

## 6.2.3 Waste and resource recovery strategy update - kerbside reform and future of waste update

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### Recommendation(s)

That Council:

- Note the progress on implementation of the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy; and
- Note the Advanced Waste Processing project is in the tender evaluation phase with a Council decision planned by the end of 2024.

### Attachments

Nil

### Executive Summary

The Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2017-26 (WRRS) was adopted by Council on 11 December 2017 and provides a ten-year roadmap for the future direction of Council's waste and resource recovery services, waste related education and advocacy activities. It identifies the key issues facing the municipality, reflects community needs, and sets out a plan for how we can keep waste services efficient and effective, minimise waste to landfill and other impacts on the environment.

The associated Action Plans are designed to turn the strategic direction into achievable actions, identifying cross department collaboration opportunities, timelines and resources required to achieve each action.

The strategy is adaptive to the new, and changing Victorian Government directions of recent years. The Victorian Government's policy 'Recycling Victoria: A New Economy' (RV) aimed to address the urgent challenges that caused disruptions to Victoria's recycling industry in recent years and makes fundamental changes to improve waste and recycling in Victoria. RV integrates a number of reforms, including the Kerbside Reform which mandates requirements for a more standardised approach to household waste management, including a four-stream waste and recycling system, standard bin lid colours, standard acceptable items and diversion from landfill targets, all of which have been incorporated into Council's Waste and Resource recovery Action Plan (2022-26).

Through this strategy, Council is continuing to work with other Councils, the State Government and industry to facilitate new infrastructure solutions and services to contribute to a more stable and resilient sector. This report outlines some of the highlights and work undertaken to deliver on Council's strategy and align to the requirements set out by the Victorian Government, helping us deliver on the vision for sustainable, secure, and effective services for the community.

Some of the highlights covered include red lid bin transition, support for the Container deposit scheme, Green waste services and storm support, securing alternative landfill services via the Advanced waste processing project, and Litter prevention activities.

## **Background**

### ***Implementation highlights***

Council is working on a number of initiatives that will help facilitate better environmental outcomes and resilience within the waste and resource recovery sector. Some of these are set or led by State or Federal Government policy, and all are within Councils own WRRS.

#### **Kerbside Reform**

Recycling Victoria: A new economy is the Victorian Government's 10-year circular economy policy and action plan to fundamentally transform the state's recycling sector, reduce waste, create thousands of jobs and sets Victoria up for a more sustainable future. The policy includes a number of reforms, including the Kerbside Reform which provides a more consistent and standardised direction for household waste and recycling systems in Victoria.

All households in Victoria will require access to a four-stream waste and recycling service, including rubbish, combined food and garden organics, mixed recyclables, and glass. Each service will have a colour-coded lid, which will be the same across the state and supported by state-wide education. A service standard will also be developed to specify the quality and performance expected of council's and alpine resorts when providing the new four-stream household waste and recycling service.

#### **Red lid bin implementation**

Aligning Cardinia's bin lid colours was our first step in meeting our obligations under the Kerbside Reform. Standard colours will help reduce user confusion, improve waste sorting behaviour, and simplify communication and education messages before further, more complex changes can be implemented.

Cardinia Shire was in the fortunate position of already having services that closely align with the standard lid colours, lime green for food and garden waste, yellow for recycling, and since 2019 all new rubbish bin deliveries & replacements have had red lids, rather than the previous dark green.

During February, March and April, a shire wide project was implemented to change all remaining (approx 25,000) green rubbish bin lids to red. The rollout successfully changed 83% of known lids, and final replacement activities are currently underway. This involved a significant communication program, with the community responding by leaving their bins out at the appropriate time, contributing to the successful outcome.

