

4.1 LANDFILL REDIRECTION: PROPOSED APPROACH TO IMPROVE FOOD WASTE RECYCLING

RM: D21-377015

Responsible Director: Deb Cailes

RECOMMENDATION*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*

INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of a Food Organics in Garden Organics (FOGO) bin collection service in July 2020, the current rate of food waste diversion from landfill is 20%.

To meet our kerbside waste diversion of 60% by 2022 and 75% by 2027 as set in the Councils Waste Management Strategy 2017-2027, it is important to increase the diversion of food waste from landfill.

Improving food waste diversion rate can be achieved through increasing the collection frequency of the FOGO service to weekly and garbage to fortnightly.

This report outlines Council's intention for a weekly FOGO service and fortnightly garbage collection and acknowledge the need for community feedback on the planned service changes.

BACKGROUND

To divert food waste from landfill, Council introduced a FOGO service in July 2020 to all residential properties that had an existing Garden Organics/green bin recycling service. Residents of the City of Monash have been responsive in their uptake of the service with approximately 30% with a FOGO bin participating despite the rollout occurring during Covid-19 lockdowns. The service is currently a fortnightly collection service and the level of landfill diversion of food waste is 20%. Audits of landfill bin contents show there remains a significant volume of food waste in landfill bins.

This is a similar outcome to other metropolitan councils, under the collection frequencies of weekly garbage and fortnightly FOGO services. Data is showing that councils with fortnightly

FOGO service remain at 15%-20% food waste diversion rate, curtailing total kerbside diversion rates to 50%-60%.

To divert more food waste material into the FOGO bin, increasing the collection frequency of the FOGO to weekly is required.

DISCUSSION

Based on feedback from our residents since introducing FOGO, there have been some concerns with the current fortnightly FOGO service collection. Fortnightly collections have discouraged some residents from using the FOGO service for their food waste, with nearly all negative comments about FOGO relates to smells and pests because of food waste sitting in the FOGO bin for up to two weeks. Some residents have specifically mentioned they would not recycle food waste until the FOGO bin is collected weekly, and/or compostable liners are provided.

The intention of switching the FOGO collection frequency to weekly is to support the FOGO bin use for food waste rather than the landfill bin. When most food or organic waste is diverted to the weekly FOGO service, there will be less waste in the garbage service which would then be moved to fortnightly collection as is the case in other councils.

Several nearby councils have scheduled or have plans for switching garbage and FOGO collection frequencies over the next few years including City of Boroondara (May 2020), City of Glen Eira (July 2021), City of Bayside (July 2022) and City of Kingston (July 2023). Based on feedback from other councils, it is anticipated that food waste diversion rates can reach 50% by moving to a weekly FOGO service, and potentially approach 80% over time as the community becomes familiar with the updated service model. The City of Boroondara have been able to demonstrate that, even in the early stages of switched collection frequencies, high levels of diversion from landfill are readily achievable.

Table 1. Council service comparison

Council	Garbage	Food waste bin	Weekly start	Compostable bags	Opt In Universal	*to note	Overall kerbside diversion	Data date
Boroondara	Fortnightly	Weekly	May 2020	Provided	Universal		70%	20/21
Nillumbik	Fortnightly	Weekly	10 years +	Not accepted	Universal	Recycling to landfill (part)	59%	19/20
Bayside	Weekly	Fortnightly	July 2022	Provided	Opt In		58%	19/20
Monash	Weekly	Fortnightly		Accepted	Universal		56%	20/21
Hobsons Bay	Fortnightly	Weekly	February 2020	Provided	Universal	50% recycling contamination rates; changing Nov 2021	57%	19/20
Glen Eira	Fortnightly	Weekly	July 2021	Not accepted	Universal	pre weekly FOGO	49%	19/20
Moreland	Weekly	Fortnightly	July 2022*	Not accepted	Universal		48%	19/20

This feedback is consistent with research titled *Kerbside Organics – Food Organic/Garden Organics Introduction*, conducted by the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG) in 2017, on residents' attitudes to FOGO services, involving residents from Monash, Bayside, Frankston and Glen Eira councils (approximately 250 residents contributed from each council).

The data to date shows that weekly FOGO service and fortnight garbage service can improve landfill diversion rates and potentially reduce council landfill costs.

There are several considerations moving forward when changing to weekly FOGO waste collections and a fortnightly garbage service, such as:

- Apartments and business access to the FOGO service
- Perceptions around impacts to garbage service changes
- Potential increase in contamination of FOGO bin
- Capacity for nappies
- Need for compostable bag /Liner use

It is intended that community consultation be undertaken to ensure our community has an opportunity to provide feedback on the weekly FOGO and fortnightly garbage collection service.

An eight week consultation period is planned between February-March 2022 to understand what is needed to support residents to make the best use of the services once the frequencies change.

Community Engagement aims to be accessible and open to all Monash residents, to understand real or perceived barriers to a weekly food and garden collection. The feedback themes will be addressed with consideration to households that will be disproportionately affected through a revised special consideration application.

