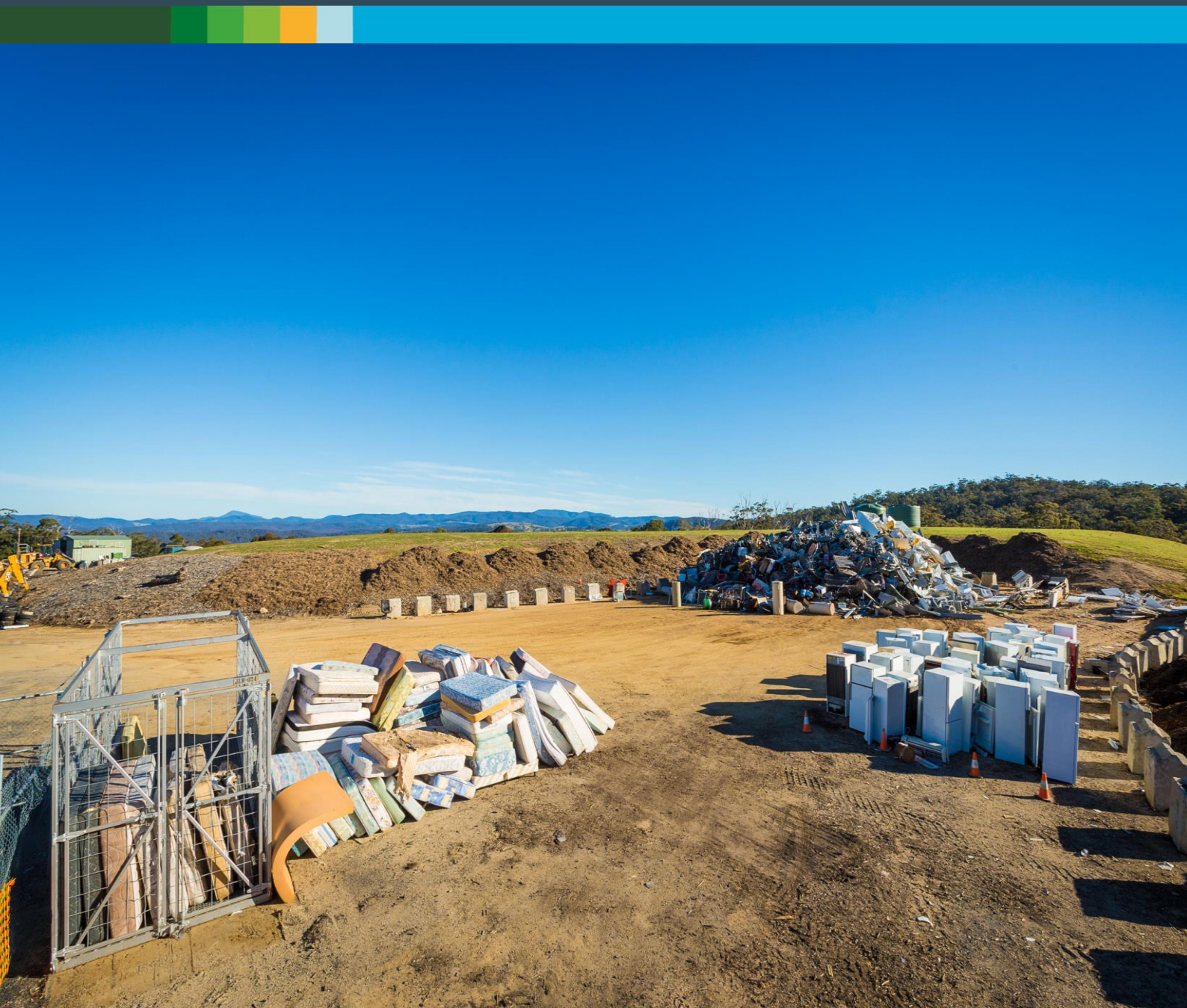


# Waste Strategy 2025 – 2035

## *Resources, Not Waste*



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Bega Valley Shire Council acknowledges and pays our respects to the traditional custodians of the lands, waterways and airspace of the shire.

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## Table of Revisions

<b>DATE:</b>	<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>PREPARED/REVIEWED BY:</b>
11 October 2024	Version 0.1 Draft For Internal Consultation and Review	Timothy Cook – Waste Strategy Coordinator. Alan Gundrill – Manager Waste and Recycling Services
10 January 2025 (Current)	Version 1 Draft For Public Exhibition	Timothy Cook – Waste Strategy Coordinator. Ian Macfarlane – Director Assets and Operations
TBA	Version 1.5 Final Draft Mark up following HYS	Timothy Cook – Waste Strategy Coordinator. Ian Macfarlane – Director Assets and Operations
TBA	Version 2 Final Adopted	Timothy Cook – Waste Strategy Coordinator. Ian Macfarlane – Director Assets and Operations

# Foreword

Reflecting on Council's achievements under the Waste Strategy 2018-2028: Recycling the Future, our targets and plans were ambitious, but we have much to be proud of.

In particular, we diverted more than 30,650 tonnes of organics otherwise destined for landfill through our FOGO collection and processing service. That equates to the weight of 15,000 cars diverted from landfill, and taking 1,810 cars off the road in terms of CO2 generation prevented.

We adopted seven Themes with 19 Strategic Actions. And by the 2023 midway point of the Strategy we had delivered or partially delivered 14 of those actions. The remaining five undelivered actions were:

1. Develop a centralised Resource Recovery Park
2. Increase recycling opportunities at transfer stations
3. Investigate innovative reuse options for bulky waste
4. Provide more Community Recycling Centres
5. Investigate construction of a local, co-mingled recycling materials recovery facility.

Several of these will continue to be progressed under the new strategy.

# Waste and Recycling Services Vision

The waste and recycling services vision was developed internally and then workshopped with a small group of community members. The Vision, Mission and Purpose statements serve to ground Council's approach to providing waste and recycling services for our community in a partnered, values-driven, forward-thinking way.

## Vision

We are a regional leader in waste management services with strong community support and industry partnership.

We provide waste minimisation and resource recovery opportunities to the community and advocate for circular and local solutions over disposal.

Our services and infrastructure are responsibly managed, both environmentally and economically, and we adjust our plans and direction in response to the growing needs of our rural, residential and commercial customers in a rapidly changing industry.

## Mission

Provide cost-efficient, environmentally conscious and innovative waste and resource recovery services for the Bega Valley that maximises the value of resources we consume and reduces waste disposed to landfill.

## Purpose

Our purpose is to meet our customers' needs while being the best custodians of the environment possible.

Council's waste team do this by providing waste and resource recovery assets and services that meet customer's growing needs and minimises environmental harm. We maximise the value of existing and new waste infrastructure through careful management of assets and services and a risk-based approach to innovation.

We respect our community by listening to their ideas and understanding what they want, while providing education on effective waste minimisation and diversion behaviours. Together with our community, we reduce the amount of waste generated by reducing unnecessary consumption and maximising re-use and recycling.

We align with State and Federal Government targets and actions to assist a regionally and nationally standardised approach. We work with other LGAs in our region, and advocate State and Federal governments to take strong investment, policy and regulatory action regarding waste minimisation and resource recovery where Council's actions alone cannot make the difference.

# Introduction

The **Waste Strategy 2025-2035 Resources, Not Waste** is Council's commitment to the Shire's community to be a regional leader in providing waste and recycling services. Council will do everything realistically possible to minimise waste to landfill and recover the maximum extent of resources from waste streams.

The Strategy was developed in-house by Council's Waste and Recycling Service's team. A methodical approach was taken incorporating extensive community consultation. This included a far-reaching waste and recycling specific survey, the formation of a community working group, and a *Have Your Say* campaign following public exhibition of the DRAFT Strategy<sup>1</sup>.

This document articulates the strategic themes and actions in enough detail to establish community expectations and the benefits to be derived from its delivery, with flexibility to allow plans to evolve and change as needs and circumstances change. However, flexibility will not deviate from the core mission, vision and purpose which sets our values and guides why we are looking to improve. They are presented at the front of the Strategy, supported by the analysis and appendices in the back half of the document.

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Council aligns to the national and state frameworks and targets, particularly those set out in the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041: Stage 1 – 2021-2027 (WaSM). Council will update its infrastructure, operations and service levels to achieve these ambitious goals.

This means delivering on five strategic themes, with eighteen strategic actions. These themes and actions will collectively improve Council's waste and recycling services to minimise waste generation, make resource recovery easier and improve customer experience when interacting with our services. Importantly this includes education, advocacy and partnering with the community and businesses. Innovation and change will be balanced against sound financial and risk management. Minimising the environmental harm associated with human activity is essential to our operations and is recognised in the strategy. The strategy also commits to leading regional action against litter and illegal dumping, going beyond the traditional wheelhouse of waste and recycling operations.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement is drafted in anticipation of public exhibition, *Have Your Say* and consideration of the resulting listening report. **DELETE FOOTNOTE FOR ADOPTED.**



# Strategic Themes and Actions

The themes and actions described here are the driving framework for this Strategy. By clearly defining each action, the overall target of decreasing waste generation and increasing diversion, re-use and recycling can be achieved. Measurement and baselining are required to transparently report the effectiveness of the strategy. This will be achieved by periodic, comprehensive waste auditing and data analysis.

## **Theme 1: Reduce Waste Generation through Education, Policy and Advocacy**

- A. Deliver waste and resource recovery education
- B. Continuously improve Council plans, policies and procedures
- C. Advocate clearly and strongly to Federal/State governments and industry to improve resource recovery practices and policies.

## **Theme 2: Increase Resource Diversion**

- D. Work with other organisations to adopt diversion programs
- E. Work with businesses to reduce waste disposal and maximise resource use
- F. Refine Waste Grants to prioritise waste reduction and resource recovery

## **Theme 3: Increase Resource Recycling through Site Rationalisation and Redesign**

- G. Expand and improve organic recycling
- H. Plan for and deliver a Resource Recovery Precinct at the CWF
- I. Rationalise and standardise Waste and Recycling Centres
- J. Increase permanent Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) at Waste and Recycling Centres
- K. Investigate hard to recycle resource recovery initiatives
- L. Improve Council Re-Use Shops.

## **Theme 4: Minimise Environmental Harm from Waste Operations**

- M. Enhance disaster ready waste infrastructure
- N. Upgrade leachate infrastructure
- O. Remediate closed landfills to futureproof compliance.

## **Theme 5: Become a Leader on Contamination, Littering and Illegal Dumping Prevention**

- P. Establish a Council-community littering and illegal dumping forum
- Q. Establish a program to reduce waste stream contamination
- R. Investigate and trial solutions to reduce litter and optimise public litter bins.



## Theme 1: Reduce Waste Generation through Education, Policy and Advocacy

### A. Deliver Waste and Resource Recovery Education

The results of the 2024 waste services review and customer satisfaction survey clearly demonstrate the community wants more education around waste and resource recovery. Education will focus on promoting Council's waste and resource recovery services so that our customers can access the appropriate services. It will also highlight non-Council pathways for safe and legal resource recovery.

Additionally, enhancing transparency around the reality of resource recovery and recycling is critical to improving public confidence in Council, governments and the waste and recycling sector more broadly. There remains a small but prevailing belief that recycling isn't real, or is a flawed system that makes no difference environmentally or economically. This could be addressed with targeted education and greater transparency in operations.

Council affirms its commitment to continuing education programs for children and young adults by supporting education institutions to participate in Waste and Resource Recovery programs. These programs have included the "Let's Get it Sorted" program delivered by Bournda Environmental Education Centre for primary and secondary schools, and the "EnviroMentors" program teaching fundamentals for Early Childhood Education Centres. These types of programs will continue.

Council needs to work with businesses to tackle commercial and industrial waste. This stream accounts for 23% of total waste to landfill. Other than kerbside co-mingled recycling collection, and limited commercial organics collection services, there are no dedicated commercial and industrial waste diversion services offered by Council. A crucial step in launching programs to support businesses is educating businesses and their customers to raise expectations and take greater action to reduce waste and enhance resource recovery.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Waste minimisation
- Waste diversion
- Decreased contamination
- Improved community attitudes to sustainability
- Improved community satisfaction

### B. Continuously Improve Council Plans, Policies and Procedures

Council has long been committed to ensuring fair fees and charges are equitably applied to customers to cover the cost of providing services. The Waste Department's fees and charges are structured to incentivise customers to waste less. This requires continuous review and a reflection on the true costs of providing waste services, including non-monetary costs.

Council prioritises research into better operating models and technology to equitably charge customers for the waste services they use. The intention is to reward customers who re-use and recycle more while covering the costs of each service, not just the waste and recycling service as a whole.

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Council must walk the talk. The Waste team will work with Council's leadership and procurement stakeholders to update policies and procedures that improve resource recovery.

This will also boost the use of re-used and recycled materials in Council's operations. Council needs to measure its performance, so establishing a data and reporting framework for resource recovery and sustainable procurement are necessary first steps.

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**The world is changing and Council will take steps to ensure that future development is managed to meet the changing needs and standards the community expects. The Waste team will work with Council's Planning Department to refine, monitor and adopt best practice development controls that ensure new development is built to modern waste management principles. Expected Benefits:**

- Lower environmental impact of Council operations
- Progress toward net zero targets
- Improved data
- Waste minimisation
- Better community waste infrastructure.

**C. Advocate Clearly and Strongly to Federal / State Governments and Industry to Improve Resource Recovery Practices and Policies**

Council has limited resources and reach in its influence of waste generating and disposing behaviours. Through peak regional bodies (including the Australian Local Government Association, Local Government NSW and the Canberra Region Joint Organisation) and directly with local State and Federal members, Council will advocate for legislative, regulatory and policy change to drive better waste diversion and resource recovery for the Bega Valley.

