

# Recommended actions to improve waste management in Hobart



No municipality can truly be considered vibrant unless they are diligent and proactive with waste management. We acknowledge the great work done to improve waste management in the City of Hobart (CoH) and the vision for zero waste in 2030. However, in light of the CoH's plans to seek environmental approval to extend the life of the landfill site, the South Hobart community would like to call for a faster and more determined approach by the CoH to dramatically reduce the amount of material being buried in the McRobies Gully.

To capture the ideas and desires of the community, a Waste Management Forum was recently held by the South Hobart Sustainable Community (SHSC) in South Hobart, attended by 42 residents. The findings of the forum, and subsequent engagement with the community, have been summarised and listed below as ideas for inclusion in:

1. a "Good Neighbour Agreement" - the purpose of which would be to improve the industrial operation's accountability to our community and to ensure that the protection of the environment is placed high on the agenda.
2. the upcoming Development Proposal and Environmental Management Plan (DPEMP) associated with extending the life of the landfill site;
3. the City of Hobart's draft Waste Management Strategy.

Through the items listed below, the South Hobart community aims to encourage a higher level of environmental protection through a stronger emphasis on immediate action to reduce waste to landfill. A reduction in waste will also help address the dust, noise and odour concerns of the immediate neighbours.

Currently 50,000 tonnes of waste and a similar amount of clean fill (such as soil, bricks and concrete rubble) are buried in the McRobies gully each year<sup>1</sup>, the vast majority of which could, with the right policies, be avoided. For example, in Tasmania, food and garden organics make up approximately 52% of business and 42% of household landfill waste and paper and cardboard make up approximately 13% of business and household waste<sup>2</sup>.

Put beautifully by a person attending the community waste forum, through this process our community hopes to inspire waste reduction and encourage the CoH to divert (from landfill) and publicly tackle anything that is potentially damaging our world.

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<sup>1</sup> [Strategic Operating Plan McRobies Gully Waste Management Centre 2010 – 2015](#)

<sup>2</sup> [WAC Tasmanian Waste Review 2014](#)

## Accurately price disposal to McRobies WMC to reflect the true cost of landfilling wastes

The landfill gate fee at McRobies Waste Management Centre (WMC) has not been enough to cover the costs of operation, overheads, mobile plant and equipment, labour, contamination monitoring, pollution control, depreciation costs of roads and buildings and other fixed assets and profit. And they certainly do not cover 30-50 year post closure management, long term monitoring and reporting, and importantly replacement of the landfill asset itself. Rehabilitation of the site alone, is estimated to be \$6.5 million<sup>3</sup> and millions have recently been spent to lower the water table within the tip to reduce leachate affecting surrounding land and waterways.

Under-pricing landfills is both economically and environmentally detrimental and McRobies WMC gate fees are too low to cover the true costs of operation.

The CoH has introduced special rates to meet unfunded landfill liabilities but the ratepayers are not the same group as major landfill users. On average 50-60%<sup>4</sup> of resources buried at McRobies are non-domestic (commercial and construction) waste but the majority of ratepayers are Hobart households. It is not fair for households to subsidise big commercial generators like clubs and pubs, retailers and building companies, as well as all past users.

The CoH understandably wants to keep landfill gate fees low for their ratepayers (us). But rather than asking “How will our ratepayers afford this?” we would like them to ask “What is the real cost of this service and who is going to pay for it – ratepayers or landfill users?”

Once the landfill has been filled, there is no chance to go back and recover the unfunded liabilities and costs – and Hobart ratepayers will have to pay.

In addition, artificially cheap landfill is biasing the market and has created anti-competitive forces, undermining recycling and resource recovery opportunities. Higher landfill prices create the headroom for recyclers to operate competitively, so the CoH will need to work with other landfill operators in the area to ensure that higher landfill charges are implemented throughout Southern Tasmania.

Most businesses want to do the right thing but they are also economically rational. They will recycle to the extent limited by cost and return. With this in mind, the South Hobart community acknowledges that a pricing structure, incentivising recycling and diversion, is essential before large amounts of money are spent trying to encourage people and businesses to act from the goodness of their hearts. Education and short-term incentives are not enough to create business confidence and investment in the recycling industry.

As a comparison to the current rate of \$80/t (or less for some high annual usage customers) at McRobies WMC, NSW landfills charge around \$222 for a tonne to be buried in the landfill (an additional \$133 is paid by the NSW facility to the State Government as a levy<sup>5</sup>).

Don't panic at the cost, remember that almost all of the material currently being buried is easily recyclable or compostable and these fees only apply to materials being buried in the ground. By diverting wastes to resource recovery businesses these costs can easily be avoided.

