

Reducing Waste and the Costs of Waste

In 2016, Yass Valley Council committed to an 80% reduction in waste to landfill. But it has no strategy or plan to achieve that goal. And it doesn't report on the amount and type of waste that goes to landfill each year. Or what is recycled.

Instead, our waste management fees go up every year; 19% in 2023/224 and 3.5% in 2024/25. Yet the most recent budget documents show Council will make around \$500 000 surplus each year on its waste service. Since 2016, a 'lack of resources' has apparently stopped Council from developing a strategy and a plan to reduce waste going to landfill – and reduce our costs.

The most recent State Government statistics for 2021-2022 show that Yass Valley residents sent 7615 tonnes of waste to landfill. That equates to 441 kilograms of waste per resident, per year. And Council is doing nothing to reduce this waste, or to help residents to change their activities, when so many options to reduce costs and environmental impacts are available.

Waste to landfill contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and the pollution of our groundwater and waterways through toxic leaching. It's a costly and inefficient use of land and an inefficient way to handle items that can be re-used, repaired, up-cycled or re-processed.

We believe that everyone in Yass Valley can do more, and do better, to reduce waste to landfill. And Council can be far more transparent and active in reducing waste and costs to Council and ratepayers. Greens Councillors will work to:

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- **Establish a Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) kerbside collection service.**

This Council has refused to work towards implementing a kerbside green-waste collection service, despite the State Government having mandated it and making grant funding available to do so. We will work to get a kerbside collection service established to stop food entering the waste stream – which will reduce waste to landfill and the methane and greenhouse gas emissions it creates.

- **Develop a clear waste minimisation strategy and plan**

We will work with the community, business, Council staff and relevant experts to develop a clear plan and process to achieve the adopted 80% waste reduction goal. Re-using and recovering resources, repairing and mending goods can be at the heart of a real waste reduction strategy that has the added benefit of building community and local business and tourism opportunities.

- **Re-establish the Green Shed at Yass and/or other transfer stations.**

One resident's trash is another's treasure and making unwanted goods available for re-homing, re-use and re-purposing will reduce the amount of waste to landfill.



- **Share information and help change habits**

Everyone needs to step up to our waste reduction responsibilities – but Council has a clear leadership role to play in helping people reduce their household waste. Council should provide information and assistance on: what can be recycled, how and where; tips and tricks for reducing household waste; community programs and education sessions; regular reporting on progress to less waste; and ongoing reviews of progress to the 80% waste reduction goal.

- **Promote home-composting.**

Home composting of food waste and other organic materials can be promoted through educational resources, demonstration sites, and even bulk purchases of composting bins that can be re-sold at cost to householders.

- **Investigate charging/fee structures that encourage waste minimisation and re-use**

The annual waste collection fee could be used to encourage people to produce less waste; those households that over-fill their general waste bins each week, could have additional levies charged, while fee incentives could be used to encourage less waste in your bin.

- **Provide a mobile recycling collection service for non-standard items**

A service could be provided in each village on a regular basis for the collection of items – like lightbulbs, batteries, paint-tins, chemical drums etc - that can be recycled but can't be put in standard recycling bins.

- **Establish tool libraries**

Tool libraries lend out 'every-day' tools and equipment for gardening, sports, camping, basic repairs – so you don't have to buy your own tools. They save people money, reduce the amount of excess goods being purchased and can reduce waste to landfill. They can work in tandem with, or alongside, repair cafes and offer opportunities for local communities to build resources and skills.

- **Focus on repair, re-use as a way to build community and business opportunities.**

Rubbish also wastes the resources embedded in the items being thrown away. We want bring back the old-fashioned idea of repairing, mending, re-using and recovering resources, while tapping into the skills and expertise in our community. Working with local groups, including through community events such as local markets, 'repair cafes' can be places where you can connect with people while having your item repaired by local, skilled people.

- **Turn trash into treasure and tourism**

Minimising waste doesn't have to be boring. Junk Fests and waste-focussed art exhibitions turn trash into art, sculpture, fashion and treasure – but not landfill. We can celebrate community, raise awareness of the possibilities of unloved goods and materials, and create tourism and business opportunities at the same time.