Council will also participate in the Bega Circular Valley initiative, sharing lessons and cooperating on projects of mutual interest and benefit. Council will work closely with local businesses to update their own practices to waste less and recover more, which may lead to local partnerships to achieve common objectives.

**Expected Benefits:**

- Improved regulatory outcomes
- Better grant funding opportunities
- Efficient regional outcomes.



## Theme 2: Increase Resource Diversion

### D. Work with Other Organisations to Adopt Diversion Programs

For-profit and not-for-profit organisations such as *TerraCycle*, *Lids4Kids*, *RecycleSmart*, *Give A Sheet For the Plant* and *Planet Ark* provide low-cost, small scale resource recovery opportunities. These types of opportunities are becoming more prevalent, and new organisations are starting up every year. Council is not always best placed to take up these opportunities at its waste and recycling centres or operational facilities.

Many community organisations and schools may not be aware of the potential benefits these types of waste diversion opportunities can offer. Council's role should be in partnering with and promoting these programs and garnering interest from other organisations to adopt initiatives that align with their values. Council can also offset initial startup costs through its waste grants and help to monitor and optimise the program to measure success and ensure it is sustainably managed.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Increased community cohesion
- Increased recycling pathways
- Waste diversion.

### E. Work with Businesses to Reduce Waste Disposal and Maximise Resource Use

Commercial waste accounts for 23% of the total waste received at Council's landfill facility. While businesses are already incentivised to minimise wastage in their operations, there are usually significant ways in which resources can be recovered from their waste streams and cycled back into use.

The NSW EPA's Bin Trim program works with businesses to adopt recycling and circular economy solutions. Council sometimes relies on the Canberra Region Joint Organisation to deliver this program on its behalf and will continue to do so. However more targeted action on waste items in local businesses is possible, and Council will resource a dedicated role that will:

- identify recoverable items in a business's waste stream
- identify alternative pathways for items that usually end up in landfill
- facilitate circular networking between businesses
- identify and facilitate partnerships with national programs and industry.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Waste minimisation
- Waste diversion
- Improved circularity.

### F. Refine Waste Grants to Prioritise Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery

Grants are a means of achieving organisational outcomes by providing financial and non-financial incentives for new innovative practices or to improve established practices. Council's waste grants have always focussed on financial incentives to achieve education, prevention, clean-up and diversion outcomes, all of which are strongly desired by the community. However, innovation hasn't been a strong focus of the waste grants program and there are numerous non-financial incentives that can be leveraged, such as secure land tenure and

knowledge transfer. As mentioned in other themes and actions, Council's waste grants will be refined to:

- maintain financial relief for community aid to assist with clean-up and prevention
- encourage the take up of low-scale and low-cost reuse and recycling programs
- foster innovation and provide pathways for new circular businesses to trial and start-up in the Bega Valley.

**Expected Benefits:**

- Cleaner communities
- Increased community cohesion
- Increased recycling pathways
- Waste diversion
- Local innovation.





## Theme 3: Increase Resource Recycling through Site Rationalisation and Redesign

### G. Expand and Improve Organic Recycling

Council will continue its organics processing journey. Having diverted almost 60,000 tonnes of methane generating organic waste from landfill, Council will deliver a new purpose built facility capable of processing up to 30,000 tonnes of organic waste annually. This facility will become a regional hub for organic resource recovery and remain a key focus of Council's environmental sustainability practices. The facility will be operated by a leader in the field of compost processing and soil improvements, with Council ensuring the facility remains in optimal asset condition.

With the commissioning of the facility, Council will take the opportunity to expand the organics collection network to its smaller villages and increase the number of commercial organisations participating in organics recovery.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Waste diversion
- Improved levels of service
- Increased circularity
- Lower landfill emissions
- Extended landfill asset life.

### H. Plan for and Deliver a Resource Recovery Precinct @ CWF

Council will develop further plans and designs to establish a resource recovery precinct at the Central Waste Facility. This will help Council to recover the maximum possible resources from the commercial and construction and demolition waste streams in an economically sustainable manner. Various technologies and facility types will be investigated and detailed options presented back to Council as they become apparent.

Related to this action is delivering waste education programs for businesses and providing grants to foster innovation. Collaboration with the Regional Circularity Cooperative is expected to facilitate leads on emerging resource recovery technologies and business models.

This action no longer includes the operation of a local Material Recovery Facility for sorting co-mingled recycling in the shire, as investigations have demonstrated that it is not economically feasible due to long logistics chains to end market material recyclers and manufacturers. Co-mingled recycling will continue to be bulked and transported outside the shire for regional processing.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Waste diversion
- Increased circularity
- Local innovation
- Extended landfill asset life.

### **I. Increase Permanent CRCs at Waste and Recycling Centres**

Community Recycling Centres (CRC) are essential community facilities subsidised by the NSW EPA for the recovery and disposal of hazardous and difficult to recycle household items. Hosting CRCs at Council's waste and recycling centres at more locations will increase accessibility for the whole community, increase the recovery rate of these items, and reduce in home hazards.

#### **Expected Benefits:**

- Safer community
- Improved levels of service
- Waste diversion.

### **J. Rationalise and Standardise Waste and Recycling Centres**

Council operates seven waste and recycling centres (one for every 5000 residents) at varying levels of service and access to the community. This causes confusion and disparity of outcomes for our community depending on location. It also increases operational costs and complexity for the good management of sites and reduces opportunities for waste diversion at less developed and frequented sites.

The Waste department will develop a services-based standard "template" for waste and recycling centres to act as a standard design brief for site upgrades and configuration. Council's waste and recycling centres will be reviewed against this standard template, with gaps and opportunities reported to Council and decisions regarding site closures and alternative services presented after direct community consultation.

Council will seek to rationalise the number of sites based on a comprehensive plan for site rehabilitation and services provision with the aim to make fewer sites open more often, with more opportunities for resource recovery, better environmental controls and improved levels of service for the community as a whole. Central to this concept is a fairly priced domestic household disposal option for properties that do not benefit from a routine roadside collection service.

#### **Expected Benefits:**

- Improved levels of service
- Waste diversion
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Safer infrastructure.

### **K. Investigate Hard to Recycle Resource Recovery Initiatives**

Currently there are many items that present challenges in recycling or re-use. Notably textiles and soft plastics feature prominently in the NSW EPA's actions to reduce waste. Embedded batteries, solar technologies and e-waste recycling are also challenging and growing issues for the sector. Council will continuously investigate emerging initiatives to deal with these problem waste types that will make a meaningful difference and consider applying for grants when they become available. Council will prioritise resources toward initiatives that demonstrate they can tackle the full breadth and volume of problem waste items over smaller scale initiatives that may only achieve limited diversion.

**Expected Benefits:**

- Local innovation
- Waste diversion
- Extended landfill asset life.



**L. Improve Council Re-Use Shops**

Council provides limited, but very popular, Re-Use Shops at most of its waste and recycling centres. Council needs to improve the service by updating its infrastructure, reviewing its business model and procedures and training and empowering its staff to operate the shops.

Central to this action is understanding Council’s place in providing an opportunity for material/item re-sale and re-use. The Bega Valley Shire is already a great supporter of garage sales, repair shops, buy/sell social media groups, Op-Shop (charity stores) and events that recirculate items in the economy. Council should position itself to complement existing opportunities rather than replicate and compete with them, while actively promoting all of the options for item re-use and re-purposing.

**Expected Benefits:**

- Improved customer satisfaction
- Waste diversion
- Increased circularity.





## Theme 4: Minimise Environmental Harm from Waste Operations

### M. Enhance Disaster Ready Waste Infrastructure

Council learned a great deal through the 2019/2020 Black Summer Bushfires and the subsequent flood events in 2021 and 2022. In the face of these challenges, the waste team and local contractors were able to quickly design, construct and then operate a disaster waste landfill cell that could appropriately manage inert (non-degradable) disaster impacted waste in large volumes. Council also updated its disaster contingency plans to account for the ability to re-activate the disaster waste landfill cells in the event of another disaster or emergency event.

In the face of an increasingly assured climate emergency, more work may be required to ensure the waste department and the community are prepared for the scale and frequency of events that might occur. The Waste department will update its Disaster Waste Emergency Plans, reviewing available data on disaster waste volumes and types and report back to Council with recommendations on the risks, requirements and triggers for future investment in disaster waste preparedness.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Better resilience/preparedness
- Extended landfill asset life
- Safer community.

### N. Upgrade Leachate Infrastructure

Leachate is the contaminated liquid byproduct generated in waste management processes. In our context this is predominantly rainwater that has come into contact with waste as well as the liquid generated by waste breaking down over time. Council's leachate systems are under constant monitoring and reports are reviewed by the NSW EPA as the regulatory authority.

Council is committed to upgrading its leachate management systems at the Central Waste Facility and Merimbula Waste and Recycling Centre as priorities, being the two sites with the largest leachate volumes under management. The systems at other sites will be continuously monitored and remediated as early as possible as issues are identified to ensure there is no environmental harm caused by our operations.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Improved environmental compliance
- Operational efficiencies.

### O. Remediate Closed Landfills to Futureproof Compliance

Modern landfilling and waste processing techniques in Australia have improved significantly in the past two decades, adopting world class science and engineering to ensure the impact of waste operations to the environment is minimised. Unfortunately historic landfilling techniques that were appropriate for the day have been proven to have significant risks to environmental and human health. Council is responsible for 27 historic waste sites, including some located at still operational waste and recycling centres.

Council will proactively manage these sites in consultation with the NSW EPA to minimise operational costs while managing all known and emerging risks. Every site requires a site-

specific plan of management and monitoring. Council expects to implement as a minimum: access control, covering any protruding waste and capping the landform, identifying and managing any leachate and controlling fauna and flora within our practical means.

**Expected Benefits:**

- Improved environmental compliance
- Lower operational costs
- Safer community.



## Theme 5: Leading prevention of contamination, littering and illegal dumping

### P. Establish a Council Community Littering and Illegal Dumping Forum

Littering and illegal dumping are separate issues that often require unique solutions. Both involve complex behaviours that are not easily addressed. While the state government has largely made the issue the remit of the NSW EPA, Council's ranger services, environmental services and waste services each have a distinct role to play in education, monitoring, prevention, clean-up and enforcement. Council is the majority government stakeholder in littering and illegal dumping within its local government area.

The Waste department will take an active role in education and prevention, and will take a leadership role in coordinating Council and the community's response to littering and illegal dumping. A community-based forum will be established, featuring representatives from each Council department and open community membership. Long standing organisational initiatives such as Clean Up Australia will continue to be supported to leverage the power of the community in tackling these issues.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Improved community engagement
- Improved community cohesion
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Improved data
- Cleaner communities.

### Q. Establish a Program to Reduce Waste Stream Contamination

It's very clear the community wants Council to play an active role in managing contamination in all its waste streams. The results of the recently completed roadside waste audits show that our community is very heavily engaged and invested in the right disposal habits, with contamination in the co-mingled recycling (yellow bin) and FOGO (green bin) at lower levels compared to other Council areas and the state average. While these are good results, constant education and reinforcement of the "good and best" behaviours are needed to maintain this result.

Concerningly, the audit showed the amount of material in the municipal solid waste (red) bin that could have been diverted from landfill is alarmingly high. At about 58% this demonstrates that approximately 7,500 tonnes of material could have been diverted at the disposal point. A dedicated program is required to tackle the scale of the problem.

#### Expected Benefits:

- Decreased contamination
- Increased diversion
- Extended landfill asset life
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Improved community attitudes to sustainability
- Increased community cohesion.



## **R. Investigate and Trial Solutions to Reduce Litter and Optimise Public Place Litter Bins**

Council will develop a plan based on the NSW EPA's *Better Practice Guide for Public Place Recycling* to increase opportunities for disposing of recyclable items. The biggest barrier to public place recycling is contamination in the stream caused by less responsible members of the community who dispose of large household quantities of waste in their recycling bins. Despite this, there is a growing community desire for more public place recycling opportunities and our community has consistently demonstrated that it is engaged and responsible in its waste disposal behaviours.

**The Waste department will also lead a review into public litter bin systems and update the style and standardisation of bin enclosures that suit the amenity of the location. Where there are hotspot issues with litter and litter bins, Council will review the number of bins and frequency of collection to ensure that bins are ideally placed and serviced frequently. Expected Benefits:**

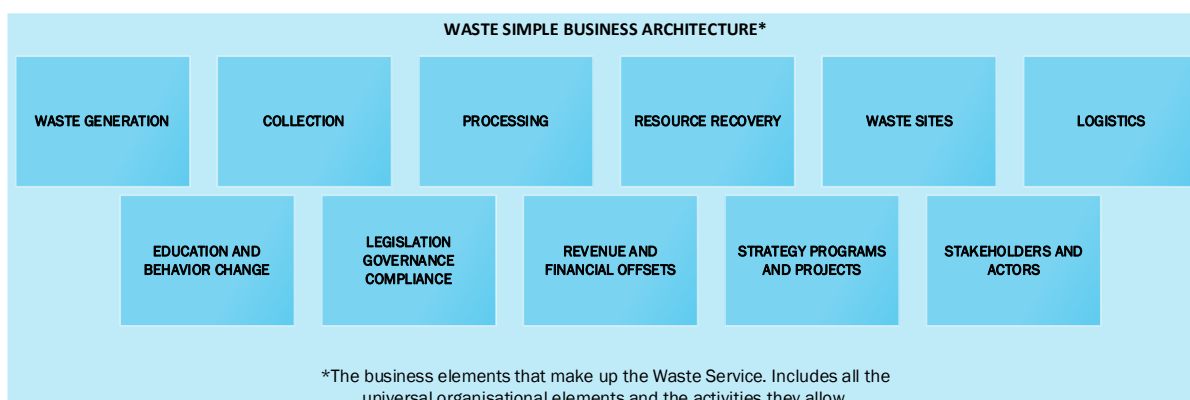
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Operational efficiency
- Cleaner communities
- Increased recycling pathways.

