



Global Research
Turning **Information** Into **Insight**

New Food and Garden Waste service

ENGAGEMENT REPORT SUMMARY

December 2021

Prepared by Global Research Ltd

For



Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction.....	3
Community Engagement.....	3
Key Findings.....	3
About this report	4
Results.....	6
Uptake and interest.....	6
Understanding the service.....	8
Rolling it out.....	11
Anything else respondents want to tell us.....	16
Respondent Characteristics	17
Respondent connections to City of Melbourne	17
Age	17
Postcode.....	17

Executive summary

Introduction

As Melbourne grows, waste management plays an important part in building a sustainable city. The City of Melbourne's Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy, developed with high levels of input from the community, outlines a vision for Melbourne to transition toward zero waste landfill. A key action in the strategy is to deliver a food and garden waste service for the city to reduce the amount of organic waste going to landfill.

In June 2021 the rollout of the new waste service to houses and single storey dwellings began. The Council will continue to roll out the service to apartments and multi-unit dwellings.

Residents who currently have the service and those who will receive it in the future were invited to provide feedback via the Participate Melbourne website, the results of which are summarised in this report.

Community Engagement

Between 21 August and 1 November 2021, this engagement received 743 submissions, including 720 online surveys and 23 'Waste Champions Wall' posts, where respondents could share tips and tricks to better manage waste on the Participate Melbourne website for the community to see.

Key Findings

Support and awareness

- Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of the new food and green waste collection, with 90% of respondents stating they were very likely to use it, and 5% somewhat likely.
- Over half of respondents who currently use the service felt they had 'excellent knowledge' of what can and can't go in the food and garden waste collection bin, while only 2% had 'some idea'.
- These results indicate reasonably high levels of awareness around the criteria for organic waste, with some room for education of the 44% who felt they had a 'pretty good idea'.
- The letter with the information pack, flyer and magnet was overwhelmingly considered the most useful information source, selected by 86% of respondents who are currently using the new service.
- Comments about the effectiveness of the messaging praised it as being clear and informative, especially the stickers on the bin and caddy lids.

Motivations and benefits

- The biggest motivation for people to use the new service was reducing their impact on the environment.
- Similarly, respondents overwhelmingly felt that the key benefits the service would bring were environmental – lessening the environmental costs of landfill waste, utilising waste to nourish gardens and soil, and making people more conscious of their waste and consumption. People also valued being able to take tangible action to reduce their personal impact.
- Personal benefits were listed second, with people describing having less general waste, cleaner bins, and more convenient disposal of garden waste and being more active in their garden as a result.

Barriers and concerns

- The main barriers to using the new service were difficulties using the supplied bin liners. These issues included running out and not knowing where to get more, the cost of buying more, the liners leaking or tearing, and being unable to tie them without handles.
- Other barriers included storing yet another large bin on their property, especially for those in small dwellings or apartments, not knowing what goes in the bins, and concerns around compliance from other people or passersby.

- Another significant sticking point for respondents was the reduction in recycling collection, which they argued nullified the environmental benefits of this initiative as excess recyclable material is now ending up in general waste bins.

Suggestions to improve the service

- Suggestions to improve the messaging focused on encouraging uptake through emphasising the importance of the service and showing where the waste ends up showing the community where the waste ends up being used. Respondents noted that the council should ensure this messaging flows through multiple channels and in different languages to reach a diverse population.
- Over a third of respondents felt that a neighbour share bin sticker/program to enable neighbours to share their recycling bin when the space is available would help them adjust to the change.
- Resuming weekly recycling collection was also identified as a way to help respondents adjust to the change.
- Highlighting the positive impact of this initiative by showing the community how much waste has been diverted from landfill thanks to the new food and garden waste service was the most popular response when respondents were asked what the council can do to help motivate change. People also wanted to know more about where the compost is used, or to have the option to access the compost.
- Comments often included queries about whether various specific items are accepted in the green waste, suggesting more education and information around what can and can't go in the green bins may be needed to help people use the system confidently.

