



WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY STRATEGY





Journey Through Time, created by local school students and artist Steven Campbell.

Acknowledgement of Country

Cessnock City Council acknowledges that within its local government area boundaries are the traditional lands of the Wonnarua people, the Awabakal people and the Darkinjung people. We acknowledge these Aboriginal peoples as the traditional custodians of the land on which our offices and operations are located, and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now live within the Cessnock Local Government Area.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

1.1 Vision

To provide a sustainable, efficient and cost-effective waste service to the Cessnock community, prioritising increased diversion of waste, best practice recovery of recyclables and enhanced community awareness whilst meeting all environmental, safety and legislative obligations.

1.2 Objective

The Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2026–2031 provides a clear direction for the management of waste during the next five-year period and a pathway for the future. The objectives of Strategy are:

- Supporting our community to work towards zero waste.
- Managing the risk of problematic, harmful and unnecessary waste.
- Working towards zero carbon emissions.
- Optimising our performance.

1.3 Targets

Council will work towards meeting current and future, national, NSW and regional waste and resource recovery targets for municipal waste. The objectives and actions in this strategy cover five (5) financial years commencing on 1 July 2025 till 30 June 2031.



BACKGROUND

Background

2.1 Strategic drivers

The development of this local strategy has been influenced and guided by a number of high-level strategies, plans and legislation (national, state and regional).

2.1.1 National

The 2018 National Waste Policy – Less Waste More Resources provides a national framework for waste and resource recovery in Australia until 2030. It incorporates the waste hierarchy, and a focus on high order uses, while building on the idea of continually reusing, recycling and reprocessing materials.

The Policy Action Plan is reviewed every 2 years to ensure the priorities and initiatives achieving the targets remain relevant. The most recent Action Plan 2024 specifically identifies organics (food and garden), building & demolition, ash, hazardous waste, paper & cardboard and timber as focus materials.

The federal government regulates the export of certain waste from Australia under the Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020. Each type of waste has its own rules that need to be complied with ensuring we only export properly processed glass, plastic, tyres and paper, preventing these materials from being dumped overseas, reducing harm to the environment and human health.

2.1.2 State

Reducing waste generation and keeping materials circulating within the economy are priorities for the NSW Government. The NSW Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041: Stage 1: 2021–2027 targets are to (noting that the first 5 align with the National Waste Policy 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.

The policies that come from this Strategy impact Council's proposed programs through changes to state priorities and funding. The EPA Waste Delivery Plan provides more detailed information on each initiative within the Strategy. Other state plans considered include the NSW Plastics Action Plan, *NSW Circular Economy Policy* and *NSW Net Zero Plan: Stage 1 2020–2030*.

2.1.3 Regional

The ten councils of the Hunter/Central Coast waste region have developed the *Regional Circular Materials Strategy – Hunter and Central Coast 2022 – 2027* aiming to transform the Hunter and Central Coast into Australia’s leading circular materials region through:

- **Collaboration** – Identifying and delivering on opportunities for strategy collaboration to solve regional problems for greatest positive impact. Through regional knowledge sharing, communication and engagement, advocacy, education and behaviour change and procurement.
- **Circularity** – Enabling and influencing the circular economy by understanding the full material supply chain creating cradle-to-cradle solutions. Focused on transforming upstream and downstream material flows to become more circular.
- **Resource Recovery** – Maintaining regional continuity and enhancement of core waste and resource recovery infrastructure, operations and services.
- **Protect the Environment** – Creating a regionally coordinated approach to protect our environment and human health through problem waste management. As well as improving regional disaster resilience and environmental regeneration.

Implementation of the Regional Strategy is dependent on the NSW Government continuing to provide funding. Relevant actions from the Regional Strategy have been incorporated into this Strategy.

2.1.4 Local

Local government plays an important role in providing residential waste services.

Cessnock 2036 Community Strategic Plan identifies the community’s main priorities and aspirations for the future along with strategies to achieve these goals. Objective 3.3 identifies better resource recovery and waste management as a key community priority with the strategic directions that we divert more of our waste for recycling or reprocessing, promote waste avoidance and create value from waste.

Cessnock City Council’s *Waste Management Strategy 2020–25* was used as a guiding document during development of this new strategy.

The number of households in Cessnock Local Government Area (LGA) at June 2024 was 26,303. This is anticipated to grow to around 31,000 by 2036 (*Cessnock Housing Strategy, 2021*), which will have a significant impact on the provision of waste services.



2.2 Community consultation

The development of this Strategy considers the strategic drivers and incorporates community feedback.

A community survey was conducted during October 2024. The survey aimed to gather information on the services Council provides around four key areas that were identified as being of most interest to our customers:

- Bulky waste service preferences (i.e. vouchers or kerbside pickup).
- Household waste collection post food being added to the organics bin.
- Cessnock Waste Management Centre.
- Illegal dumping and littering.

The community has also indicated via the Community Satisfaction Research Report March 2023:

- 90% of the community rates waste management as a priority for Council.
- ‘Waste collection and disposal’ and ‘Litter control / illegal dumping’ were rated in the top five services of importance.
- There is a 32% performance gap (i.e. importance compared to satisfaction rating) for ‘Litter control / illegal dumping’.
- ‘Waste collection and disposal’ and ‘recycling and waste reduction’ had high community satisfaction ratings but our community was less satisfied with these services than the regional benchmark.