# Waste and Recycling Services Strategic Overview

## Approach of the Strategic Review

To develop the strategy the waste and recycling services team undertook a multi-analysis approach.

1. To understand and review our core business in detail we undertook a detailed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis that enabled us to develop a simple and informative business architecture diagram. It is a visual representation of the Waste department's operations, objectives, processes, assets and stakeholders. The summary results of the SWOT Analysis are provided in Appendix A.



**Figure 1. The Waste Simple Business Architecture**

2. To understand community perceptions, needs and desires the community undertook a comprehensive Waste Services Review and Customer Satisfaction Survey in early-2024. The listening report is provided in Appendix B. Pleasingly there was very strong alignment between this survey and the Council's holistic Customer Satisfaction Survey undertaken in mid-2024 in regard to the waste service. The analysis was substantial and has not been replicated in the body of this strategy.
3. Additionally, a small group of community members participated in a Waste Strategy Community Working Group that met three times to workshop different aspects of the strategy and the analysis being undertaken. This group provided direct feedback to the strategy author on the merits of the approach, the results and the DRAFT strategy itself. Their feedback was adopted wherever possible, informing not only the development of the strategy but operational considerations in delivery.
4. To finalise strategic consideration of the multiple factors that directly and indirectly affect Council's provision of waste and recycling services, the Waste team undertook a review of:
  - a. progress under the *Recycle the Future: BVSC Waste Strategy 2018-2028*
  - b. the current legislative, regulatory and policy environment
  - c. the local and regional social, industry and geographic circumstances

- d. relevant available waste and recycling data of Council's operations (including assets, waste composition, organisational structure and financial position).

The results of this review are provided directly in the following sections.

This strategy will address all the simple architecture elements. The detailed business architecture is provided in Appendix C, highlighting the specific sub-elements addressed by strategic actions under this strategy where there was either a desire or a need to undertake improvement.

## Core Business

The Waste department has defined its role and core business in Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework as:

*The Waste Services team provide waste collection, disposal, recycling / beneficial reuse, infrastructure, services and education to protect public health and the environment.*

- Provide waste collection and recycling services for residential, commercial and public areas
- Provide organics processing - FOGO - for residential and business customers
- Manage risks to Council's waste operations and future strategic direction
- Resource and implement the Waste Strategy
- Review and update as required Council's Waste Asset Management Plan and asset register
- Improve whole-of-Council waste operations to become the leader in our community
- Provide education activities for the community on how best to utilise our waste services
- Protect the environment from impacts associated with waste generation, resource recovery, recycling and disposal activities



## Prior Strategic Direction and Progress

We aligned our Waste Strategy 2018-2028: Recycling the Future with the then adopted NSW State government resource recovery targets:

- 75% diversion of waste from landfill by 2022
- 70% recycling of municipal solid waste by 2022
- 70% recycling of commercial and industrial waste by 2022
- 80% recycling of construction and demolition waste by 2022
- Implement the NSW Illegal Dumping Strategy
- Meet litter number targets
- Reduce the rate of waste generation per capita

We only partially achieved these State targets. The targets and mandates have since been updated.

Under the Waste Strategy 2018-2028: Recycling the Future we adopted 7 Themes with 19 Strategic Actions. And by the 2023 midway point of the Strategy we had delivered or partially delivered 14 of those actions. The remaining 5 actions that are undelivered include:

1. Develop a centralised Resource Recovery Park
2. Increase recycling opportunities at transfer stations
3. Investigate innovative, reuse options for bulky waste
4. Provide more Community Recycling Centres
5. Investigate construction of a local, co-mingled recycling materials recovery facility

Of these 5 actions, we remain committed to further development of the Central Waste Facility to further recover resources currently for landfill, increasing diversion opportunities at transfer stations and providing more Community Recycling Centres.

## National and State Legislative and Policy Setting

The National and State policy frameworks have been updated, with new targets and timelines set by the Federal and State Government.

### National Framework

The National Waste Policy – Less Waste, More Resources was released by the Department of the Environment and Energy in 2018 and provides a framework for collective action by businesses, governments, communities, and individuals until 2030. The policy identifies the following seven targets:

1. Ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, commencing in the second half of 2020;
2. Reduce total waste generated in Australia by 10% per person by 2030;
3. 80% average resource recovery rate from all waste streams following the waste hierarchy by 2030;
4. Significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry;
5. Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025;
6. Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030; and

7. Make comprehensive, economy-wide and timely data publicly available to support better consumer, investment and policy decisions.

## State Framework

The NSW government released the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041: Stage 1 – 2021-2027 (WaSM) as the first stage in a 20-year plan that focuses on the environmental benefits and economic opportunities to reduce waste, improve waste management, and increase material recycling.

The WaSM Strategy aims to reduce waste generated and increase recycling through adoption of the targets:

- reduce total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030
- have an 80% average recovery rate from all waste streams by 2030
- significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry
- phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025
- halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030
- reduce litter by 60% by 2030 and plastics litter by 30% by 2025
- triple the plastics recycling rate by 2030

To achieve the WaSM targets of halving food waste to landfill and achieving net zero emissions from organics in landfill by 2030, the government will require the separate collection of:

- food and garden organics from all NSW households by 2030;
- food waste from businesses that generate the highest volumes, including large supermarkets and hospitality businesses, by 2025

Based on an assessment of waste and circular economy infrastructure needs over the next decade and beyond the government has identified three key areas to focus on – residual waste, organics, and plastics. Recovery and recycling infrastructure will need to keep pace with demand and to support this there will need to be investment in new and upgraded facilities from now to 2030 to prevent any shortfall in capacity.

Getting the right infrastructure in the right place will be critical to recover, reuse and extend the life of most materials. The WaSM Guide to Future Infrastructure Needs 2021 reviews the waste infrastructure requirements in NSW to underpin change.

The NSW Plastics Action Plan supports the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041. The NSW Plastics Action Plan will assist in delivering the following targets from the WaSM Strategy:

- Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025;
- Reduce the total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030;
- Achieve an average 80% recovery rate of resources from all waste streams by 2030;
- Significantly increase the use of recycled content by government and industry;
- Reduce plastic litter items by 30% by 2025;
- Reduce the overall litter by 60% by 2030; and
- Triple the plastics recycling rate by 2030.

## Regional Circumstances

Being equidistance from the major capital cities of Sydney and Melbourne and their associated heavy industrial and logistics bases presents a challenge for accessing regional and national waste sector resources.

An understanding of the location of major waste sector and logistics infrastructure and services demonstrates that the Shire is a long distance from Material Recovery Facilities, Recyclers and Heavy Manufacturing and is reliant on road transport as the principal freight mode.

Regional Waste Infrastructure			
Material Recovery Facilities	Major Recycling - Manufacturing	Major Commercial Landfills	Major Commercial Organics Processing
Greater Western Sydney	Greater Western Sydney	Woodlawn NSW (Veolia)	Canberra
Greater Melbourne	Greater Melbourne	Lucas Heights NSW (Suez)	Nowra
Albury	Newcastle		Wollongong
Canberra (under development)	Wollongong		
Nowra (under construction)			

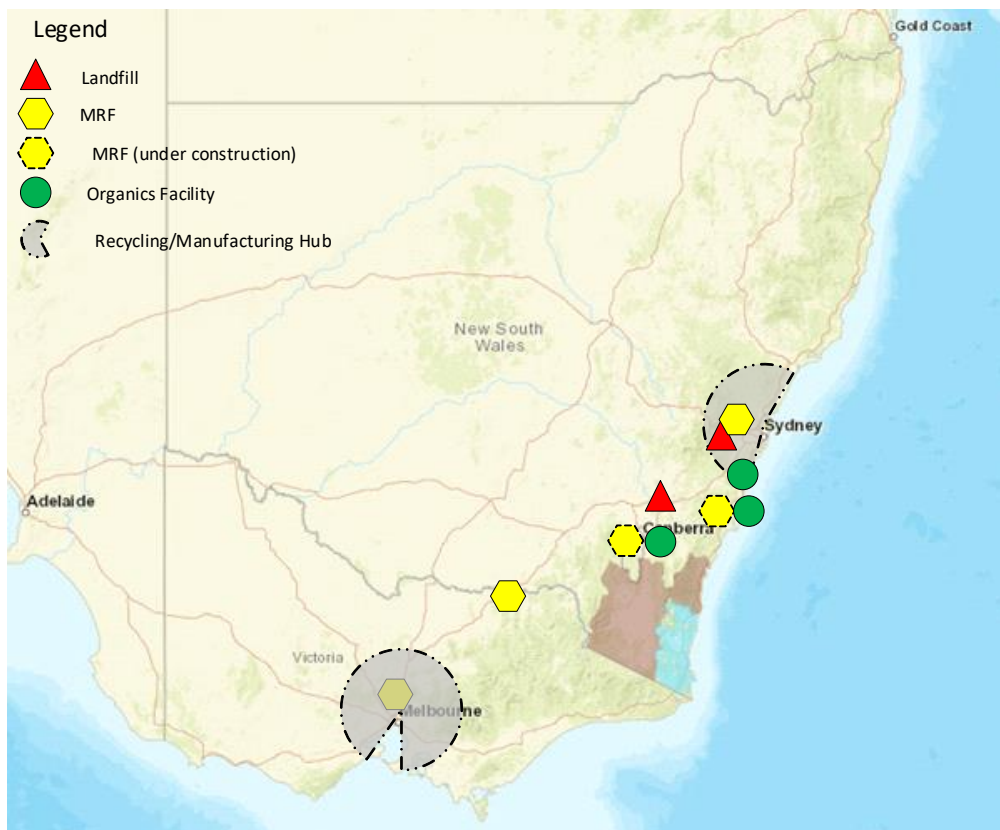


Figure 2. Regional Waste Infrastructure. Locations are approximate

A number of conclusions can be derived when considering dependent waste infrastructure:

1. Added complexity in processing technology and processes (such as soft plastics processing, separation of co-mingled recycling, rare earth/metals recovery, toxic/hazardous waste processing) adds costs and access to technical resources that can usually only be overcome by processing at scale, and nearer to industrial hubs.
2. Where there is no-value to very low-value in the waste/resource stream (such as municipal solid waste destined for landfill or organic waste processing), a local solution is required as the value economics do not allow for long transportation for processing
3. Where there is low-value to medium-value in the waste/resource stream (such as co-mingled recycling) there is economic feasibility in transportation to regional facilities
  - a. In these circumstances, volume of inputs and the downstream supply chain must be understood against the capital and operating costs of a local solution
4. Where there is higher value in the waste/resource stream (such as scrap metal, re-usable textiles, and the container deposit scheme) there is economic feasibility in transportation to regional and national facilities and costs may be offset or profitable.

## Local Circumstances

The Bega Valley Shire is located at the south-eastern extremity of coastal New South Wales and covers an area of 6,276 square kilometres. The equidistant point between Sydney and Melbourne on the coastal State and National Road network is located in the Shire. The nearest metropolitan city is Canberra approximately 220km from the City of Bega.

At the last census in 2021 the population was estimated at 35,972 residents. The Shire is typified by a large coastline with many coastal and rural communities, and large areas of forested reserve. There is a large geographic spread of population settlements throughout the Shire so the population density is a low 5.73 persons per square kilometre. This large area of scattered settlements presents serious logistical challenges for the provision of municipal services.

There are approximately 18,890 permanent residential dwellings in the Shire, and some 2000 business premises. Council provides a roadside collection service to residential properties in towns and villages, and a rural collection service for other properties. The 12,400 residential properties receive a roadside service, as do 4,000 rural properties. Due to access issues for heavy waste collection vehicles approximately 2,500 rural properties are without a roadside collection service.



The population is older, with more than half of all residents in the Shire over the age of 50. The Shire is the most popular destination for internal migration in the nation, which is the key driver for population growth. Nevertheless, the population is expected to grow by a relatively modest 0.65% per year to 2036, or 13.7% over 15 years.

Council has positioned itself to provide landfill and organic processing for domestic and commercial customers, and remains dependent on larger regional material recovery facilities for processing co-mingled recycling destined for Sydney-Melbourne recycling infrastructure.

Innovation in technology and business practices is leading toward some promising small to micro-processing of waste with higher value-added productivity. We are yet to realise this emerging potential in Australia, however change is expected with Federal and State Government action.

**Regional Circularity Cooperative**

The Regional Circularity Cooperative (RCC) launched the Bega Circular Valley Program in November 2023. Council is not a member of the RCC but anticipates being involved as a key governmental stakeholder. The Waste and Recycling Service will continue to liaise on projects and operational improvements that are being undertaken by the RCC, and participate in ways that share knowledge and data. Opportunities to formally partner with the RCC will be assessed on their merits.

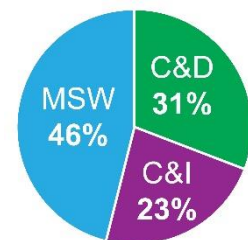


**Waste Data Analysis and Findings**

**How Data is Classified**

Waste fits into three broad categories: Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), Commercial and Industrial (C&I), and Construction and Demolition (C&D). MSW is domestic residential waste through kerbside collection or self-haul to Waste and Recycling Centres. C&I is waste generated by commercial entities but excludes construction and demolition waste which has its own category, C&D.

