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Central Coast (Waste) Resource Management Strategy Submission

Deadline Sunday 21/6/2020

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the refining of the Central Coast (Waste) Resource Management Strategy 2020-2030.

Kariong Eco Garden has a long history of encouraging waste reduction, organics recycling, reduction in single use plastics (through Boomerang Bags and Plastic Free July) and more recently re-use and repair with our Repair Café, run by volunteers in Kariong Community Hall on a monthly basis (before Covid-19 restrictions). Later this month we celebrate 15 years since our establishment was approved by a Motion of Gosford Council on 28/6/2005.

We wrote a submission on waste to Gosford Council in January 2014 and I include it below. It still says everything we want to say – only a few names have changed eg Re-use Xanadu is no longer, but Fairhaven is doing a fine, very similar job on the same site at Point Clare.

The Bigger Context

The world is even more actively addressing the waste and plastic pollution issue than it was six years ago. We agree with the relatively new Australian government waste policy that we will stop exporting our waste (except where it meets strict quality controls). In many cases when we believed we were ‘recycling’ because we had sold our recyclate to other countries we were just transferring our environmental problem to our poorer neighbours.

It’s our waste – it’s our problem; in fact we could see it as an opportunity. As we said 6 years ago, “There’s no such thing as waste, only stuff (resources) in the wrong place”. A good way to look at ‘waste’ is as a verb, not a noun. Waste is something we DO when we don’t sort our resources in the best way. Waste is minimized in a circular economy when resources go back into circulation. As we remind students who are learning about compost – “In nature, nothing is wasted.”

We know that recycling provides more jobs than landfill, we know that composting our organic waste is better for the climate than landfilling it and we know that incineration of mixed waste creates toxic ash and air pollution that is hazardous to human health. We are guided by groups like the Boomerang Alliance, Total Environment Centre, Zero Waste

Australia; wise people like David Suzuki and we continue to follow permaculture principles of earth care, people care and sharing surplus.

We see that many other Council's (including our near neighbours Lake Macquarie) have introduced FOGO (Food Organics Garden Organics) collections and we call on Central Coast council to do the same as soon as possible. With our red bins containing an average of 59% organic matter what are we waiting for?!

We understand that it is a change that some people will struggle with initially but having spoken with a Lake Mac Councillor, David Belcher, two weeks ago, we have heard that "by and large constituents are happy with FOGO, despite a small vocal group making it hard initially and there is very low contamination." See below for ideas about how we can learn from Penrith and Lake Macquarie's experience.

We urge the Central Coast Council to take swift action. Many of your good proposals eg, identifying avoidable council waste streams (eg single use plastics) and improving waste behaviours, assessing targeted recovery options for a broader range of household items (eg a pick-up service before the bulk kerbside garbage truck, taking items to a Tip Shop) and engaging businesses in avoiding waste (such as using a FOGO collection service and alternatives to single use plastics), need immediate implementation not 3-5years.

There was overwhelming support for a Tip Shop at the community consultations. See our 2014 submission for suggestions about how to do this – or look to [Kimbriki Buy-Back Shop](#) or [Resource Recovery Australia](#). Please don't delay.

GO FOGO

We don't have to re-invent the wheel – over 40 councils in NSW are now using a FOGO (Food Organics Garden Organics) system. Let's join the movement towards creating healthy soil that can be returned to our farms, parks and sportsfields. Armidale is another good example of Organics Recycling recommended to us, with their [City to Soil program](#).

An [article by Mike Ritchie Consulting, we highly recommend in full](#), but here are two excerpts:

FOGO represents low hanging fruit for many Councils

The economics and experience across Australia support the fact that FOGO works. It makes particular economic sense where a Garden Organics service is currently in place, and where landfill levies are high. In this case, FOGO immediately saves money and further reduces waste greenhouse gas emissions.

It is acknowledged that every council is different, however overall there are considerable benefits to be realised. The transition to FOGO can be tailor made to suit each and every situation. Different bin combinations and timings, rewards and penalties, as well as contracting arrangements will all lead to the right service for individual councils' residential mix and needs.

Implemented carefully, FOGO saves money and increases diversion. It gives councils more time to consider more challenging decisions around enhanced waste processing technology and instead maximises the use of demonstrated solutions that are current in the marketplace.

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Penrith learned a lot of lessons and these can be used by other Councils:

- Be gradual with the introduction. Introduce Food Organics into the Garden Organics bin as a weekly service, but maintain bin size and collection frequency of the residual bin. Only when the new FOGO service settles down should the residual bin be dropped to a fortnightly service.
- Offer alternatives for residents with different needs and capacities.
- Introduce education before, during and after. Have ongoing incentives and disincentives to encourage correct sorting and bin selection.

