptake, providing residents with a convenient, affordable alternative.

## **3. Connect the community to liners**

Some members of the community believe compostable liners would help them to recycle food and many are willing to purchase liners. There is confusion over the types of liners that are acceptable. Council can play a role in supporting the community by connecting them with appropriate products.

The provision on an ongoing supply of liners to residents has been costed at \$650,000 per annum and would require additional staff resources to maintain stocks and control the distribution to residents at various Council customer service centres. For these reasons this is not recommended, especially since not all residents expressed concerns about liner access.

The option of offering a discount to liners was explored. A once-off \$5 discount would cost approximately \$210,000, assuming a 60% take up. This expenditure has not been budgeted and may lead to confusion regarding ongoing discount. This option was not recommended.

Some feedback was provided related to lost or replacement kitchen caddies. Replacement caddies are available for all residents with a green organics (Fogo) bin by contacting City of Monash customer service centre. Information on replacement caddies will be added to the support pack.

#### 4. Information and Support Package

Respondents in both the online survey and the telephone survey were asked what information they would like in the support pack to assist them with this change. Across both survey mediums, the top four requested items are the same.

	Phone Survey (include in pack: % = yes)	Community Survey (4 selections allowed)
<b>Calendar of when bins are collected</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Compostable liners</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Poster / fridge magnet with information on what can go in each bin</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Tips to reduce smells when recycling food scraps</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Sticker on the bin with collection day and how often bin is collected	73%	19%
How to compost food at home	68%	8%
Information on what happens to food and garden waste	68%	13%
Tips to wash green bin	65%	17%
How to compost pet waste at home	63%	12%
Information on reusable nappies	45%	3%

Based on the above, officers recommend that the information package includes a letter, collection calendar, waste and recycling guide, A-Z guide



of recycling and disposal as well as supporting information (including on replacement caddies) and tips on waste management and reduction. This information pack includes supporting information on the different types of accepted liners available at major supermarkets and online retailers, with Council providing online purchase options through an online partnership. It should be noted that the A-Z guide will be uploaded to Council's website shortly and a program to install updated education stickers to kerbside bins is being developed.

Should Council wish to provide a sample pack of liners they could be mailed out separately to the information package prior to the frequency changes in August. They cannot be included in the pack due to manual handling issues with the existing supplier. They would therefore need to be sent separately. Sending separately may cause issues if there is a long duration between receiving the pack and the liners. Officers do not recommend this option. The estimated cost to supply 20 liners and post to 70,000 households is approximately \$300,000. There is a risk this will set an expectation that Council will supply liners which is not financially viable or recommended by officers.

### **Other considerations**

Only properties with individual bins serviced by Council kerbside collection will be impacted by this change. In some cases, streets have a combination Councils collection contractor will be provided with a list of exceptions, outlining the properties that remain with a weekly rubbish collection. This includes commercial and industrial property types.

### ***POLICY IMPLICATIONS***

The proposed actions support;

- Council Plan (2021-2025) objectives of a Sustainable City, particularly working with the community towards a zero-waste future, actively increase reuse and recycling.
- City of Monash Waste Management Strategy (2017-2027) has an objective of a 60% waste diversion rate by 2022 and a 75% diversion rate by 2027.
- City of Monash Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2016-2026) - waste objective is to have best practice waste and recycling collection services and reduced community consumption of resources and improved recycling, whilst reducing waste to landfill also supports the GHG emission reduction and contributes to the goals of the Zero Net Carbon Action Plan (2020).

### ***GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT***

As the change to waste collection has a direct and significant impact on the Monash community, a gender impact assessment (GIA) was conducted as part of this work.

From the outset, as required under the GIA process set out by the Commission for Gender Equality, officers discussed assumptions and potential issues for different members of the community including:

- Likely issues for residents who use nappies and incontinence pads – while this is likely to affect people of all genders, given the gendered nature of caring this is likely to disproportionately affect women;
- The impact on single-parent households, which are predominantly women;
- The fact that women are often still doing the majority of unpaid domestic labour such as cooking, cleaning and shopping, which means they may also take on greater responsibilities for waste and recycling; and
- That there will need to be special consideration for others in the community who may have medical conditions.

These discussions both shaped the way that community consultation was undertaken (it included an online survey, face to face consultation, pop up stalls, and presentations to all advisory committees) as well as the questions that were asked in the consultation (including asking people's gender, and asking questions about people's attitudes towards the change and current recycling and waste habits).

The Gender Equity Advisory Committee echoed officers' assumptions around certain aspects of waste, particularly concerns around the gendered impact on women and a potential added burden, and members also raised issues around nappies and caring duties.

In the community survey with 4,302 responses, there were more women (46%) respondents compared with men (37%) or people who self-identified their gender (0.3%).

This survey revealed that, in terms of feelings about the change, women were more likely to have positive feelings e.g. 28% of women respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that 'we're excited, this is a positive change', compared to 20% of men. In addition, women were more likely than men to report that, 'there won't be any challenges for our household' in relation to this change. Men (71% of male respondents) were also more likely to feel nervous (either strongly or very strongly) about the change compared to women (64% of female respondents). Women were slightly more positive about fortnightly rubbish collection compared to men.

Men and women reported similar rates of currently recycling food scraps (and their reasons for doing so - to help the environment and reduce landfill), and similar concerns around hygiene issues. Women and men were both concerned about smells from nappies, however women did also note concerns around smell from menstrual products. There was some anecdotal evidence of the burden around waste falling to women, with some women noting that recycling food waste was 'yet another cleaning task' but that a benefit of the change was they 'won't have to freeze food to reduce smells.'