MSW remains our largest waste stream to landfill with around 46% of waste from residential sources, C&I 23% and C&D 31% in 2023. This changes from year to year and can be skewed when large construction projects are underway such as the Eden’s Fishermen’s Club or the Bega





TAFE, or when larger amounts of landfill cover material are brought on to site which includes crushed concrete and clean fill which is reported in the C&D category.

Our data is also considered in terms of the three waste and resource streams: the general waste stream (red lidded bin, sometimes called residual waste), recycling stream (yellow lidded bin) and the Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) stream (green lidded bin).

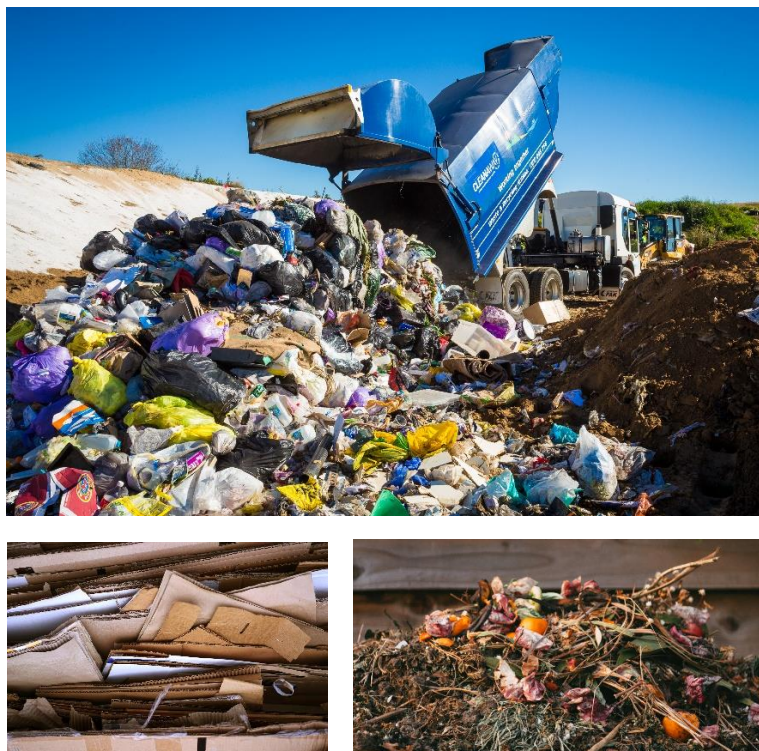
### Data Collection, Constraints and Limitations

There are constraints and limitations in the data that we can access. Council’s data is collected by our collections contractor on the number of bin lifts, average weight, total weight and how often they are presented for collection. In this data set, domestic and commercial data is not separately identifiable. Data is also collected at our Waste and Recycling Centres, in cubic metres, and at the Central Waste Facility in tonnes where there is a weighbridge. This data includes the amount (weight or volume) and waste type.

Kerbside waste audits have been completed every two years since 2018 to understand the composition of waste placed on the kerbside for collection. The waste audits give a detailed compositional analysis of what is included in each kerbside waste and resource stream. This is particularly useful in analysing contamination in each stream and what opportunities exist for better resource recovery. However, broad assumptions are applied as we only collect a small sample of kerbside waste from the whole Shire.

We know that the data we collect isn’t a true representation of the whole waste and recycling that occurs. For example, residents can recycle food scraps at home as compost or animal feed, private commercial collections occur for waste destined outside the Shire, re-use occurs a variety of ways such as buy-swap-sell groups, op shop donations, and myriad other ways.

### Municipal Solid Waste



This waste category is Council's largest and most comprehensive understood, with the best data.

Around a quarter of the domestic residential properties in the Bega Valley have a rural bin collection. For the rural properties this means a weekly general waste collection, fortnightly recycling and no FOGO bin. The remaining residential properties in towns and villages have fortnightly general waste and recycling and a weekly FOGO service. An estimated 5% of properties are multi-unit dwellings which are more than one dwelling located on a site. This can include blocks of units, senior living complexes and semi-detached housing. These types of dwellings can have different waste composition with less garden organics, and in some situations share bin access. In waste audits, the data is often separated by multi-unit dwellings and single-unit dwellings to provide a more complete picture of waste composition by dwelling type.

There are seasonal increases across all residential streams particularly for FOGO collections with a 50% increase over the summer months.

Amounts of kerbside collected MSW to landfill dropped by 30% after FOGO was introduced in late 2018 but has increased slightly until 2021 where it has remained consistent with about 6900 tonnes going to landfill in 2023. Recycling has reduced by around 10% since the introduction of the Container Deposit Scheme in 2017 but has remained around the same since then at around 3600 tonnes each year. When a weekly FOGO service was rolled out in late 2018, amounts of food and garden organics through the kerbside collection more than quadrupled in the few years following, with a small reduction in recent years to 5000 tonnes per annum.

### **Residual Waste**

The residual waste *to landfill* from the kerbside and self-haul to Waste and Recycling Centres is around 13,000 – 14,000 tonnes per annum and is consistently our largest waste stream to end up in landfill.

Data collected from kerbside audits conducted in 2020, 2022 and 2024 shows that the composition of our residual waste varies but the average red-lidded landfill for urban areas has around 36% FOGO and 21% recycling. In fact, up to 80% of what is in the kerbside general waste stream (red bins) could have been recovered through the recycling or FOGO bins or through our Community Recycling Centres.

When FOGO was rolled out, there was an assumption made that people in rural areas would most likely compost onsite or feed food scraps to animals, yet 41% of the rural red-lidded landfill bins, collected weekly are 41% FOGO and 13% recycled.

### **Recycling**

Contamination in the recycling stream is trending upwards with contamination at 15% in the last audit for urban properties and 19% for rural properties with a two-bin system.

### **FOGO**

The NSW EPA released a position statement in late 2022 confirming acceptable inputs into the FOGO bin. This meant re-educating the public on what can be composted and what was

previously thought to be permitted as an acceptable input into FOGO is now a contaminant in the most recent audit. Items such as compostable packaging and containers, pizza boxes and pet litter are no longer accepted, and this can skew the reporting when considering contamination rates.

After FOGO collections commenced in 2018, contamination of the stream recorded in the 2020 audit showing an overall 3.6% contamination, or 10.9% if we adjust for current accepted inputs. By 2022, that had risen to 4.2% with multi-unit dwellings performing better than single unit dwellings. Single unit dwellings have a higher proportion of food in their green-lidded FOGO bins. The audit undertaken in winter 2024 showed that FOGO contamination is now at 12.1% of the stream, mostly attributable to incorrect bags being used as caddy bags with a compostable/plastic blend or plastic bags to dispose of the food waste into the FOGO bin.

This shows that when FOGO first rolled out compliance was excellent but has declined over recent years. Confusion following changes to allowable inputs significantly affected contamination rates coupled with the widespread use of non-compostable bags have become the key concerns.

Common contaminants most recently found include animal faeces and pet litter, paper and newspapers, food in non-compostable bags.

## Commercial and Industrial Waste and Resources

The C&I stream is fairly steady with 6,500-7,000 tonnes each year sent to Council's landfill through private collection and disposal methods at the Central Waste Facility or Waste and Recycling Centres. Through the commercial kerbside residual waste (red-lid) bins, 70% of this could have been recycled through FOGO or recycling bins and a further 13% at the CRC's. The total quantity cannot be reliably separated from the MSW data.



Contamination in commercial bins is high, with 19% FOGO contamination and 14% recycling contamination. Common contaminants in the FOGO stream are food in plastic bags, cardboard and packaged food. In the recycling stream soft plastics, bagged waste and compostable packaging occur most frequently.

## Construction and Demolition Waste and Resources

This waste category is exclusively self-haul (or privately contracted) to the Central Waste Facility or Waste and Recycling Centres. Clean brick and concrete can be diverted from landfill and recycled at the Eden Waste and Recycling Centre, however almost all other C&D material is destined for landfill at the Central Waste Facility. In 2023 it accounted for 31% of waste to landfill, or 8,887 tonnes.

## Key Findings

They findings from an analysis of Council's data are:

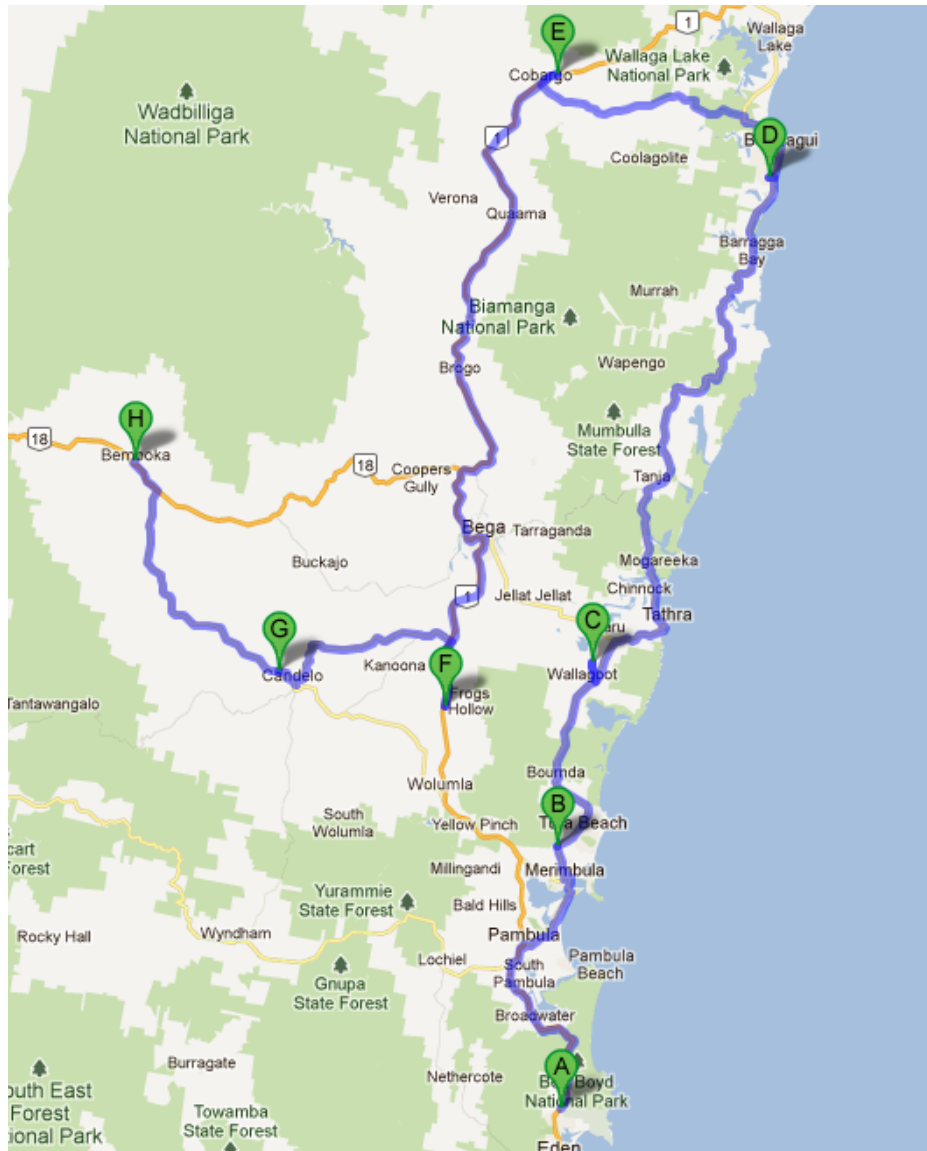
- Contamination is increasing across FOGO and recycling,
- Increasing numbers of residents are using non-compostable bags for FOGO,
- Increase amounts of waste is going into landfill each year, at a rate greater than our population projections.

The key recommendations that have informed this strategy and shaped the themes and strategic actions are:

- There are significant amounts that we can divert from landfill through FOGO and recycling bin education and other actions
- Around 80% of the kerbside residual red bin can be recovered using readily available yellow and green bins or through Community Recycling Centres.
- Recovery of resources, particularly FOGO in rural areas might be achievable.
- Keeping up education in the community essential to continued waste diversion and low contamination

## Waste Sites and Assets

Council operates eight waste sites within the region.



**Figure 3. Council Waste and Recycling Facilities**

One site is currently landfilling waste (Central Waste Facility) but with approvals for two other locations (Bermagui, Eden). Seven are waste and recycling centres that allow for self-haul drop off prior to transfer to a processing location. The waste and recycling centres operate at varying levels of service and access to the community. One of those (Cobargo) was destroyed in the 2019/20 Black Summer Bushfires and is now operating at extremely limited service levels for domestic waste and recycling disposal only for select households.

This causes confusion and disparity of outcomes for our community depending on location. Several service only a few hundred residences and businesses, whilst Merimbula and Wallagoot jointly service the largest population concentration in the Shire, but are only 12 minutes travel apart. The current location of facilities and their service levels increases

operational costs and complexity for the good management of sites and reduces opportunities for waste diversion at less developed and frequented sites.

