



Consistent Communications Collective

Waste Management Information Pack

July 2020

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1.0 Achieving Consistent Communication

Local and State Government research indicates that the community considers Local Government to be the first point of call for information on waste management. Feedback from the community demonstrates there is a high level of confusion on what materials can be processed through the kerbside collection system. This is in part due to the use of different messages to communicate various approaches to processing and recovery. The alignment of messages between Local Government, contractors and other tiers of Government is a practical step that will begin to address confusion on waste management.

To assist with the achievement of consistent communication on waste management, WALGA has established a Consistent Communications Collective with representatives from Local Government, State Government, Material Recovery Facility (MRF) operators and other relevant stakeholders.

The Collective meets 2-3 times a year, or as required, to discuss a range of topics such as community enquiries, contaminants received at Material Recovery Facilities, and the distribution of consistent messages through various communication channels.

The intent of this document is to compile the matters discussed and agreed by the Collective, to facilitate a consistent approach to community engagement.

For information on the Collective, contact Manager Waste and Recycling, Rebecca Brown on (08) 9213 2063 or email rbrown@walga.asn.au.

2.0 Agreed Terminology

To facilitate the delivery of consistent messages, the Collective has reached agreement on terminology that will be used when undertaking **community engagement** activities on waste management (Table 1).

3.0 Kerbside Collection System

3.1 Materials Included and Excluded from the Recycling Bin

In 2018, operators from the Material Recovery Facilities agreed what material should be included or excluded from the kerbside recycling bin (Figure 1). Local Governments, MRF operators and WALGA actively promoted this simplified message to the community. This initiative forms the basis for future high level communications on the recyclability of materials processed through the kerbside collection system for both metropolitan and non-metropolitan Local Governments. The terminology that was agreed was:

- Plastic bottles and Containers – clean and empty (lids off)
- Glass bottles and jars – clean and empty
- Cardboard – flattened
- Paper - not shredded
- Aluminium and steel cans – clean and empty

Table 1: Agreed terminology.

Agreed Terminology	Rationale	Date agreed
Kerbside Collection General Waste Recycling Garden Organics (GO) Food Organics (FO) Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO)	This terminology was agreed, rather than using the bin lid colours as currently not everyone is using the Australian Standard colours and the community may not know what the colours mean.	February 2019
Verge Collection Bulk Waste Service Bulk Garden Organics Service	The term 'bulk waste' was selected (rather than junk or verge waste) to reflect only bulky items too large for the General Waste bin (not just general junk) should be placed on the verge. There was agreement that small items should go in the General Waste bin, rather than the Bulk Waste Service. <i>Example recommendation: cut hoses into short lengths and place in the General Waste bin.</i>	February 2019
Self-haulage Drop-off Centre	There was agreement that the umbrella term of 'Drop-off Centre' is used to describe a range of facilities. The specific kind of facility can then be clarified in brackets. <i>For example: Take xxx to your nearest Drop-off Centre (name of recycling centre, transfer station or landfill).</i> Any reference to a Drop-off Centre is to be accompanied by the text 'contact the site for more information'.	February 2019
Local Government	The term 'Local Government' will be used to describe the organisation. The term 'Council' describes the group of elected members who are the decision-making body of the Local Government.	February 2019
Household Hazardous Waste	The term 'Household Hazardous Waste' will be used to describe material covered by the HHW Program.	February 2019
Problematic waste	Other materials that are hazardous, but not covered through the HHW Program will be referred to as 'problematic waste.'	February 2019

3.2 Why Certain Materials are Problematic in the Recycling Bin

The simplified message highlights the role of the kerbside collection system and provides information on "why" certain materials must be disposed in a certain way. The Collective has agreed that general terminology will be used to communicate the negative consequences of incorrect source separation (Figure 2):

- Affects the operation of the recycling facility (e.g. ropes, cables and hoses become tangled in the machinery)
- Affects the quality of recyclables produced (e.g. food contaminated material, flexible plastics)
- Affects OHS for workers (e.g. Household Hazardous Waste, nappies and syringes).



Figure 1: Graphics on materials included or excluded from the kerbside recycling bin (Source: WALGA, 2018).

