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# Executive Summary



Council's vision is for a Greener, Bolder, More Connected City. Reducing waste and maximising recycling outcomes is not only a vital part of the work we do but is also very important to our community. The *Waste and Recycling Strategy* sets out our long term goals and objectives for waste and recycling, with an Action Plan outlining our focus for the next three years.

Council previously adopted the *Darebin Waste and Litter Strategy 2015-2025*. Significant challenges in the waste and recycling industry and our declaration of a climate emergency have required us to rethink and adjust our approach. While many core objectives such as reducing overall waste to landfill and community education remain a key focus, we have also shifted our focus to cutting emissions from waste, advocacy to state and federal government and challenging traditional approaches to waste and recycling.

A review into Council's waste and recycling services was conducted over the last 18 months with the aim of identifying innovative, solution-focused approaches to service delivery and materials processing. The review informed our *Waste and Recycling Strategy* so that it:

- reflects Council's commitment to taking action on the climate emergency;
- takes into account recent changes in the waste and recycling industry;
- positions Darebin as a leading council for waste and recycling services;
- challenges traditional kerbside models and current best practice; and
- delivers customer service excellence, greater social equity and inclusion, and value for money.

This strategy is shorter in timeframe than the previous strategy – this reflects the dynamic state of the waste and recycling sector. There will be significant changes and challenges over the next few years resulting from recently released policies and disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. This will require a degree of flexibility to adapt our approach as needed. That being said, this strategy sets long term directions, so that we can be confident that actions now and in future will contribute to Council's long term goals. In order to meet the current challenges in the waste and recycling sector, state and federal government intervention is required to meet the current challenges in the waste and recycling sector and address issues outside the remit of councils.

Like other councils, Darebin City Council temporarily sent recyclable materials to landfill in 2019 when the SKM recycling facility in Coolaroo closed. This occurred between 25 July and 5 September 2019. This closure highlighted issues in the sector including unsafe stockpiling, an over-reliance by some operators on overseas processing and the vulnerability of statewide recycling infrastructure. Council has since renegotiated a new contract with Visy and our kerbside recycling material is being recycled. The recycling crisis and the temporary disruption to this service highlighted the need for a change in the statewide and national approach to waste and recycling.

In 2021 we will consult with the community about possible changes to a range of services to achieve improved waste and recycling outcomes. This consultation will include options for:

- changing the collection frequency of kerbside services to maximise food and green waste recycling;
- services to multi-unit developments and businesses;
- options for improving source separation of recyclable materials, such as glass.
- improved hard waste services to maximise recycling outcomes; and
- improving fairness, equity and sustainability in relation to how waste and recycling services are charged, and options for how incentives may be able to help reduce waste and therefore cost overall.

While we have reviewed our approach and developed this new strategy we have continued to roll-out a number of key initiatives, including:

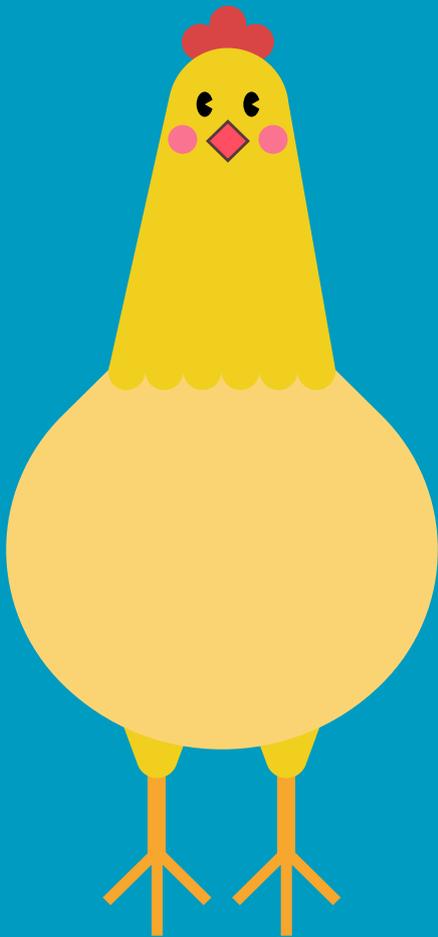
- The introduction of food waste recycling via the green bin in October 2019
- The continued roll-out of communications to our community on how to prevent food waste

- Adoption of the new Council Social and Sustainable Procurement policy to prioritise the purchase of recycled products and materials
- New home composting incentives scheme roll-out in 2019
- Educating and helping our community to recycle their electronic waste through our e-waste campaign
- Promoting textile drop off hubs
- National Recycling Week promotions
- Launching a *Pitch It for Waste*: a business development program to begin in 2020, designed to support new business start-ups in tackling our waste
- Supporting our community to act on waste reduction by encouraging advocacy and behaviour change. This included the promotion of Love our Streets and Friends Of groups in Council social media channels.

We will continue this work and ask the community to continue to work with us to reduce waste, improve their recycling outcomes and cut emissions from waste. We will continue to work with other levels of government to improve waste and recycling outcomes.

#### Darebin City Council waste operations officer





## Key Objectives

- Address waste in the context of Climate Emergency
- Value resource productivity
- Design out waste and pollution
- Maintain the value of products and materials
- Innovate new solutions for resource efficiency
- Create new circular economy jobs
- Foster behaviour change through education, regulation and engagement



## Long-term Goals

- Reform waste policy at the state and federal level to align with the climate emergency
- Divert all food and green waste from landfill and increase uptake of the food and green waste service
- All textiles diverted from landfill
- Reduced textile consumption
- Comprehensive waste services provided to all multi-unit developments and commercial business
- Greenhouse gases eliminated from all waste processing
- Reduce contamination, increase diversion, minimise waste to landfill and increase resource recovery
- Maximise diversion of hard rubbish from landfill
- Waste charges are financially sustainable and equitable
- Drive innovation in materials recovery and world leading waste operations
- Zero dumped rubbish and litter
- Darebin City Council is a zero-waste organisation

# Climate Emergency and Waste Implications



Darebin Council was the first Council in the world to declare a climate emergency. There are now over 1480 governments worldwide that have declared a climate emergency. This commitment is driving new and significant investment into greenhouse emissions reduction actions by many Victorian councils.

In 2017, Darebin Council adopted its *Climate Emergency Plan*. This plan requires council to re-examine its policies and actions in the context of the climate emergency. This means that instead of just looking at our waste from a cost or volume/tonnage perspective, we examine waste through the lens of greenhouse gas emission reduction.

In the case of recycling systems, emissions are avoided because of a reduction in the need to produce goods from virgin materials. Benefits are typically reduced in comparison to those resulting from waste prevention activity, as the recycling production process itself also results in some emissions.

## What are Darebin's greenhouse gas emissions from residential waste?

When considering the greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste, there is a need to consider impacts across the whole waste system from the benefits of improved recycling to better waste processing, instead of just the end product. That is, consideration of all the emissions in the production of goods, transport and waste processing as well as recycling and composting options.

