

City *of* HOBART

Response to Tasmania's Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan - Waste

About the City of **HOBART**

The City of Hobart is the local government body covering the central metropolitan area of lutruwita/Tasmania's capital city nipaluna/Hobart.

The present-day council entity was legislated in 1852 with the role of Lord Mayor created in 1934.

As enshrined in legislation, the key function of local government is:

- To provide for the health, safety and welfare of the community;
- To represent the interests of the community; and
- To provide for the municipal area's peace, order and good government.

The City of Hobart delivers a range of services to over 56,000 residents and employs over 550 staff.

The Role of Local **Government**

The City of Hobart provides regular general waste, recycling, and Food Organic and Garden Organic (FOGO) waste collection for residents and for some businesses.

The City currently operates a landfill facility at McRobies Gully in South Hobart which has a target date to cease new-landfill operations by 2030. As such the City has been preparing for some time for life without its own landfill.

The City's *Waste Management Strategy 2015-30* underpins our significant waste reduction actions and programs with a primary aim to achieve zero waste to landfill. This long-term commitment to waste reduction provides environmental, financial and social benefits as well as a reduction in emissions from landfill.

Introduction

The City of Hobart welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Tasmanian Government's draft Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan for the waste sector (Waste ERRP).

The City recognises the commitment of the Tasmanian Government to transition to a low emissions economy and the importance of the *Climate Change (State Action) Amendment Act 2022* and the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25. In addition, recent investment to increase organics processing and composting facilities in the north and south of the state are welcomed, as are any new initiatives that will arise from the landfill waste levy under the Tasmania Waste and Resource Recovery Board.

The City of Hobart has been a leader in climate action and waste minimisation for more than two decades. In June 2019, the City declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency. Building on this declaration, in November 2021 Council endorsed the Sustainable Hobart Action Plan 2020-2025: Toward zero emissions Hobart.

The City of Hobart Waste Management Strategy 2015-30 sets a goal of zero waste to landfill by 2030 with a series of targets, set at 5-yearly intervals, applied to monitor progress. In 2015, the diversion rate from landfill was 32 per cent, the 2020 target was 50 per cent. The most recent reporting period for 2022-23 shows that 49 per cent of waste was diverted from landfill through re-use and recycling programs.

The City of Hobart has achieved this diversion rate through a number of programs and initiatives, of note are:

- Garden waste service introduced in 2016 and extended to include food organics in 2019 (FOGO).
- FOGO service available for businesses and organisations and FOGO bins located in five public places.
- By-law banning a range of single-use plastics at takeaway food retailers.
- Conversion of public dog tidy bags from petroleum-based plastic to compostable – this alone eliminates around 1.2 million single use plastic bags from circulation per year in Hobart alone.
- A reusable nappy and sanitary product rebate scheme.
- A range of public activities such as schools waste audits, tours of the Waste Management Centre, and home compost workshops.
- Securing investment in the Landfill Gas Extraction Plant at McRobies Gully Landfill to improve the efficiency of the system.
- Increased capacity of the Hobart Tip Shop to remove recyclables from the general waste stream at McRobies.
- Improved retrieval of construction and demolition materials from general waste at McRobies.

Some of the key outcomes and priorities of the Waste Management Strategy are:

- A better funded and regulated waste sector.
- Maximising resource recovery.
- A more waste aware community.
- A reduction in organic materials to landfill.
- A better-informed waste disposal fee structure.
- More frequent and accurate waste to landfill and waste diversion data collection.

Further to the Waste Management Strategy, Council endorsed the *Waste Reduction Statement of Commitment* on 17 April 2019. This reiterates the City's commitment to implementing priority actions across all operations to minimise environmental pollution and reduce waste.

Key issues

1. How can we build on work already underway to reduce emissions and build resilience in the waste sector?

Behaviour change is a critical factor in reducing waste emissions. The City acknowledges the significant amount of work already being undertaken by government, industry, businesses and the community to reduce waste generation, improve resource recovery and move to a circular economy.

The Tasmanian Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2023-2026, developed by the Waste and Recovery Board, has a strong focus on prioritising circularity thereby reducing waste production and consumption.

The City considers that the following opportunities could build upon, elevate and embed behaviour change:

- Provide leadership and support systems that encourage and incentivise circular economy initiatives.
- Build on and highlight community and industry circular economy initiatives.
- Provide resources and funding to encourage circular practices.

Diverting organic waste from landfill. The introduction of FOGO services for residents and businesses is underway in many councils in Tasmania. Where the service has been introduced there has been a reduction in the volume of waste that goes to landfill.

The FOGO service at the City has been rated by our community in recent surveys as being an important service with a high level of satisfaction.

More can be done to reduce the volume of green and food waste going into landfill. The following opportunities have been identified for the Hobart LGA but could be applicable state-wide:

- Increase the volume of FOGO collected from commercial operators, most notably restaurants and cafes and large operators such as hospitals, supermarkets and education facilities.
- Further encourage and support event organisers to implement recycling and waste diversion programs, including food waste.
- More public FOGO bins, particularly in popular picnic/barbecue areas.
- Better education of businesses and the community to reduce the amount of soft-plastics significantly contaminating FOGO bin services across the city.