About this report

Below is a summary of results collected during this engagement. All feedback from different sources was combined and coded by analysts. Written comments have been discussed by question, with topics organised from most-to-least frequently mentioned. Note that topics raised in written comments by five respondents or fewer have not been included in this summary report.

To give a clear and consistent indication of the number of comments received on each topic, the following key was used throughout the report to describe the relative number of comments on each topic:

Number of comments	Written as:
3 comments	a few
4—7 comments	a small number
8—14 comments	several
15—24 comments	a moderate number
25—49 comments	a considerable number
50—74 comments	a substantial number
75—99 comments	a sizeable number
100—149 comments	a large number
150+ comments	a very large number

TIPS AND TRICKS FROM THE COMMUNITY

Choose the product with less packaging to buy! We can all contribute and be part of the zero emissions target! By choosing less packaging products or recyclable materials on the packaging. Also think before you throw things away! That would make a big impact!

Keep a 'bag of bags' in one's backpack or shopping bag so that plastic bags can be re-used again and again for food purchases.

We line our small internal compost bin with newspaper and during the week put things in it that won't start decaying badly, such as onion peel, citrus etc. The things that will go off quickly we put in a bag in the freezer. When we get our bins ready the night before collection, we tip everything (minus the newspaper and the plastic bag that had the frozen stuff in it) into the caddy liner and put it in the bin.

'Grow' your waste: Instead of immediately discarding food scraps, I consider if I can plant them! Carrot tops, capsicum seeds, avocado pits...these can all be replanted and grown into house plants. I don't think we'll get actual veggies from them, but it's a fun experiment to do with the kids!

Don't buy packaged vegetables where loose ones are available. Instead use recycled bags or canvas, cotton or paper bags.

Recycling Foil: If foil pieces are too small, they can get lost in the recycling process. To ensure all foil is properly recycled, have a separate container where you progressively scrunch used foil into a ball the size of a fist. Once large enough it can be popped in with the rest of the recycling.

Change your perception! Many might not like this "hack", but the most effective method for reducing my food waste has been changing my perception of what should be eaten and what gets binned. Most of the "scraps" we discard are full of fibre and nutrients and are perfectly edible! Do the carrots, potatoes, and beets really need to be peeled? Nope! I no longer bother "top-and-tailing" the beans, and I eat the whole stalk on the cauliflower and broccoli. You can eat the core of apples and pears, it won't hurt you. Your body and the planet will thank you.

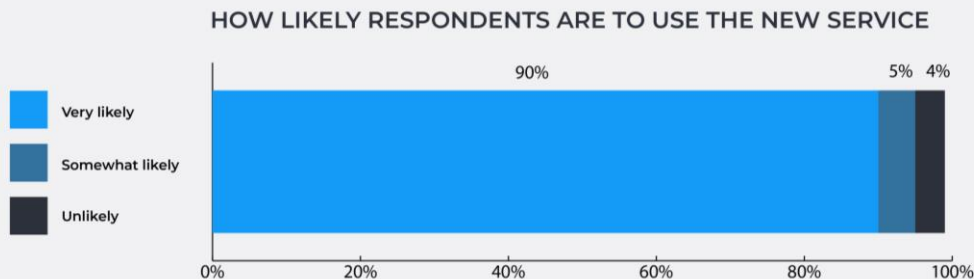
One effective way to avoid the use of plastic produce bags at the supermarket is to use the paper bags by the mushroom section. You can also use them for other loose purchases such as nuts and trail mix!

Avoid thin fruit/vegetable bags in supermarkets: There are plenty of thin meshed breathable and reusable bags that come in different sizes available to collect fruits and vegetables in the supermarket. Have some in your shopping bag.

Results

Uptake and interest

RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED: The City of Melbourne is rolling out a food and garden waste collection service for residents. How likely are you to use the City of Melbourne's new food and garden service?



