

## 10.5. North Sydney Council Bi-Monthly Waste Clean Up - Response to Council Resolution

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**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

### **PURPOSE:**

At its meeting of 12 December 2022, Council resolved:

- 1. THAT Council prepare a report on whether our bi-monthly waste pickup service still meets community expectations.*
- 2. THAT the report include suggestions on how we can discourage (or disallow) waste that could be reused, repurposed or repaired being sent to landfill.*

This report addresses the Resolution.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Council provides residential waste and recycling collection services to over 36,000 dwellings under a waste collection contract with United Resource Management (URM). Under the current contract, services include weekly garbage and commingled recycling collections, public place recycling collections, illegally dumped rubbish collections, and pre-booked fortnightly garden organics and household clean-up services. On average, approximately 4,300 householders book a clean-up collection service every month, with over 200 tonnes of items collected. Collected clean-up material is disposed of at landfill under the current Greenwaste Processing and Bulky Waste Disposal Contract with Cleanaway. Clean-up services were first introduced in 1992 as a way of tackling illegally dumped rubbish, particularly around multi-unit dwellings.

Community satisfaction of Council's Waste Services remains consistently high as evidenced by the feedback received in Council's Customer Satisfaction periodic surveys.

Council also provides other options for residents to rehome and divert materials from landfill: residents are encouraged to utilise the collection services of charitable organisations such as The Bower Reuse and Repair Centre for furniture items; the RecycleSmart program for textiles, toys, books and other bric-a-brac; and the Artarmon Community Recycling Centre (CRC) for the disposal of several household problem wastes such as paint, motor oil, gas bottles, fire extinguishers, e-waste, light bulbs, batteries, smoke detectors, x-rays, printer cartridges, mobile phones, and wearable textiles.

The pre-booked bulky waste collection service is integral to Council's overall waste management services, and it provides a speedy, convenient service for the collection and disposal of many unwanted household items. If this collection service were to be withdrawn or reduced in frequency, residents' satisfaction would decline as the number of illegally dumped material incidents would likely increase. There is a distinct positive correlation between the number of illegal dumping incident reports and the frequency, or lack thereof, of a bulky waste collection service.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no financial implications to this report.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. THAT** the Council's Pre-booked Household Waste Clean-up Services (Bi-monthly Collection) Report be received.
- 2. THAT** the Council's Pre-booked Household Waste Clean-up Services (Bi-monthly Collection) continue to be provided at the current level.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **5. Our Civic Leadership**

#### **5.4 Council services are efficient and easy to access**

## **BACKGROUND**

Council provides residential waste and recycling collection services to over 36,000 dwellings under a waste collection contract with United Resource Management (URM). Under the current contract, services include weekly garbage and commingled recycling collections, public place recycling collections, illegally dumped rubbish collections, and pre-booked fortnightly garden organics and household clean-up services. On average, approximately 4,300 householders book a clean-up collection service every month, with over 200 tonnes of items collected. Collected items are disposed of under the current Greenwaste Processing and Bulky Waste Disposal Contract with Cleanaway: the items are delivered by URM to Cleanaway's Artarmon Transfer Station where it is bulked up to be landfilled at Lucas Heights. The services were first introduced in 1992 as a way of tackling the problem of illegally dumped rubbish, particularly around multi-unit dwellings.

On average, there are 15 illegal dumping incidents reported each week; however, this number doubles during the weeks in which a pre-booked clean-up service is not available. Under the Waste Collection and Processing Services Contract, the contract rate for the collection of dumped rubbish is double the rate for the collection of a pre-booked clean-up service.

Community satisfaction of Council's Waste Services remains steadily high as evidenced by the feedback received from Council's periodic Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Consequently, Council has not scaled back on any waste management services offered to its residents but has continually sought initiatives that would enhance its objectives of landfill waste diversion.