The draft Strategy was placed on public exhibition with feedback considered prior to final report and consideration by Council.

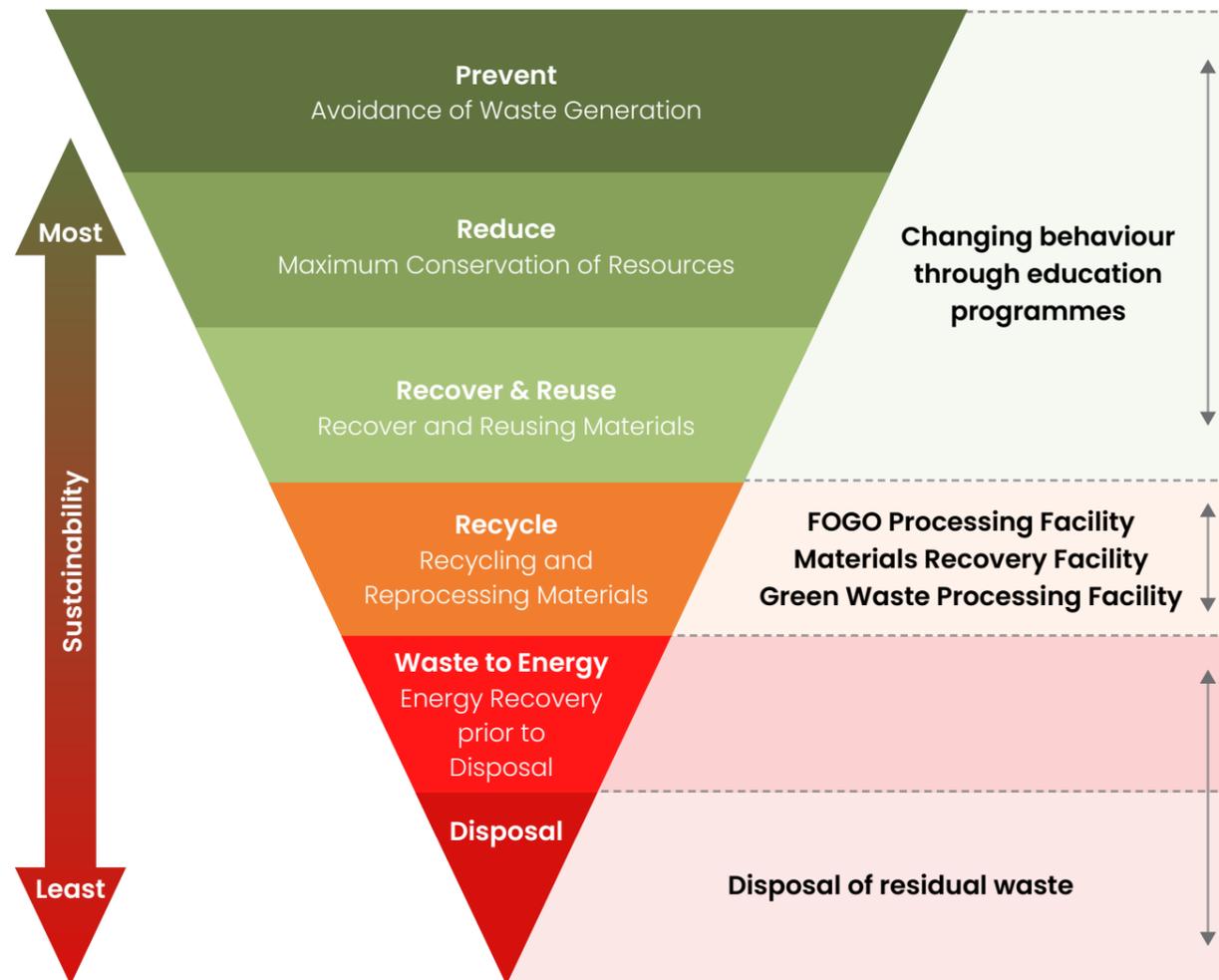


UNDERSTANDING WASTE

Understanding waste

3.1 Waste hierarchy

The Waste Management Hierarchy is an internationally recognised concept which lists waste management options in order of preference according to their sustainability and environmental impact.



3.2 Circular economy

The traditional linear economy, takes resources to make goods that are bought, used and then disposed of as waste. The circular economy aims to eliminate waste by the continued use of resources.



3.3 The cost of waste

Providing waste management services is a significant cost to Council and the community.