To determine the biggest potential improvements to Darebin's carbon impact from waste management, it is necessary to look at waste going to landfill. Figure 1 shows emissions associated with waste going to landfill across the municipality. While 'Recycling Potential' demonstrates that significant reductions in emissions can be achieved via recycling, the 'Reduction Potential' shows that far greater gains can be achieved by avoiding production of these materials in the first place.

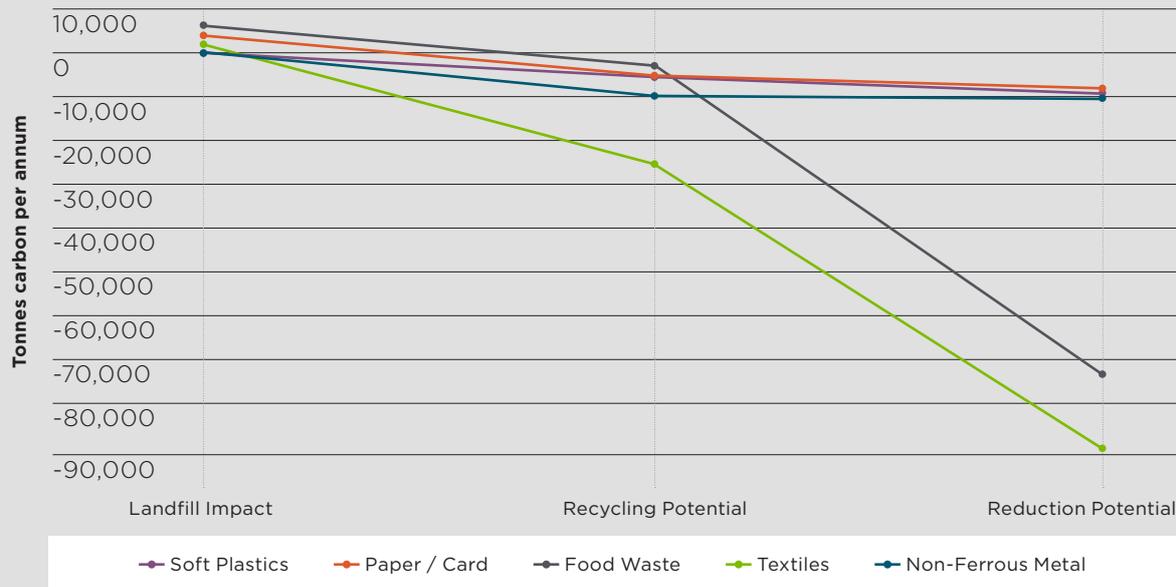
## Waste avoidance is the best way to reduce emissions



## Plastic ready for recycling



**Figure 1 - Top 5 Carbon Emissions Reduction Opportunities**



### What does this mean for action?

In reviewing Darebin’s waste in the context of the climate emergency, Council has identified the following opportunities for greenhouse gas emission reduction:

#### FOOD

The greatest potential to reduce carbon impacts from waste is to address food waste. This is also the single biggest opportunity to reduce the quantity of waste Darebin sends to landfill. In 2019, Darebin Council introduced a new food waste recycling service to existing green bin households.

Further reductions in food waste can be achieved by introducing a universal food waste service for all. This will mean:

- Developing food and green waste collections for apartments and town houses, and
- Developing commercial food and green waste collections.

#### WASTE AND RECYCLING ACT

Darebin Council is calling for the Victorian Government to take a more active leadership stance in relation to waste greenhouse emissions, waste greenhouse emissions avoidance and drawdown outcomes.

The announcements in *Recycling Victoria* of a new dedicated waste and recycling Act provide a unique opportunity to legislate acting on the climate emergency in the waste

sector. The Act could set emission reduction targets for the waste sector and set up the framework for the authority to drive down emissions in the sector. This could be aligned to the greenhouse gas reduction targets in Victoria’s *Climate Change Act 2017*.

Now is the time for the Victorian Government to act to set emission reduction targets for the waste sector.

## TEXTILES

Textiles are the most carbon-intensive materials on a per tonne basis. Although they do not make up a large portion of Darebin's waste stream, reducing textile use can have a relatively large carbon impact. Council will start to target textiles through a reduction in consumption and increases in recycling by:

- Introducing and/or promoting new textile collection services, such as drop-off hubs or periodic collections, and
- Investigating textile recycling in Australia.

Textiles that cannot be re-used typically end up getting disposed of, often in developing countries. To date, limited options exist for reclaiming fibres to enable the creation of recycled fibres for new products. There are precedents for innovative processing and re-use of textiles internationally with the most famous being the ReTuna recycled shopping mall in Sweden.<sup>1</sup>

Further, the Australian company Blocktexas claims to have developed a proprietary technology that enables the separation and reclamation of fibres. Blocktexas are reportedly intending to build a 10,000 tonne per annum reclamation facility in South East Queensland. There may be an opportunity to investigate the establishment of a similar facility in Darebin for the Melbourne market.<sup>2</sup> This would build on the long history of clothing and footwear manufacturing that exists in Melbourne's northern suburbs.

## QUICK WINS

As well as the core actions outlined in this Strategy, which may take some time to implement fully, there are several actions that Darebin can progress relatively easily and quickly. These include:

- Improvements to the Darebin Resource Recovery Centre
- Textile collections
- Food waste prevention education
- Implementation of an incentivised home composting program

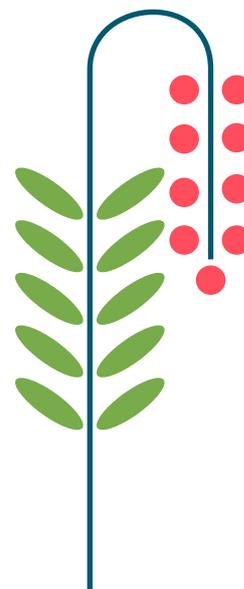
## SEPARATE THE RECYCLING STREAMS FOR IMPROVED MATERIAL RECOVERY

There is also good potential to reduce carbon impacts by recycling and reducing non-ferrous metals like aluminium or copper, as well as tackling the paper and cardboard and dense and soft plastics waste streams. Council can investigate and develop new collection services to:

- Identify opportunities for expanding community recycling station drop off points (i.e. recycling hubs) and the range of materials recycled.
- Develop business cases and partnerships that identify whether high and low value waste streams like paper and metal can be separated and if overall frequency change could reduce waste to landfill.

<sup>1</sup> ReTuna Återbruksgalleria, <https://www.retuna.se/english/>; Maddy Savage, "This Swedish mall is the world's first ever secondhand shopping center," Huffington Post, 28 November 2018, [www.huffpost.com/entry/recycled-mall-sweden-retuna\\_n\\_5bfd0762e4b0eb6d931346b3](http://www.huffpost.com/entry/recycled-mall-sweden-retuna_n_5bfd0762e4b0eb6d931346b3).