Council currently provides several options for residents to rehome and divert materials from landfill: residents can utilise the collection services of The Bower Reuse and Repair Centre instead of the bi-monthly pre-booked clean-up service, whereby some household items, such as unwanted furniture are repaired and resold to the community at low cost. Recently, Council has offered the RecycleSmart program to enable difficult-to-recycle items such as textiles, to be collected and transferred to local charities and recycling organisations. Residents of North Sydney can also safely dispose of several household problem wastes including paint, motor oil, gas bottles, fire extinguishers, e-waste, light bulbs, batteries, smoke detectors, x-rays, printer cartridges, mobile phones, and wearable textiles (trial phase till 30 April 2023) at the Artarmon Community Recycling Centre (CRC) which promotes the sustainable circular economy.

## CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

## DETAIL

There are five waste collection zones servicing over 36,000 residential properties in the North Sydney Local Government Area (LGA), with medium and high-density housing making up 89.3% of the dwellings. Since 1992, Council has offered a bi-monthly pre-booked clean-up collection service to its residents. This has provided residents with the ability to easily dispose of unwanted bulky household items, thereby minimising illegal dumping incidents, even though the LGA is characterised by a high transient population.

Under the current waste collection contract with URM, which commenced 1 July 2019 and expires 30 June 2026 (excluding potential contract extensions of up to three years), Council offers fortnightly pre-booked clean-up collection services. This service is managed via an on-call booking system that has a cut off time of 4.00 pm on the Sunday prior to the scheduled Monday collection. Accepted items include clothing, furniture, floor coverings (bundled with string in rolls no greater than 1.2 metres in length), and whitegoods.

E-waste is not accepted in the pre-booked clean-up collection service and must be taken to the Community Recycling Centre (CRC) for disposal. It is then processed by a third-party contractor who extracts all valuable resources.

Non-booked clean-up items are treated as illegally dumped materials. A sticker is left on the non-booked pile, reinforcing to the householder the requirement to book for the service. A letter is also sent directly to the property if a single dwelling, or the Strata/Body Corporate and Building Manager in multi-unit dwellings, to advise that all items are to be pre-booked. On average, there are 15 illegal dumping incidents reported each week however this number doubles during the weeks in which a pre-booked clean-up service is not available. Under the waste collection contract, the collection cost of each reported illegal dumping incident is double the rate of the collection of a pre-booked clean-up service.

All collected material is transferred to Cleanaway's Artarmon Resource Recovery Centre where it is bulked up and sent to the Lucas Heights Landfill. Currently there are no processing facilities in NSW that can recycle kerbside collected bulky waste before landfill disposal. Whitegoods, however, are collected separately and are delivered to scrap metal dealers for recycling.

During the tendering process for the current waste collection contract, Council encouraged tenderers to provide innovative solutions for collected clean-up material, to minimise landfill disposal. The successful tenderer, Suez (which was subsequently sold to Cleanaway) proposed utilising the material as Processed Engineered Fuel (PEF). Essentially this entailed collecting the material and grinding it down to produce a potential alternative fossil fuel source in coal fired power stations or in cement kilns. Council only received one tender submission for the processing of clean-up waste, being from Suez. The processing tender proposal was rejected

by Council on the grounds of price and viability. Under the terms of the conforming tender, the processing of clean-up material represented a 65% increase in price per tonne over the landfill price (this would equate to approximately an additional contract outlay of \$225,000 per annum). Further, PEF markets in NSW were not established as coal fired power stations were not technically able to use waste-based fuels in the generation of electricity; only one cement kiln existed in rural NSW and it too was not capable of burning PEF. Unfortunately, due to regulatory restrictions, waste to energy fuel applications for PEF remain inhibited, meaning there are currently no financially viable alternatives for clean-up material collected at kerbside other than landfilling.

Council also sought processing options for discarded mattresses. According to a clean-up waste composition audit conducted by Anne Prince Consulting (APC) in 2017, mattresses represent approximately 11% of waste presented by residents. Again, only Suez provided a proposal for the processing of mattresses which were to be collected separately: mattresses would be broken down and the various components sent to dedicated recyclers; what could not be recycled would be converted to PEF. The proposal was rejected on financial considerations – the proposed price was more than \$1,200 per tonne (there are approximately 15 to 20 mattresses per tonne).