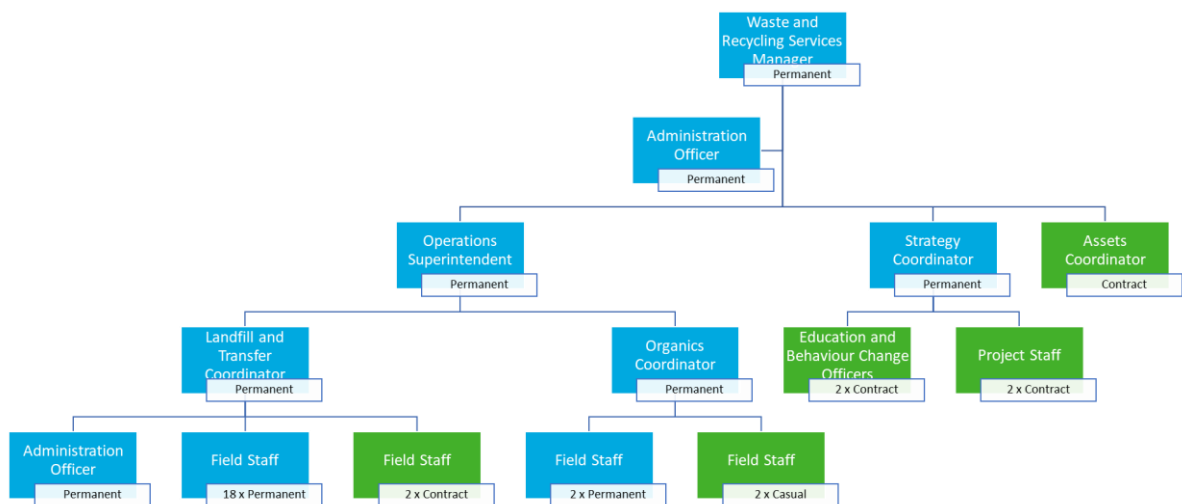
There are a further 27 legacy waste sites under management. They are contaminated land, requiring ongoing monitoring and control to ensure that harm to environmental and human health is mitigated and minimised. As such, these waste sites are an operational liability offering no level of service to the community. The NSW EPA are the regulatory authority for the management of legacy waste sites and Council must work closely with them to satisfy requirements to protect the environment.

## Waste and Recycling Service Organisational Structure

This section of the strategy is provided to inform future detailed planning and highlight the considerations and impacts of delivering against the Strategic Themes and Actions. It is not and cannot be authoritative at this stage, with detailed project plans and businesses cases required to fully understand the impact of change on organisational structure, roles and responsibilities.

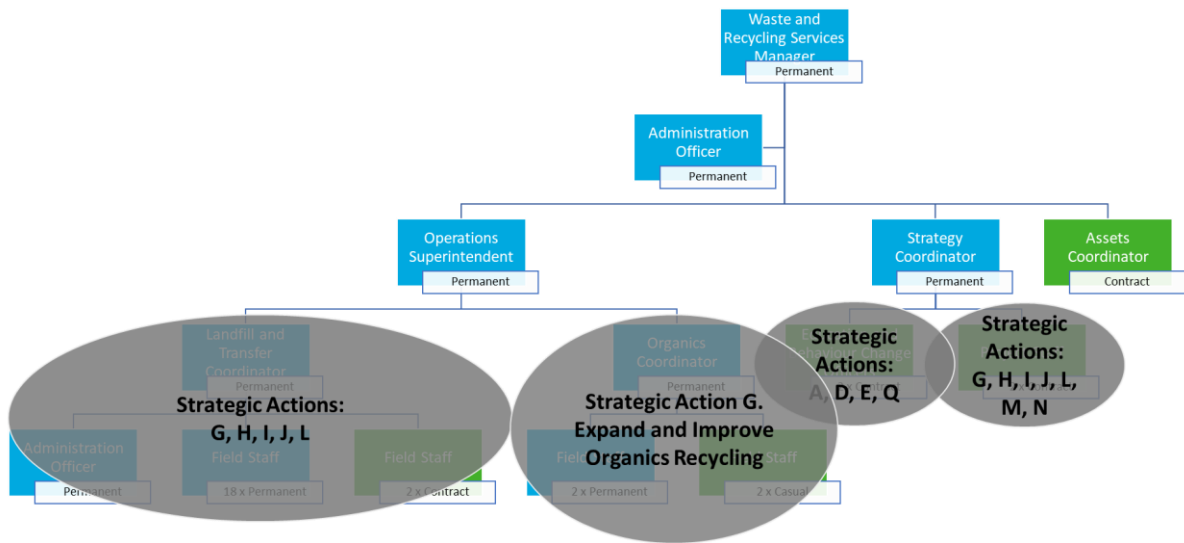


The current waste and recycling organisational structure is depicted below.



**Figure 4. Waste and Recycling Service Organisational Structure 2024**

As the strategic initiatives are launched and delivered, the organisational structure will inevitably transform. Known impacts to structure and staff are highlighted in the following figure, with reference to the initiatives that are expected to trigger change.



**Figure 5. Waste and Recycling Service Organisational Impacts**

Appropriate industrial relations procedures must be followed in accordance with the relevant NSW Local Government (State) Award provisions at the time of the impact, and the Fair Work Act 2009. The change may be as simple as extension of contracts and team growth or as complex as options for redundancy or re-training/re-skilling and re-deployment. Overall, there is expected to be a slight temporary surge in project delivery and education resources in the short to mid-term as Theme 3 and 4 infrastructure projects are delivered and Theme 2: Diversion programs are adopted. Field staff are expected to remain roughly the same overall, as organics team resources are re-deployed to other areas, and waste and recycling centre infrastructure and operations become more standardised.

With such extensive change likely over the strategy period to field, project and education staff, management roles and responsibilities will also be reviewed and potentially adjusted.

# Appendix A: SWOT Analysis Summary Report

HPE CM9 Reference D24/8561

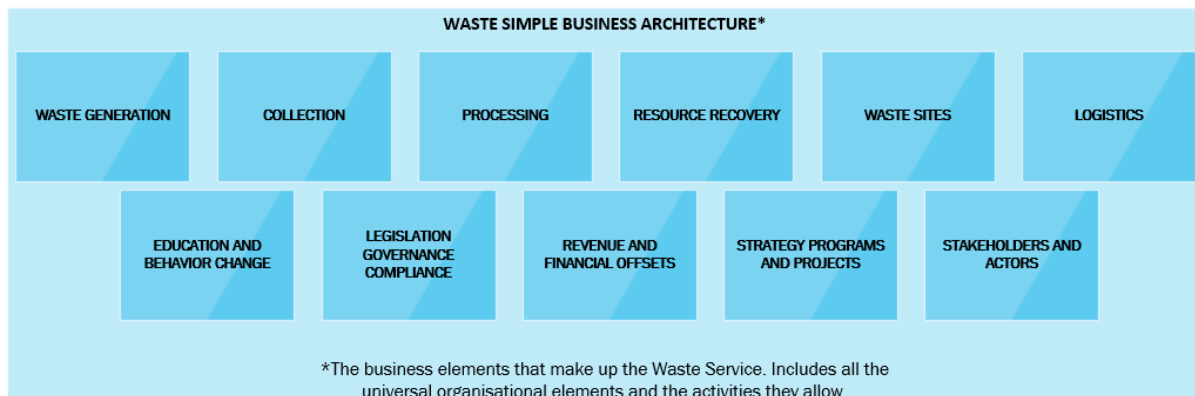


## SWOT Analysis Workshop – Summary of Activity

On 29 Jan 2024 representatives across Council's Waste Services conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis in a facilitated workshop.

A simple and detailed Waste Services business architecture was used to frame the analysis.

The session began by introducing the business architecture, and refining it to ensure it included all the services, activities, processes, resources or concepts within Council's Waste Services. A copy of the simple and detailed business architecture is at CM9 D23/39511. The simple business architecture is reproduced below, showing the refinements made during the workshop.



The workshop then led the group through small group and individual activities to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats and General Points not covered in the framework.

At the conclusion of the activities, the next steps for the Waste Strategy Development Project were discussed. A copy of the slide presentation used to facilitate the workshop is at CM9 D24/5955.

The complete transcript of points captured during the SWOT analysis are at CM 9 D24/8495. These have been supplemented with points captured in a face to face discussion with other Waste Services Staff on 15 Jan 2024, who were not present at the workshop.

### Summary of Key Findings

Staff believe all parts of the service defined in the architecture are performing well i.e. reflect general strength in all areas. There are weaknesses of varying criticality and numerous opportunities to address those weaknesses or consolidate on strengths.

The group was very able to identify a range of threats to the Service.

#### Key Strengths

- The roadside collection service performs very well.
- Education and behaviour change programs are popular and impactful and we have good social capital with our community.
- We are conversant with our governing legislation, regulations and standards and are generally compliant.
- We have very good relationships with our stakeholders and actors and this complements our operations.
- We provide a broad range of services across a large geographic area, that are generally considered to be a fair cost.

- We have been fortunate to secure fair to good additional revenue from Scrap metal sales, grant funding and Methane carbon credit trading.
- Our Strategic programs are generally good.
- We are well prepared to deal with most waste types, especially disaster waste.
- The CWF Landfill – a key asset – is very well managed.

### **Key Weaknesses**

- Bin Banks and Public Place Bins are either not well managed, and/or not meeting the community's needs.
- The CRC is limited in its accessibility, and we often accept bycatch because of its limitations.
- Our ability to service MUDs is constrained by service levels, contract support and policy.
- Our rural customers are generally underserved compared to our residential customers.
- Our education is not influencing contamination of waste streams, has a limited budget and resources for a Council this size, and fails to take up some opportunities as a result.
- Our leachate treatment/management is below regulator and staff expectation and requires significant investment.
- Our Waste Transfer Stations are poorly configured and equipped and limit our ability to sort and divert resources from MSW.
- Our Waste Transfer Stations are inconsistent in operating hours, waste types able to be received, and there are too many of them.
- FOGO contamination seriously limits the quality of our organics processing operations as does site and budget constraints, and we are processing well above our licenced capacity.
- Littering and illegal dumping is a gap across Council due to resourcing and organisational silos.
- Our policies and procedures require updating and are incomplete in parts.
- We are very reliant on contractors for our logistics operations.
- Our remoteness from waste processors leads to significantly poor / high cost outcomes.
- Our fees, charges and other revenue do not cover our outgoing costs for the service.
- We change our plans and strategies often and rarely measure success.
- We lack insight into what kinds of waste is being generated, and so we lack insight into what to do about it.
- Our field staff are disengaging and do not feel consulted or informed.

### **Key Opportunities**

Most of the opportunities require moderate to significant investment to achieve, needing to be financially offset by diversion from landfill or another revenue type.

- Collections service standards can be enhanced when the new contract is tendered, including expanding the network, increasing service options for customers and more frequent servicing.
- Transfer Station logistics could be transitioned in-house.
- CRC operations could be upgraded, including having more mobile CRCs, to accept more vol and more types of problem wastes.
- Grant and circular economy funding can/should be accessed to achieve WASM targets.
- Education and Behaviour Change activities can be more focused on addressing contamination

- Re-use shops can be redesigned and upgraded to improve customer experience and storage, and procedures developed to improve quality and fair pricing of goods. Vehicles of value could be recovered from the scrap metal stream and sold for a premium. Re-use shops could be outsourced.
- Test and Tagging capability could improve e-waste diversion by making available/more attractive for sale.
- WTS require redesign, in consultation with field staff to improve several areas of concern raised (see details).
- WTS should be rationalised as there are too many.
- In-House shredding and trommelling of certain waste streams may improve quality of throughput and logistics.
- Leachate treatment and storage infrastructure could be addressed.
- Methane carbon credit trading could be more advantageous to Council.
- New regional Material Recovery Facilities will come online in the next 1-3 years.
- Fees and charges can be adjusted to recover full costs of the service, and could be reconfigured to reduce cross subsidisation across the service eg move to a user pays model.
- C&I and C&D resource recovery is the main opportunity for greater diversion.
- Activities to improve staff engagement and retention can be undertaken.

### **Key Threats**

- Risings costs of the service, cost of living pressures affecting our communities capacity to pay and its impact on the waste budget were the strongest theme emerging under threats.
- Staff shortages, retention, satisfaction and brain drain was the next most common threat.
- The effects of climate change including more frequent and severe disasters were the third highest theme.
- Changes to government, governance and resulting priorities affects almost all our activities. Regulated service creep and cost shifting was especially concerning.
- Council's reliance on contractors limits our ability to affect change, and our remoteness from downstream processors (lack of local infrastructure) drives up costs and limits options.
- Major contamination events (eg asbestos containing material) in our organics and recovered aggregate were of serious concern.
- The communities general lack of awareness, apathy or saturation with global and local issues will affect our ability to educate and drive changes in waste generating behaviours.

# **Appendix B: Listening Report – Waste Services Review and Customer Satisfaction Survey**

HPE CM9 Reference D24/44067

# Waste Services Review and Customer Satisfaction Survey 2024 Listening Report



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Bega Valley Shire Council acknowledges and pays our respects to the traditional custodians of the lands, waterways and airspace of the shire.

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## Introduction

Bega Valley Shire Council's adopted "Recycling the Future" Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2018-2028 is due for review and update.

The project will redevelop the strategy, reflecting on progress against the existing objectives and ensuring a new strategy is fit for the future based on evolving community needs/wants, technology, environment and regulation.

Council is responsible for providing waste collection and waste management services to its community. These services are highly technical, both scientific and engineered, requiring a carefully considered balance of operational activity, asset management and business administration to achieve strategic outcomes.

A service area strategy is required to guide the provision of services now and into the future that is fit for purpose, meets our legislative requirements, *meets community expectations*, is sustainable, and aligns insofar as is possible with adopted and emerging best practice.

To understand community expectations, the project team has undertaken two key activities:

1. The formation of a community strategic working group
2. Development of a community survey. The output from these two activities will heavily inform the strategy.



## How was the survey developed and what were its limitations? What have we learnt in conducting a survey?

The purpose of the survey was to gauge general community sentiment and the level of satisfaction with:

1. the waste services provided by Council
2. value for money
3. general perceptions toward waste and sustainability
4. the future role and activities of Council's waste department.