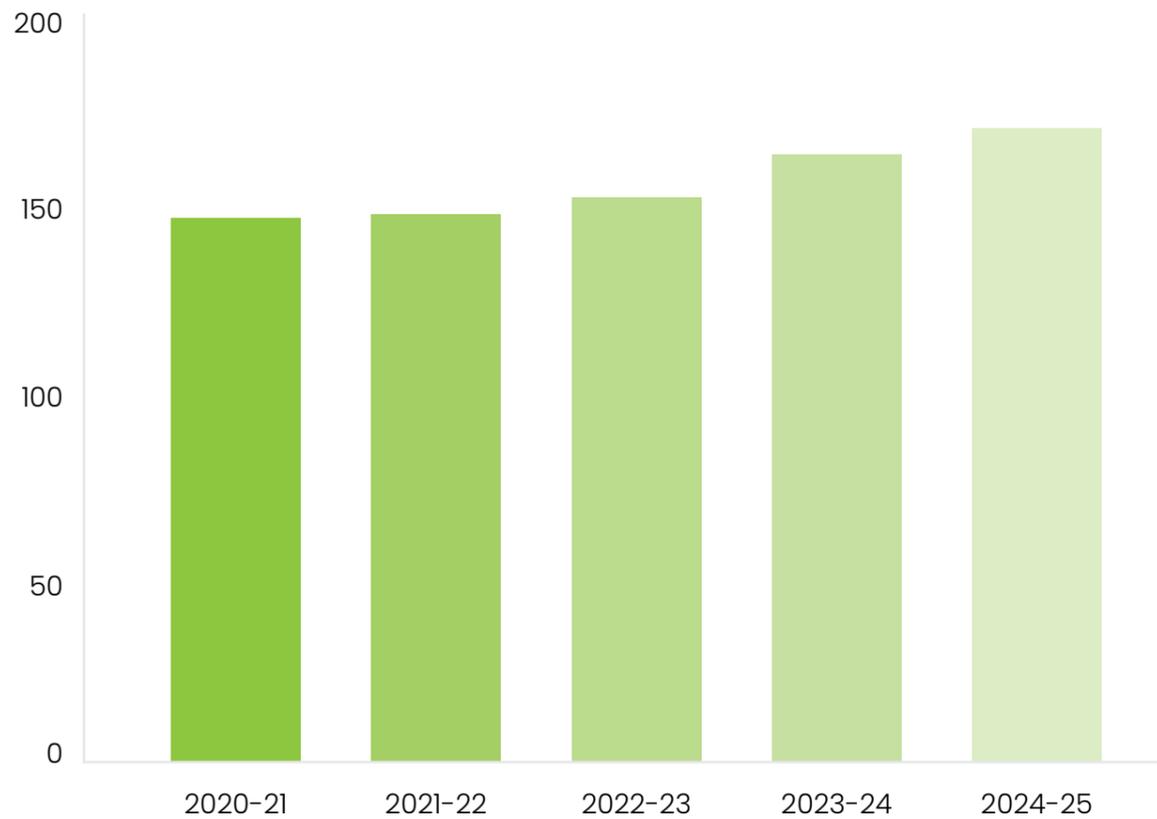
In 2023-24 Council's total expenditure on domestic waste management was \$10,987,000. Under the *Local Government Act 1993*, Council must provide domestic waste management services to residents, and monies collected under the Domestic Waste Management Charge must only be spent on the provision and management of these services. Council cannot use general funds to pay for waste services and vice versa.

A significant portion of domestic waste management expenditure is attributable to the NSW Government Waste Levy (\$170.10 per tonne in 2024-25 increasing annually). The total Waste Levy paid by Council for domestic waste in 2023-24 was \$4.5 million. It is noted that the NSW EPA is currently undertaking a review of the waste levy.

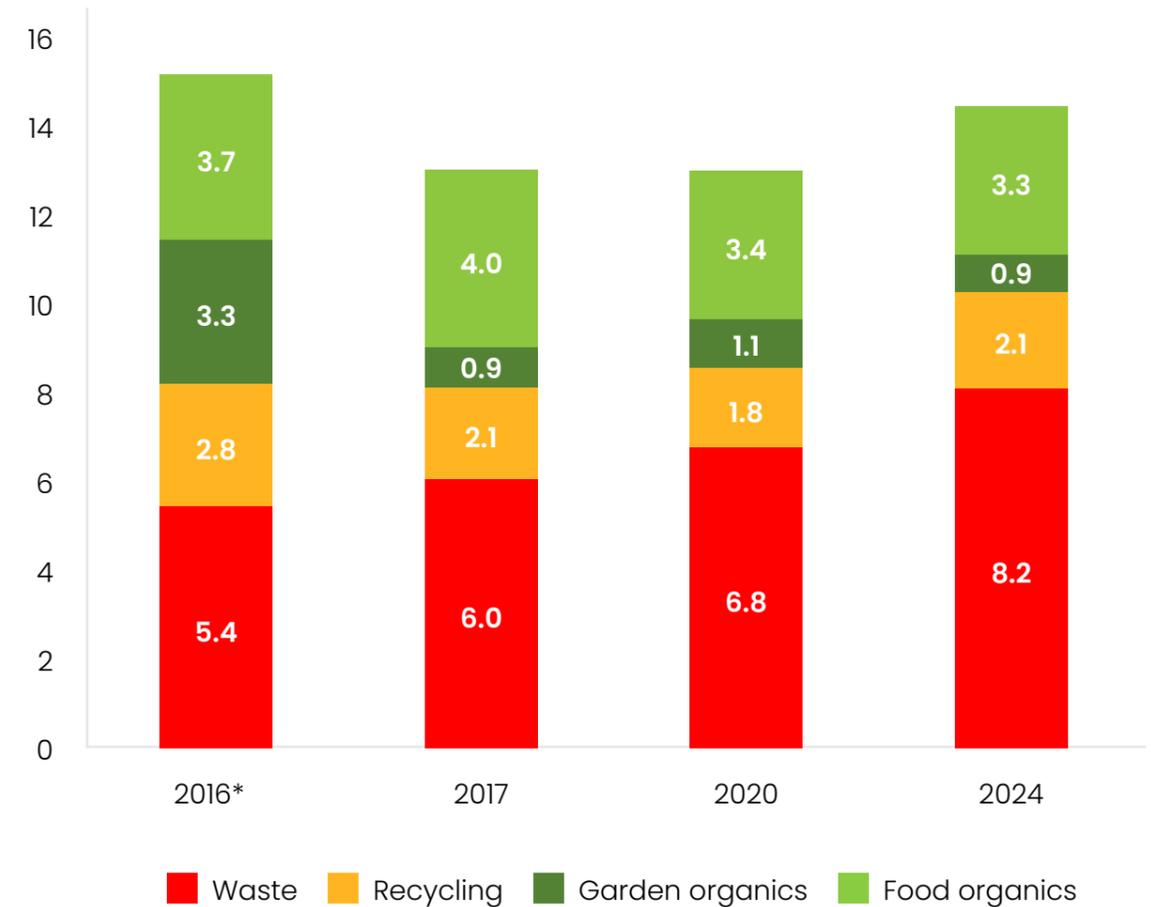
As Council owns the Cessnock Waste Management Centre, fees are controlled to prolong the life of this community asset and stabilise costs associated with the disposal of domestic kerbside waste.