#### **Service Standards**

Household waste and recycling services will be regulated via mandatory Service Standards and accompanying regulations established under the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021. The first service standards, which are yet to be finalised by state government, will detail how councils and alpine resorts must provide waste and recycling services to households and will support councils and alpine resorts to provide a high quality, consistent service across the state. The Service Standards will also include acceptable items lists for all four waste streams, ensuring consistency for all Victorian households. This will allow Council to commence planning for its next Recycling Processing Contract.

#### **Container deposit scheme**

Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) launched on 1 November 2023, allowing Victorians to receive a 10c refund for every eligible drink container returned to a designated drop-off point. Accepted containers include most aluminium, glass, plastic and liquid paperboard (carton) drink containers between 150ml and 3L. Upon return, residents can choose to receive their refund as cash, EFT, voucher, or a charity donation.

Collection points can be found across Victoria. Cardinia Shire is fortunate enough to have 15 locations, which are a mix of Over the Counter, Reverse Vending Machines and the Return-It Depot on Bald Hill Road, Pakenham – the second busiest location in the state. As a Victorian Government initiative, Council's role in the CDS has focused on connecting network operators with local sites, and educating the community about what containers are accepted and directing residents to the CDS website for return locations and further information. This effective collaboration has contributed to the successful network within Cardinia, meaning our residents can fully take up this initiative and opportunity.

Eligible containers received through councils kerbside recycling bin also provide refunds to Council and recycling operators.

### **Green waste drop-off services – storm support**

Following the severe storm that impacted Cardinia residents on 13 February 2024, the waste team responded quickly, adjusting collection schedules, supplying bins and staff support at the recovery centres and within 48 hours following the storm, impacted residents were able to take garden waste and debris to local transfer stations at no cost to them. While waste management is only one aspect of disaster recovery, approximately 400 residents used the service between 15 and 20 February. This service helped reduce the financial and emotional burden on impacted families during a challenging time. Additional support from the State Government, and operational support from Council meant that impacted residents could continue to drop off storm related debris to local transfer stations at no charge until April 30 and that professional clean-up crews continued to remove debris placed on the kerbside until May 2024.

Council continues to provide residents with opportunities to correctly dispose of green waste throughout the year through our regular green waste drop off services, optional fortnightly FOGO bin collection and bookable hard and green waste collection service.

### **Litter and illegally dumped rubbish**

In 2022 Council introduced a dedicated full time Litter Prevention Officer in the suite of roles in the Waste Services team. This role has been instrumental to Council providing a proactive approach to managing litter, illegally dumped rubbish and unbooked hard waste across the shire. Since the authorised role started, we have actioned 3,011 dumped rubbish related customer requests, removed 539 tonnes of dumped rubbish from the environment and issued more than \$38,000 in infringements to people doing the wrong thing. Council has been able to proactively educate the community on correct behaviours and target and take action against unacceptable behaviours.

### **Advanced waste processing**

Council's adopted Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2017-2026 included an action for Council to work with the State Government (formerly Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group) to procure alternatives to landfill beyond 2021. This work has been a priority for many years, driven by the impending closure of the only remaining landfill in the south east metropolitan area, the need for secure services for the future, and a desire for better environmental and social outcome than landfilling. Advanced waste processing technologies are utilised extensively in advanced regions in Europe, the US, and Asia, as a safe, trusted and reliable infrastructure solution to compliment other Resource recovery systems, achieving good diversion from landfill outcomes. This technology is seen within the Recycling Victoria policy as a key component of a circular economy, supporting the other resource recovery initiatives and aspirations.

This complex project has been worked on over a number of years. The collaborative procurement project, involving 9 Councils, is supported by a Victorian Government project team and a Special Purpose Vehicle that contains shareholders from each Council. The project is now in the tender evaluation phase. It is expected that Council will consider the tender recommendations by the end

of 2024. Any successful contractor would be expected to utilise tried and tested, and reliable technologies, and be experienced with delivery and management of these types of facilities.