Community Engagement includes:

- Letter to all residents in January 2022 explaining the service changes and providing information about ways to provide feedback
- 8 weeks of community wide consultation during February –March 2022 including all Council communication channels, shopping centre pop up events, festival and library events as well as focus groups and surveys.
- Community Satisfaction Survey questions in March 2022
- A follow up letter will be provided to residents in May 2022 with a summary of any service adjustments that have been put in place to further support the change in frequency. This letter will include new details for residents such as collection calendars and service frequency go live dates for their street.
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A discussion paper and supporting fact sheets will be prepared to support the community engagement which will explain the financial, operational and environmental reasons for proposing a frequency change for the kerbside garbage and FOGO services, and how Council plans to address any challenges and minimise impact for the community. The community will be engaged through the mail out letters, social media, surveys, focus groups, and submissions to Shape Monash. The consultation will be promoted through our website, social media, bus stop poster, the Bulletin and other council publications and newsletters.

The results of the community consultation will be presented to Council in April 2022 and will inform any required adjustments to the service once frequency is changed

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Monash's overall diversion rate (the amount of material in the recycling and food waste bins that is recycled) is currently at 56%. The Waste Management Strategy (2017-2027) has an objective of a 60% waste diversion rate by 2022 and a 75% diversion rate by 2027. The 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).

The actions outlined in this report support;

- **Council Plan (2017-2021)** objectives of a Liveable and Sustainable City and Inviting Open and Urban Spaces.
- **City of Monash Waste Management Strategy (2017-2027)** - Kerbside waste diversion 60% by 2022 and 75% by 2027
- **City of Monash Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2016-2026)** - Develop and implement recycling service based on best practice approach

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Waste services is an essential service that Council provide to the community. This community consultation will assist Council to provide the best value service to meet community needs. Introduction of weekly FOGO service can assist Council to optimise service delivery costs and divert more food waste from landfill, whilst supporting residents to use the service.

CONSULTATION

Based on research across Australia (including Victoria), the key features of best performing services are: clear and simple communication and a community engagement program to support residents; a kitchen caddy with prompts to separate food at the point of preparation; a universal 240L FOGO/green bin; a bin inspection program to provide targeted and timely feedback; waste audits to measure participation and contamination; compostable liners and a weekly collection (switching the garbage collection to fortnightly).

Monash implemented a food waste recycling program from July 2020, which included a comprehensive communication program (the face to face engagement program was delayed due to Covid) and delivery of a kitchen caddy and welcome pack to around 66,000 properties with an existing 240L FOGO/green bin (collected fortnightly). Properties without FOGO/green bins (apartments, retirement villages, businesses, schools) have been able to apply for a FOGO/green bin and caddy (at no cost), as long as sufficient collection and presentation space is available.

A detailed waste audit was also completed during November 2020 and a bin inspection program (referred to as the Recycle Right Feedback Program) commenced in December 2020. The detailed three bin waste audit (sampling 250 of each rubbish, recycling and food and garden bin contents) found that around 20% of food and garden waste is currently being placed in the FOGO/green bin. The Recycle Right Feedback program, which visually checks the

contents of bins on the nature strip on collection day, has inspected over 2700 FOGO/green bins and found around 30% are being used for food recycling.

Since the program commenced, residents have been in contact with Council to provide feedback about the program. During program launch (July to August 2020), the majority of feedback (70%) was complementary of the program, however feedback has also been received regarding the collection frequency (with suggestions for a weekly food and garden waste collection), compostable liners (which ones to use and why Council hasn't provided these) and concerns around smell and pests.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Letter postage and community consultation activities are expected to cost approximately \$150,000. Provisions have been made within existing 2020/21 budget.

Any resultant change to FOGO and landfill service is anticipated to result in significant cost savings for Council due to the tonnes diverted from landfill. Ongoing increases to the Landfill Levy (currently at \$105.90/tonne) are possible beyond 2022 \$125.90/tonne and the disposal rate disparity between landfill and organics processors is expected to be \$85.75 per tonne by 2025/26. With increasing disposal contract gate fees and the Landfill Levy (Table 2), changing collection service frequencies for FOGO weekly and garbage fortnightly will avoid the otherwise increasing landfill disposal costs.

Table 2. Victorian Landfill Disposal rates

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<i>Waste Gate Fee</i>	\$62.00	\$62.80	\$63.80
<i>EPA Landfill Levy</i>	\$105.90	\$125.90	\$128.40*
Total Landfill cost per tonne	\$167.90	\$188.70	\$192.20*
<i>Organics cost per tonne</i>	\$114.30	\$117.40	\$120.90

*actual EPA Landfill Levy is unconfirmed for 2023/24, estimated here as CPI increase only from 22/23

There are no procurement implications as Monash Council is part of the MWRRG South Eastern Organics Processing contract (2017-2032) which has capacity for all participating councils to send higher rates of food waste collected in the FOGO bin service and diverting it from the garbage bins and landfill.

CONCLUSION

Current data suggests that food waste diversion rates will remain at 20% unless further action is taken. To achieve Monash Council's waste diversion from landfill target of 75% by 2027, and avoid significant extra waste disposal fees, a switching of the collection frequencies for our garbage and organics kerbside bins is planned.

The community and residents are key partners in the success of these services and community feedback will be sought and integrated where possible into the service design for the new frequency