There has been a steady increase in the total number of pre-booked clean-up collection bookings over the last five financial years. A summary of pre-booked clean-up bookings and tonnages for the five-year period is shown in the table below.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Number of Clean-up Bookings</b>	<b>Tonnages</b>
July 2017 – June 2018	32,795	1,859
July 2018 - June 2019	34,679	1,958
July 2019 - June 2020	37,676	2,271
July 2020 - June 2021	44,900	2,332
July 2021 - June 2022	52,009	2,427

During 2017-2018 FY, a total of 32,795 pre-booked clean-up collection bookings were received. Since then, the gradually increasing trend has continued. In COVID-19 lockdowns in the 2021-22 financial year there was a significant increase in bookings with 52,009 bookings made, marking an increase of 38% since June 2019. Council is expecting the increasing trend to continue this financial year, with the number of bookings expected to be more than 4,300/month.

### **Clean-up Presentation and Compositional Audit**

In 2021, North Sydney Council engaged Knowwaste to assess clean-up presentation rates across the North Sydney LGA. The audit reported that 91% of the bookings were valid, with the rest (9%) illegally dumped and requiring collection as registered illegal dumping.

North Sydney Council had engaged Anne Prince Consulting (APC) in 2017 to undertake a compositional audit of pre-booked clean-up collections. It was noted over a representative sample across North Sydney, that furniture represented 48% of items presented for

collection, followed by mattresses (11%), carpets/textiles (8%), cardboard (7%) and whitegoods (3%). The audit showed that out of all the items presented for collection, only 24% had the potential to be reused, as rehoming and reuse organisations have very strict guidelines on what they classify as a potential reusable item. Further, these organisations are not on-call enterprises, requiring residents to book far in advance for a possible collection. Given the high transient nature of North Sydney residents, long collection wait times are not appropriate; Council's pre-book collection service therefore provides the best solution to collecting bulky household waste, minimising illegal dumping incidents.

### **Community Satisfaction**

Council undertook a community consultation process as part of its tendering process before the commencement of the current waste contracts. The consultation showed that the majority of respondents were satisfied with Council's waste and recycling collection services. Consequently, no significant changes were made to the tendered waste services.

In 2020, Council undertook a Customer Satisfaction Survey to assess satisfaction with different Council-managed facilities and services. Overall satisfaction with Council was extremely positive, with an average rating of 5.4 out of a possible 7.0. The average rating for facilities and services was 5.0 (out of a possible 7.0) with the top-rated including maintenance of parks, ovals, and bushland areas (5.7 out of 7.0), feeling safe in North Sydney (5.7), waste and recycling collection services (5.7), satisfaction with the way North Sydney looks and feels as a whole (5.5), and cleanliness of local roads and footpaths (5.5). This survey confirmed that residents were satisfied with the provisions and services provided under the current Waste Collection Contract.

The pre-booked bulky waste collection service is integral to the overall waste management services provided by Council, and provides a speedy, convenient service for the collection and disposal of many unwanted household items. If this collection service were to be withdrawn or reduced in frequency, residents' satisfaction would likely decline as the number of illegal dumping incidents would probably increase. There is a distinct correlation between the number of illegal dumping incident reports and the frequency, or lack thereof, of a bulky waste collection service. Residents have repeatedly stated that tidy, clean streets within the LGA are of paramount importance.

### **The Bower Reuse and Recycle Service**

Council promotes the utilisation of donor collection services. The Bower is an environmental charity organisation which aims to provide programs and services to create a circular economy. As a participating Council, residents of North Sydney Council can utilise the collection services of The Bower (instead of the bi-monthly pre-booked clean-up service), where some household items are repaired and resold to the community at low cost. The Bower Reuse and Repair Centre currently accepts bookings for household furniture, bikes, some electronic appliances, building materials, bric-a-brac, kitchenware, and books.