<sup>2</sup> BlockTxx Pty Ltd, [www.blocktexas.com](http://www.blocktexas.com).



## DEEP REDUCTIONS IN WASTE TO LANDFILL - WASTE PROCESSING OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

By undertaking a significant step change in how waste is managed, Darebin could increase diversion of waste from landfill from 44% to 82%<sup>3</sup> and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The core actions to achieve this level of performance are collecting food waste (which is underway), anaerobic digestion of the collected food waste, and treatment of the residual waste before landfill.

Anaerobic digestion of food and garden waste and treatment of the residual waste before landfill are two processes that will assist us in reducing our carbon output. However, Darebin cannot do this on its own. To enable this, the following factors need to be assessed:

- Economies of scale. In most instances, to get good results from these two processes the need for additional feedstock requires additional partners.
- Investment in new technologies. Capital costs for a new plant to process food waste could be around \$20 million, while a new plant to treat the leftover waste before it goes to landfill could be \$50 million to \$75 million.
- Engaging with potential suppliers to gather further detail on what can be delivered by specific equipment and processes, and their operational parameters.
- Joint ownership and joint procurement approaches.



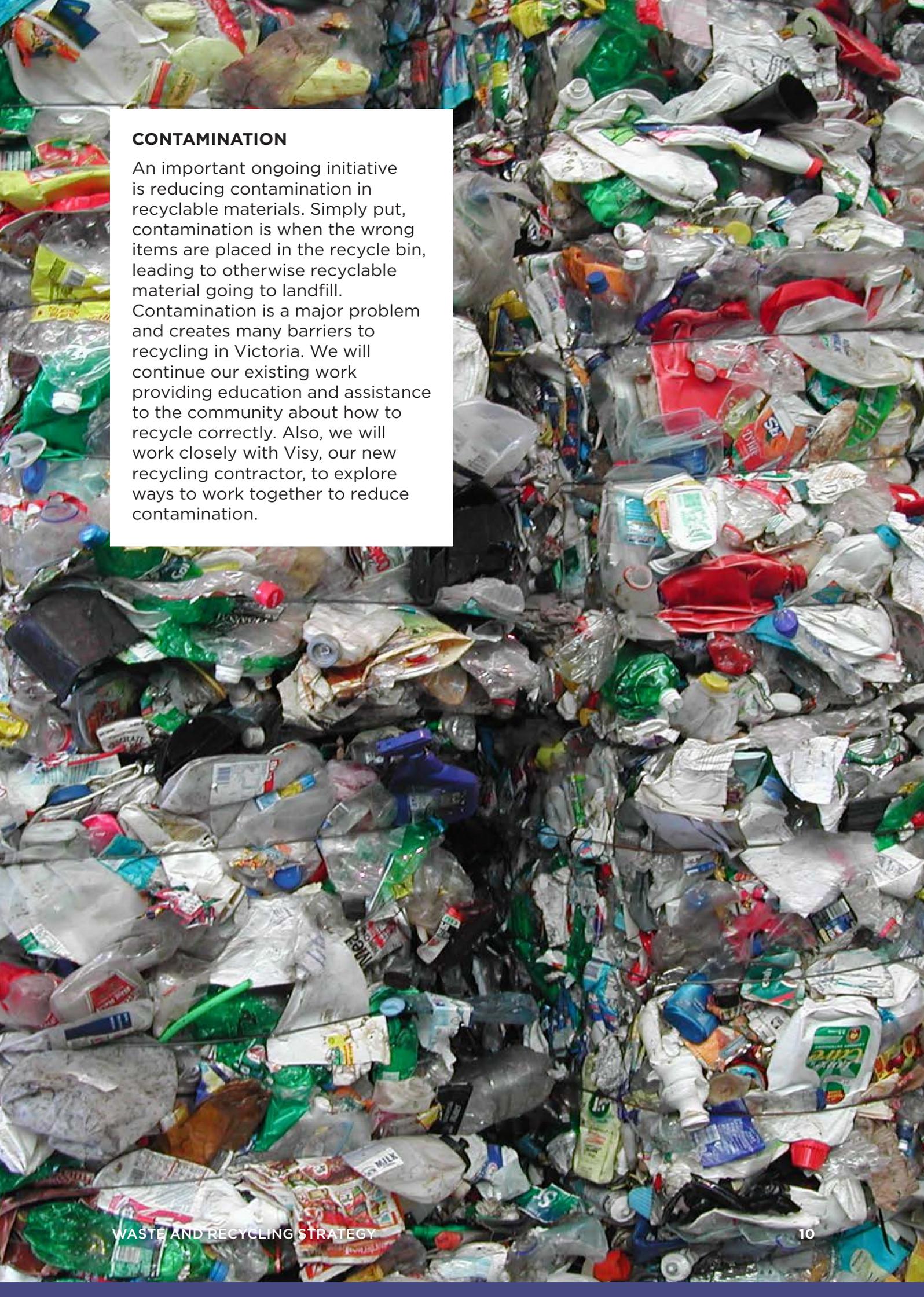
<sup>3</sup> "Strategic Waste Options - Summary Report," Prepared for Darebin City Council by Eunomia Research & Consulting Ltd, July 2019, p8.

We have seen the Victorian Government deliver significant investment in renewable energy through harnessing the energy purchasing power of all levels of government. This has resulted in new wind and solar farms in Victoria and will bring forward around \$533 million of new investment in renewables, 300MW of new renewable energy, and around 600 jobs during construction, saving the state \$84 million over 10 years. The same kind of benefits could be achieved with large-scale anaerobic digestion and Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) processes. *Recycling Victoria* provides the ideal framework for these investments utilising funds promised for waste to energy grants. This work needs to start urgently.

## WASTE TO ENERGY IS NOT THE SOLUTION

We do not support waste to energy technology as a sustainable technology. By consuming plastic, which is made from petroleum, this technology is effectively burning oil for energy and creating more greenhouse gases, albeit at a slightly slower speed. If the Victorian Government is successful in creating a strong and effective recycling processing and collection infrastructure, then plastic would be largely removed from the waste stream and waste to energy is far less likely to be a suitable technology.

We are also concerned that waste to energy plants could act to displace investment in renewable energy sources of electricity such as solar and wind power.



## CONTAMINATION

An important ongoing initiative is reducing contamination in recyclable materials. Simply put, contamination is when the wrong items are placed in the recycle bin, leading to otherwise recyclable material going to landfill. Contamination is a major problem and creates many barriers to recycling in Victoria. We will continue our existing work providing education and assistance to the community about how to recycle correctly. Also, we will work closely with Visy, our new recycling contractor, to explore ways to work together to reduce contamination.

# Waste Hierarchy



This strategy places emphasis on the waste minimisation hierarchy which favours waste avoidance and reuse as the preferred outcomes before recycling, energy recovery, or landfill.

The hierarchy is a useful guide for individual choices, however this strategy also recognises that this approach must be embedded into policy and service design by all levels of government and that avoiding waste generation must ultimately be embedded into how Australia's economy and society operates.