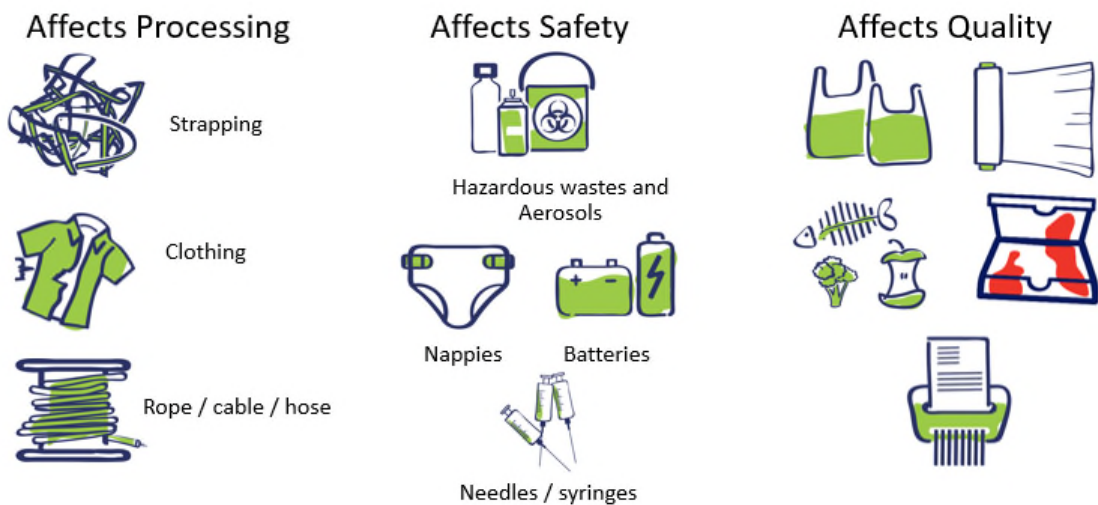


Figure 2: Types of contamination in the recycling bin (Source: SUEZ, 2018).

3.3 Materials Included and Excluded from the FOGO Bin

WALGA, Local Governments, Regional Councils, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and industry stakeholders are working together to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to progress Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection and processing systems in Western Australia.

It is acknowledged that a balance needs to be struck between the type of material which will create a near perfect product with very low levels of contamination and the reality of how the customers (the general public and Local Governments) will or will not want to use the service. The ultimate aim of the system is to both generate a good end product that has a beneficial purpose, and ensure that the system is relatively straightforward to utilise and communicate to end users.

The simplified message to the community has been agreed as follows:

- **Allowed** – food scraps, garden organics, food soiled paper and cardboard, shredded paper, paper towels and tissues
- **Not Allowed** – plastic bags, nappies, glass and ceramics and general waste*

* The 'Not Allowed' list considers the most common/most serious contaminants for the FOGO bin.

3.4 Why Certain Materials are Problematic in the FOGO Bin

Some materials allowed in FOGO bins will require additional measures to minimise/prevent contamination that will impact processing and the end product. These include:

- **Paper and cardboard**
 - Strong educational messaging on the types of paper and cardboard allowed. Focusing on food soiled paper and cardboard only
 - Educational messaging should promote recycling of clean paper and cardboard before composting. The waste hierarchy places paper and cardboard recycling above composting
- **Compostable caddy liners**
 - Educational messaging needs to be clear about what liners to use
 - Local Governments can put in place mechanisms to ensure the general public has access to the correct types of caddy liners. For example, Local Governments can buy in bulk and supply certified compostable caddy liners through their administration buildings, libraries, and recreation centres.

Compostable packaging has been specifically excluded from the FOGO Bin as there is some doubt about the circumstance under which these products will compost and this type of packaging can easily be confused with non-compostable plastic packaging.

3.5 A-Z List of Materials Included and Excluded from the Kerbside Collection System

The Collective has formalised a common A-Z List of materials included and excluded from the kerbside collection system for use by waste educators, customer service and public relations staff in responding to **detailed** community enquiries on a range of waste management issues. The A-Z List is available from the [WasteNet](http://www.walga.asn.au) website.

While the A-Z List focuses on source separation behaviours for the kerbside system, it also outlines acceptable management pathways for a range of problematic and hazardous materials. The A-Z List aligns with the definition provided in Schedule 1 of the [Waste Local Law Template](#) for 'non-collectable waste.'

The Collective has agreed that the following overarching messages will inform the A-Z List:

- Flexible plastic – Take back to REDcycle bins at participating supermarkets
- Charity donations – The giv.org.au website will be used as the point of reference for the community in the future
- Commercial waste generators – When responding to enquiries from commercial waste generators on disposal options for various materials, advice can be provided to commercial waste generators where:
 - The Local Government provides a commercial waste service for that material type
 - There is a clear disposal pathway in place, for example Total Green Recycling for e-waste, Paintback for commercial painters and Cleanaway for certain commercial quantities of HHW and problematic waste
 - Promotion of waste management businesses should only occur in situations where there is only one service provider, or a provider has gone through an open tender process such as WALGA's Preferred Suppliers Panels. Such advice should be accompanied by a disclaimer to the effect that other service providers may be available.

Amendment Process

The Collective has agreed that the following process will be used to amend the A-Z List and this Information Pack. This process will allow for up-to-date information on waste management to be provided to the community:

1. **Proposed amendments:** will be discussed and agreed at meetings of the Collective. WALGA will liaise with MRF operators to determine the recyclability of materials on an as needs basis
2. **Amendment and distribution:** amendments will be made following meetings of the Collective. Amended resources will be hosted on the [WasteNet](#) website*.