As such the survey was designed to be considered in five parts:

1. Demographic Questions (addressed in the "Who was surveyed" section below) (questions 1-4)
2. Service Satisfaction (questions 5-26)
3. Perceived Value for Money (questions 27-28)
4. Community Attitudes Towards Waste (questions 30)
5. Prioritisation for Future Investment and Role of Council (question 29-31).

The survey was designed primarily as an online survey. There were no changes in how questions were asked for paper surveys taken at community engagement events.

The survey was comprehensive, with most respondents completing it in 10-12 minutes.. Ninety-Four incomplete surveys were recorded, although many of these were still useful in understanding service satisfaction.

The question design for the "Choose your top 3" questions, specifically questions 29 and 31, resulted in some respondents selecting more than three options on the paper surveys. This invalidated a total of 31 answers, which had a minor influence on the data. This issue did not occur with online surveys. While this may affect the individual percentage scores for each option, it is not expected to change the overall ranking or order of community preferences.

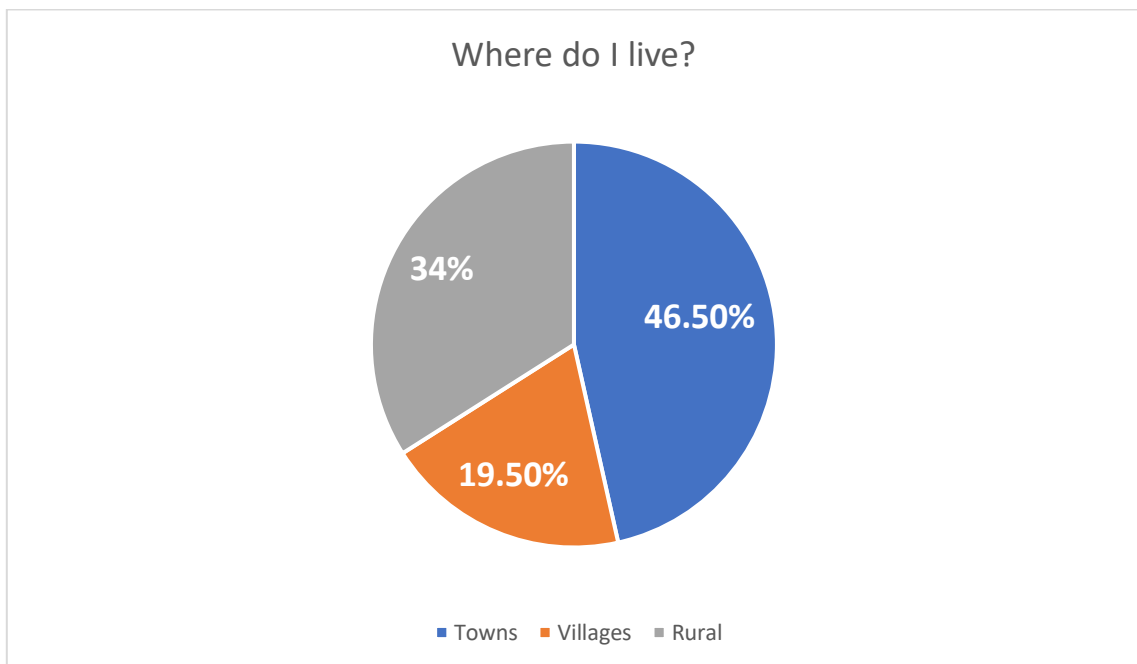
Due to the number of paper surveys completed (145) at market engagement activities and spikes in online completions following those events, it is highly recommended future Council surveys undertake this type of engagement.

Many responses to the survey satisfaction questions recorded a 'Neutral – 3' score, with corresponding comments indicating the respondent doesn't use the service. The survey is designed to have those responses entered as 'Don't Use – 0', with the intention of having no impact on the overall satisfaction and dissatisfaction score. If we are to count these 'Neutral 3' scores as 'Don't Use 0' scores, the overall effect increases customer satisfaction levels.

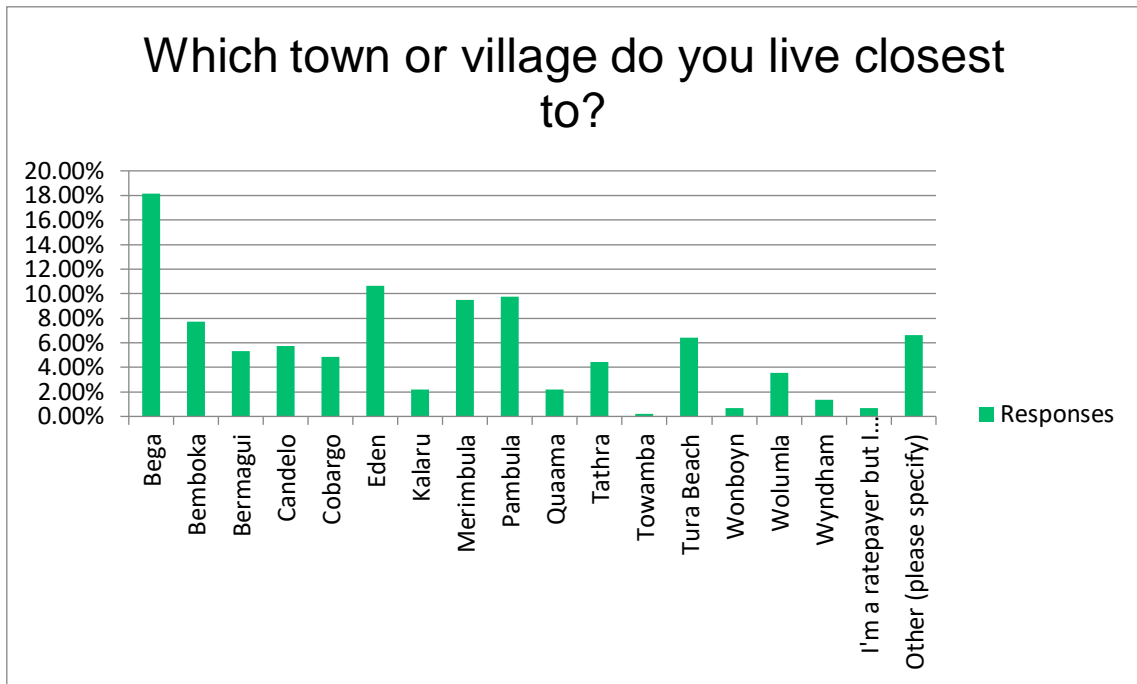
It should also be accepted that while someone may not use a service, they may have a valid opinion about it.

## Who was surveyed?

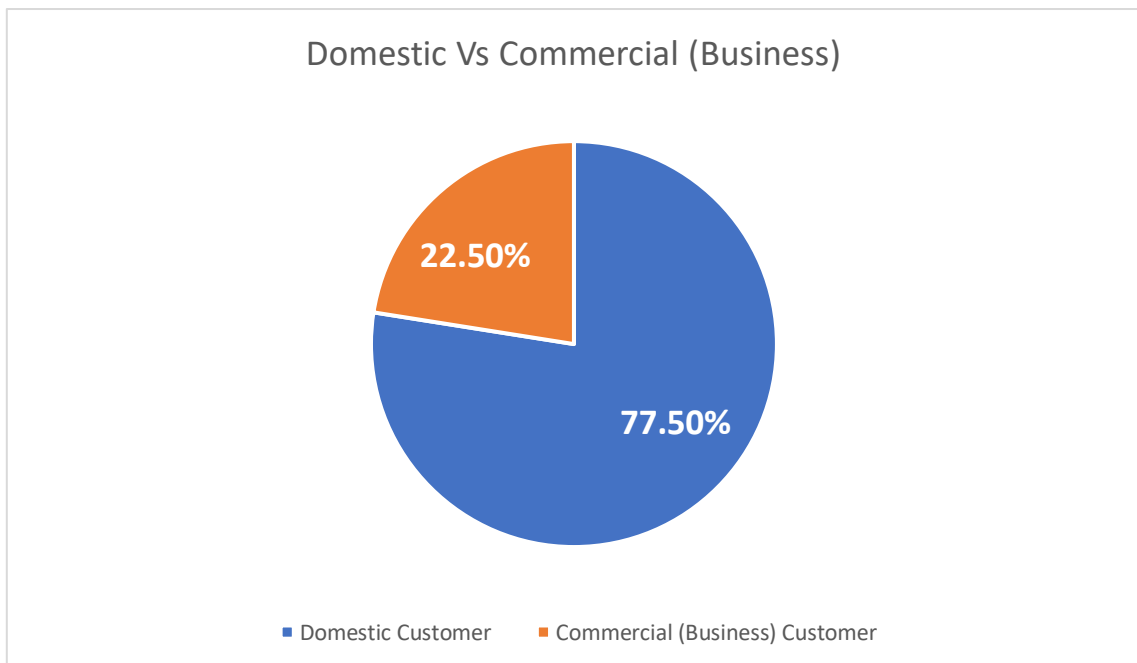
- We received a total of 452 Surveys
  - Based on the SurveyMonkey tool, using number of households (18,990), a survey sample size of 377 gives 95% confidence in accuracy of the results
  - There are 358 complete surveys
  - There are 94 incomplete surveys, 50 of which still provide complete service satisfaction data and comments
  - There are 39 Internal (BVSC) staff surveys, of which 23 were complete, and 16 were incomplete
  - There were 145 paper surveys collected at community engagement events that were manually entered into SurveyMonkey
- Respondents lived (Q2)
  - 46.5% in towns
  - 19.5% in villages
  - 34% in rural



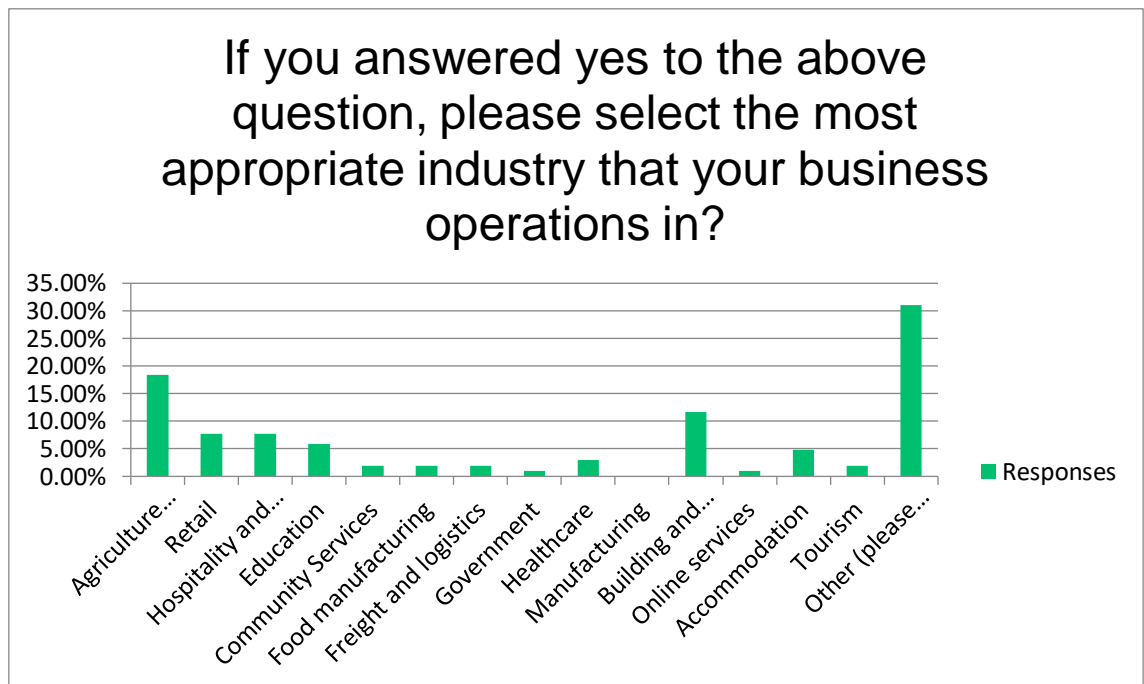
- The breakdown of where respondents lived was (Q1)



- Respondents answered as (Q3)
  - 77.5% domestic customers
  - 22.5% commercial (I own or run a business)



- Those that own or run a business included (Q4)



- The variety of occupations provided in responses to “Other” were diverse. Most responses could have been categorised as an occupational option listed in the question.

## How was the survey engagement conducted?

The survey was conducted over two periods.

1. The internal staff survey was conducted 22 February – 7 March
2. The external public survey was conducted 15 March – 15 May

The survey was provided online, with a supporting media release and social media posts.

The survey team also attended several community events:

- Eden Markets 16-March
- Men's Shed Muster (Merimbula) 19-March
- Bega (Zingel Place) Markets 22-March
- Candelo Markets 7-April
- Cobargo Market 13-April
- Merimbula Seaside Market 21-April
- Nethercote Market 27-April
- Bermagui Breakers AFL Fixtures 11-May

With the following survey options:

1. Paper survey
2. Online survey conducted on a provided tablet
3. QR Code to complete on respondent's own device (at Candelo Markets and subsequent events)

Due to illness, the survey team were unable to attend the Bermagui *Sculptures by the Sea* event. The team instead attended several Bermagui Breakers AFL fixtures.

In addition to paper surveys collected at the events, there were notable spikes in online surveys following:

- Bega Zingel Place Markets (9 that day, and 101 in the following 4 days)
- Candelo Markets (11 that day)
- Merimbula Seaside Markets (16 that day)
- Nethercote Markets (12 that day)

The Nethercote Markets had the most engagement, with 17 paper surveys plus 12 online surveys that day. Community event engagements generally achieved 20 surveys (+-5).