**Avoid** - a deliberate choice to not generate waste through purchasing decisions and behaviour.

- For example, choose items that will last a long time or have a long life span, join a tool or toy library to borrow the items you need, repair items rather than throwing them out, choose items with no or less packaging, buy smaller amounts of food that goes off quickly. By avoiding buying new items we achieve the highest environmental, financial and community benefits.

**Council will support the community to avoid the use of single-use plastics by working with local businesses.**

**Reuse** - choose items that can be reused rather than disposed.

- For example, use a refillable water bottle rather than single use bottles, give items to an op shop or friends, buy second hand items and use reusable bags.

**Council will explore better ways of recovering materials from hard waste and e-waste collections through contracted parties and fostering innovation.**

**Recycle** - involves turning items into reusable (often raw) materials. It can also include buying recycled items, and the composting of food and garden waste. Recycling can reduce the energy, water, and greenhouse emissions associated with producing new items.

- For example, use your kerbside recycling bin correctly, recycle metal products, and take phones, TVs and computers to drop-off points for electronic waste recycling. Buy products such as printing paper and toilet paper with 100% recycled content.

**Recovery of energy** - when materials cannot be recycled, energy may be able to be recovered from them. However, waste to energy technology should not be seen as a sustainable alternative to recycling. It is Council's position that the state government should pursue other technologies and policy approaches such as anaerobic digestion.

**Council will trial a biodigester or dehydrator with local traders to process food waste.**

## WASTE HIERARCHY

MOST PREFERABLE

Avoid

Reuse

Recycle

Recovery of energy

Treatment

Containment

Disposal

LEAST PREFERABLE

Council will support the community to avoid the use of single-use plastics by working with local businesses.

Council will explore better ways of recovering materials from hard waste and e-waste collections through contracted parties and fostering innovation.

Council will trial a biodigester or dehydrator with local traders to process food waste.

### Treatment, Containment and Disposal

- the last options and least desirable outcome for waste management. Darebin's residual wastes are disposed to a secure best practice landfill with a high level of gas and energy recovery.



# The State of Play for the Waste and Recycling Sector



## Global

Waste is a global issue. A global shift in recycling processing means that places all over the world are taking a different approach to recycling. Australia, like many other developed countries, has been reliant on overseas markets for the processing of some recycled materials. Many of these markets have collapsed or are shrinking. This presents challenges but also opportunities to make widespread change in how waste is dealt with globally. The developed world should not be exporting its environmental problems to developing countries.

## CHINA NATIONAL SWORD

Until recently China was among the largest importer of recycled materials globally. In 2018, China introduced the National Sword Policy which put restrictions on the kinds of recyclable material it will accept from overseas. It will only accept material with a contamination rate of 0.5% or less. Much of the material they received previously was heavily contaminated. Following the change in policy from China, other countries throughout Asia began to impose similar restrictions.

The global price for recyclable materials plummeted with these changes, sparking a 'recycling crisis'. This has forced many developed countries to rethink their approach to waste and recycling, develop new markets domestically, and move towards circular economy solutions.

Some developed countries already have advanced waste and recycling that we can learn from. For example, the Netherlands only sends 2% of its waste to landfill, with landfill bans extending to 64 different categories of waste.<sup>4</sup>

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION CIRCULAR ECONOMY ACTION PLAN

The European Commission Circular Economy Action Plan is one example of how circular economy approaches are being implemented around the world.

The European Commission has adopted a Circular Economy Package which includes a suite of measures to transition to a circular economy. One of these measures is the Circular Economy Action Plan, which promotes efficient resource use throughout the economy. The European Commission has estimated that shifting to a circular economy will save €30 billion over 20 years through more efficient waste management and will increase GDP by seven per cent. By 2035, up to 170,000 jobs will be created in the waste management sector and around 3 million jobs in the wider economy.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Millicer, "Recycling and incineration surprises in the Netherlands," The Fifth Estate, 7 May 201, <https://www.thefifthestate.com.au/columns/spinifex/recycling-and-incineration-surprises-in-the-netherland/>

## National

Traditionally, the Australian Federal Government has not played an active role in waste and recycling in Australia, leaving the responsibility to the state and local government sector. Following the recycling crisis, the Australian Federal Government showed more interest in the issue, however greater and more urgent action is required at a national level. The entire waste and recycling system needs to be reshaped, because dumping almost half the nation's waste in landfill is simply unsustainable. Nationally Australia generates approximately 67 million tonnes of waste per year, with 55% of that going to recycling facilities, 3% to energy and the remaining 42% to landfill. Approximately 12% of national recycling was exported overseas in 2017-18. China's policy restrictions led to a significant decrease in Australia's recycling exports to China. Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, overall waste exports to China decreased from 1.26 million tonnes (Mt) to 0.75 Mt, a decline of 41%. Most of Australia's recycling export market shifted to other countries in Asia. However, these countries are progressively imposing import restrictions meaning that new approaches to waste and recycling management are urgently needed<sup>5</sup>.

The 2018 *National Waste Policy: Less waste, more resources*, provides a framework for collective action by businesses, governments, communities and individuals until 2030. An Action Plan for this policy was released in 2019 which set actions across the business sector and all levels of government in Australia. The policy sets stronger targets for improved recycling and reducing waste to landfill including:

- 80% average resource recovery rate from all waste streams following the waste hierarchy by 2030
- Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025

- Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030

On 9 August 2019 the Council of Australian Governments agreed that Australia should establish a timetable to ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, while building Australia's capacity to generate high value recycled commodities and associated demand. The Federal Government tasked state Environment Ministers to develop a proposed timetable and response strategy to implement this ban.

Darebin would welcome such a ban, however without the required funding support and investment in improved infrastructure much of what is currently being exported could end up going to landfill or being stockpiled.

International experience shows that best practice waste management is achieved with a strong nationally co-ordinated approach<sup>6</sup>.