The Bower, and other charitable organisations such as St. Vincent's, have strict acceptance thresholds. Under the program, the items must be in good condition, repairable, and

reusable. However, in most cases residents normally discard items which are old, cannot be used anymore, or simply replaced due to new trends. This creates pressure on The Bower to cater for several Sydney metropolitan councils and other donation partners. Put simply, these organisations are inundated with requests for the collection of unwanted household items and consequently acceptance criteria has become more stringent.

Additionally, the average wait time until bookings are reviewed is almost two weeks. Once reviewed, the items listed for collection are checked to ensure they meet the rigid acceptance guidelines. The lead time from booking to collection is approximately three to four weeks. Such a lead time generally does not suit residents who expect immediate collection, especially those moving house. Therefore, booking a collection with Council's pre-booked collection service is an efficient service for residents not wanting to wait for extended periods. The prompt collection thus minimises the number of illegally dumped incidents.

### **RecycleSmart**

RecycleSmart offers household pick-up services for difficult-to-recycle items which would otherwise have been landfilled. Bagged materials (e.g. textiles, books, toys) are delivered to local infrastructure such as charity shops and the CRC (e-waste and hazardous household waste). In its meeting of 28 March 2022, Council resolved to offer RecycleSmart a three-month trial from July 2022 to September 2022, which was subsequently extended by a further three months. During this time, Council received positive feedback from the local community about the RecycleSmart service, and the collection service was again extended by another 12 months, from January – December 2023.

For the 7 months from 5 July 2022 – 31 January 2023 the results were as follows:

- 1,133 bookings
- 2,168 bags collected
- 3,973 kilos collected
- 29% soft plastics, 35% textiles, 18% e-waste, 19% other (batteries, printer cartridges, and x-rays etc.)

### **Community Recycling Centre (CRC)**

Another waste reduction initiative undertaken by Council is the Community Recycling Centre (CRC), a drop off facility for common household problem waste (paint, motor oil, gas bottles, fire extinguishers, e-waste, light bulbs, batteries, smoke detectors, x-rays, printer cartridges, and mobile phones) that cannot be collected via Council's kerbside waste and recycling collection services. Items are processed to recover several materials and resources which are later recycled and reused in various other products. The North Sydney CRC was established after NSROC (Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils) received a grant from the NSW EPA through the NSW Environmental Trust with funding from the waste levy. The centre is operated by North Sydney Council on behalf of the City of Ryde and the councils of Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Mosman, and Willoughby.

With more residents dropping off problem waste each year, and limited room at the CRC for storage of waste, restrictions apply on the maximum quantity of waste dropped off per visit. A maximum limit of 20 litres or 20kg per customer per (free) drop-off is allowed.

In its meeting of 28 March 2022, Council resolved that an agreement be sought with the Community Recycling Centre (CRC) member councils, to engage King Cotton to provide a textile recycling collection bin at the CRC. An agreement was reached by the CRC member councils to offer King Cotton a six-month collection trial (31 October 2022 – 30 April 2023) to collect only wearable textiles including good condition clothes, shoes, handbags, belts, and hats. A total of 2,519 kilos has been collected in the last three months, a great circular economy outcome as all wearable textiles collected are reused, repaired, and resold.

### **Resource Recovery Education**

Council provides a variety of waste education material to residents. Apart from waste avoidance messages on Council's website, on social media platforms, and at workshops at the Coal Loader, Council also drops letterbox flyers to residents, building managers and Strata Managers informing them of acceptable items and household clean-up procedures. A waste calendar is distributed annually (usually in December) advertising the greenwaste and general household clean-up dates for the year ahead. Illegal dumping flyers are distributed in hotspot areas where residents place greenwaste and/or clean-up items out on the kerb without any booking. The distribution of these flyer aims to inform and educate residents that clean-up and greenwaste collection items must be booked before they are placed out on the kerb. Council's website and social media platforms are kept updated with new waste and recycling information, including information on The Bower Reuse and Repair Centre.