

Let's rethink waste survey 2023 summary

Overview

Hepburn Shire Council conducted a waste survey from April to early June 2023 through the Participate Hepburn platform (and hardcopy versions at Customer Service Centres-Hubs) to gain a better understanding of how people use their waste services in the region and inform how changes are made in the future. The survey received 438 responses.

Survey respondents came from different demographics (including gender, age and location), household types (families, couples, live alone), along with both township and rural residents, and those without a kerbside service.

Overall, the waste survey showed that kerbside services are well utilised, as are the transfer stations. Residents are also engaged with their household and commercial waste but would like more information on what goes in each bin, and how to recycle correctly. There were many comments on wanting a garden or food and garden service, as well as a few wanting a glass service.

Kerbside collections

Landfill (general waste) bin was reported as 75% full or more (including overfull) for their collection cycle 47% of the time. This dropped to 39% when there were no children present in the household. Only 8% of respondents said they had an extra landfill bin collected.

Participants in the Clunes Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) trial reported their landfill bin being 75% full or greater 42% of the time but they still received a weekly landfill service. Only 37% of residents reported their organic bin being 75% full or greater.

For the recycling bin collection, 50% of respondents said their recycling bin was 75% full or more (including overfull) each collection cycle. This rose to 72% for families with children in the household.

Clunes residents made use of the collection schedule with the majority putting their landfill and recycling bin out at the collection frequency for their property. 66% of Clunes residents reported putting their organics bin out weekly or fortnightly, while 27% reported they did not use it (and mentioned using other means for recycling organic material). Currently 90% of residents reported not requiring an extra bin (landfill or recycling).

Communication and education

The most preferred source to find information was on the Hepburn Shire website (47%), followed by Facebook (32%) and next most mentioned was email communication (7% responses in free text response). This tells us there is a strong preference for digital

communication, along with having hard copies of this information available and accessible to all residents.

We heard that many residents had enough information to sort their waste correctly (56%). However, it was noted that a lot of residents (44%) said they still would like more information to guide what items they place in each bin. The most common suggestion for how information could be improved was labels on bins, education, information on plastic recycling and mail outs, while some other suggestions included videos, quizzes and phone app. Currently due to the Re-think waste project and the draft bin standard list, officers have recommended not placing stickers on bins. FOGO bins were also mentioned here by residents to help them better sort their waste.

Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO)

There were 45 respondents who were involved in the current FOGO bin trial in Clunes. 86% of Clunes trial residents said they received enough information about what goes into a FOGO bin and 76% of residents found the organics (food and garden) kerbside service easy to use. 62% of the respondents mentioned using their caddy (including some using paper or paper towel).

For the Clunes trial, information was provided with the bin delivery (in the caddy), information was shared in newsletters, online through social media and website, local social media platforms and in-person through residents (community leaders) Council engaged with on the project. The caddy is an important item to help behaviour change in diverting scraps from the kitchen to the kerbside FOGO bin. Free text responses showed Clunes residents were very pleased with the service and would like for it to continue. Across the Council, 51% of responders were aware of the current organics trial in Clunes.

68% of people who completed the survey did not know the term FOGO – Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO), with some mentioning they knew what it generally meant but not the acronym. The Clunes trial referred to FOGO as an organics (food and garden) bin. This is a reminder that the acronym should be used in conjunction with full words in future communication.

About 30% of respondents said most likely their food and garden waste was going into landfill. 70% mentioned using things such as home compost, worm farms, animals, chooks, giving to neighbours and food organics bin. It was noted however the limitations of compost – meat and dairy products for example.

Transfer stations and hub recycling

75% of respondents visited a transfer station a few times a year or less, most commonly (56%) for the drop off materials (which includes e-waste, hazardous materials and scrap

metal). The next most common was green material to drop off (50%). Cost (44%) was the most common barrier mentioned to visiting the transfer stations.

Costs for items taken to the transfer station are based on a cost recovery system. This means costs charged directly relate to the cost incurred by council to dispose and transport waste. The cost of waste transport and disposal is increasing and information on why this is needs to continue to be provided to residents.

There were 30% of respondents who visited the Customer Service Hubs to recycle items a few times a year or more. Lots of the comments in the survey indicated that residents were not aware of this being a service Council offers. The most common items to dispose of were batteries (35%), e-waste (22%) and bottle tops (15%).

Waste service and recycling feedback

Residents responded with lots of information when asked (open text) about what they would like to change about their service (although many residents said they were happy, and nothing should change). Some common feedback included introduction of garden or food organics and garden organics (FOGO) service; glass separation/bin/collection point; more tip vouchers; hard waste collection for everyone; improved labelling on bins; service more rural areas; more bin capacity – landfill, recycling and garden all mentioned. Those in Clunes mentioned wanted the trial organics bin to become permanent.

The survey asked residents how Council could support them to recycle correctly and reduce waste. Responses included (free text) themes such as through garden-FOGO offering; glass separation/collection; free green waste drop off all year at transfer station; information to short-term rentals; soft plastics collection; increasing recycling collection, hard-rubbish and more landfill/general waste. Some residents raised concerns regarding their property not being in a collection zone and missed bins.

Overall, the survey information tells us that a carefully planned education and behaviour change program will be essential to the success of any change to the current waste system. There are many residents engaged in wanting to separate and recycle correctly.