

## **8.16. RecycleSmart and Textile Recycling**

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**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

### **PURPOSE:**

This report responds to the Council resolution of 21 February 2022 regarding the the RecycleSmart program.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The RecycleSmart program offers a pickup and delivery service for recycled textiles, soft plastics, e-waste and other items such as batteries and printer cartridges. RecycleSmart are a convenient service for people that do not have a car or are unable to drop off small amounts of, for example, e-waste to the Community Recycling Centre (CRC).

Residents can book in a collection via a RecycleSmart app and can have a supermarket bag size full of recyclables collected and taken to a local drop off point, for example- St Vinnies, and the Salvation Army. It is a relatively expensive service and to date there has been no reporting performed on the life cycle analysis of the materials collected by RecycleSmart. To verify what proportion of the collected materials are diverted from landfill would be difficult as there is no way to measure and report the amounts recycled, except for the e-waste delivered to the CRC. Council staff will seek to obtain more data from RecycleSmart to allow analysis to be undertaken. Thus, it is recommended that Council undertakes a 3-month trial with RecycleSmart at a capped cost of \$15,000 plus GST. A cost benefit analysis will be undertaken at the conclusion of the trial.

King Cotton and Upparel have been reviewed as potential textile recycling organisations to provide a collections bin at the Community Recycling Centre (CRC). King Cotton can work with Council to provide the service at no cost. It is recommended that Council seeks agreement from the CRC member Councils to engage with King Cotton.

The textile recycling collection locations considered are the Council Customer Service Centre, the Coal Loader, the Library, the Crows Nest Community Centre, the Neutral Bay Community Centre and the Community Recycling Centre (CRC).

The preferred location is the CRC. The CRC would depend on agreement from all of the CRC member Councils.

Council will utilise the Council website to educate residents on the impact of textile waste on the environment and to inform residents of any new textile recycling collection points via the newsletter and social media platforms.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

RecycleSmart are offering a 3-month trial at a capped costs of \$15,000 plus GST. The app is included for the trial period.

Funds will be drawn from the Domestic Waste Management Budget.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1.THAT** Council seek an agreement with the Community Recycling Centre member Councils about engaging with King Cotton to provide a textile recycling collection bin at the CRC.
- 2.THAT** following endorsement from the member Councils, a textile recycling collection bin be installed at the CRC.
- 3.THAT** RecycleSmart be offered a three month trial to enable recyclables to be collected within the North Sydney LGA .

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment
- 1.2 North Sydney is sustainable and resilient

## **BACKGROUND**

Council at its meeting of 21 February 2022 resolved:

- 1. THAT Council join the RecycleSmart program to enable recyclable textiles to be collected from residences within the North Sydney LGA*
- 2. THAT Council coordinate with a textile recycling organisation (such as Upparel, or a suitable equivalent) to provide a central collection point for used textiles at our Community Recycling Centre in Artarmon*
- 3. THAT Council provide a brief report on the feasibility of other places where textile recycling points could be located, such as at Council Chambers*
- 4. THAT Council educate residents on the impact of textile waste on our environment and to inform residents of the new textile recycling collection points via our communication channels (newsletter, social media etc)*

Council rescinded The Charitable Recycling Bin Policy in 2018 on Council owned land to due to health and safety issues. People were using these bins as rubbish dumping sites, bins were always overflowing, this attracted more and more bags of useless materials and broken items as well as dumping near the bins which attracted vermin. Charitable recycling bins located on private land are experiencing the same issues. Placing a textile recycling bin on Council land will highly likely attract the same issues.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

### **Textile Recycling**

Textile waste and the impacts of fast fashion are an increasing issue for the environment. Annually Australians acquire an average of 27 kilograms of new clothing per person, and discard around 23 kilograms of clothing to landfill each year.

In North Sydney 4% of the general waste bin comprises of textiles. (APC Domestic Waste Audit 2017) Across Sydney, textiles account for 3.92% of the red lid bin. (Thread Count - NSW Textile Data Report for EPA 2021). Based on NSW data, there are 0.46kg of textiles in every Sydney resident's weekly kerbside red-lid bin. (Textile Action Plan for Sydney Councils 2021)

Council can help recover textile waste from going to landfill by providing textile recycling opportunities for residents. However, not all textiles collected can be reused or recycled and may need to go to landfill.

King Cotton and Upparel have been reviewed as textile recycling organisations suitable for the CRC.

### **King Cotton**

King Cotton is a national clothing recycling operator with more than 850 bins across Sydney and Melbourne. King Cotton offers clothing recycling bins as well as an on-demand household collection service for clothing and textiles.