### Landfilled waste

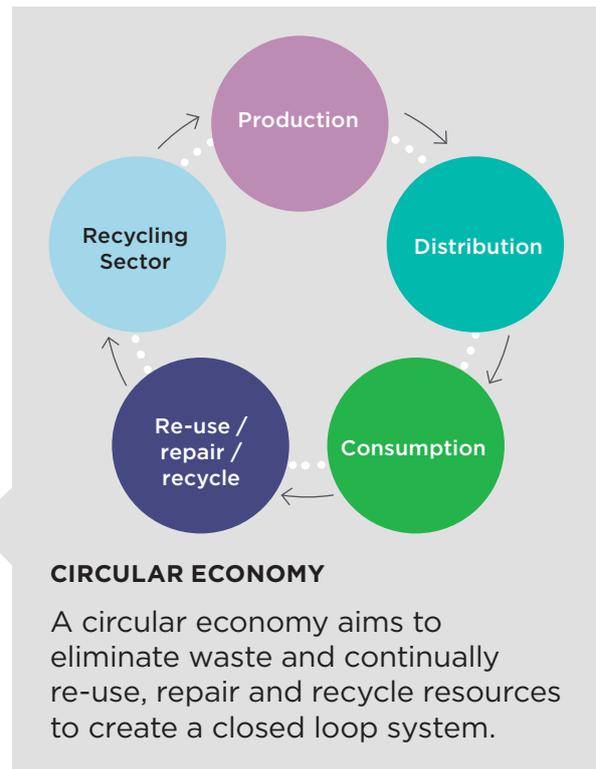


- 5 Joe Pickin and Jenny Trinh, "Data on exports of Australian wastes 2018-19," Prepared by Blue Environment, 1 November 2019, <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/23acbf02-2178-4139-81b0-58adcac4f5cd/files/data-exports-australian-wastes-2018-19.pdf>
- 6 Peter Hannam, "Ambitious and expensive': Export bans on waste prompt pleas for federal funding," Sydney Morning Herald, 8 November 2019, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/ambitious-and-expensive-export-bans-on-waste-prompts-pleas-for-federal-funding-20191108-p538sh.html>; 2018 National Waste Policy: Less Waste, More Resources, Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy, 2018, <http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/waste-resource-recovery/publications/national-waste-policy-2018>

## Victoria

The collapse of the state's largest recycling facilities, the uncovering of dangerous stockpiling and storing practices, and illegal disposal of toxic waste resulted in a recycling crisis which highlighted a lack of long-term planning and policy co-ordination at the state government level. In recent years, several large-scale fires have occurred at recycling facilities and storage sites, resulting in serious environmental and public health impacts.

A range of state government departments have responsibilities for waste and recycling. These agencies have recently conducted or commenced a number of reviews in light of the recycling crisis.



**Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)** is responsible for policy relating to land use and environment. DELWP led the development of *Recycling Victoria* which is the Victorian Government's 10-year policy and plan for reforming waste and recycling.

DELWP is responsible for the administration of the landfill levy which places a price on every tonne of waste that goes to landfill. This levy is paid by councils on behalf of residents to the state government. Since its introduction in 2005 \$1.7 billion has been collected via the levy. The money raised is held in the Sustainability Fund, purposed to fostering:

- Environmentally sustainable use of resources and best practice in waste management.
- Community action or innovation in relation to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, or adaptation or adjustment to climate change in Victoria.

**Environment Protection Authority (EPA)** is responsible for environmental regulation. The Environment Protection Act was updated in 2018 and will take effect from July 2020. The amended Act includes significant reforms to contaminated land and waste management.

**Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG)** – MWRRG is the regional waste forum for metropolitan Melbourne. The Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Strategic Plan articulates the long-term direction for resource recovery and waste management in metropolitan Melbourne. MWRRG is responsible for negotiating and managing a number of contracts for waste and recycling processing on behalf of councils and provides support to councils on waste and recycling education.

**Infrastructure Victoria** has recently examined how the industry as a whole has been operating, what has been working and what hasn't, and will advise how infrastructure and government action can create a better recycling sector. It found that 'outcomes observed in the Victorian recycling and resource recovery sector fall short of a sector operating efficiently and are reflective of market failures.'<sup>7</sup>

**Sustainability Victoria (SV)** is a statutory authority whose role is to support the sector through education. They also manage the 'Detox your home' program for the collection of household chemicals.

**Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO)** conducts reviews and audits of the public sector. Recent reviews include 'Managing the Municipal and Industrial Landfill Levy' in 2018 and 'Recovering and Reprocessing Resources from Waste' in 2019.

The diffuse nature of roles and responsibilities across the state government for waste and recycling has led to duplication, a lack of cohesion and inadequate long-term strategic planning. Darebin City Council has long called for the establishment of a dedicated waste and recycling authority in Victoria, and the announcement of this in *Recycling Victoria* is welcomed. It is crucial that this new authority centralises the delivery of policy, regulation and support to create a whole of lifecycle approach to waste management in Victoria. The Sustainability Fund, raised through the landfill levy, must be properly directed towards its stated purpose to improve waste management, greenhouse gas reduction and climate change adaptation.

## RECYCLING VICTORIA

In February 2020, the Victorian Government released its long anticipated circular economy policy titled *Recycling Victoria*. This is the Victorian Government's 10-year policy and plan for reforming waste and recycling. Within the policy were a range of measures, such as a container deposit scheme (CDS) and rolling out statewide access to food waste and separate glass recycling.

Darebin applauds the Victorian Government for most of these measures, which Council has long called for. These include a designated waste and recycling Act and authority to govern the sector, CDS and the focus on tackling food waste. There are other aspects of the policy which

Darebin opposes, in particular the encouragement of waste to energy and increase in the landfill levy. Overall, Darebin supports the Victorian government's long term focus and much needed reforms.

Local councils will be responsible for implementing much of *Recycling Victoria*. While the announcement of funding with the policy is encouraging, the amount promised is unlikely to cover all the costs. The Victorian Government needs to provide local councils with sufficient funding to implement the *Recycling Victoria* policy and ensure that only the landfill levy pays for these reforms, not resident council rates.

## Local

Local councils in Victoria are responsible for domestic waste management services such as kerbside collection. Councils play a crucial role at the frontline of the waste management process and can assert a strong influence in the sector – especially when working in collaboration with other councils.

