

Rural City of Wangaratta

Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2023-27

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## Vision

“The Rural City of Wangaratta is a leader in effective waste management, resource recovery, and the circular economy, not only amongst Councils, but throughout the wider industry.”

## Introduction

This Waste and Resource Recover Strategy has been developed in response to the rapidly changing waste management environment, and the legislative and policy framework changes that have been implemented in to support best practice in the face of these changes. This Strategy will set the direction for the development and delivery of waste management and resource recovery services by the Rural City of Wangaratta up to 2027.

The Waste and Resource Recovery sector in Victoria is one of the most regulated and legislated in Australia. Council is subject to considering the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 2017, the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021, the Recycling Victoria Policy (2020) in addition to the Planning and Environment Act (1987) and the Local Government Act (2020). From the Federal Government, Council is required to consider the National Waste Policy (2018) and the subsequent National Waste Policy Action Plans (2019&2020).

With recent changes to State and Federal government policies increasing the focus in the circular economy, increasing resources recovery for highest value use as close to the waste generation locations as possible. This “once in a generation” industry wide shift in approach to waste management provided the opportunity to review infrastructure and service delivery models in order to ensure compliance and best service for the community.

The Rural City of Wangaratta (Council) is responsible for delivering waste and recycling services the residential and public places it manages. Commercial services are also offered to those businesses that are best serviced by a regular kerbside collection. Additionally, Council also own and operate the Bower Landfill, the Wangaratta Organics Facility and publicly accessible transfer stations across the municipality. This Strategy can only consider those parts of the waste and resource recovery management cycle that it has direct influence over.

This Strategy is only looking to 2027. It is anticipated that this will bring it into alignment with future State Government requirements for the development of updated Local Government Strategies and Plans once the State Level Documents have been completed. Whilst the current 2018 Strategy is not due to expire until the end of 2023, most of the major actions have been completed, and with significant changes in the industry over the past couple of years, the development of the new Strategy has been brought forward.

## Community Engagement

This Strategy has been developed following an extensive community consultation. Between February and April 2023 Council received more than 270 responses from members of the community. This engagement primarily took the form of a survey and investigated the community’s use and value of Rural City of Wangaratta waste and resource recovery facilities and services, and what the community would like to see from future works in this space.

## Circular Economy Act

### Recycle Victoria

Following the collapse of the recycling and resource recovery industry in early 2019 The State Government released the Recycling Victoria Policy in February 2020. This far-reaching Policy was designed to change the landscape of waste and resource recovery industry in Victoria. One of the

first, and largest, action was the establishment of a new Act and a new Authority to support its implementation. The subsequent Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act was adopted by Government in late 2021. Recycling Victoria, the new Authority, came into being 1 July 2022. The former Regional Waste Management Groups ceased to exist upon the creation of the new Authority.

The new Act places a new set of requirements for reporting, data management, standards of service delivery through kerbside reform and outlines penalties for non-compliance for Councils and other waste and resource recovery service delivery organisations. Recycling Victoria are now the Authority responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act, as well as delivering new programs, such as the Container Deposit Scheme, regulating the waste to energy sector and implementing the State-wide infrastructure plan.

Recycling Victoria is developing the Victorian Recycling Infrastructure Plan (VRIP), to be released in 2024. It will provide long-term strategic infrastructure planning to guide and inform decision-making in relation to waste, recycling and resource recovery infrastructure over the next 30 years.

Council hold responsibility to ensure that waste is managed in such a way as to ensure that resources are recovered to the highest order possible in accordance with circular economy principles. All future projects and programs that generate or manage potential waste items or materials need to consider how a circular economy lens can be applied to achieve the best outcome for resource recovery. Projects that invest in the acquiring of goods or materials also need to consider how they can purchase items that reuse recovered items.

#### Risks

Under the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021, Councils as providers of waste and recycling or resource recovery services will have certain positive obligations including:

- To provide certain services including a municipal residual waste service, recycling service including for glass, food and garden organics
- To comply with pre-sorting and separating of waste or recycling material (the detail of what requirements will apply will be specified in regulations yet to be made)
- Council, as providers of a waste, recycling or resource recovery services:
  - Have a duty to give Recycling Victoria prescribed information,
  - Any agreement entered into in connection with the provision of their services must incorporate the service standard that applies,
  - As providers of essential waste, recycling or resource recovery services, a requirement to minimise the risk of serious failure disruption or hindrance of services so far as reasonably practicable,
  - Duties to keep records and information about the service provided, so far as reasonably practicable, and
  - Duties to comply with service standards.