King Cotton processes the clothing at a central depot in Punchbowl NSW where the material is sorted and baled. Collected clothing is either distributed to a local retail outlet or baled for export to overseas retail markets. Wearable clothing is sold to third world countries, unwearable clothing is recycled into items such as handbags or cleaning wipes.

As King Cotton exports clothing overseas it should be noted that shipping costs have increased and are impacting the market.

King Cotton donates 20% of gross profits to charities including Make a Wish Foundation, YouthSafe, Father Chris Riley's Youth off the Streets and Enough.

King Cotton accepts wearable clothing, wearable shoes, handbags, accessories and Manchester.

King Cotton operates by providing traditional metal clothing bins and collecting the material 3-7 times per week depending on the utilisation of the bin.

Monthly reports are provided stating the number of kilos collected.

There would be no cost to Council for the bins or collections. Financially, this makes King Cotton the preferred organisation.

### **Upparel**

Upparel aims to extend the life of unwanted textiles and reduce landfill by providing collection bins and receiving boxed unwanted clothing.

Upparel accepts clothing items, shoes, linen and fabric.

Material is either repurposed or recycled. Charity partners Sacred Heart Mission and Ready Set and others distribute 50% of the clothing to people in need. 20% of the textiles are repurposed (designers source textiles for use in their collections) and the rest are recycled. Recycling involves cotton and similar fabrics being shredded and used to fill mattresses, pet

beds and home insulation. Polyester-based textiles are shredded and processed into chips which are reused to make more polyester.

Upparel offers a 120L bin or a 240L bin and a monthly pick up. Upparel can offer additional collections. For North Sydney, a 240L bin would be required, possibly two. Weekly pickups would be required. As the bin/s would be more suitable for indoors, storage would need to be considered. This type of bin would not be suitable outdoors as the lid could be left open to the elements.

Upparel charges include:

- \$100/\$200 plus GST – unbranded/branded 120L/240L bin
- \$50 plus GST – collection for first bin
- \$25 plus GST – collection of second bin
- \$3/kilo plus GST – textile recycling fee
- \$1/kilo plus GST – contamination fee

A 240L bin takes on average around 40-50 kilos of clothing/textiles.

### **Implications of setting up a textile collection at the CRC**

Setting up a textile collection based on either the King Cotton or Upparel models would be suitable for the CRC. The CRC is already set up to receive car drop offs by residents and truck collections of material. There is space to add a large textile collection bin at the CRC and the site is supervised at all times.

The disadvantages are that an extra collection/s by either King Cotton or Upparel trucks can affect the collections of the other items that are already at the CRC. Truck movements are limited and collections need to be scheduled to fit in with the CRC opening hours. It is possible that commercial operators may use the CRC to dispose of textiles.

The CRC is paid for by the six member Councils, North Sydney, Willoughby, Mosman, Lane Cove, Ryde and Hunters Hill. Approval for a textile collection at the CRC needs to be approved by all of the members.

If a textile collection service was approved by the member Councils, residents from all of the Councils could utilise the service.

There is also the potential for commercial businesses to drop off textiles to the CRC which may lead to the clothing bin overflowing and impacting collection arrangements.

It is recommended to seek agreement from the CRC Council members to engage King Cotton for textile recycling at the CRC. King Cotton will work with Council to offer the service at no cost and can also provide large bins to cater for the residents of North Sydney and other member Councils (should approval be granted by other member Councils).

## **Textile Recycling Locations**

If Council was to engage with King Cotton or Upparel and offer a textile collection bin, the location of the bin would need to be accessible to most residents. Council location options considered included the Customer Service Centre, Coal Loader, the Library, the Community Recycling Centre and the Community Centres at Crows Nest and Neutral Bay.

A Council officer would need to manage the collections and ensure the collection point is kept tidy and hazard free at each location.

### **Council Chambers – Customer Service Centre**

Council is currently collecting batteries in a 120L wheelie bin in the Customer Service Centre. The Customer Service Centre is widely accessible and a central location. Only a small 120L clothing collection bin could be added to this area due to limited space. Risks would be that generous donations could cause the bin to overflow and create an untidy area.

### **Coal Loader**

The Coal Loader currently collects batteries, e-waste, compact fluorescent lightbulbs, toner cartridges and mobile phones. There is no suitable space on site for the placement of a large textile collections bin that can be closely monitored.

### **Library**

There is the potential for a large clothing bin to be placed near the Ridge St Carpark at the back of the library. This would be a central and accessible area. It should be noted however that there are already clothing bins operated by Vinnies in the St Mary's Church carpark nearby. There would be limited staff to manage the bin and the risk of illegal dumping is very high in addition to concerns around pedestrian and traffic safety.