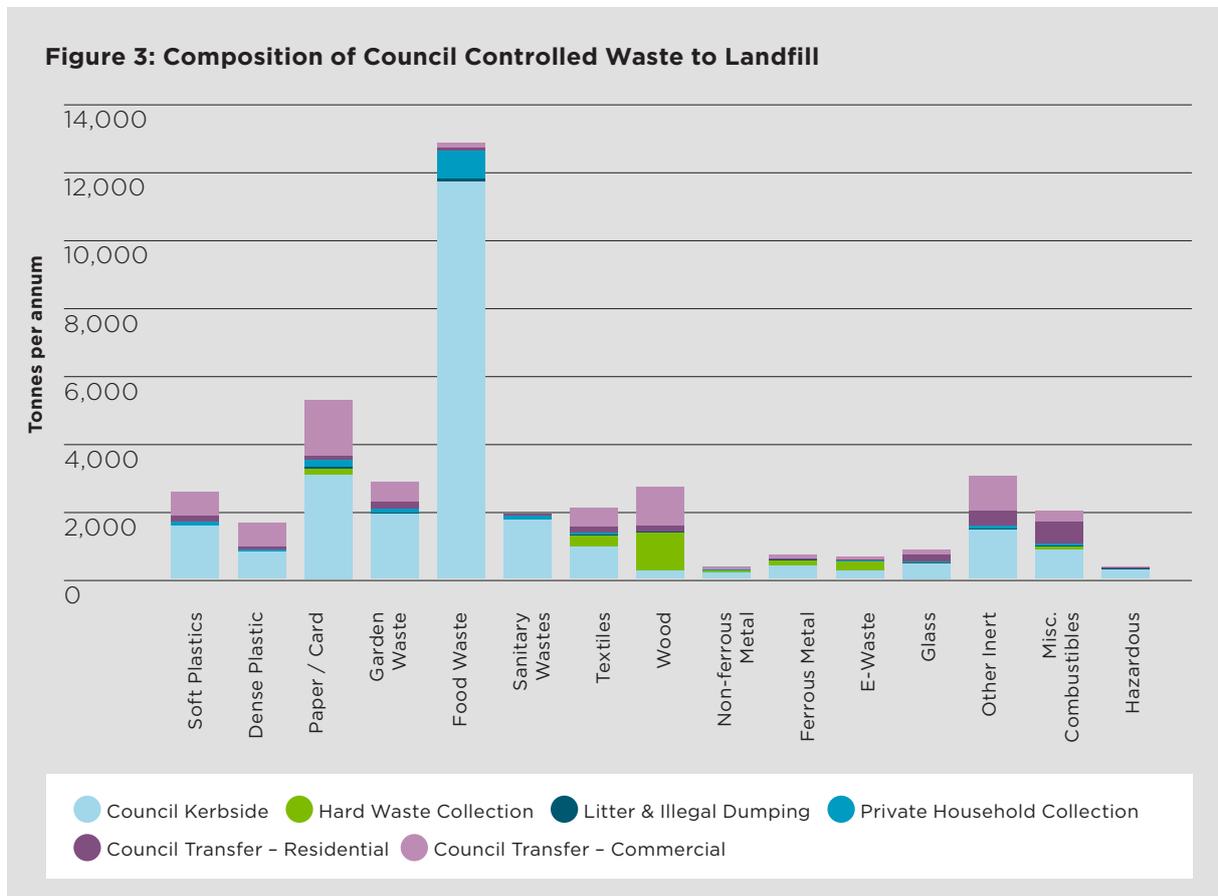
The average Darebin household produces approximately 15 kg of total waste per week – 52% landfill, 27% recycling and 21% food and green waste. The trend over time for kerbside collection shows a reduction in total waste and in garbage (landfill) over time. Recycling and green waste remain relatively stable.

In 2019 Darebin introduced food waste recycling. Food can now be placed in the green bin along with garden waste and is then turned into compost. While over time this could lead to an increase in green waste, garden waste output

can be highly changeable depending on rainfall and may decline over time.

An audit of kerbside bins conducted in August-September 2018 showed that contents of the average household garbage bin was 40% food waste and a further 5% of other organic material. Introducing food waste recycling, encouraging home composting and promoting ways to reduce food waste is the biggest opportunity for Council and the community to reduce waste to landfill. This will also significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions – food waste in kerbside garbage bins goes to landfill where it produces methane. Methane is a harmful greenhouse gas which is calculated to contribute approximately 7000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

Over the course of this strategy we will continue to focus on reducing food waste to landfill. We will work with the community to try to find solutions to



help residents in multi-unit developments and help businesses to divert food waste from landfill.

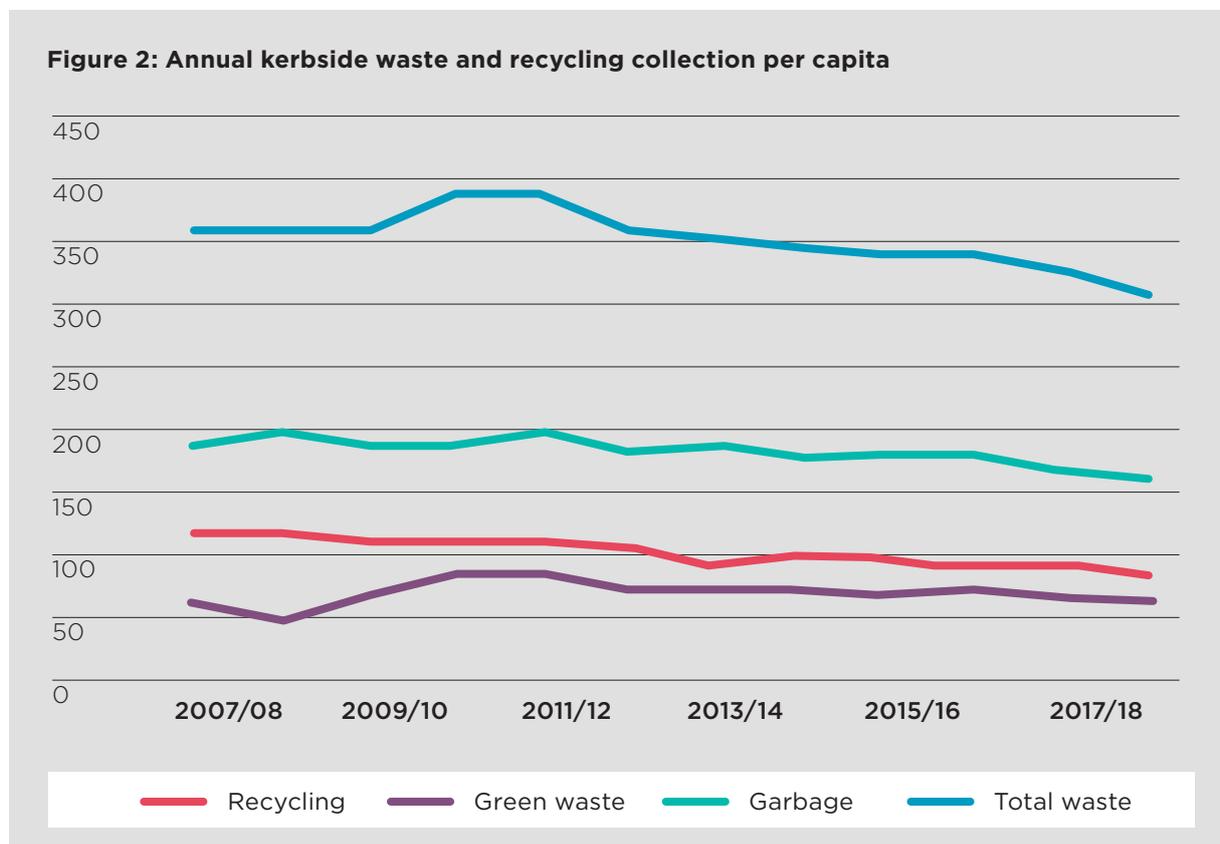
Council also collects waste in the form of hard rubbish and dumped rubbish. These waste streams are collected through our transfer station Darebin Resource and Recovery Centre (DRCC), street sweeping and litter collections. Figure 2 shows the composition of this waste that currently goes to landfill.

In total Council collects approximately 40,000 tonnes of waste. 57% of this waste is sent to landfill and 43% is recovered via kerbside recycling, green waste, via drop off points or transfer stations.

Approximately 2000 tonnes of hard rubbish are collected annually in Darebin and just over 20% of this is recycled. A key focus for Council will be to improve this recycling rate, promote other options for re-use of materials and discourage dumped rubbish.