Notably, failure to comply with any of the above obligations will be an offence, punishable by civil and criminal penalties of up to \$454,350 for Council.

However, the Act provides “checks and balances” in the form of review mechanisms applying to the numerous powers which Recycling Victoria will be able to exercise. For example, use of the exemption powers and the issuance of information gathering notices, improvement notices and prohibition notices will be reviewable at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

## Victorian Regional Circular Economy Plan – Hume Region

To support the transition to a more circular economy the State Government developed regional plans informed by the local stakeholders. The Hume regional circular economy plan sets out the region's aspirations for a sustainable and thriving circular economy. Hume's four circular economy aspirations to 2030 are detailed below.

- Product stewardship is paramount and all those involved in the product life cycle—manufacturers, retailers, users, and disposers share responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of products.
- Best practice circular economy approaches are adopted where all levels of government, industry, education institutions, researchers and community work together to progress the circular economy in Hume.
- Hume's consumers are active participants in the circular economy and all sectors of the community make decisions to avoid waste generation, encourage reuse and recycling of products to reduce their environmental impact.
- Our local circular economy is sustainable, self-sufficient and resilient to market changes and we collaborate to create and take up local circular economy opportunities.

## Service delivery

### Current Services

Council currently offer a comprehensive suite of waste and resource recovery service to the community of Wangaratta and surrounding districts. Services offered by Council include:

- Kerbside collection of waste, recycling and full organics to all urban properties, with kerbside waste and recycling offered to most rural areas.
- Four transfer stations, including three in rural communities.
- Management and clearing of all public place bins throughout the municipality.
- Removal and management of reported dumped rubbish.
- Supply and management of bins for community and other special events.
- An EPA licenced Landfill open to municipal wastes, waste removal contractors and residential asbestos.
- The only Council owned and operated, EPA licenced, organics processing facility on Victoria.

Services will continue to be delivered in accordance with community expectations and State Government requirements. The Victorian Government are currently working on the first ever set of consistent service standard for waste and resource recovery services across the State. Council is expecting these to be delivered by the end of 2023. Once these standards have been incorporated into Regulations that will be managed by Recycling Victoria, Council will confirm the kerbside glass services that will be delivered across the municipality. Council intends on being a leader in the delivery of new services. It is planned that these services will come into effect mid-2024.

Potential expansion of the kerbside organics services will also be addressed in the service standards. Changes to this service stream are not expected to come into effect until 2030.

Council will continue to engage with the community to ensure that services delivered reflect the community's needs, especially in areas of urban growth. Services will be delivered in accordance with the Waste Services Policy, which is reviewed and adopted annually. Charges are set to reflect cost recovery of delivering services. External collaborative tendering will continue to be used to test markets and ensure best value for the community.

## Recycling Victoria Service Standards

Recycling Victoria is currently developing Service Standards for waste and resource recovery services across Victoria. Household waste and recycling services will be regulated via mandatory service standards and accompanying regulations established under the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021. The first service standard, which is expected to be delivered in late 2023, will detail how councils must provide waste and recycling services to households, including compliance with standard lists. The service standard will support councils consistent service across the state.

## Container Deposit Scheme

The Victorian Government has announced that the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) will come into effect from 1 November 2023. Council will work with the Network Operators to ensure the roll out of the return and collection points best serve the community. These sites will most likely be in high traffic, publicly accessible locations, at densities set by the Scheme Coordinator.

## Public Place bins

Offer a more responsive public place litter prevention and recycling service. In addition to reducing litter, they assist in improving the amenity of public spaces, and support the small public gathering and events. These bins are not designed to support waste management of private businesses. Should businesses require bins to be placed on public land to support their operations, Council will consider how additional kerbside bins may be used to meet these needs. The placement of public bins will continue to be reviewed in accordance with community use of an area as part of the Waste Services Strategy.