NSW Waste Levy (per tonne)



Average Weekly Waste Bin Contents (by weight kg)



*Prior to the introduction of the garden organics collection



WHERE ARE WE TODAY?



Where are we today?

4.1 Current services

The domestic waste service currently includes a three-bin kerbside collection for approximately 26,000 properties across the LGA. Prior to June 2025 the service was weekly waste, fortnightly recycling and garden organics and waste vouchers for bulk waste disposal. As of July 2025 the service comprises weekly waste and Food Organics/Garden Organics (FOGO) with fortnightly recycling, and waste vouchers for bulk waste disposal. Households out of the domestic waste service area are eligible to purchase alternate waste and recycling vouchers for waste disposal at Cessnock Waste Management Centre.

Cessnock Waste Management Centre, including the transfer station and landfill, operates under an Environment Protection Licence that prescribes practices to manage the site, prevent pollution and limits quantities of waste accepted to 60,000 tonnes per year. The current landfill

is nearing its operational capacity and is due to close by December 2025. The construction of a replacement landfill cell has commenced.

The transfer station provides opportunities for resource recovery by directing customers past a series of drop-off points for various recoverable materials and household problem wastes. The facility includes a differential pricing strategy to encourage customers to separate materials for recycling and recovery.

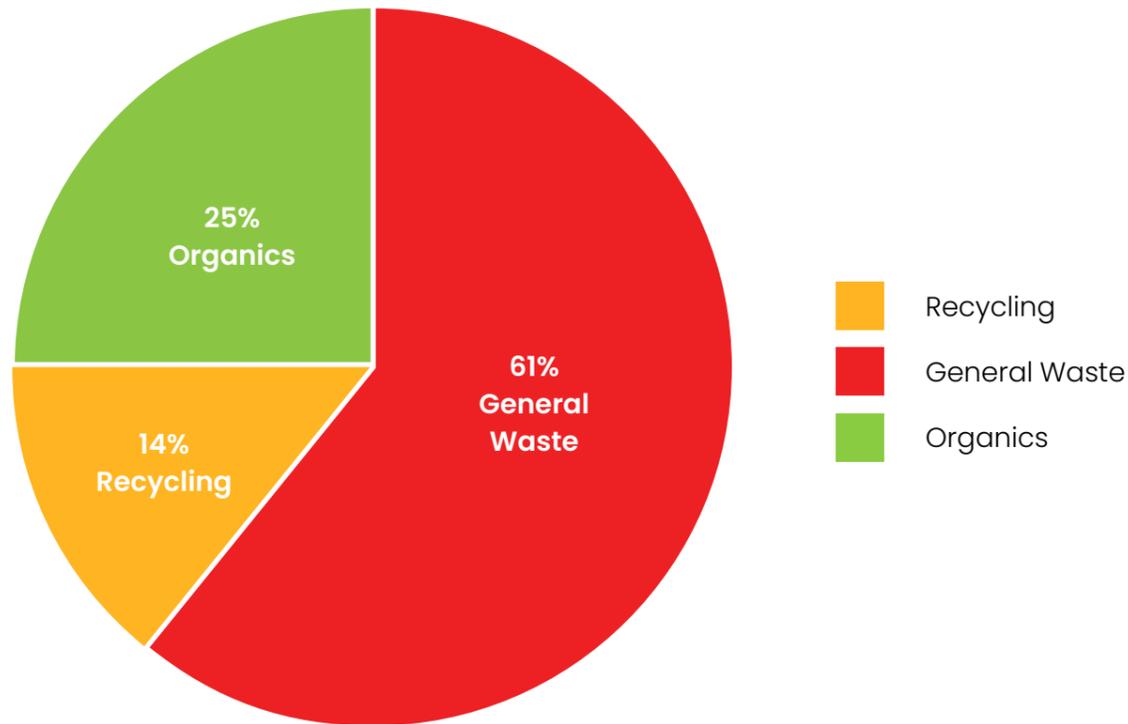
Council delivers a range of complimentary environmental services to manage waste including litter and illegal dumping programs, drop-off events for mattresses and household chemicals, community education and communication regarding waste services, safe sharps disposal options and recycling stations for problem wastes.