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<sup>3</sup> [Landfill Rehabilitation Levy flyer - Hobart City Council](#)

<sup>4</sup> [What is air worth? How to price a landfill. MRA Consulting, June 2015](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Suez Environment - Waste Charges and Service, effective 1 July 2015](#)

## Lobby all Southern Tasmanian Councils to require licensed landfill facilities to pay a contribution for each tonne of waste buried in the ground at the facility. This contribution would be called a waste levy and would be pooled and used to promote recycling and resource recovery in the southern region

A southern waste levy would capture the big southern three - Glenorchy, Hobart and Sorrell (Copping) landfills (the other smaller Central Highlands and Derwent Valley Council landfill sites could also join the southern levy). The Latrobe/Devonport (Dulverton), Launceston and Burnie landfills have already introduced their own northern waste levy. Together, the big six bury over 80% of Tasmania's landfill wastes.

The NSW landfill levy is \$133 per tonne and they continue to set the trend for other States. In Tasmania it has been estimated that a levy of \$120 would be a good starting point.

A levy means that businesses only pay when they choose to bury materials in the ground. Materials diverted from landfill into re-use, composting or recycling facilities do not attract the fee, so resource recovery businesses reap the benefits. Remember that almost all of the material currently being buried is easily recyclable or compostable and the levy only applies to materials being buried in the ground. By diverting wastes to resource recovery businesses the cost can easily be avoided

Considering the State Government's track record on environmental management and pollution control issues, we highly recommend that the Southern councils work together to introduce the levy without State Government involvement. The State Government could never come close to implementing a \$120 levy and it is unlikely that they could commit to using the bulk of the levy revenue on waste management initiatives.

Our State government would also fear the impost on businesses, however in other States where levies have been introduced and used to fund recycling infrastructure and education, job creation has been high. And importantly, recycling jobs are green collar jobs and largely recession proof. This is in contrast to our resource-extractive industries, such as mining, which are often seen as being keys to a strong economy. Our mining industries, however, tend to be cyclical, based on commodity prices and currency fluctuations, and inevitably come at a great environmental cost (and rate payer cost) to Tasmania. Recycling is one of the fastest growing manufacturing sectors in Australia but its growth cycle is due to rising environmental controls on landfills and the introduction of landfill pricing signals.

The effect of levies across Australia has been to drive waste costs for most companies from 1% of operating costs towards 2-3%<sup>6</sup>. Although this is a significant impost, it is one that reflects the true costs of landfilling resources and doesn't rely on Hobart resident subsidies.

Our State Government would also fear an increase in illegal dumping, however a waste and reuse proud society would be less likely to illegally dump waste. It is an illegal activity and cannot be used as a reason to not accurately price waste.

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<sup>6</sup> [The State of Waste 2015, MRA Consulting](#)

## Once the price indicators are in place, and diverting waste is a financially advantageous option, educate people about reducing, reusing and recycling waste

1. Business waste - Following the NSW Waste less, Recycle More example, the CoH could help small and medium sized businesses reduce waste and improve waste separation by subsidising i) free business waste assessments and procurement surveys; ii) tailored action plans and ongoing support; and iii) half the cost of onsite small-scale recycling equipment. Include construction and demolition businesses.
2. Industrial waste - Industrial (business) recovery rates (2010/11) in Tasmania were a low 27%<sup>7</sup>. The CoH could commit long-term funding to the Resource Work Coop to help businesses divert construction, demolition, commercial and industrial wastes and create networks and synergies to allow waste from one company to be used as input for another. We acknowledge the current requirement for demolition/waste management plans in planning applications within Hobart. Additional suggestions from the community forum include:
  - Community and industry education about recycling of construction wastes including potential separating into different bins.
  - Community understanding on what is happening with construction wastes
  - The CoH should be informed by deconstruction & building companies of upcoming demolitions and builds and require them to sort demolition & building wastes.
3. Government waste - Lead by example. Create a one-hour online training activity that all government employees (State and Local) within Hobart must to do each year. The training activity provides people with avoidance and recycling information and then requires them to undertake a short test. They can have as many goes as they need to get all the questions right. Such a training program is currently used to satisfy staff education obligations under the new WHS legislation.
4. Public waste - Work with the State government to ensure that all public servants in Hobart recycle all their wastes well while at work. This would involve all Council and State Government facilities like schools, service Tas, PWS offices, Lincs, information outlets, Council Chambers, public parks and venues, etc. Cleaners, maintenance and grounds staff would need adequate resources for managing centralised waste stations effectively (i.e. providing and maintaining bins for flexible plastics, food wastes, comingled recycling, landfill, batteries, cardboard and paper, etc.). This would also involve having signage above waste stations, describing the wastes.
5. Events –CoH events could be used to display best practice waste avoidance and lead by example, always changing their approach to display possibilities and best practice.
6. Community campaigns – By supporting local campaigns such as the Tassievore Eat Local Challenge, up-cycling projects, tours to McRobies and the Derwent Park Recycling Facility, and the availability of the Coles flexible plastics recycling, the CoH could help spread the word about the importance of reducing and recycling packaging wastes.
7. A community member suggested a South Hobart recycling pilot project, but Hobart is not large, so we believe a full scale municipality-wide approach would be better.