These are all lessons that need to be learned, not reasons why FOGO shouldn't be implemented."

In 2019 the NSW EPA and NSW Environmental Trust advertised [Round 7 of the Grants](#) for Councils to support organics collections (FOGO). Has Central Coast Council applied for this funding? We suggest a FOGO trial eg in Long Jetty or Springfield or Kariong, particularly as we have the advantage of having the Remondis AWABA Organics plant right next door and already offering collections to businesses in the Central Coast.

Schools need FOGO too. Sadly we have to admit that schools are not able to manage the bulk of their food waste onsite. At best some manage a token amount in worm farms and compost bin, when there are teachers with the time and energy to keep them going. We have helped set up many Worm Tubs and later visited to see them dead and neglected ☹.

Waste to Energy – choose wisely

We are aware that there are good examples of Waste to energy, in the case of source separated organics eg [Earth Power](#) – Organic waste to energy is good and consistent with a Circular Economy. They generate power that is pumped back into the grid and make fertiliser.

Bad Waste to Energy is not part of a Circular Economy – thermal processing, incineration, pyrolysis and gasification. These kinds of waste to energy, using mixed waste, encourage people to make more waste and potentially cannibalise resources that should be recycled. Mixed waste to incineration is a dirty energy – more polluting than standard fossil fuel power generation and we all know we need to transition to a zero emissions future for a safe climate. Incineration requires high tech filters, air quality monitoring, checking batches for hazardous waste. We have seen stories of farms in Japan that could not sell their milk because the filters on the nearby incinerator had not been fixed (due to cost) and now the heavy metals had contaminated surrounding farmland. Public health concerns are more important. Let's avoid the problem in the first place!

This [great article by David Suzuki](#) explains why it is not consistent with a Circular Economy: “Turning unsorted and usable trash into a valuable fuel commodity means communities are less likely to choose to reduce, reuse and recycle it. [Burning waste can seem easier](#) and less expensive than sorting, diverting, and recycling it. But once it’s burned, it can never be used for anything else—it’s gone!”

Where does Litter come into the Strategy?

Perhaps it is in a different strategy, but we were surprised that we couldn’t see any reference to litter in the strategy. We all know that not all rubbish makes it in a bin, let alone the correct bin. Shouldn’t the Council’s Litter plans be part of this strategy?

Council waste infrastructure needs to include gross pollutant traps that need to be mapped and well maintained. We support the idea of high tech bins which compact the rubbish, needing to be emptied less often and sending signals ‘back to base’ to tell staff when they are full.

Where does the Single Use Plastic policy fit into the Strategy?

The Central Coast Council Single Use Plastic Policy and the Sustainable Event Policy were both open for comment in 2019 – what has happened to them? They are very relevant to the Waste Resource Management.

We recommend that Central Coast Council sign up for the [Plastic Free Places](#) program available (at a cost) through the Boomerang Alliance. Please apply for NSW Government Funding if needed. Other state governments have funded programs in Townsville, Cairns, Perth and Adelaide. Helen from Plastic Free Cairns recently explained their program on the ABC Local Radio. We need it here too – to work with our wonderful local cafes and restaurants to help them transition to being Plastic Free Champions, saving millions of plastic items from going to landfill or ending up as litter.

Our Responses to Key Actions:

DRIVE WASTE AVOIDANCE

1. Enhance community awareness – YES always

1.1.2 *School food waste needs to go to FOGO*

1.1.3 *Repair Cafés and Tip Shops need to become the norm in the Central Coast*

Engage local businesses to support uptake of opportunities for avoidance of waste and increased recycling – *We are interested in the use of soft plastics and other waste items in local roads. A much better option than shipping our soft plastics to Victoria. Are you sure it is safe and won’t create microplastics?*

Support local groups rescuing good food and help them do it in more places and encourage businesses to utilize a FOGO collection service for unavoidable food waste – could you offer a rebate?

2. Identify avoidable Council waste streams and improve waste management behaviours – *YES of course*

3. Enhance the sustainability focus in council procurement to close the local loop - *YES - including a target for recycled content and encourage recycling businesses to set up right*

here. Imagine a nappy recycling company (AHP absorbent hygiene products) and the reductions to landfill.