A radio advertising campaign ran from 1 May – 15 May, on 2EC and Power FM. Over that period 57 online surveys were completed with spikes on 3 May (Fri), 8 May (Wed) and 10 May (Fri). Across those three days there were 34 online surveys completed.

The survey team checked results throughout the survey period. It was noted there were only four surveys from Bemboka residents (two online, two paper) prior to 1 May. The survey team spoke with proprietors of the Bemboka Hotel and Bemboka Post Office Thu 2 May and left QR code flyers at both. There were an additional 35 surveys completed online from Bemboka residents between 2-6 May, as well as some organic social media posts drawing attention to the survey.

Due to the timing – it is difficult to discern whether the radio ads or QR code flyers – or a combination of both - are responsible for the uptick in surveys in the final two weeks, or which influenced Bemboka residents most.

# How did people respond?

## Service Satisfaction

The survey satisfaction results have been adjusted to account for question methodology, specifically providing an option for 'Don't Use = 0'.

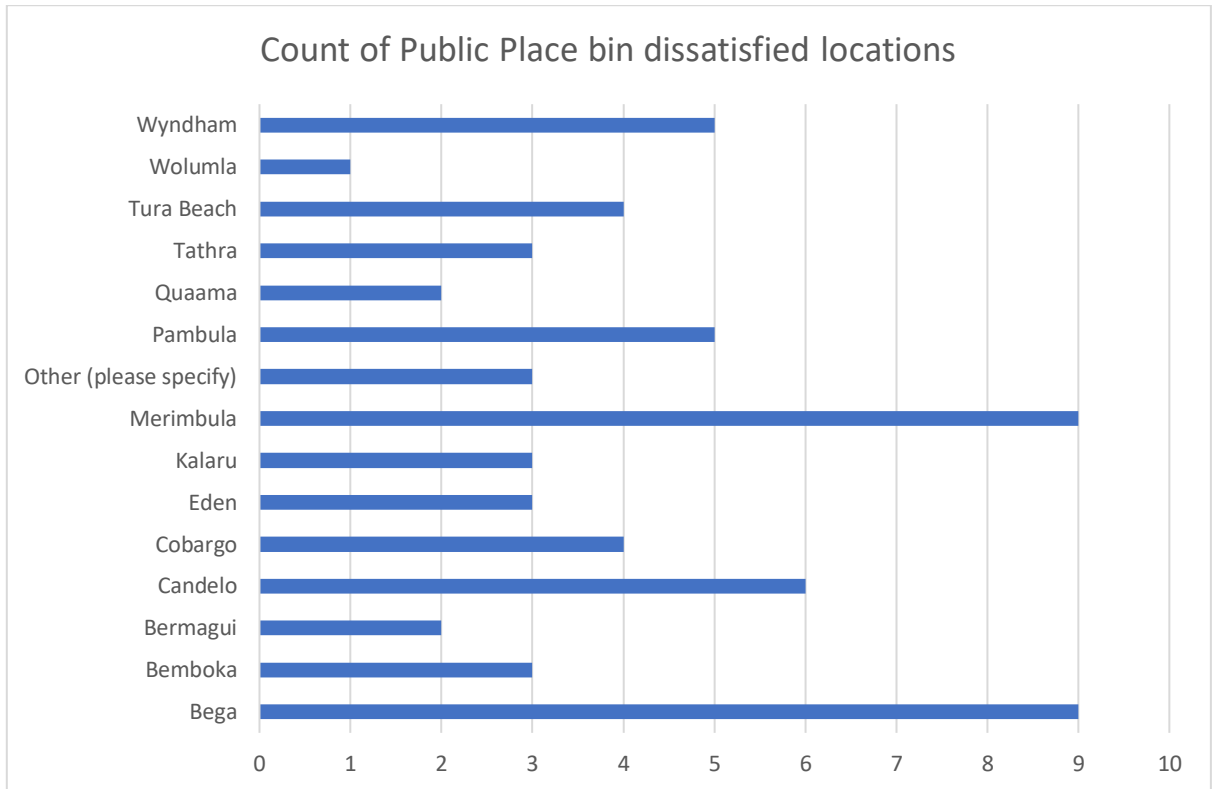
A satisfaction score of 1-5 was used with 1 being very dissatisfied, 5 being very satisfied, and 3 being neutral.

The notable results are:

- All service areas surveyed received a positive satisfaction rating (an average score of more than 3.0).
- The average satisfaction score across all services was 3.61
- The services with highest satisfaction were:
  - Kerbside recycling collection (4.05)
  - Free waste disposal vouchers (3.95)
  - Waste App (3.88) \*noting a high 'Don't Use' response (35.32%)
  - Kerbside FOGO collection (3.83)
  - Waste and Recycling Centre – recycling drop-off (3.81)
- The services with lowest overall satisfaction score\_were:
  - Brick and concrete disposal at Eden (3.20) – note this is predominantly a commercial service
  - Commercial disposal at the CWF (3.22) – note this is a commercial service
  - Mobile Community Recycling Centres (3.25)
- The services with largest number of dissatisfied responses (Scoring 1 or 2)
  - Kerbside landfill collection (68) dissatisfied responses
  - Public litter bins (62)
  - Green waste disposal at waste and recycling centres (45)
  - Compost purchase (44)
  - General Waste Disposal at waste and recycling centres (38)

Regarding public bins, negative feedback was received indicating a perceived lack of bins, infrequent emptying, overflowing rubbish, dirtiness, unpleasant smells, ugly design, and a need for more recycling bins.

Conversely there were many comments indicating satisfaction with the number and servicing of public bins. It can be concluded that issues with public bins is limited to specific hotspot locations. The locations where respondents live that had greatest dissatisfaction are:



The comments generally identify Merimbula, Bega and Candelo as areas with issues. For instance, of the five responses from Wyndham, three directly or indirectly refer to bins across the shire or in Merimbula, not specifically in Wyndham.

## Perceived Value for Money

Answering questions (27 and 28) about fair pricing and value:

- 62.5% responded our services ARE fairly priced
- 37.5% responded our services ARE NOT fairly priced

Between questions 27 and 28, 517 written responses provided insight into respondents' answers. This feedback provided more insight than any other question in the survey.

- A very large number of comments supported that Waste Services fees were fair
- A very large number of comments had the opinion that our fees were too high/expensive without detailing a specific service
  - Many of these comments referred in general to Council rates, rather than specifically waste fees and charges
- A large number of responses questioned/didn't like that green waste disposal and compost sales both attract fees i.e. green waste disposal should be free
- Several responses questioned the perceived high cost of mattress disposal

## Community Attitudes Towards Waste

The majority of respondents (59.24%) disagree and a further (17.92%) were neutral with the statement.

*"As long as my bins are emptied, I don't think about waste management i.e its Council's responsibility"*

The vast majority of respondents (85.38%) believe waste can be a valuable resource.

The vast majority of respondents (89.65) think about reducing waste in their everyday lives.

The vast majority of respondents (87.32%) find it easy to sort waste at home.

The vast majority of respondents (80.00%) find recycling makes them feel good.

Only a small majority of respondents (55.98%) want to learn more about sustainable waste management. \*

\*This answer is at odds with the responses to *Question 29. "What role(s) do you think Council should play in helping to improve waste management in the Bega Valley? (Choose up to 3 answers)"* where the top response was "Waste Education and Awareness Programs".

## Prioritisation for Future Investment and the Role of Council

The following indicates clear priorities from survey respondents.

Question 29 *"What role(s) do you think Council should play in helping to improve waste management in the Bega Valley? (Choose up to 3 answers)"*

- A majority of respondents (55.15%) would like Council to conduct Waste Education and Awareness Programs
- A leading minority of respondents (34.26%) would like Council to conduct compliance and enforcement programs to tackle bin contamination, illegal dumping and littering
- A leading minority of respondents (27.3%) would like Council to promote existing waste services and infrastructure\*
- A minority of respondents (22.56% and 22.28% respectively) asked for new or additional waste collection services or new or additional waste and recycling infrastructure.

\*This is supported by the many written responses indicating respondents were unaware of many of the services we surveyed.

To Question 31 *"Thinking more broadly about waste management, resource recovery and recycling within the Bega Valley Shire region, is there anything else you would like to raise that hasn't been covered already or that you see as an issue or priority?"*

- A majority of respondents (53.2%) wanted Council to deal with littering and illegal dumping
- A near majority of respondents (40.67%) wanted Council to deal with items put in the red (landfill) bin that could have been recovered
- A leading minority of respondents (31.2%) wanted Council to deal with contamination in the yellow (recycling) and green (FOGO) bins
- Additionally, three options were related to enhancing our Waste Transfer Stations (Waste and Recycling Centres). Taken collectively, they represent 250 preferred responses—far exceeding any other option. This underscores the priority placed on improving our waste facilities.
  - *"Improving the current Reuse (tip) shops at Council's Transfer Stations"*
  - *"Expanded Community Recycling Centre (CRC) facilities - to accept more types of problem household waste for recycling at more Transfer Stations"*
  - *"Improving transfer station consistency in waste types accepted, opening hours and layout/design. (Currently not all transfer stations accept all waste types, and have varying operating hours)"*



# Was there a difference between what different demographics told us?

## Town/Village vs Rural

There were several key differences between these two demographics.

- Town/Villages were less happy with kerbside landfill (red bin) collection than rural, reflecting comments around fortnightly vs weekly collection.
- Rural residents were less satisfied (but only slightly) with:
  - green waste disposal at sites, citing cost and distance.
  - Re-use shops,
  - Compost, citing they use their own or issues with quality/contamination
  - Website, citing they don't have internet or don't use computers.
  - They also reported less use of the Waste App
- Kerbside FOGO collection was a very contentious question in the rural demographic. Based on the survey design and results, further engagement is required with this demographic on this issue to properly understand the issue.
  - Of the 142 respondents in the rural demographic, only 25 people left a rating. The vast majority selected don't use which reflects the service is not available rurally.
  - Of the 25 people who left a rating, 14 responded they were dissatisfied leading to an overall dissatisfied rating (2.16). However this only accounts for 1 in 10 in the whole demographic being dissatisfied.
  - In the comments there were:
    - 14 comments indicating they want the service
    - 10 comments indicating they don't want it/already compost at home

A key theme in comments was the additional distance and related costs to access waste transfer stations for rural residents.

There was a larger difference in opinion on value for money, where only 57.63% of rural respondents through fees and charges were fair, vs 65.14% for town/village respondents.

In terms of prioritising effort and resources, there was very strong alignment between the two demographics. Towns/villages would prefer to prioritise new or additional collection services and making vouchers more accessible, where rural respondents would prioritise new or additional infrastructure and improving Re-use shops. This could reflect a difference in attitude between the two demographics towards the effort/method to dispose of waste, and re-use over disposal.

## Resident vs Business

There was strong alignment in responses between these two demographics. Generally, the business demographic was reported slightly lower satisfaction on most service areas.

Notable differences included lower satisfaction in the business demographic for:

- kerbside collections
- compost purchase
- special recycling
- website app
- CRCs.

There was slightly higher satisfaction for Brick and Concrete disposal.

The business demographic was only slightly unhappier about value for money, with a 3.9% difference.

Interestingly, there was also very strong alignment in prioritisation with most of the “Top 5” issues the same between demographics. Business respondents would prefer priority be given to expanding CRCs and hazardous waste collection and disposal, and residential demographic would prefer priority be given to Re-use Shops, new infrastructure and making waste vouchers more accessible.

Notably, both demographics ranked “Development of tools, resources and programs to educate about waste avoidance and improve recycling *for businesses*” as 6<sup>th</sup> priority for Question 29.

### **Internal Staff vs All Community**

N.B. there will be staff who completed the survey as part of the public survey (only 23 complete internal responses during the internal only period).

In general the internal staff surveys aligned very closely with the overall public feedback received. The only notable difference is that adopting a User Pays system for fees and charges was higher in priority for internal staff than for the public.

## In general, what did people say? (the content of written comments)

Most questions allowed respondents to leave a comment. In total, across all questions there were more than 3200 comments provided. There was on average, 130 comments per question.

There were approximately 37 comments asking for a regular hard waste roadside collection service (key terms: hard, curbside, kerbside, pickup) and this was a common theme in face-to-face conversations at engagement events and consistent with regular feedback the Waste team receive. The main reason given is that people don't have Utes or trailers, can't afford disposal fees or are renters who don't receive waste vouchers. There was a prevailing attitude this should be free, although some indicated a book-in service as an option.

There were many responses from town/village residents wanting weekly red bin collection and/or larger bin sizes, or rural residents currently liking the weekly collection. This is consistent with regular feedback the Waste team receive. Conversely, there were many comments that fortnightly red bin collection and allocated bin sizes are good. There were also many comments that indicate people are unaware they can change the size of their bin.

There were many responses that yellow bin recycling kerbside pickup should be weekly.

There were a significant number of responses (52) indicating the respondent didn't know about a service or issue. These were predominantly against questions relating to the CRC, CRS (Libraries), Mobile CRC, Waste Grants, Waste App, Eden Brick and Concrete disposal and the CWF.

There were many responses indicating a lack of faith in recycling systems, and that it isn't clear what can be recycled. There were lots of responses about losing a soft plastics recycling pathway. Most acknowledged it was not Council's fault, but are seeking a Council solution.

The confusion and/or change in allowable inputs into FOGO was mentioned many times, indicating that people are not clear on what can be disposed of, or why.

Several comments asked for Council to provide Return and Earn stations (Container Deposit Scheme), especially in Bermagui. This is supported by a presentation from the Bermagui Men's Shed where they claimed to be reimbursing \$15,000-\$18,000 annually in CDS revenue thanks to support from community members.