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<sup>7</sup> [WAC Tasmanian Waste Review 2014](#)

## Collect kerbside food and green waste together, beginning in 2016

Rather than wait until closer to 2030, we would like to see food waste included with the proposed 2016 green waste kerbside collection service and begin straight away to divert all organic material from landfill. Make it a weekly service, include businesses too and reduce the landfill bin service to once fortnightly.

Almost half of our wastes are organic<sup>8</sup> (not including paper and cardboard which are best recycled into new paper). Organics in landfill produce large amounts of methane (some is captured at McRobies), and represent a great loss of potential soil improver.

The materials will need to be taken offsite for processing. Environmental approvals will be difficult and costs will be higher than landfilling the waste, but Hobart's food waste needs to be diverted from landfill as a priority.

Additional suggestions at the community forum include:

- The CoH should encourage microenterprises (through workshops and resources) such as in-vessel systems, community and household composting and commercial worm farms.
- People should be able to opt out of the green waste bin if they provided a written pledge/inspection to say that they can manage their own food and green wastes.
- The commercial composting facility should be constructed and managed either to minimise methane production, or to generate and capture biogas.
- As with all waste management, financial grounds should be one element only in the decision process.

## Take on a lobbying role to tackle non-recyclable products

Even with accurately priced landfilling, some wastes are not viably diverted to recycling. The only solution is to avoid such waste generation. These include, industrial waste, synthetic textiles, polystyrene and metal/plastic snack bags.

We would like the CoH to identify and lobby the manufacturers and suppliers of these products and involve the public to make them more aware of better options. We would also like the CoH to lobby State and Federal politicians to improve stewardship schemes for end-of-life packaging. One community member suggested investing in a polystyrene recycling machine and a re-use scheme for polystyrene boxes. Polystyrene however is such a [big environmental menace](#) that we call for the CoH to phase out its use altogether.

## Create collection points for recyclables that are not accepted in kerbside recycling

Currently Coles and Woolworths fund flexible plastics recycling facilities, Battery World funds battery recycling and Sustainable Living Tasmania funds fluorescent light recycling. We would like there to be more places where people can take wastes like these (e.g. at all Government facilities like schools, Service Tas, PWS offices, Lincs, Council Chambers, information outlets, etc.).

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<sup>8</sup> [WAC Tasmanian Waste Review 2014](#)

Cork and cotton are two more materials that could be collected, and with [Terra Cycle](#) we hope the list will be endless (even cigarettes are being collected for recycling by Terra Cycle, who collaborate with manufacturers to find solutions for their waste!).

One community member suggested that McRobies create collection points where a whole suite of materials could be stockpiled until there were funds to deal with them.

**Encourage the pull-through effect, by ensuring procurement policies favour recycled plastic products and by ensuring State Government departments do the same.**

Replas receives flexible plastics from bins out the front of Coles supermarkets and processes the materials in Victoria into recycled plastic bollards, ramps, seats, stairs, etc. Supporting this process by favouring recycled plastic products ensures that the wastes can be processed and used in Australia, without going all the way to China.

One person at the forum pointed out that a small portion of Tasmanian E-waste is separated into its components for recycling. Is there a way to encourage this industry? Are the products made into something new in Australia that Government should be favouring in procurement policies?

**Continue to address the noise, dust, odour and illegal dumping issues experienced by the community**

Odour, dust and traffic noise are a concern for local residents. Diverting the food and green wastes elsewhere and more than tripling waste diversion using the ideas listed above could solve these issues. A more vibrant waste conscious community could also help reduce illegal dumping. Some additional suggestions brought up at the community forum for the CoH to consider include:

- Repair roads to and from tip to make them less noisy.
- Get trucks to come in and out of McRobies Road. This would by-pass a large number of residential dwellings and the Cascade Female Factory World Heritage Site.
- Introduce a 40km/hour speed limit through the Macquarie St shopping and school district.
- Find out how many trucks there are and how they can be reduced and what times of the day can be avoided.
- Have bike lanes on the roads (separated from the road by turtle humps to give kids a physical cue to stay on the cycle space (not careen out into the road) so that children don't need to compete with trucks.
- Encourage better use of the wheel wash for trucks.
- Clean up waste on roadsides going to the tip and in the storm water and surrounding bushlands.
- Regular cleaning of the stormwater diversion waste trap.
- Use signage to inform people about the storm water traps and nets and water quality monitoring data (some people fill their water bottles downstream of the WMC there).
- Mitigate bad odours by ensuring high standards of landfill management.