4.2 Waste data

4.2.1 Kerbside collection

In 2023-24, a total of 24,993 tonnes was collected from the kerbside. The proportion of material diverted from landfill, also known as the resource recovery rate, for the kerbside collection service for the period was 39%.

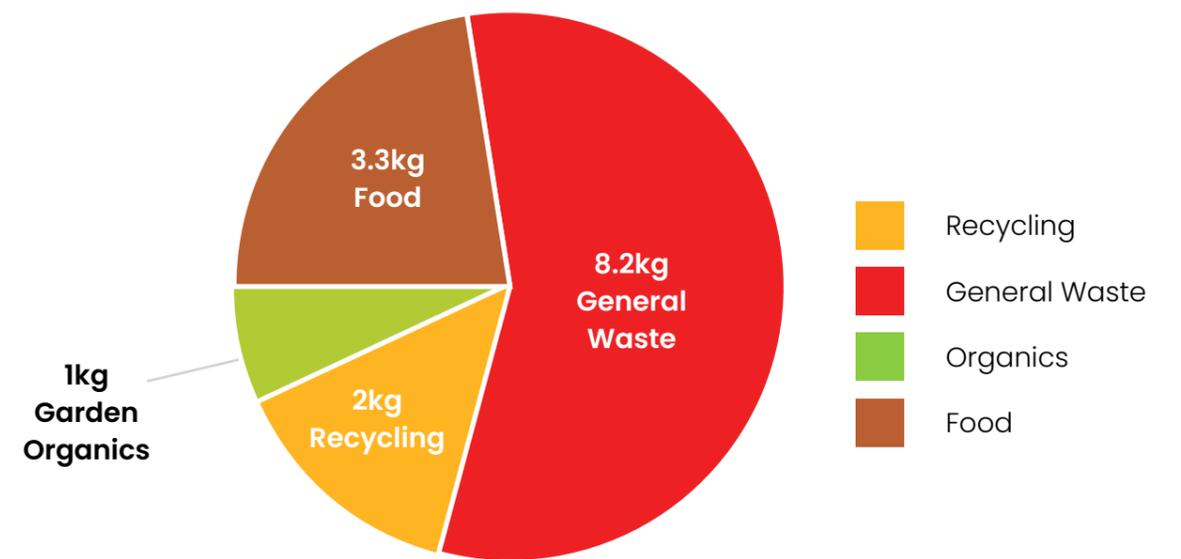
2023-24 Kerbside Resource Recovery



The Average* Cessnock Bin



Contents of the average* Cessnock Waste Bin



*based on October 2024 audits of bins in Cessnock Local Government Area.



4.2.2 Cessnock Waste Management Centre

In 2023-24, a total of 32,365 tonnes of waste was received at the CWMC. The resource recovery rate at the centre (excluding the general waste kerbside collection) for the period was 19%.

Waste vouchers contribute significantly to the total waste disposed of to landfill. In 2023-24, waste vouchers issued were separated into waste and recycling materials in an effort to encourage the community to increase separation of waste and recyclables resulting in a recycling rate of 28% for voucher transactions.