## Waste reduction

In accordance with the Council Plan 2021 – 2025, Council has set a target to divert more than 80% of kerbside collections from landfill by 2025. The following have been identified as the main activities that can be undertaken in the life of this Strategy to help achieve this target. A comprehensive waste bin audit should be undertaken to assist in identifying further opportunities in our community from 2026.

## Increasing recycling – Separating glass

It has been shown that increasing the amount of waste materials being recycled, and resources recovered, is of high importance to the community. Council will progress with increasing the quality and quantity of potential waste being recovered by supporting the separation of glass from the co-mingled (yellow lidded) recycling bin. As outlined above, Council is currently awaiting final clarification from the State Government on the requirements for this service. Once this information has been released, Council will commit to the rollout of the separate glass service for the community. Further information will be made public once it becomes available.

## Supporting local recycling processing and circular economy opportunities

To assist in providing the community a reliable and resilient service, Council will support local options for waste and resource recovery service where possible. Engaging and supporting local options will help to reduce travel required and increase resilience in the industry. These actions will reduce the likelihood of the industry business and systems collapses that have occurred over the past five years.

Council will also actively engage with the upcoming Recycling Victoria Infrastructure Plan development to promote the network and manufacturing opportunities available in the Region.

## Soft plastics

With the collapse of the domestic soft plastics program “RedCycle” the community have expressed a strong desire to establish an alternative, local, solution. Council will commit to pursuing opportunities for local recycling, seeking State and Federal Government support were available, and partnering with regional businesses for technological and market-based solutions.

## Education

To support the actions outlined throughout this Strategy, an Education Plan will be developed. This plan will support the community in the use of the new services, improving diversion from landfill through optimal use of existing services and support broader waste and resource recovery information sharing.

## Infrastructure

### Bowser Landfill

With the focus of waste reduction, and best use of resources within Council to deliver these services, a review of the future operations of the landfill will be undertaken. The most recent Landfill Cell, Cell 6, has just recently completed construction and is anticipated to provide approximately 9 years of filling capacity. Increasing costs of construction, management, monitoring, compliance reporting, and rehabilitation have placed increased pressure on the viability of operating smaller scale landfill.

The Bowser Landfill was originally designed to accommodate one further waste Cell, to be built in two stages. Constructing this further filling space would also require a reconfiguration of the supporting infrastructure across the site. Infrastructure such as the weighbridge and staff amenities would need to be relocated and Coleman Road would need to be sealed to provide access. With the completion of Cell 6, now is the perfect time to review the business plan for operations and management the facility into the future.

### Transfer Stations

Transfer stations are becoming an ever more important part of the resource recovery network as the need increases for more efficient collection of materials to support a circular economy. With the review of the future of Bowser Landfill, there is the potential to make better use of the facility with ungraded materials recovery infrastructure for both residents and businesses in our community.

The new site will demonstrate best practice for a facility of its size, recovering materials to support a local circular economy, and provide ease of use for visitors.

From this Strategy, a concept plan for a new transfer station and materials recovery facility will be designed and drafted ready for construction.

### Organics Processing

The Rural City of Wangaratta are currently the only municipality in the State to own and operate a licenced Food Organics and Garden Organics Facility. As part of the Council Plan 2021 – 2025, Council have set the target in increasing compost produced at the facility by 10% each year. Within a year of operations, that facility was already receiving the maximum volume of input. Output from the facility has been limited as Council continuously improve the technology on site to improve the quality of the compost produced. As the last of this equipment is installed, Council will need to pursue appropriate markets to ensure best value use of the compost produced.

Council recently obtained a licence expansion to 12,000t from 5,200t. In accordance with the State Government plan to reduce organics going to landfill, and the requirements for additional processing

capacity to meet this requirement. Given the operation capacity of the site, Council is now in a position to be a regional leader and set a model that could be replicated by other Councils across the State. Council establishing further capacity in this facility will ensure financial and operational viability into the future. Council will explore the feasibility to expand the site to process up to 24,000t per year over the next year. As the waste and resource recovery industry moves to reduce reliance on landfill, further investment in resources recovery facilities and technology will ensure Council is resilient to potential market risks into the future.