### **Policy Implications**

The Waste and Resource recovery strategy Action Plan (2022-26) plays a high-level role to guide the direction and resource allocation for Councils Waste Management Services team over the coming years. It is a key document in a suite of strategic documents and articulates the implementation of strategy and policy that has been determined by Council.

Implementing this WRRS will ensure Cardinia Shire continues to meet the needs and expectations of our community, as well as the Council Plan priorities (2.1, 3.2 & 5.4). The WRRS Action Plan also ensures we are meeting the requirements outlined in the Victorian Governments, 'Recycling Victoria: A New Economy', policy and plan.

### **Relevance to Council Plan**

#### **2.1 We support the creation of liveable spaces and places**

2.1.1 Advocate, plan for and deliver accessible community infrastructure and services that address community need.

#### **3.1 We value our natural assets and support our biodiversity to thrive**

3.1.2 Actively move towards zero waste through increasing waste recovery and reuse.

#### **5.1 We practise responsible leadership**

5.1.4 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy.

### **Climate Emergency Consideration**

At the September 2019 Council meeting, Council resolved to declare a climate emergency. In addition to this, the Recycling Victoria transition to a more circular economy, outlines the need to reduce our reliance on landfill, while also effectively managing our waste and minimising our impact on the natural environment.

With a growing population and the increased waste produced as a result, Council will engage and communicate upcoming service changes to the community while also continuing educating on the importance of reducing and correctly disposing of waste to gain maximum recovery and minimise littering and dumped rubbish in the environment. As such, the WRRS action plan is essential in managing these changes and enable us to meet waste reduction targets set by the Recycling Victoria.

The Victorian Governments Kerbside Reform will substantially improve the value of materials recycled in Victoria. For example, Recycling Victoria in their 10-year strategic policy and plan has estimated that separating glass from other materials could increase the value of recycled glass, plastic, paper and cardboard by up to \$210 million annually. It is also estimated that by providing all Victorian households with access to a combined food and garden waste service we could divert a significant amount of organic waste from landfill each year and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with disposing of organic waste in landfill.

Advanced Waste technologies in place of current Landfill services will also contribute to climate change action by reducing greenhouse emission from landfill, and potentially generating electricity.

### **Consultation/Communication**

As part of the WRRS development in 2017, Council engaged a contractor to undertake an initial survey of 700 residents to gain an insight into their thoughts and priorities in relation to waste management issues and future options.

Internal Council teams identified for the updated action plan included Communications and Engagement, Active and Connected Communities, Festivals and Events, Compliance Services and Learning and Organisational Development, and were consulted throughout August and September 2022.

Ongoing initiatives and planning is informed by Councillor feedback received at regular briefings. This includes the addition of food waste into the green waste kerbside bin in 2020, the addition of an authorised Litter Prevention Officer in 2021, the Hard Waste Satisfaction survey conducted in 2022 - after which several changes were made to the management of this service and the timing and structure of the recent red lid changeover project in 2023 and 2024. This is not an exhaustive list, and it is worth noting that each of these programs and all others conducted by the waste services team include extensive communication and engagement plans and programs, including emergency and unplanned extreme event response.

The advanced waste processing project has a specific webpage available for updates, and updates will continue to be communicated to the community as key milestones are achieved as we work towards alternatives to landfill.

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

The ongoing actions are services within the WRRS are covered by the General Garbage charge, and are included within the draft 2024-25 budget.

The red lidded bin program cost approximately \$750,000 to complete, \$304,000 of which was provided by the State Governments Kerbside Reform Funding across the FY23 and FY24 financial years. Communications and engagement for this project cost \$37,329 which was fully funded by the Sustainability Victoria household education fund in FY24. There will be more funding provided by the Kerbside Reform Fund in future financial years to support future projects.

### **Conclusion**

Considerable work and progress has occurred within the Waste and Resource Recovery area at Cardinia Shire Council – we have lots to be proud of. This report seeks to inform Council and the community on some highlights of the implementation of the WRRS Action Plan.