DELIVER A STEP CHANGE IN DIVERSION FROM LANDFILL AND BUILD A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- 2.1 Investigate large scale waste processing solutions for mixed waste – NO – don't do it.
- 2.2 Explore the viability of an integrated resource recovery precinct/s to maximise resources from a wide range of local waste streams – YES – how about Somersby?
 - 2.2.2 *Drop off Centres for problem waste items are needed ASAP – lots of examples in other councils. One example from a council in Victoria:*
<https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/services/recycling-and-rubbish/recycling-drop-off-points>
- 2.3 Assess targeted recovery options for a broader range of household items, including salvage from kerbside collection and the viability of a resale or hire shop. *“Salvage and Save” and “Tip Shops” are proven business models – look at [Kimbriki Buy-Back Centre](#) or [South Hobart Tip Shop](#) as examples. Don't delay – get it started or put out a tender for a local charity, Co-operative or employment program to take it on and Council provides the land and buildings. (This certainly will contribute to/ strengthen triple bottom line outcomes.)*
 - 2.3.2 *YES - don't delay - introduce a bookable pick-up service to collect re-usable products in tandem with any re-use shop. Make it super easy.*
 - 2.3.3 YES
 - 2.3.4 YES
- 2.4 Optimise existing waste management facility to better sort, extract and recycle various dry wastes – YES
- 2.5 Improve and expand community recycling practices through education – YES
- 2.6 Facilitate and utilise local end markets for recycled products and materials - YES

STRENGTHEN TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE OUTCOMES

- 3.1 Collaborate with social enterprises and not-for-profit groups in mutually beneficial partnerships – YES – See [Resource Recovery Australia](#)
- 3.2 Develop and ongoing dialogue with the community, business and other stakeholders with regards to waste management –YES – *more forums and consultations where we can share ideas.*
- 3.3 Work with other levels of government -YES
- 3.4 Continue to optimise waste facilities and services through delivery of efficient and cost-reflective operations - YES
 - 3.4.3 Continue to promote CDS -YES

ENHANCE STREET AND OPEN SPACE APPEAL - *don't forget WATERWAYS by addressing single use plastics ASAP

- 4.1 enhance public place waste & recycling services –YES *at events, markets and festivals etc*
- 4.2 Explore smart city technology to enhance waste processes - YES– *smart bins*
- 4.3 Audit kerbside bins, bulky waste and public place bins to target opportunities to improve recovery – YES – *you do this already I thought – keep it up!*
- 4.4 Review best practise bulky waste collection services including service delivery and education - YES
- 4.5 Review best practise waste storage design and service delivery for residential development, commercial/industrial and subdivisions - YES

ADDENDUM:

Kariong Eco Garden submission on Gosford City Council Waste Strategy Draft Report May 2013. Submission deadline 30 January 2014.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the GCC Waste Strategy. We hope to be part of an ongoing conversation into ways that waste can be avoided in Gosford LGA. Within our networks are many people passionate about waste reduction and actively working to sort it, reduce it, compost it, re-use and upcycle it in homes, schools, churches, workplaces and the wider community.

Our general approach to 'waste' is inspired by permaculture principles eg "There is no such thing as waste – only things (resources) in the wrong place:" or as it says on our Waste Wise booklet for visiting school students: There is only one planet earth - let's not waste it.

We would like to affirm Gosford Council's

- awareness that food waste is an important target area.
- Gas capture at GCC's landfills
- Initiatives like Second Hand Saturday
- Chemical clean up days
- Proactive recycling promotion in local media
- Education and awareness programs eg on home composting
- Professional waste management
- Support for Container Deposit Legislation in NSW

Kariong Eco Garden has a particular interest in the awareness and education regarding waste as this is a key component of what we seek to do – be a living learnscape where people can learn about composting, worm farming, water and energy conservation and growing food naturally.

We feel that we are only scratching the surface of what can be achieved in our community in terms of organics recycling in schools, businesses and homes. There is much more scope for diversion of food waste from landfill. We are also concerned about the over convenience of Bulk Kerbside Rubbish collections and feel that this encourages a throwaway mindset when things are not wanted but are still useful.

Public Place recycling trials can be informative. Please audit these bins and consider trialling a Reverse Vending machine, which is the technology that will be used with a national Container Deposit System. We appreciate Gosford Council's support for Container Deposits. We run a Clean Up Australia day site every year and see hundred of bottles and cans – often in the vicinity of public place bins. Please continue to lobby for CDS.

Getting Organics out of landfill is a priority

Over 50% of the contents of the domestic red lid bin is compostable (pie graph, page 12, food + other organic+ garden organics).

We would like to endorse Option C on page 23 of the Strategy ie 3 bin system incorporating food organics with garden organics – in the Green bin, collected weekly. The red lid bin is then collected fortnightly *

It would be helpful to see the result of the "detailed modelling" referred to on page 23.