#### Closed Landfill Management

Council holds an ongoing responsibility to ensure effective management of closed landfill in accordance with the EP Act. Development of a rehabilitation plan based on strategic analysis of the risks posed by closed landfills to ensure that sites are being actively managed to comply with new EP Act will be undertaken following a preliminary assessment of the known sites.

#### Future Steps

Regional plans due to be developed by Recycling Victoria by 2027, supporting Council plans to be developed following. The actions outlined in this plan are to be undertaken in the lead up to the development of these plans and will assist in Council meeting its requirements under relevant Acts and Plans. At the completion of this Strategy, Council will be well placed to be actively involved in the development of the new Infrastructure Plans and ensure that the Wangaratta Region is optimally serviced by resource recovery opportunities.

Establishment of a Community Reference Group will be required to support the development of the next strategy following the development of the state-wide infrastructure plan by Recycle Victoria. This group will have the opportunity to build off the established waste management infrastructure and investigate region hub processing of wastes such as solar panels, e-waste, glass, etc.



## Action Plan

Action	Details	Timeframe	Deliverable	Next Steps
Education Plan	Council officers will develop an education plan that will outline the aims, objectives and priorities for waste and resource recovery education from Council. The Plan will highlight the key projects, messages, and modes of delivery Council waste and resource recovery education will involve. The Plan will be adaptable to new programs and priorities as they arise.	2024	The Waste and Resource Recovery Education Plan will be an internal working document that guides the educational work of the Waste and Resource Recovery Team.	Once the Plan has been delivered, Council staff will deliver the actions and update as required. A full review will be required with the development of the next Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy.
Transfer Station Master Plan	To prepare for the upgrade of the transfer station, a concept level design will be developed by Council. The Plan will be based on best practice for resource recovery and safety access for the community.	2024	A set of concept plans that can be used to develop detailed design drawings and potential grant funding programs.	Using the concept plans, a feasibility and business plan will be presented to Council for approval to progress with a new facility. Council will ensure that the facility is included in future State level infrastructure planning.
Glass Bin and Expanded Organics Kerbside Plan	Council will commence a kerbside glass bin collection in urban areas. Organics services will be expanded on urban fringes to bring these services into alignment with the rest of the urban areas.	2024	Delivery of new bins and kerbside collection in accordance with service specifications adopted by Council.	

Waste Bins Audit	Undertake audits of kerbside waste bins to inform future projects and service delivery.	2025	Audit data and report that can be used to inform future planning activities	
Organics Facility Expansion 25k development	<p>Completing the capital works required at the Organics Processing Facility to provide the capacity to compost 25k pa of organic materials.</p> <p>In conjunction with the capital works at the facility, Council will also work with the EPA to obtain an expanded licence.</p>	2026	The organics processing facility capable of composting 25k pa in accordance with EPA requirements.	Upon completion of these works, Council will undertake a business development to secure appropriate feedstocks to process through the facility.
Closed Landfill Management Plan	Council will develop a plan for managing the risks associated with closed landfills managed by Council.	2024	The Plan will outline activities required to identify and manage the risks associated with each closed landfill managed by Council.	Ongoing management will be required for many of the closed landfill sites. The Plan should be enacted and updated annually.
Bowser Landfill revised rehabilitation plan	A revised landfill rehabilitation plan will be required. This plan will take into account changes that have occurred at the site since the initial permitting process and ensure that works are being completed in accordance with EPA Best Practice requirements.	2027	The revised rehabilitation plan will provide a detailed design document that can be used to project manage the final stages of the landfill in the lead up to, and following, the closure of the facility in the coming years.	Council will need to work with the EPA to ensure that the document is fit for purpose and that the actions are completed in a timely manner. Works proposed will need to be included in Councils budgeting process and capital planning.

<p>State-wide and Regional Infrastructure Planning</p>	<p>Council will engage with the State and Regional infrastructure planning processes over the next three years. This will ensure that the needs of the Rural City of Wangaratta are addressed in this planning process and supported by all levels of government.</p>	<p>2025 - 2027</p>	<p>Through contributing to this plan, future projects and services required by the Community will be more effectively planned for in State led funding and contract programs.</p>	<p>This strategy will be reviewed and updated following the development of these plans. The updated strategy will incorporate the projects and initiatives identified, ensuring that Council are integrating with broader, best practice, waste and resource recovery programs.</p>
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