** Participants of the Collective must ensure that the most recent version of the A-Z List and Information Pack are used to update resources and materials.*

4.0 Frequently Asked Questions

As the first point of call for information on waste management, Local Governments receive and respond to a number of waste management enquiries from the community.

4.1 Where Does my Recycling Go?

There are a number of different destinations for material collected through the kerbside recycling system. As market dynamics regularly change, MRF operators may sell recyclables to a number of different locations throughout the year. Specific information is difficult to source, due to commercial sensitivities.

Western Australian Datasets

Current waste management data for Western Australia varies in its reliability, as the reporting of this information has previously not been compulsory and data sets may be incomplete. In 2020, the State Government made data reporting compulsory for Local Governments and Regional Councils, Recyclers and non-metropolitan landfills receiving more than 20,000 tonnes per annum. This is likely to increase the accuracy of data reporting. The two main data sources of recycling data in WA are the [Local Government Census](#) and the [Annual Recycling Activity Report](#). Local Government data is now publicly reported on the [MyCouncil](#) website.

Federal Government Datasets

In 2018 the Department of the Environment and Energy commissioned an analysis of [Data on Exports of Waste](#). This analysis, sourced from ABS data, covers the amount of waste exported from Australia by waste type, place of export and country of destination, in value (\$) and tonnage.

Data for the 2017/18 Financial Year showed the impact of China's *National Sword Policy*, which restricted imports of recyclable material. While this had a major impact on the recycling sector, alternative export markets in other Asian countries were found – with the quantity of exports increasing in the 2017/18 Financial Year. Increasing requirements relating to waste import standards in countries around the world highlighted the need for Australia to better manage its domestic waste.

In 2019 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed Australia should establish a timetable to ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, while building Australia's capacity to generate high value recycled commodities. Further development of response strategies will seek to reduce waste, decrease the amount of waste going to landfill and maximise the capability of Australia's waste management and recycling sector to collect, recycle, reuse, convert and recover waste.

4.2 Why Don't I Have Three Bins?

Currently, the waste management needs of approximately 35% of the population in the Perth metropolitan area is serviced using a three bin system for General Waste, Garden Organics (GO) and Recycling. One of the headline strategies in the [Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030](#) (WARR Strategy) is:

“A consistent three bin kerbside collection system, which includes separation of food organics and garden organics from other waste categories, to be provided by all local governments in the Perth and Peel region by 2025 and supported by State Government through the application of financial mechanisms.”

State and Local Government have agreed that it is important to minimise confusion for residents whose kerbside collection system will transition from a two bin to a three bin system, or from a GO to a FOGO system. As the bin lid colour for GO and FOGO bins is the same, there is a considerable potential for confusion in the community.

When responding to enquiries on the use of different kerbside collection systems, considerations include:

- The State Government introduced the WARR Strategy in February 2019. The WARR Strategy contains a headline strategy on transitioning to FOGO. The State Government previously supported a range of better practice approaches to kerbside collection systems through the Better Bins Program.
- The implementation of FOGO across the entire metropolitan area will take time as infrastructure to process FOGO needs to be established. There is limited processing capacity for FOGO in close proximity to where it is generated
- Further work is required to identify and establish market outlets for material collected from a FOGO system
- Local Governments are subject to long term contracts and have invested in other processing infrastructure, such as Alternative Waste Treatment facilities and Waste to Energy facilities.

4.3 Does Recycling go to Landfill?

Surveys of community attitudes consistently identify a degree of scepticism as to whether recyclables are actually recycled. There may be a variety of reasons for this attitude:

- National media coverage has identified issues with stockpiling in other States as a result of China's *National Sword Policy*, there have also been reports that MRFs have closed in Victoria
- Observations that the 'same truck' collects both recyclables and waste. Frequently trucks are used for multiple purposes (both general waste, recycling and FOGO/GO collections). In other situations all trucks – general waste, recycling and FOGO/GO collections – have the same branding so it may appear to be the 'same truck'
- Observations that recycling is going to the same place as waste. Transfer Stations accept both general waste, recycling and organics in some areas, as materials are bulked for transport – to different locations for sorting or disposal
- Observations that public place recycling bin material is collected in the same truck as general waste. In some cases public place recycling bins may be so heavily contaminated that they need to be collected as general waste.

It is important that Local Governments continue to actively investigate community concerns and provide a response on findings. For example, by providing information on:

- The economics of recycling vs landfilling – it is cheaper to recycle material rather than landfill it (recycling costs av. \$95/tonne, landfill costs \$160/tonne – 18/19 Financial Year)
- GPS data logs of truck movements (where available) – this can provide information on the time a truck serviced particular streets and the end destination of materials
- Promoting videos showing collected material as it travels through a MRF
- Providing tours of MRFs
- Promoting data on tonnes of material diverted.