

ITEM 5 WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY - FEES AND EXEMPTIONS - COUNCIL POLICY

Council has a longstanding policy of accepting mixed general waste from eligible Community Service Organisations (CSO) and limited amounts of mixed general waste and green waste from customers holding a Pensioner Concession Card without charge.

These fee exemptions discourage the sorting and reuse / or recycling of material and this practice is misaligned with Council's commitment to reduce our municipal solid waste and divert waste from landfill as set out in:

- The *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001* and associated NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041; and
- Wollongong City Council's Waste and Resource Recovery 2022 Action Plan.

This paper recommends the adoption of the revised Waste and Resource Recovery – Fees and Exemptions Council Policy effective from 1 July 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 Council adopt the draft Waste and Resource Recovery – Fees and Exemptions Policy effective from 1 July 2022.
- 2 Council remove the fee exemption for Local Community Service Organisations, and continue to provide support for those organisations who hold an approved Waste Management Plan with:
 - a the provision of on-site recycling and sorting bins at the Wollongong Waste and Resource Recovery Park (WWRRP).
 - b Waste fee exemption (Full Gate Fee) for illegally dumped charitable waste on public land (outside the Organisation's premises or donation bins) once the incident is reported to Council and investigated prior to delivering the material to Wollongong Waste and Resource Recovery Park, with a maximum fee exemption per incident of \$3,000.
 - c A reduction in the General (mixed) waste gate fee by the NSW EPA Waste Levy to eligible Community Service Organisations for mixed waste, not associated with illegal dumping.
- 3 Council remove the fee exemption for mixed and green waste for Pensioner Concession Cardholders and promote the following Wollongong Local Government Area (LGA) enhanced waste services:
 - a Two (2) garden organics drop-off events per year for Hazard Reduction purposes at locations throughout the LGA.
 - b An additional kerbside recycling (yellow lidded bin) collection between Boxing Day and two weeks post Boxing Day.
 - c Recycling events conducted in partnership with the NSW Environmental Protection Authority and the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation including Household Chemical Collection events.
 - d Kerbside on-call household clean-ups that are included in the current Annual Domestic Waste Management Charge.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Paul Tracey, Manager Open Space + Environmental Services (Acting)
Authorised by: Joanne Page, Director Infrastructure + Works - Connectivity Assets + Liveable City

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Waste and Resource Recovery Fees and Exemptions Council Policy

BACKGROUND

Waste from Community Service Organisations

Council's current Waste and Resource Recovery – Fees and Exemptions Policy entitles Community Service Organisations with active EPA Community Services Exemptions to dispose of an unlimited amount of unusable goods provided via public donations without charge which is misaligned with the practices of other local governments. Council has received more than 2,850 tonnes of mixed waste which had been landfilled over the past three (3) financial years.

Pensioner Concession Cardholder

Pensioner Concession Cardholders currently receive fee exemptions at the Wollongong Waste and Resource Recovery Park (WWRRP) for:

- two garden (green) waste 'drop offs' of up to 100kg each, and
- two general (mixed) waste 'drop offs' per year up to 100kg each.

Over the past 3 financial years, Council has received a total 1,409 tonnes of pensioner exempt waste at the WWRRP.

PROPOSAL

Waste from Community Service Organisations

Council proposes to remove the exemption from Council's component of the Mixed General waste disposal fee for Community Organisations and this proposed change has been supported by working directly with these organisations over the past 18 months to develop tailored Waste Management Plans that encourage waste sorting practices to ensure reusable and recyclable material is diverted from the landfill.

The fee exemption from the NSW EPA Waste Levy will remain in place for eligible organisations. The change to the fee exemption has been included in the Draft 2021/22 Fees and Charges.

Pensioner Concession Cardholder

The existing pensioner fee exemption will be removed and replaced with enhanced LGA wide services available to all residents that encourage diversion of waste from landfill including:

- Two free Green waste 'drop offs' conducted throughout the LGA, over 4 weeks to assist with household hazard reduction (bushfire and windy weather).
- An additional kerbside co-mingled recycling (yellow-lidded bin) collection between Boxing Day and two weeks post Boxing Day.

An education program will also be developed to promote the kerbside on-call bulky waste collection service to our Pensioner Concession Cardholder ratepayers, as an alternative to pensioner concession cardholders bringing waste to the WWRRP.