Men and women also reported similar reasons for not having enough space in their bins, with large households, children in nappies, and pets the three highest across both women and men respondents. There were similar rates for women and men requesting more information on reusable nappies.

In terms of support pack contents, while women and men were keen to see information on what can go in bins, a waste calendar, compostable liners, and tips to reduce food waste, there were some gendered differences within this. For example:

- Women were more likely to want information on what can go in bins compared to men;
- Women were more likely to want a waste calendar;
- Women were more likely to want compostable liners; and
- Women were more likely to want tips on how to reduce smells with food waste.

The survey results showed that both men and women were very concerned about nappies. As noted above, officers propose expanding the 'Special Consideration' criteria to include households with two or more children in nappies.

The results did not suggest the collection frequency change would disproportionately affect women, with women actually being more likely to react positively to the suggested changes. However women were more likely to want support from Council in the support pack. Provision of information was addressed by the officer recommendations.

### ***SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

Waste services is an essential service that Council provide to the community.

Through the community consultation, common areas of concern have been identified and are aimed to be addressed through the recommendations included herewith. Furthermore, an information and support package will be

developed based on the feedback received to support the community through this change.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As the collection of landfill bins will be changing from weekly to fortnightly, and the FOGO bins are subsequently changing from fortnightly to weekly there is no tangible increase in the number of bins collected on a monthly basis. Furthermore, the disposal and recycling facilities for these two material streams are a similar distance from Monash. Therefore, there is a negligible difference in the collection costs per annum.

Conversely, the costs for landfill disposal continue to increase, driven predominately by increases to the EPA Waste Levy. There is no certainty on the EPA Waste Levy (\$125.90 in 2022/23) beyond 2022/23, however it should be noted this has increased from \$65.90 in 2019/20.

Food waste diverted from landfill through the FOGO bins will be disposed of at our contracted composting facilities. Assuming an additional 20% diversion from landfill to organics (6120 tonnes) because of the frequency change, Council would see a reduction in disposal expenses of approximately \$345,000 which has been factored into the draft 22/23 budget.

### **Expanding 'Special Consideration' criteria**

The average number of approved 'Special Consideration' requests is approximately 10 per annum since 2010. Since the December 2021 announcement of Councils intention to change the collection frequency of the landfill bin, the number of 'Special Consideration' requests that meet our current criteria has increased.

In 2016, 8,836 people or 4.8% of the population in the City of Monash reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to a disability (Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025). Whilst not all these disabilities would result in the generation of additional waste, many would. Based on this, we expect to see continued increased requests for 'Special Consideration' for households who meet the existing criteria but have not required the additional landfill bin volume previously.

Expanding the 'Special Consideration' criteria to include households with 2 or more children in nappies will further increase this uptake. In Monash, around 1600 new babies are born each year (Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025), however with Monash's fertility rate at 1.4 many of these 1600 new babies will be in single child households, which will not meet the 'Special Consideration' criteria.

‘Special Consideration’ provides the upgraded 240L landfill bin at no charge to the household, therefore council bears the additional costs for collecting and disposing of the additional waste. The estimated cost of providing this additional (upgraded) service is approximately \$120 per approved bin (2022/23). Based on this, should the number of ‘Special Consideration’ approvals increase to 1000 the total cost of expanding this service can be estimated to be \$120,000.

To minimise the ongoing cost to ratepayers of offering this service, approvals will be for a 2-year period, with approved households required to meet the criteria upon reapplication. Based upon expected uptake of Special Consideration, this administration task will be undertaken with existing resources and will not require additional funding.

It should be noted that ratepayers whose households do not meet the ‘Special Consideration’ criteria can request an upgraded residential bin (switch 120L bin to 240L bin) landfill bin at an additional cost (2022/23 proposed fee: \$237.65, per annum).

### **Reducing the cost of additional recycling bins**

As of 31 December 2021, there are approximately 925 properties paying for an additional 240L recycling bin. Of these, 289 are at residential properties with the remaining 636 at commercial and industrial premises. The proposed fee for additional recycling bins in 2022/23 was \$154.00, providing a total revenue of \$142,450.00 arising from these 925 bins. Reducing this fee to \$65 in 2022/23 results in a revenue of \$60,125.00 creating a reduction of \$82,325.00, as this reduction will extend to properties with existing additional recycling services.

### **Connecting residents with Compostable Liners**

Information will be provided on brands of certified compostable liners and local purchase locations, to support the 54% of Monash residents who intend to purchase compostable liners to buy the correct type. In addition, Council can have links to external providers through an online platform that connects the community member to a way of purchasing valid liners. There is no financial impact as a result of compostable liners.

### **Information and Support Package**

The estimated costs of developing and sending, including design and printing, the Information Support pack is approximately \$110,000. Provision has been made within the budget.

### **CONCLUSION**

In total, over 7000 interactions were recorded over the 8-week consultation period, providing feedback from a variety of perspectives and across a range of

household circumstances. Considering the comprehensive feedback received from the community, officers sought to find solutions to address the most common concerns. As such, it is recommended that Council:

1. Confirms it will proceed with the collection frequency change of Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) (green) bins to weekly and Landfill (red) bins to fortnightly from August 2022;

And to support the community through this change:

2. Expands the special consideration to include eligibility for households with two or more children in nappies to obtain an upgraded (120L to 240L) waste bin at no additional cost.
3. Reduces the cost of obtaining an additional 240L recycling bin to \$65 in 2022/23.
4. Posts an information package that includes a letter from the Mayor, waste calendar, Waste and Recycling Guide, A-Z guide to recycling and disposal, information about liners and other information on waste reduction.
5. Continues community education programs to support all households to reduce waste; and
6. Notes that officers will continue to investigate, pursue and advocate for new waste reduction and resource recovery initiatives.