Where are the comparative costings? Have different models of source separation been considered eg City to Soil style, as in Queanbeyan and Bungendore. This would seem to be a good low-tech model that would suit a trial in the Gosford City Council area and produce a high quality product for local farmers and Parks and Gardens to use.

We know that increasing numbers of councils are successfully educating their communities on source separation of food and achieving high levels of diversion from Landfill eg Penrith City Council, Coffs Harbour Council, South Australian councils and Christchurch NZ.

Have you compared their cost per tonne of resources diverted? If it is as high as you predict ie \$230-\$250/tonne, why are these other councils still doing it? Could they be making significant savings in other areas? eg greenhouse gas emissions? Fertilizer? Landfill levies? We think this needs some more explanation. We are not convinced that we need to go down the AWT path. The quality of the end product is highly variable.

We also would recommend more composting workshops for the community, a comprehensive survey of how many households have a working compost system, and who would like to start one if they had support? We suggest that GCC has a target eg 20% of all households have working organics recycling systems (compost and or worm farms). We have heard of council's that offer a helpline and home visits and have significantly boosted participation in home composting. The benefits of this cannot be underestimated.

Commercial businesses and schools also have a significant quantity of food waste eg a school of 500 students may produce about 20kg of food waste every day.

A source separated food waste collection service would benefit these places. There are local people going to extraordinary lengths to collect organic resources from local businesses. Could a community run commercial worm farm or composting system be trialled?

Food waste from events eg local festivals also needs a place to go eg when Coast Fest was on 6 or 7 years ago in Gosford, we separated all the food waste and took a trailer load up to Lake Macquarie Council's Teralba Worm Farm. If we had a local food waste recycling facility local festivals and school fetes could make use of the service.

Bulk kerbside waste collections – amazingly efficient – very wasteful

If disposal is truly the last resort on our Waste minimisation hierarchy then why do we make it so easy for people to send their unwanted household items straight to landfill?

Has anyone ever surveyed the items that go into these trucks? Much of it is not rubbish.

We do not need to crush these items in a truck – we need to relocate many of them to a place where people who want them, can find them – eg a Salvage and Save Store (as in Adelaide, South Australia), Tip Shop (as in Tempe or Kimbriki, a Reuse and Repair Centre (as in Marrickville – The Bower or Revolve in Canberra) or existing charities.

These places can be Employment and Training centres. They can be safe and clean, sorted and organized with shelter from the elements. They can even make money! Particularly if the majority of employees are recruited through programs like Work for the Dole– apart from money they save by reducing the tonnes of waste going to landfill.

Resource Recovery places like these and Reverse Garbage (industrial discards for community use) are heaven for teachers, up-cyclers, artists, sustainable house builders... and the resourceful folk like you meet at any Men's Shed. A Salvage and Save place that I visited in South Australia was earning good money selling collectors items on ebay and auction sites.

Would Gosford Council like to encourage this kind of resourceful community? Could we at least start by linking people with existing charities when they make a booking. We would like to see the establishment of at least one resource recovery place – this may be at an existing Landfill site – but best outside the weigh station area. Council could offer a pick up service for suitable items or materials or the 'Bulk Kerbside Truck run' could incorporate a

couple of vehicles that go round first to pick up all the saleable items and take them back to the place where they can be sorted, priced and made available to happy customers.

Places like Re-use Xanadu (in Point Clare) who are trying to do this on a small scale should be supported and information about their existence should be made available to the public eg are they already listed on the Planet Ark Recycling website? Some of these places need help to get the word out.

* re the fortnightly red bin situation when green bin is collected weekly: the disposable nappy families will need to have provision to pay for an extra red bin collection. Investigations into Nappy Recycling schemes are worth doing. Baby nappies and incontinence pads are predominantly organic matter and can be composted. A Member of NACRO (National Association of Charitable Recyclers) was running a trial into this, last I heard. A Victorian company was also offering a collection and recycling service – imagine removing the nappies from landfill, composting them and only having the residual material (less than 5% of the nappy volume) going to landfill. In the UK some Councils actively promote Modern Cloth Nappies and celebrate “Real Nappy week”. Councils pay families a subsidy to get started with Modern Cloth Nappies as a way of thanking them for reducing waste and the burden on very limited landfill space.

We are calling on Gosford Council to lead the community in transforming into a sustainable community. Current consumption practices need to be questioned. We cannot keep consuming and wasting resources at the current rate. We need to reduce our footprint.

We are happy to be a partner in this process – that’s why we are here,

Lisa Wriley

For Kariong Eco Garden

30 January 2014