It should be noted that the introduction of the weekly domestic green waste collection reduces the need for the current green waste exemption.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Community Organisations

Community consultation was undertaken in relation to the draft Waste and Resource Recovery – Fees and Exemptions Policy in:

- July and August 2020. Consultation was undertaken with the general community and directly with all Community Service Organisations (CSO's) who were eligible and utilising the fee exemption. 80% of the CSO's were supportive of the sustainable approach proposed by Council and 40% were already sorting material. Members of the public who responded during the community engagement period supported the proposed changes if suitable infrastructure was provided by Council.

- Since July 2020, Council has worked closely with the CSO’s to develop tailored Waste Management Plans for each organisation. Of the twelve CSO’s with a current charitable waste exemption provided by the NSW Environmental Protection Agency:
 - nine (9) CSO’s have an approved Waste Management Plan and are diverting material from landfill.
 - two (2) CSO’s have not supplied a plan.
 - one (1) CSO no longer has an EPA Exemption.

Pensioner Concession Cardholders

Community consultation was undertaken in relation to the draft Waste and Resource Recovery – Fees and Exemptions Policy as follows:

- Online community engagement was undertaken during July and August 2020. A number of newspaper advertisements, posters and FAQ’s in libraries and community centres were used to promote this engagement, and direct contact made with a number of Seniors’ interest groups throughout the city. Only four responses were received regarding the proposed changes to waste fee exemptions for Pensioner Concession Cardholders. Feedback received related to the perceived impacts of removing a service that benefitted low-income households. Due to the limited number of responses received, Council resolved to undertake further consultation at the December 2020 Council Meeting.
- A second round of online community engagement occurred in June 2021. Seniors’ interest groups including U3A Northern Illawarra, Illawarra Forum, U3A Central Illawarra, U3A Wollongong, Care Ways Community, Community and Neighbourhood Centres Group, Community Facilities and Library Services were consulted, however no submissions were received.
- Based on the very limited responses from the two separate Pensioner Concession Cardholder engagements, the opportunity to educate and promote waste disposal services currently available to these residents should address concerns within the community.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong 2028 Goal “We value and protect our environment”. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan Strategy	Delivery Program 2018-2022 4 Year Action	Operational Plan 2021-22 Annual Deliverables
1.2.1 Reduce our ecological footprint, working together to minimise the impacts of climate change and reduce waste going to landfill.	1.2.1.1 Develop and implement a range of programs that encourage community participation in reducing Wollongong’s ecological footprint. 1.2.1.3 Methods to reduce emissions are investigated and utilised.	Deliver waste minimisation programs in accordance with the Waste Strategy. Continue to deploy Council’s Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations support the sorting and reuse or recycling of material and are aligned with Council's commitment to reduce our municipal solid waste, increase diversion of waste from landfill and increase landfill life as set out in:

- The *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001* and associated NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041; and
- Our Waste and Resource Recovery 2022 Action Plan.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The recommendations consider the ongoing financial risk of Council continuing to accept waste from Community Service Organisations and Pensioner Concession Cardholders without providing an incentive for the waste to be sorted for reuse or recycling prior to landfilling.

The existing cost structures for Community Service Organisations are misaligned with neighbouring councils and this increases the risk of charitable waste being transported into the Local Government Area for disposal to landfill.

The recommendations consider reputational and social risks of imposing additional costs on Community Services Organisations during the social and business restrictions imposed due to COVID-19. Council Officers have worked proactively with these organisations to assist with the development and implementation of individualised Waste Management Plans which is expected to result environmental and financial benefits for both parties.

The recommendations also consider the reputational and social risks of changing the current free services available to Pensioner Concession Cardholders.

Additional consultation was undertaken, and further education is planned to increase the awareness of Council's on-call household clean-up service. The recommended changes to fee exemptions for Pensioner Concession Cardholders allows Council to fund enhanced waste services for all residents:

- Additional Christmas kerbside recycling bin collection; and
- Two Garden waste drop offs at selected locations throughout Wollongong.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is expected that the current cost of landfilling material received from Community Service Organisations will be offset by the cost of transporting, processing and / or recycling the material received, and the ongoing development and promotion of the enhanced waste services that will benefit to all residents in the LGA.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations support the sorting and reuse or recycling of material and are aligned with Council's commitment to reduce our municipal solid waste and increase diversion of waste from landfill.



WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY – FEES AND EXEMPTIONS COUNCIL POLICY

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL:

PURPOSE

To establish a consistent approach for the exemption of fees from Council’s prescribed waste and resource recovery services.

POLICY INTENT

The main objective of this policy is to establish a consistent approach in respect of any exemptions to payment of Council’s prescribed waste disposal fees.

WOLLONGONG 2028 OBJECTIVES

This Policy contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong 2028 goal “We value and protect our environment”. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan	Delivery Program 2018-2021	Annual Plan 2020-2021
Strategy	3 Year Action	Annual Deliverables
1.2.1 Reduce our ecological footprint, working together to minimise the impacts of climate change and reduce waste going to landfill.	1.2.1.1 Develop and implement a range of programs that encourage community participation in reducing Wollongong’s ecological footprint.	2 Deliver waste minimisation programs in accordance with the Waste Strategy.
	1.2.1.3 Methods to reduce emissions are investigated and utilised.	1 Continue to deploy Council’s Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy.

POLICY

The following rules will apply in relation to waste fee exemptions.

Revolve Centre and Community Recycling Centre

Residents, including pension card holders, are exempt from the **NSW EPA Waste Levy and Council’s waste disposal fee** for all recyclables accepted at the Revolve Centre and Community Recycling Centre at the Wollongong Waste and Resource Recovery Park.

Waste Collection Events

Residents, including pension card holders, are exempt from the **NSW EPA Waste Levy and Council’s waste disposal fee** at Council run events for the collection of specific waste materials. This includes hazard reduction waste, Christmas recycling and events run in partnership with the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) including Household Chemical Collection events.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

The RSPCA is exempt from the **NSW EPA Waste Levy and Council’s waste fee** for the disposal of dead animals.

WASTE & RESOURCE RECOVERY – FEES & EXEMPTIONS

COUNCIL POLICY

Community Services Exemption (CSE) holders

Council is committed to supporting charity organisations in managing waste and has assisted with the development of individual Waste Management Plans specifically tailored by the charity organisation and reviewed and approved by Council.

While sorting and recycling at site prior to transportation to the Wollongong Waste and Resource Recovery Park (WWARRP) are encouraged, Council will provide limited recycling facilities at the Small Vehicle Transfer Station for CSE holders to utilise as identified in their Waste Management Plan.

Organisations holding a CSE are exempt from the **NSW EPA Waste Levy** under the following conditions.

- The requirements of the CSE are complied with (as determined by Council);
- The organisation holds and meets the requirements of an individualised Waste Management Plan which has been approved by Council.
- The organisation has sorted their waste prior to arriving at the WWARRP to remove reusable and recyclable waste in accordance with its approved Waste Management Plan;
- The waste is not received as a split load i.e. the waste originates from a single organisation; **and**
- The waste is sourced from the Wollongong Local Government Area.

OR

- The material for disposal has been illegally dumped on public land (at the Organisation's premises or donation bins) and the incident has been reported to Wollongong City Council and investigated. The organisation must collect a voucher from Council prior to delivering the material to Wollongong Waste and Resource Recovery Park. A maximum cost per incident of \$3,000 (NSW EPA waste levy plus Council's waste fee) applies, after which the **NSW EPA Waste Levy** will be applied.

If the above criteria are not complied with, then both the **NSW EPA Waste Levy** and **Council's waste fee** will be applied.

Landfill Cover Material

Cover material may be exempt from fees subject to consultation with Waste Services.

Requests to waive fees

The General Manager has the delegated authority to determine individual requests for waiving fees for eligible Local Community Service Organisations.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

- Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001.
- NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041.

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed every two years from the date of each adoption of the policy, or more frequently as required.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

WASTE & RESOURCE RECOVERY – FEES & EXEMPTIONS

COUNCIL POLICY

Role	Responsibilities
Waste and Resource Recovery Manager	Implementation of this Policy.
Strategic Projects Coordinator	Development of Waste Management Plans in consultation with Organisations with an active Community Services Exemption.

RELATED PROCEDURES

Wollongong City Council Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2022.

APPROVAL AND REVIEW		
Responsible Division	Open Space and Environmental Services	
Date/s adopted	<i>Executive Management Committee</i> 26 May 2020	<i>Council</i> 7 December 2020
Date/s of previous adoptions	14 September 2015, 14 July 2014, 12 September 1988	
Date of next review	7 December 2022	