

6.1. MM01: Council's commitment to reducing waste to landfill

The Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment has set a resource recovery target of 80% from all waste streams by 2030 for the waste management industry (NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041). To achieve this aspirational target, councils are required to undertake waste management practices which minimise waste disposal at landfill and maximise resource recovery.

Council currently undertakes the following resource recovery initiatives-

- All recyclables collected in the yellow lidded bin are transported to Visy at Smithfield for sorting and processing.
- All greenwaste collected at kerbside is transferred to an organics processing facility.
- To reduce food waste from going to landfill, Council provides subsidised compost bins and worm farms to residents who are encouraged to participate in workshops to enhance their knowledge of composting (172 compost and worm farm bins were provided to residents in the last 12 months).

Prior to 2019, Council had contracted Suez to transfer the material collected in the red bins, to a processing facility at Eastern Creek where waste was separated into streams such as metals, plastics and organics, diverting approximately 65% of waste from landfill. The organics waste stream was ultimately converted into a compost like material used in mine rehabilitation and broad acre agriculture applications. However, the waste exemption orders that allowed for such applications were rescinded due to concerns about contamination, resulting in the entire red bin being landfilled.

There is now a view that the organics fraction of the red bin, approximately 35% of the bin's contents, should be source separated and processed at recognised Food Organics and Garden Organics facilities. Council resolved to undertake a food waste trial to determine to what extent a separate Food Organics collection and processing program was feasible.

Under the trial, approximately 400 multi-unit dwellings were to be given a separate food waste bin, with the food waste transferred to Veolia's Earthpower facility at Camellia for processing. The aim of the trial was to determine whether the material collected was suitable for processing, the extent of contamination in the food waste collected and whether such a program could be rolled out throughout the LGA. Unfortunately, the trial has not progressed due to the following reasons-

- Limited capacity at Earthpower – Veolia has advised that Earthpower has no capacity to accept additional material from any sources for processing. Additionally, the facility runs strict contamination thresholds meaning organic waste which contains materials such as plastic bags are rejected and landfilled. Earthpower has been closed for waste processing for the last eight months for upgrading.

- Earthpower is in negotiations with alternative processing facilities outside of the Sydney Metropolitan Area, including a site near Forbes, NSW. Essentially, Veolia's Camellia facility would be used as a transfer station for collected food waste before being transferred to a rural location. Again, contamination management is a major concern.

To achieve the mandated 80% resource recovery target, it is imperative that there are financially viable processing options within the Sydney metropolitan area. Currently there is only one foodwaste (food organics FO) processing option available to Sydney councils – Veolia's Earthpower. Barriers to entry for new participants is high as it requires a considerable investment in land and infrastructure, there are stringent regulations around noise and odour management, customers are usually locked in to long-term contracts and there is not a large enough market for the end product, given contamination concerns.

To move past this stalemate, I propose Council petition the NSW Government to provide the waste management industry with more assistance, both regulatory and financial, to incentivise the development of new waste processing facilities within the Sydney metropolitan area. The Government needs to explore options for processing that address the contamination issues and provide councils and the waste industry with long term certainty over processing contracts and over the regulatory environment.

I therefore recommend:

1. THAT Council write to the Minister for Planning, Industry and the Environment calling on the NSW Government to provide financial and regulatory support to the waste industry so that organic waste can be diverted from landfill.

2. THAT Council reiterates its commitment to delivering a foodwaste pick-up service across our LGA.

**COUNCILLOR JILLY GIBSON
MAYOR**