2. What future opportunities do you think will have the most impact?

Priority 1 – Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill

The City supports the future opportunities included in this priority area and provides the following comments.

- Increased FOGO collection and centralised processing capacity are essential. Certainty around the processing of FOGO waste and the infrastructure required will encourage more councils to introduce the service.
- Improvements in the sorting and retrieval of construction and demolition waste across the State.
- Expansion of the proposed Container Refund Scheme (CRS) to a full range of hard-plastic bottles and containers, in addition to glass and hard plastics produced by bigger conglomerates.
- The ability to ban, or extract and recycle soft-plastics.
- Planning also needs to be in place for the active management of landfill sites when they have stopped being used.

Priority 2 – Increasing the recycling and recovery of organic waste

The City is supportive of the future opportunities in this priority area and provides the following comments:

- Education and awareness of the impact of organic waste on the environment together with the promotion of circular economy practices are needed so that individuals and industry can take action to reduce emissions from waste.
- Consistent reliable data on waste streams and the emissions produced is crucial for future planning and the development of solutions or technology to increase recycling and recovery. For example, a more centralised FOGO processing model across multiple councils as above.
- It is also essential that consistent methodologies are used to measure and report on the recycling and recovery of organic waste.
- Much work needs to be done to reduce the contamination of FOGO by soft plastics.

Priority 3 – Building the resilience of our waste sector into the future

The City is supportive of the future opportunities in this priority area and considers it vital that the long-term resilience of the sector is planned for. The City has recently undertaken a climate risk and vulnerability assessment which identifies numerous risks including: “Increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events leading to damage to critical infrastructure (power, communications, water, sewerage and waste), resulting in additional costs and resources required to clean up potential health hazards (asbestos, sewerage, toxins, bacteria and pollutants).”

It's critical that climate risk is now included in the future management planning of the waste sector across the State.

Priority 4 – Supporting collaboration to reduce emissions and build resilience in the waste sector

The City is supportive of the future opportunity in this priority area and welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with the State to pursue these. Local government is a key stakeholder in reducing emissions from waste and recognises the need to support innovative approaches to reduce emissions and build resilience. For example, the City of Hobart understand that the efficient capture of methane from landfill and water treatment plants to produce energy will have a significant positive impact on the level of methane in the atmosphere. The City recommends the State Government work closely with landfill operators to explore ways to promote methane gas capture at these sites.

3. Are there any priorities or future opportunities missing from this draft Plan?

The City supports the priorities and future opportunities but considers that there is not enough emphasis on waste avoidance. The most effective way of reducing waste to landfill is to not produce it in the first place and to work with the community, businesses and industry to reduce waste. It is far more efficient and cost effective to reduce and/or sort waste at the source rather than at the landfill destination.

Consideration should also be given to whether the sale of offsets from methane capture is appropriate. There is concern that the use of offsets or carbon credits delay emissions reduction and whether they lead to any emissions reduction over time. The City is currently evaluating its approach to carbon credits as part of its climate strategy which is currently under development.

The City recommends that the ERRP place more emphasis on exploring innovative approaches to develop technologies for the reuse and recycling of waste, for example to create bioenergy, biochar, compost, mulch, bioplastics or animal feed.

Soft-plastics are arguably in much need of attention since they contaminate all waste streams, are highly polluting of our waterways, and difficult to recycle at present. Partnerships with research and development institutions and trialling new technologies

could help reduce organic waste in landfill, particularly FOGO and soft-plastics. The State should also consider how it can use its purchasing power to catalyse innovation in this sector.

In addition, the commitment and resourcefulness of communities could be harnessed through supported programs that could achieve resource recovery outcomes, for example food banks, home composting, community gardens etc.

4. Are there other ways we can collaborate to reduce emissions and build resilience in the waste sector?

Emissions from waste is the City's most significant relative source of corporate emissions. The landfill at McRobies Gully is managed to reduce methane emissions through methane oxidation in cover soils, and capture and utilisation to generate electricity. Achieving higher methane reduction can lead to technical challenges and issues with contractual arrangements which in turn could lead to increased costs for the City.

To minimise emissions from the McRobies landfill a technical study needs to be commissioned looking at how they can be minimised in the short term and eliminated as quickly as possible. It is suggested that such a study would be worthwhile undertaken state-wide across landfill sites and may require technical assistance and funding from the Tasmanian Government.


While it is appreciated that feedback being sought is specifically to address the reduction of emissions from waste, the City is also seeking to reduce waste and the impact it has on the natural environment. The City calls on the State Government to implement state-wide legislation to phase out the use of single-use plastics and single-use items and prioritise the implementation of the CRS.

Conclusion

The City of Hobart appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan – Waste.

The City is currently developing its Climate Strategy 2030 in collaboration with the community and climate leaders. The strategy will provide an integrated response to climate change by the City with the community. The strategy will identify further opportunities for collaborative action with the Tasmanian Government towards a zero emissions and resilient waste sector.

It is important to note that due to the timing of this consultation period, the draft climate strategy is not able to be shared. The feedback provided in this submission is based on existing policies and strategies of the City of Hobart, and early directions for



the Climate Strategy. The City will continue to engage with the Tasmanian Government as the strategy progresses to identify further areas of collaboration and recommendations for State leadership.