Reducing single-use plastic and litter is also a key focus for this strategy. We will work with our local community to eliminate single-use plastics and to support initiatives like Love our Street and Water Watch, support the activities of creek management groups, and support Friends Of groups to protect our waterways.

A 3-year Action Plan has been prepared which outlines the detailed work we will do at a local level over the next three years to improve recycling outcomes, reduce waste to landfill and reduce emissions from waste. However, this strategy recognises that many of the opportunities to implement best practice waste and recycling processing require state and federal government support and intervention. We are committed to working with other levels of government to implement the changes needed at a local, state-wide and national level.



7 "Recycling and resource recovery infrastructure - Evidence base report," Infrastructure Victoria, October 2019, p17.

# Waste and Recycling Advocacy



Creating a circular economy requires government policy and intervention and must be founded in the waste hierarchy. It should be designed to achieve:

- Minimal use of virgin materials
- Net zero emissions
- No escape of litter into the environment

## Key Advocacy Asks to State and Federal Government

To meet longer term goals emerging from the strategic design work described above, the Strategy proposes Council focus efforts on building a strong advocacy platform to shift industry and government towards low carbon and robust waste and recycling management solutions. The following key advocacy asks are:

### 1. FACTOR GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS INTO ALL WASTE AND RECYCLING DECISIONS

Climate change is the leading environmental issue of our time. Given the climate emergency, we call on the Victorian State Government to ensure that greenhouse emissions are a key driver when making decisions on waste and recycling management, infrastructure or projects.

### 2. CREATE EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE TO LOOK AT THE WHOLE SUPPLY AND WASTE SYSTEM INCLUDING POLICY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FACILITATION

The announcement of the new authority is an unmissable opportunity to reshape the waste sector in Victoria. The

authority must achieve a whole of system view and take charge of waste and recycling throughout its lifecycle. Through this, the authority can coordinate the transition of the sector to a world leading industry. This authority must effectively coordinate with Federal and local governments and could be funded via the Landfill Levy.

### 3. TURN OFF THE TAP - REQUIRE AND INCENTIVISE HIGHER USE OF RECYCLED MATERIALS

- Enhance market mechanisms, such as product stewardship schemes, through new policy and legislation. Shifting more responsibility for waste towards producers could drive major change in industry.
- Go further than the target in the National Waste Action Plan to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025. Stronger actions such as bans should be in place.
- Setting high minimum recycled content procurement targets in all levels of government.
- Introducing financial incentives for using recycled materials, funded by producers using virgin materials. A similar mechanism to the Victorian Energy Efficiency Scheme could be considered.

- Broadening and deepening the TV and computer product stewardship scheme to other products and include mechanisms for cost burden sharing.
- Advocating to Victorian State Government to fast track its Plastic Pollution Action Plan, promised in 2019 with an aim to prioritise the most effective actions to reduce other types of plastic pollution such as cigarette butts, food and beverage containers and other single-use plastic items. We consider that these actions need to be taken through Council of Australian Governments for broad-scale nationwide action.

#### **4. INCENTIVISE AND DRIVE EFFECTIVE WASTE AND RECYCLING BEHAVIOUR AT END OF PIPE**

In principle, economic incentives should align with policy goals. Product sale levies should be placed on all types of packaging, including source separated schemes for items including cigarette butts, other types of plastics, textiles and glass. Funds from these systems could help industry establish collection points in places people already visit including shopping areas, schools or trains stations. Costs should be borne by users, rather than by the broader community.

The Victorian State Government should also deliver a sustained, wide-spread waste education campaign focused on waste avoidance to contribute to changing behaviour.

#### **5. RECYCLING INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND SECTOR WIDE STANDARDS**

Council encourages the creation of regular industry and economic development tools that can be used to help the recycling industry develop, innovate and grow. These could include Research and Development grants, support to facilitate early business development and help to identify locations for collection networks.

Sector accreditation for overseas imports or processing is also important and should be done at state or federal level to ensure that accreditation effectiveness and enable a level playing field.

#### **6. REQUIRE HIGH STANDARDS FOR WASTE AND RECYCLING PROCESSING THAT CUT EMISSIONS**

The need for effective recycling processing will remain high. Recycling will be expected to be reprocessed into quality recycled material streams. Darebin Council does not regard burning plastic (waste to energy) as a suitable path (refer to page 9 for why). The Victorian State Government should pursue other technologies and policy approaches. Council has received advice that suggests that waste to biofuel may offer a good intermediate solution because it could displace the use of fossil fuels in vehicles for which we don't currently have a better alternative.

#### **7. WORK WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP**

Local government is united in believing that the introduction of a national product stewardship scheme is critical to help share the cost burden, which is currently falling primarily on local government.

Product stewardship legislation is national, so schemes must be introduced by the Australian Federal Government. However, Victorian State Government can lead the way on the introduction of new legislation and working together with the Australian Federal Government.

We further call on the Australian Federal and Victorian governments to work together urgently to introduce a comprehensive product stewardship scheme.

### **8. SPEND THE LANDFILL LEVY ON IMPLEMENTING *RECYCLING VICTORIA* IN FULL**

While Darebin appreciates the funding announcements in *Recycling Victoria*, this is not enough to cover the full costs of the transition. We call for the Victorian State Government to spend the landfill levy on implementing the policy in full. We do not want to see rate payers left to foot the bill, forcing councils to limit other community services.



# Action Plan

The unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the unknown time and extent of disruptions mean that we have needed to build in a degree of flexibility in terms of timing for implementation. As a result, this Action Plan is divided into three categories: *Current Actions*, *Intermediate Actions* and *Long-Term Direction*.

*Current Actions* is work that is either already underway or will be undertaken throughout the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic.

*Intermediate Actions* is work which will be undertaken over the following 2 years after the major disruptions from the pandemic have passed.

*Long-term direction* represents the outcomes and vision which the actions are trying to achieve.

<b>Broad direction</b>	<b>Current Actions</b>	<b>Intermediate Actions</b>	<b>Long-term direction</b>
<b>Re-set the strategic direction of the Waste Strategy to align with the Climate Emergency</b>	Continuing our advocacy work for waste policy reform to deliver outcomes that align with the climate emergency.	Develop an interactive Zero Waste Map for our community (or similar online tool) to provide an accessible resource promoting the waste minimisation initiatives and recycling options available in Darebin.	Reform waste policy at the state and federal level to align with the climate emergency.
	Run a Pitch IT competition for innovative waste services.		
<b>Foster Innovation</b>	Supporting community behaviour change through waste minimisation programs, events, campaigns and via Council media channels.	Refresh Council's Waste and Sustainable Living webpages to provide accurate and useful information for the community.	
		Continuing our advocacy work for waste policy reform to deliver outcomes that align with the climate emergency.	
<b>Cut food waste to landfill</b>	Rolling-out a food waste service to residential properties and food waste prevention programme through social media and events.	Consider collection frequency changes to increase uptake of food and green waste service.	Divert all food and green waste from landfill and increase uptake of food and green waste service.
	Rolling-out home composting incentives and promotion of community programs, information sessions, training and promotion of home composting and worm-farming as the preferred way to manage unavoidable food waste.	Trial a bio-digester or dehydrator with local traders to process food waste locally.	
		Work with other councils to investigate options for a large-scale anaerobic digestion facility.	
		Expand the service for food and green waste collection.	