We received comments complaining that site opening hours were inconvenient for them, especially sites that only open a few days per week.

Regarding Re-use shops, while the sentiment is largely positive, there are many complaints about the quality of items and infrastructure, and that more could go into the shops from general waste or scrap metal disposal.

Regarding compost, while the sentiment is largely positive, there are many complaints about availability, small contamination (glass, plastic), weeds, pH, and nutrient content.

While largely positive about the BVSC Waste webpages and Waste App there were comments indicating some respondents do not use computers or devices and want other means of accessing information. There were several comments that the website as a whole is difficult to navigate and information is not up to date.

There were many comments against any further permanent site closures, with emphasis on Wallagoot, Candelo and Bemboka. There were several comments asking for Cobargo to be redeveloped as a site.

## What conclusions can we draw from the survey?

In general, community satisfaction with the waste service is very high, with a clear majority of respondents saying our services are fair value for money. Those who do not feel it is value for money feel very strongly that it is not but are often taking issue with the total fees and charges for Council's services (e.g. rates, waste and potentially water and sewer). They are a significant minority at (37.5%).

There is a clear desire for:

1. more/better education (although only half of respondents want to learn more),
2. better sites (open more often) with opportunities to divert more waste from landfill
3. tackling illegal dumping and littering
4. respondents also want Council to deal with contamination more actively in all three streams (red, yellow and green bins).

Where education is concerned there is a desire to focus on existing services, non-Council disposal options for items and an opportunity to be more convincing and transparent about end-to-end recycling systems we utilise.

There is very strong desire for a hard waste kerbside collection, but vouchers are also viewed very positively among respondents.

There are localised problems with public place litter bins, notably in Merimbula, Bega and Candelo that need to be addressed.

A weekly red bin service is a contentious issue, with most comments in favour, but many comments also in favour of fortnightly. This should not be conflated with overall satisfaction with the current services which is high.

Regarding FOGO Kerbside collection and the rural demographic (who are not currently serviced) the survey results indicated further engagement is required with this demographic to properly understand this issue.

There is little recognition in the community around "commercial and industrial" or "construction and demolition" waste streams and tackling those to reach diversion targets.

## What's Next?

This listening report has been provided directly to Council's leadership executive, and Councillors.

The Waste Strategy project team will compare the results of the survey with the outputs from an internal staff Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis that was conducted in February 2024. It will also be considered in the context of the NSW Government targets under the Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy. This will then inform the major strategic themes under the Waste Strategy, and the program of strategic projects Council will commit to undertake.

The results will be provided to the Waste Strategy Community Working Group for consideration and comment in the final workshop.

Finally, the DRAFT Strategy will be prepared for the Council to consider and place on public exhibition for a final HAVE YOUR SAY, prior to determination by Council. The Strategy may be amended or adjusted based on the results of the final HAVE YOUR SAY.

Timeline for Strategy Adoption	
June - July 2024	Analyse results of Survey, SWOT, prior feedback from working group and WASM Strategy
August 2024	Final Community Working Group session
August – October 2024	Finalise DRAFT Strategy
November - December 2024	Council Consideration and Have your Say
January – February 2025	Adopt Strategy

## Thank You for Your Feedback

452 people  
provided survey  
submissions

8 face to face  
community  
events

# Appendix C Waste Detailed Business Architecture

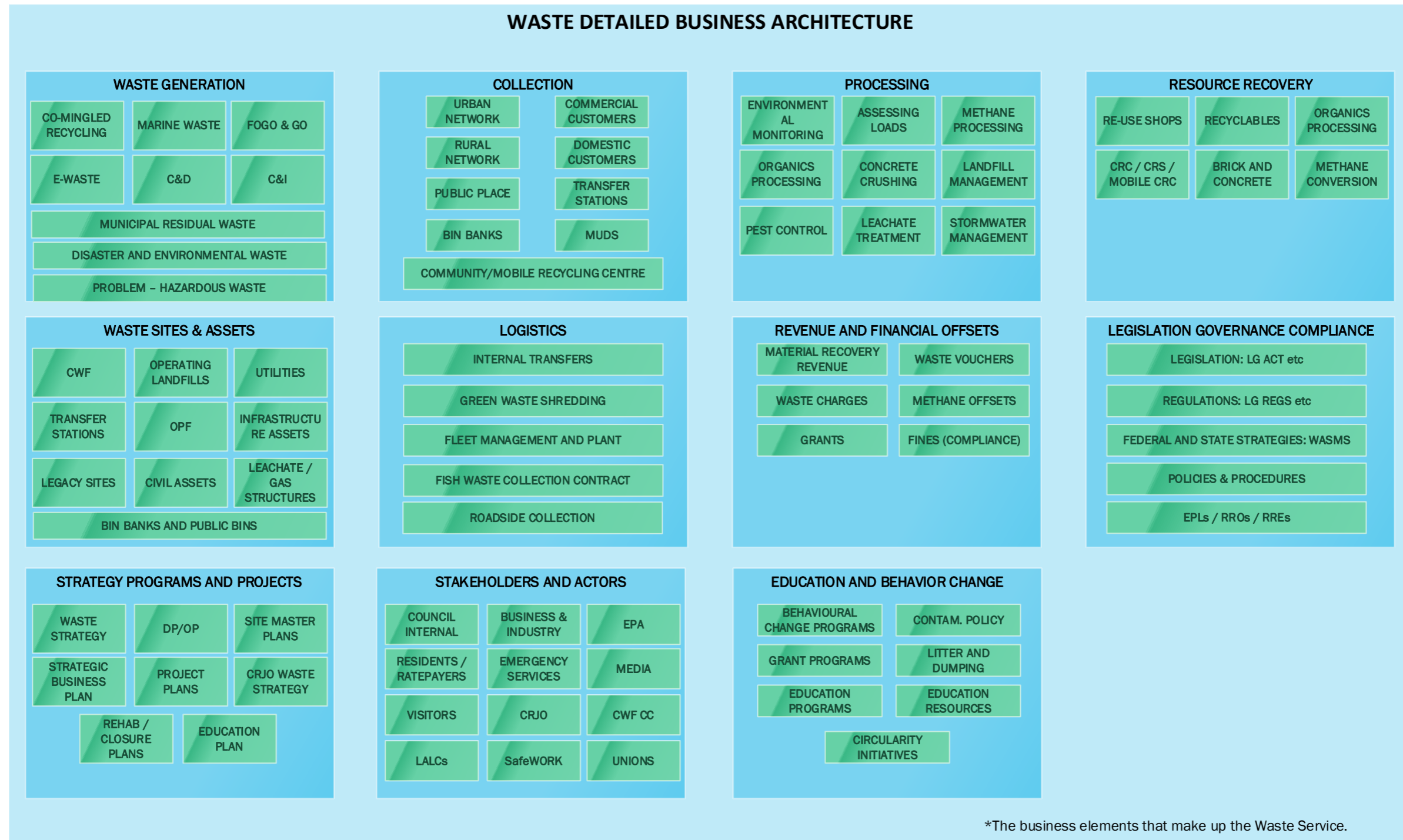


Figure 5. Detailed Waste Business Architecture

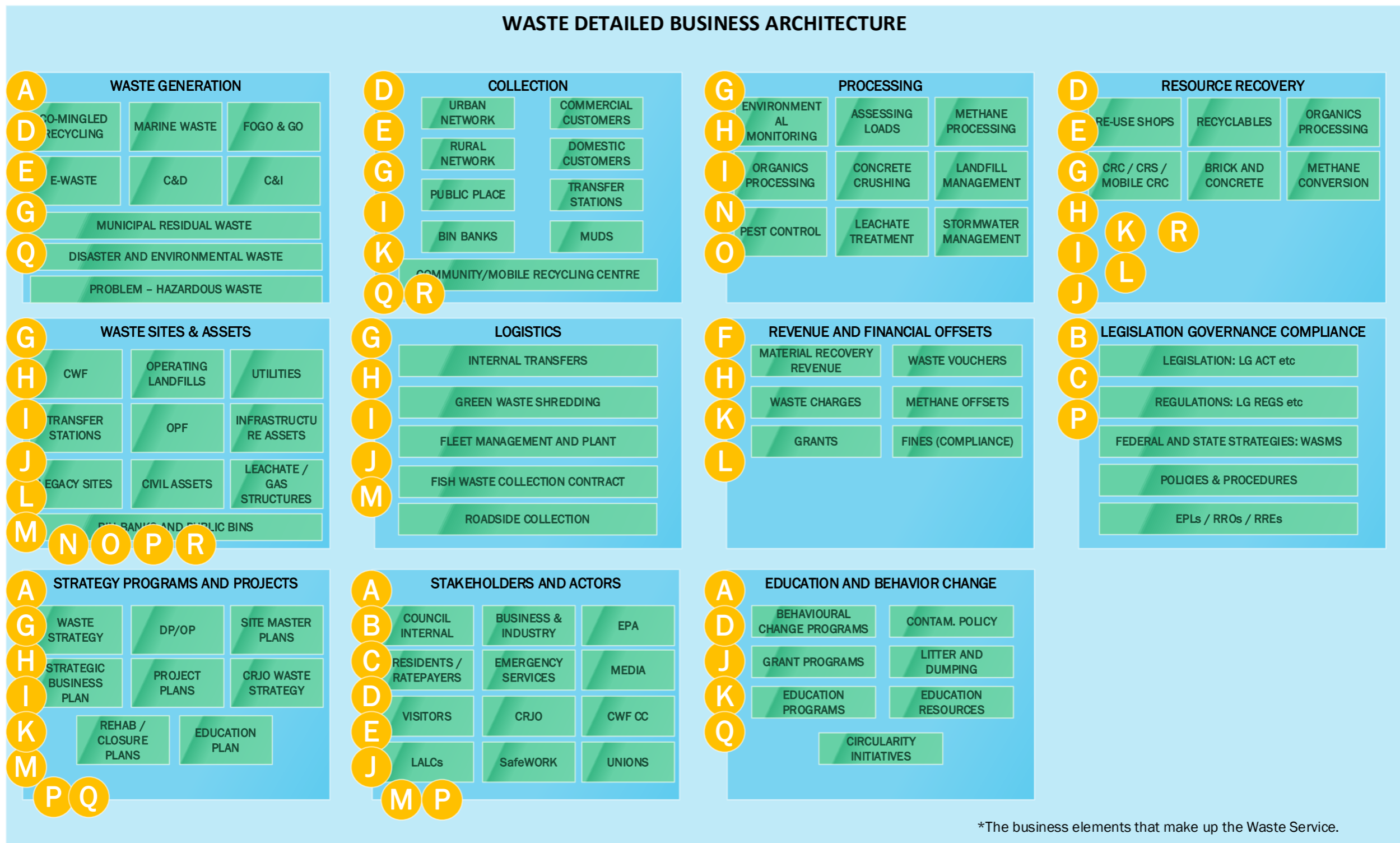


Figure 6. Detailed Waste Business Architecture – Mapped Strategic Actions

# Appendix D: Strategic Waste Program and Projects

## Waste Sub-Program Definition

The Waste Sub-Program includes all holistic business activities under the Council's waste department, meeting its legislative responsibility to provide domestic waste services to the community. It also includes providing limited commercial waste services due to the remoteness from industry run facilities and services. Diversion and resource recovery activities are a major component in providing waste services, with education and minimisation a core focus. The program consists of capital projects, operating projects and operating business as usual activities.

The program benefits the community by responsibly managing waste from a variety of sources, and diverting as much as possible from landfill back into the economy through recovery, re-use and recycling. It aims to minimise the cost of human activity to the environment whilst balancing reasonable financial costs to the community. Our community will have the option to dispose of unwanted materials in a way that meets their needs, at an affordable price, with confidence that Council will manage those materials in a responsible way. The community will be educated to make better consumption decisions that have more beneficial impacts for our society and environment.

CAPEX-OPEX Projects	Start	Finish	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
1. Landfill Expansion	2025	2030	█					█					
2. Organics Processing Facility - CWF	2025	2026	█	█									
3. CWF Resource Recovery Precinct	2028	2035				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
5. FOGO Domestic Collection Network Expansion	2026	2026		█									
6. Rural Red Bin Fortnightly Collections													
7. Mandatory FOGO for Commercial Customers	2026	2026		█									
8. 4th Bin for Glass Collections													
9. C&I Sorting Facility @ CWF	2028	2029						█	█	█	█	█	█
10. C&D Sorting Facility @ CWF	2027	2028				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
11. Bermagui Resource Recovery Centre	2025	2027	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
12. Eden Resource Recovery Centre	2025	2028	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
13. Merimbula Resource Recovery Centre	2024	2027	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
14. Bermagui Remediation Action Plan	2025	2025	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
15. Eden Remediation Action Plan	2025	2026	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
16. Merimbula Remediation Action Plan	2025	2027	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
17. Tathra, Pambula, Cobargo, Candelo & Bemboka RAP's	2025	2028	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
18. Legacy Sites RAP	2026	2030						█	█	█	█	█	█
19. Wallagoot RAP and Site Closure	2026	2027											
20. Cobargo SAWDS	2023	2025	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
21. Public Place Bin Renewal and Recycling	2025	2026	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
22. CWF Landfill Cell 4 Cap	2029	2031						█	█	█	█	█	█
23. Expand Network of Permanent CRCs	2026	2028						█	█	█	█	█	█
24. Community Adopted/Led Diversion Program	2025	2030	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
25. Business2Business Circularity Program	2027	2032								█	█	█	█
26. Waste Innovation Grant Program	2027	2032								█	█	█	█
27. Disaster Waste Management Plan	2025	2026	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
28. Leachate Management Systems Upgrade	2025	2027	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█





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