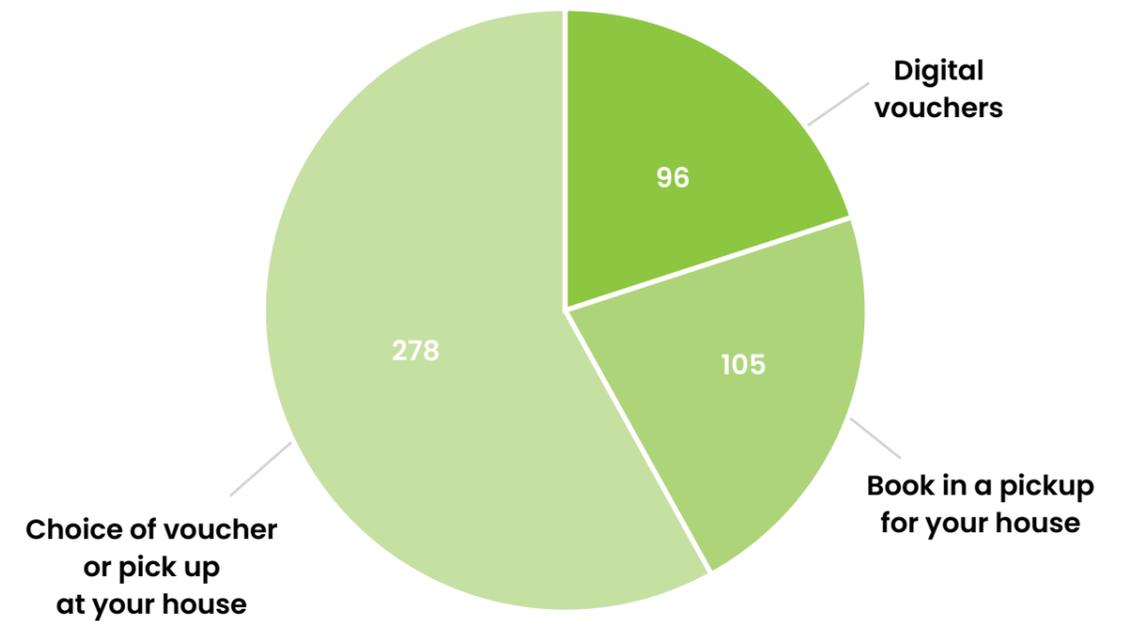
4.3 Community survey

Just under 1,400 community members participated in the Waste Strategy Community Survey in October 2024. The full results of the community survey are available on Council's website. The key results regarding community preferences on kerbside collection and bulk waste services are displayed on page 21.

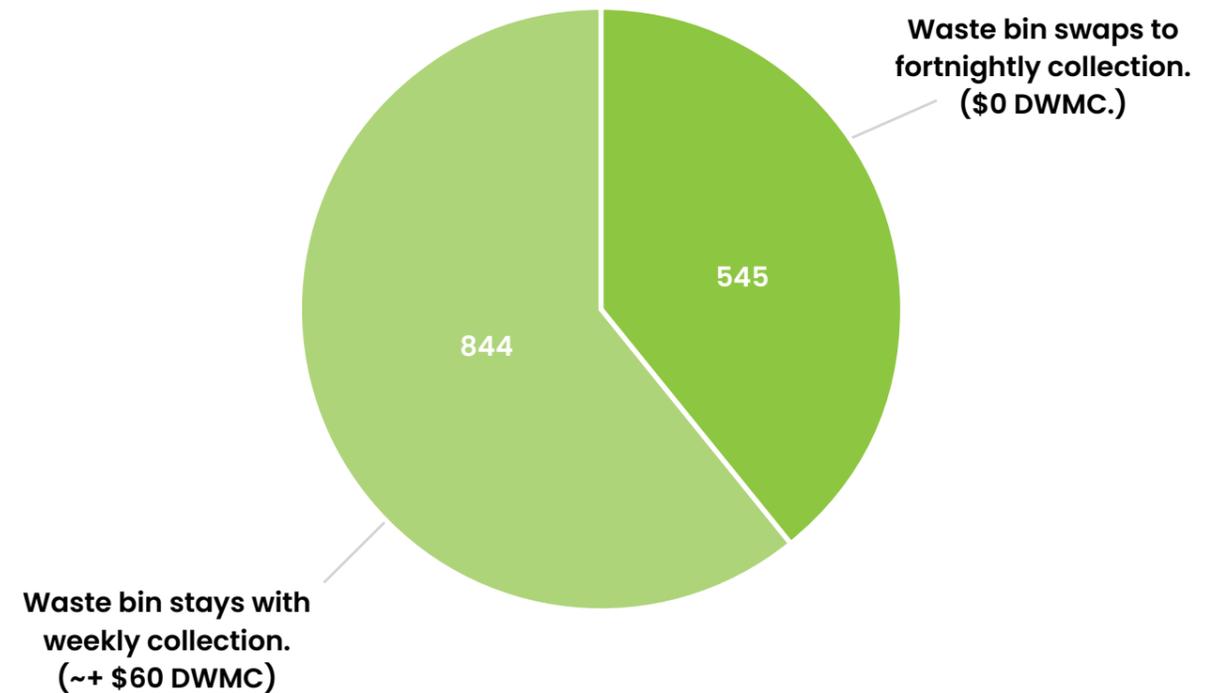
When asked about preferences for kerbside general waste collection, once the food organics collection commences, the majority (61%) wanted waste collection to stay weekly.

The responses relating to bulk waste management indicates a preference for having a choice of either vouchers or kerbside collection as well as issuing voucher to households and including mattresses on recycling vouchers.

What would you like the Bulk Waste Service to look like in Cessnock?



Community Survey - Waste Collection Frequency





4.4 Challenges & opportunities

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<p>Waste generation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amount of waste we are producing is growing. 	<p>Waste generation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community education. Circular economy-based procurement policies.
<p>Protecting the Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landfill emissions impact on climate change. Environmental Protection Licence requirements. 	<p>Protecting the Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landfill gas system upgrade and effective use of gas captured (e.g. leachate treatment system). Landfill extension project- improved design and operational features.
<p>Circular Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our linear economy (take, make & dispose) is unsustainable. 	<p>Circular Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local reuse and recycling solutions. Additional recovery through sorting of dry waste. Consideration for further separating recyclables.
<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement of equipment. 	<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste sorting equipment and technology- reducing what ends up in landfill. Recyclable segregation and compacting equipment.
<p>Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with regulatory reporting requirements. Accurate capture of all product movements and separated streams once onsite. 	<p>Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve compliance and reporting process. Integrate technology (e.g. landfill GPS compaction system, truck/bin weighing systems).
<p>Illegal Dumping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the amount of illegal dumping. Improve community awareness around the damage resulting from illegal dumping. 	<p>Illegal Dumping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and stakeholder development through recent Illegal Dumping grant. Consideration of introducing a Bulk Waste collection service.