<b>Broad direction</b>	<b>Current Actions</b>	<b>Intermediate Actions</b>	<b>Long-term direction</b>
<b>Cut textiles to landfill</b>	<p>Provide detailed information on sustainable clothing consumption, reducing textiles to landfill and options for repairing textiles on Council's website.</p> <p>Develop and promote a Darebin Op Shop Map in collaboration with the Darebin Op Shop Collective, to promote shopping second-hand and donating clothing within the community.</p> <p>Explore a specialist textiles collection service for households and centralised drop off options.</p>	<p>Run an education and awareness campaign on textiles use and reuse to promote the sustainable consumption, repair and reuse of clothing and other textiles.</p> <p>Support local, creative and effective solutions to reduce textiles waste and encourage opportunities for reuse in local industries.</p>	<p>All textiles diverted from landfill.</p> <p>Reduced textile consumption.</p>
<b>Establish services suitable for the commercial sector (business) and multi-unit developments (MUDS)</b>	<p>Investigate options for food and green waste recovery in multi-unit developments.</p>	<p>Trial a Food and Green Waste collection for businesses.</p> <p>Develop business cases for a 'complete' (i.e. most if not all waste streams) recycling and waste solution for MUDs and businesses based on self-funded waste charges model.</p> <p>Support Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG) with local implementation of recycling and waste engagement for Multi-Unit Developments (MUDs).</p>	<p>Comprehensive waste services are provided to all MUDs and commercial businesses in the City of Darebin.</p>

<b>Broad direction</b>	<b>Current Actions</b>	<b>Intermediate Actions</b>	<b>Long-term direction</b>
<b>Secure future focused technologies that deliver the lowest greenhouse option.</b>	<p>Continue to call on the Victorian Government to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support a policy approach to deliver waste processing facilities with high standards on greenhouse gas emissions</li> <li>• Provide local councils with sufficient funding to implement the Recycling Victoria policy. Ensure that the landfill levy pays for these reforms.</li> <li>• Address the split incentive between landlords and tenants for the provision of comprehensive waste services.</li> </ul>	<p>Explore innovative ways to divert nappies and other household products from landfill.</p> <p>Work with others in local government to effectively implement the Victorian State Government <i>Recycling Victoria</i> policy and ensure it aligns with the climate emergency.</p> <p>Work with other councils to tender for cutting edge processing facilities such as anaerobic digestion with high standards on carbon.</p>	Greenhouse gases eliminated from all waste processing.
<b>Recycling</b>	<p>Rolling out communications for the e-waste ban and promoting residential e-waste collections at key customer service centres.</p> <p>Promote and support alternative, accessible recycling options for the community (e.g. Community Recycling Stations, the Darebin Resource Recovery Centre, kerbside recycling services, and public place recycling).</p> <p>Deliver the recycle right message through online channels.</p>	<p>Identify opportunities for expanding community recycling station drop off points (i.e. recycling hubs) and the range of materials recycled.</p> <p>Deliver the recycle right message through various channels, including the distribution of the Recycling Guide to all residents.</p> <p>Review waste services and develop a transition plan for implementing the Victorian State Government <i>Recycling Victoria</i> policy in a way which is right for Darebin.</p>	Reduce contamination, increase diversion, minimise waste to landfill and increase resource recovery.

<b>Broad direction</b>	<b>Current Actions</b>	<b>Intermediate Actions</b>	<b>Long-term direction</b>
<b>Hard rubbish service review to increase resource recovery rate</b>	Analyse hard waste and recycling services (including e-waste collections) to inform a new contract.	<p>Review the hard waste contract and e-waste collection services and implement new systems which deliver better community and resource recovery outcomes.</p> <p>Investigate better waste solutions for people with disabilities. This includes smaller/ more manoeuvrable bins and access to other services including hard waste as part of the service review.</p>	Maximise diversion of hard rubbish from landfill.
<b>Waste Charges</b>	Review the costs of delivering existing and potential new waste services.	<p>Review service charges to ensure equitable and sustainable charging for waste, recycling and food and green waste recycling services.</p> <p>Undertake a comprehensive audit of residential waste and recycling to inform service changes.</p>	Waste charges are financially sustainable and equitable.
<b>Contracts - Key Waste Services</b>	<p>Review the Darebin Resource Recovery Centre (DRRC) contract, which expires in June 2021, with a focus on improving waste and climate change outcomes. Investigate the potential to further develop the site to achieve better outcomes for the region.</p> <p>Tender for recycling collection services in 2020 to ensure high quality service that maximises resource recovery.</p> <p>Commence tender preparations for a regional landfill waste disposal contract.</p>	<p>Implement the new contract for the DRRC and work with the DRRC contractor to assess and trial recovery of a wider range of materials, including further expansion of product stewardship listed items.</p> <p>Promote Darebin's 'transfer station' - DRRC - to our community.</p> <p>Implement landfill contract tender.</p> <p>Progressively implement standardised bin lid colours and bin stickers in line with <i>Recycling Victoria</i>.</p>	Drive innovation in materials recovery and world leading landfill operations.

<b>Broad direction</b>	<b>Current Actions</b>	<b>Intermediate Actions</b>	<b>Long-term direction</b>
<b>Litter and Dumped Rubbish</b>	<p>Continue to work with our community to support and promote community efforts to reduce litter and dumped rubbish in Darebin.</p> <p>Consider and consult on the introduction of a city-wide ban on single use plastic that would apply to any business that provides or sells plastic takeaway food containers, straws, coffee cups and plastic lids.</p>	<p>Continue to work with Merri Creek and Darebin Creek Management Committees and community groups to reduce litter in waterways and expand the WaterWatch program.</p> <p>Develop a litter and dumped rubbish reduction campaign.</p> <p>Support businesses to reduce single use plastics use.</p> <p>Develop strategies to reduce rubbish dumping near multi-unit developments.</p> <p>Investigate the best infrastructure options for protecting waterways from litter including gross pollutant traps.</p>	Zero dumped rubbish and litter
<b>Council Leadership</b>	<p>Update Council procurement policy and implement processes to prioritise purchase of recycled products and materials (see the new <i>2019 Sustainable Procurement Policy</i>).</p> <p>Continue to support roll-out of Council's action plan to eliminate the use of single use plastic at Council events and events on Council land and venues.</p>	<p>Develop and implement a Towards Zero Waste Plan for Council.</p> <p>Continue to implement measures to avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle waste and stop litter from Council facilities and services.</p> <p>Continue to support good waste avoidance, litter and recycling practices at community events by providing information in Council's Event Guide and Venue Hire Policy and making appropriate bin caps available.</p>	Darebin Council is a zero-waste organisation.

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