### **Crows Nest Community Centre**

Crows Nest Community Centre is central but access for collections would be difficult. There is limited staff to manage donations and collections. There is a lack of space to place a bin. There is the risk that a clothing bin placed in this area would overflow and attract illegal dumping.

### **Neutral Bay Community Centre**

Neutral Bay Community Centre is central but access for collections would be difficult. There is limited staff to manage donations and collections. There is limited space inside and outside the centre to place a bin. The area is a very busy commercial area, there is the risk that the clothing bin could be used by commercial businesses.

The CRC is the best location for a textile recycling bin. It would require a large bin to be supplied by King Cotton. The CRC would require the agreement of all member Councils.

### **RecycleSmart**

RecycleSmart is a program to enable recyclable textiles and other items to be collected from residences within the North Sydney LGA. It aims to make recycling more accessible to

residents that are less mobile. Drivers collect material directly from households, upon their request, and deliver the material to local infrastructure.

Residents book a pickup via the RecycleSmart App or website. Residents can subscribe for free and get up to 2 bags picked up per month or book a single pickup for \$2 per bag. The resident would need to pay the \$2 per bag for the collection service. Any grocery shopping bag can be used.

The material collected by RecycleSmart is dependent on the available infrastructure. Items collected fall into five main categories:

- Soft plastics
- Non-recyclable clothes
- Recyclable clothes and other accessories
- E-waste
- Misfits (or other)

RecycleSmart have advised textiles would be divided into wearable and unwearable clothes. Wearable clothes would go to Vinnies and the Salvation Army. Unwearable clothes would go to other outlets such as Zara and H&M for example. It should be noted that Council has been unable to verify whether there are commercial agreements in place between RecycleSmart and the custodians of the drop off points which raises the question of what happens to all of the products received from North Sydney.

Soft plastics are taken to Coles or Woolworths Redcycle bins. Coles and Woolworths were contacted and confirmed no agreements were in place with RecycleSmart.

E-waste and misfits (eg: batteries, light globes and printer cartridges) are taken to the Community Recycling Centre (CRC).

The CRC currently accepts e-waste and problem household waste such as batteries and light globes, paint, oils, gas bottles, fire extinguishers, e-waste, smoke detectors, mobile phones, x-ray films and printer cartridges. All North Sydney Council residents are entitled to drop off 20kg or 20L to the CRC for free.

The CRC member Councils pay for the disposal of non-scheme e-waste (ie. e-waste excluding computers or televisions).

E-waste collected by RecycleSmart must fit in a standard shopping bag, therefore only small amounts of e-waste are accepted by RecycleSmart. Oversized items will be rejected.

RecycleSmart drivers weigh and assess the contents of each bag and report back to Council on a monthly basis.

The report includes:

- Quantity of materials collected

- Number of booked collections
- Number of bags picked up
- Visual volume assessment of each waste type

RecycleSmart also offers the RecycleSmart App to book the service. This app informs residents about recycling locations and information. The RecycleSmart App helps users correctly dispose of over 250 household items. If Council subscribes to RecycleSmart, the RecycleSmart App would be included at no extra charge.

#### Financial implications

The costs for the RecycleSmart service are:

- Up to 1,000 bags collected: \$5,000 plus GST per month
- 1,001-2,000 bags collected: \$10,000 plus GST per month
- 2,001-3,000 bags collected: \$15,000 plus GST per month
- For each additional +1,000 bags collected: +\$5,000 plus GST per month
- Recycling App: \$4000 plus GST per year

If the number of bags increases by just one over the bracket, the next threshold applies. Eg: 1001 bags collected would be \$10,000 plus GST per month. Council's costs would increase significantly.

RecycleSmart are offering a 3-month trial with a capped cost of \$15,000 plus GST. The trial offer is for unlimited bags collected. The app is included for the trial period. There is no charge for the recycling app if Council were to subscribe to the pickups. RecycleSmart will need to provide assurance on the methods they will use to collect, secure and dispose of resident's personal data. A privacy statement would need to be advised regarding use of resident's privacy data. The RecycleSmart App is managed by RecycleSmart and Council has no control over the data.

It is possible that RecycleSmart could be refused permission to drop off material and items may be rejected at the drop off locations, potentially ending up in landfill if no formal agreements exist between RecycleSmart and the organisations at which the deliveries are made.

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that Council take up the offer of a 3-month trial capped at \$15,000 plus GST. A cost benefit analysis should be undertaken at the conclusion of the trial.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is recommended that Council trial RecycleSmart for 3 months with a report provided on a cost benefit analysis on conclusion of the trial.



Council should seek agreement with the CRC member Councils about engaging with King Cotton to provide a textile collections bin at the CRC.