WHAT WE WILL DO



What we will do

1. Supporting our community to work towards zero waste

Both the national and state governments have set waste avoidance and landfill diversion targets as a priority. Avoidance is the most cost-effective process to manage waste for Local Government. Consumerism and single use/disposable products impact on Council's ability to reduce waste to landfill. Landfilling waste is expensive and unsustainable as the land is permanently lost from agricultural, housing or commercial use and has potential future contamination liabilities. Resource recovery and circular economy reduces the need to extract raw materials for production of goods, while reducing the amount of waste destined for landfill.

Council will achieve this by:

- 1.1 Working towards national and state targets.
- 1.2 Engaging with the community to maximise resource recovery.
- 1.3 Educating and promoting sustainable waste practices.
- 1.4 Seeking local government waste and sustainable material support funding.



2. Managing the risk of problematic, harmful and unnecessary waste

Problem wastes include a range of products commonly used in households that when disposed of in kerbside bins and landfill have the potential to pollute the environment and harm human health. Littering and illegal dumping can cause serious pollution, harm human health and be detrimental to local amenity. Incorrect disposal of batteries (loose and embedded) continues to pose serious health and safety risks to the community and Council staff and equipment. As the number of embedded battery powered products continues to grow (vapes, phones, bikes, tools, cars) the correct handling and disposal of these batteries/items must be understood and shared with the community.

Council will achieve this by:

- 2.1 Working towards preventing litter.
- 2.2 Working towards preventing illegal dumping and strengthening the way we regulate waste crime.
- 2.3 Improving the management of hazardous and household problem wastes.
- 2.4 Operate facilities in line with Environmental Protection Licence and Development Application conditions.

3. Working towards zero carbon emissions

Council has adopted a Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction target of net zero emissions by 2050, in line with the NSW Government's target. Landfilling of waste materials is the major contributor of Council greenhouse gas emissions (76% in 2019). The Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy will work in conjunction with the Climate Change Resilience Plan to assist in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

Council will achieve this by:

- 3.1 Diverting organics from landfill.
- 3.2 Decrease carbon emissions from landfill.
- 3.3 Building waste operations resilient to climate change.
- 3.4 Leveraging purchasing power to stimulate local circular economy.

4. Optimising our performance

Continuous improvement is required in order to provide a sustainable cost-effective waste service to the community. To provide the infrastructure required for the ongoing provision of a sustainable cost-effective waste service to the community.

Council will achieve this by:

- 4.1 Being smart with data to facilitate continuous improvement.
- 4.2 Delivering operational, environmental and financial sustainability.
- 4.3 Investigating strategic infrastructure and investment opportunities.
- 4.4 Leveraging technology to enhance operational performance.
- 4.5 Investing in the professional development of our Waste and Resource Recovery Staff.



A woman wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat and a dark t-shirt is smiling as she pours garden waste, including leaves and small white flowers, from a green bucket into a large green recycling bin. The scene is set outdoors in a garden area with a wooden shed, a birdhouse, and various plants in the background. A green decorative shape is in the top-left corner, and a white decorative line is in the bottom-right corner.

ACTION PLAN

Action Plan

Council has developed clear strategic actions for each objective, which are detailed in the table below:

Objective 1 – Supporting our community to work towards zero waste

ACTIONS		TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
1.1 Working towards national and state targets.	1.1.1 Continue to increase the resource recovery options for bulk waste disposal such as kerbside collection.	2027-31	Leader	Operational budget
	1.1.2 Investigate options to expand recovery streams.	Ongoing	Contributor with industry	Operational budget
1.2 Engaging with the community to maximise resource recovery.	1.2.1 Participate in community and council events to promote waste and resource recovery and sustainable living.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget
	1.2.2 Support industry business partners to undertake waste and sustainable material initiatives.	Ongoing	Contributor with industry	Operational budget
	1.2.3 Work with households to volunteer for a fortnightly waste collection.	2026-31	Leader	Operational budget
	1.2.4 Work with HRR and partner councils on the new kerbside recycling contract.	2025-28	Contributor with HRR	Operational budget
1.3 Educating and promoting sustainable waste practices.	1.3.1 Develop targeted education campaigns to avoid waste and increase resource recovery.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	1.3.2 Promote the CRC and resource recovery opportunities available at the CWMC.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
1.4 Seeking local government waste and sustainable material support funding.	1.4.1 Seek funding opportunities for Local Government waste and sustainable materials initiatives and deliver projects where successful.	When available	Leader	Grants
	1.4.2 Collaborate with HJO to secure regional waste group funding.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget

Objective 2 – Managing the risk of problematic, harmful and unnecessary waste

ACTIONS		TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
2.1 Working towards preventing litter.	2.1.1 Participate in regional and NSW EPA Litter Prevention Programs.	When available	Contributor	Grants
	2.1.2 Developing events waste minimisation procedures/processes.	2026-27	Leader	Operational budget
	2.1.3 Participate in annual Clean up Australia day.	Annually	Contributor	Operational budget
	2.1.4 Continue the Adopt-a-Road program.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
2.2 Working towards preventing illegal dumping and strengthening the way we regulate waste crime.	2.2.1 Develop campaigns to target illegal dumping in collaboration with Compliance Services.	When available	Contributor	Grants
	2.2.2 Provide cost effective domestic collection services to adequately manage bulk waste and resources generated by residents.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	2.2.3 Structure fees and charges at CWMC to encourage resource recovery and divert waste from landfill.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
2.3 Improving the management of hazardous and household problem wastes.	2.3.1 Operate CWMC in line with industry best practice, the Environment Protection Licence and Development Application parameters (i.e. biodiversity offset area).	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	2.3.2 Continue to work with the NSW EPA to operate a Community Recycling Centre (CRC) and provide an annual Household Chemical Clean Out.	When available	Contributor	Grants
	2.3.3 Review asbestos management processes to meet NSW EPA Asbestos Strategy objectives and guidelines.	2027-28	Leader	Operational budget
	2.3.4 Aligning hazardous waste tracking with the state/national system.	2025-26	Leader	Operational budget
	2.3.5 Working with industry to ensure safest methods for handling and disposal of batteries and emerging problem waste.	2025-27	Contributor	Operational budget
2.4 Operate the facilities in line with EPL and DA requirements.	2.4.1 Monitor and remediate Council owned former waste sites to mitigate potential environmental contamination.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	2.4.2 Continue to manage the biodiversity offset area as per the Management Plan.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	2.4.3 Ensure the successful capping and closure of the existing CWMC landfill cell, and transition operations to the new landfill extension.	2025-2026	Leader	Operational budget

Objective 3 – Working towards zero carbon emissions

ACTIONS		TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
3.1 Diverting organics from landfill.	3.1.1 Reduce the amount of FOGO disposed in the general waste bin.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	3.1.2 Help the community to reduce food waste.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	3.1.3 Provide an opt-in to fortnightly waste collection for residents.	2026-31	Leader	Operational budget
3.2 Decrease carbon emissions from landfill.	3.2.1 Increase the efficiency of landfill methane gas capture and investigate electricity generation and gas-powered leachate treatment system.	Ongoing	Contributor with Contractor	Operational budget
	3.2.2 Reduce carbon emissions from waste collection fleet, plant and infrastructure.	Ongoing	Contributor with Fleet	Operational budget
	3.2.3 Seek funding opportunities to reduce carbon emissions, and deliver projects where successful.	When available	Contributor	Grants
	3.2.4 Expanding data collection to include scope 3 emissions from waste operations.	Ongoing	Contributor with Strategic Planning	Operational budget
3.3 Building waste operations resilient to climate change.	3.3.1 Develop a Waste Disaster Plan in conjunction with neighbouring councils.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget
	3.3.2 Test and review annually the Pollution Incident Response Management Plan.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
3.4 Leveraging purchasing power to stimulate local circular economy.	3.4.1 Enable procurement processes across Council that consider sustainable materials, recycled content and whole of life carbon emissions.	Ongoing	Contributor with Procurement	Operational budget
	3.4.2 Support research opportunities that identify new circular economy and sustainable material technologies.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget
	3.4.3 Significantly increase the use of recycled content in Council operations and construction projects.	Ongoing	Contributor with Works & Infrastructure	Operational budget
	3.4.4 Work with neighbouring councils within Hunter to undertake joint procurement where suitable opportunities present.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget

Objective 4 – Optimising our performance

ACTIONS		TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
4.1 Being smart with data to facilitate continuous improvement.	4.1.1 Improve how we collect, manage and use data including creating accessible approaches for data reporting to track progress against targets.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	4.1.2 Undertake bi-annual (2 yearly) bin audits to provide data for service improvement.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	4.1.3 Undertake bi-annual (2 yearly) community surveys to better understand the community's waste and resource recovery needs.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
4.2 Delivering operational, environmental and financial sustainability.	4.2.1 Continue to investigate opportunities to streamline services, improve operational efficiency and provide value for money services to our community.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	4.2.2 Provide appropriate infrastructure at CWMC to meet waste management needs.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	4.2.3 Implement landfill GPS compaction technology to ensure maximum use of new landfill cell airspace.	2025-2026	Leader	Operational budget
4.3 Investigating strategic infrastructure and investment opportunities.	4.3.1 Continue to partner with other Councils to streamline services, improve operational efficiency and provide value for money services to our community.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget
	4.3.2 Investigate new and emerging resource recovery opportunities.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget
	4.3.3 Monitor Energy from Waste and other emerging technologies for residual waste.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget
4.4 Leveraging technology to enhance operational performance.	4.5.1 Enhance operational efficiency.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	4.5.2 Consider practical trials for emerging technology .	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
4.5 Investing in the professional development of our Waste and Resource Recovery Staff.	4.6.1 Participate in industry events to remain at the forefront of industry changes and development.	Ongoing	Contributor	Operational budget
	4.6.2 Continually develop our staff in line with industry changes and emerging technologies.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget
	4.6.3 Provide education, training and leadership opportunities for staff.	Ongoing	Leader	Operational budget



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation

Council will report on targets and achievements to the community as part of the IP&R annual report.

The Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy will be reviewed every five years to assess its implementation and maintain agility in response to technology and policy change.





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