- > The majority of respondents indicated that they were very likely to use the new food and garden waste service (90%), with a further 5% stating that they were somewhat likely to use it.
- > Only 4% of respondents stated that they were unlikely to use the new service.

Why respondents selected this answer

Supportive comments

805 comments

Over half of supportive comments about the initiative focused on the environmental benefits of composting organic waste instead of sending it to landfill, especially the reduction of carbon emissions.

Other positive comments included that it would supplement home composting efforts by taking items that cannot go in the home compost; that people were already using the new service and enjoyed it; general expressions of praise and gratitude for the service, or remarking that it should have come in sooner. People who have a lot of organic waste from their garden or cooking were glad this could be disposed of appropriately, while others described the new system as convenient and simple to adopt.

People described feeling a sense of responsibility to use the service, appreciating the reduced guilt that came from disposing of waste in a less environmentally harmful way.

The little caddy has revolutionised our kitchen waste. It feels so good to know the food and greens are going to be composted. With all recycling going to the yellow bin, our general waste is now negligible. So good. Thank you MCC.

Concerns about the initiative and its practicality

69 comments

The concerns raised by respondents about the new system included that the bins are too large for people's limited storage space or the low amount of green waste produced; that the change from weekly to fortnightly recycling collection is not manageable; that the initiative is not available to those living in apartments; and that it is not a necessary service. Some concerns were also raised about liner supply long-term or how to access liners if they run out, and about liners tearing, leaking, or being too small.

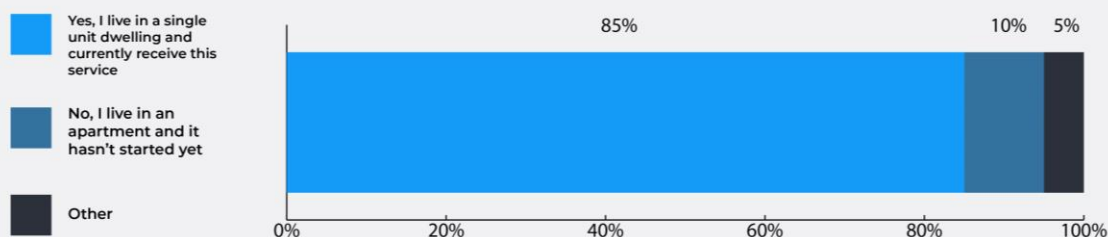
Logistical comments

7 comments

These comments included the suggestion that green waste collection should be fortnightly and concerns about people not using the service properly and contaminating the waste.

Do you currently receive the service?

CURRENT USE OF THE SERVICE



- > The majority of survey respondents currently use this food and waste collection service (85%).
- > Ten percent of respondents do not currently use this service as they live in apartments.

Expressions of interest

50%

Of the 74 respondents who live in an apartment building greater than 6 storeys in height, 50% were interested in being part of a pilot program.

27%

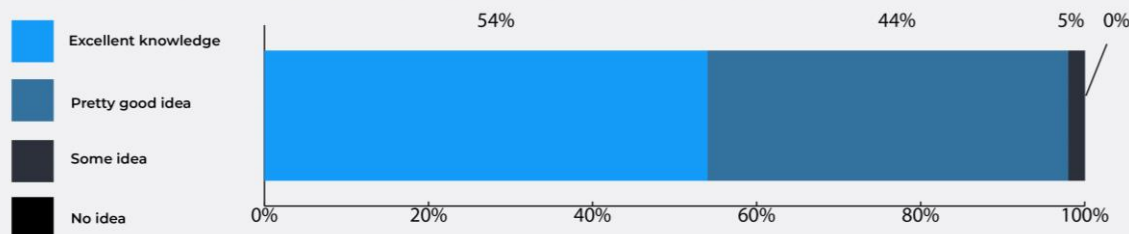
Over a quarter of respondents expressed an interest in being a waste champion.

Understanding the service

Do you know what can and can't go in the bin?

Note: only respondents who **currently use** the service were asked this question (n=611).

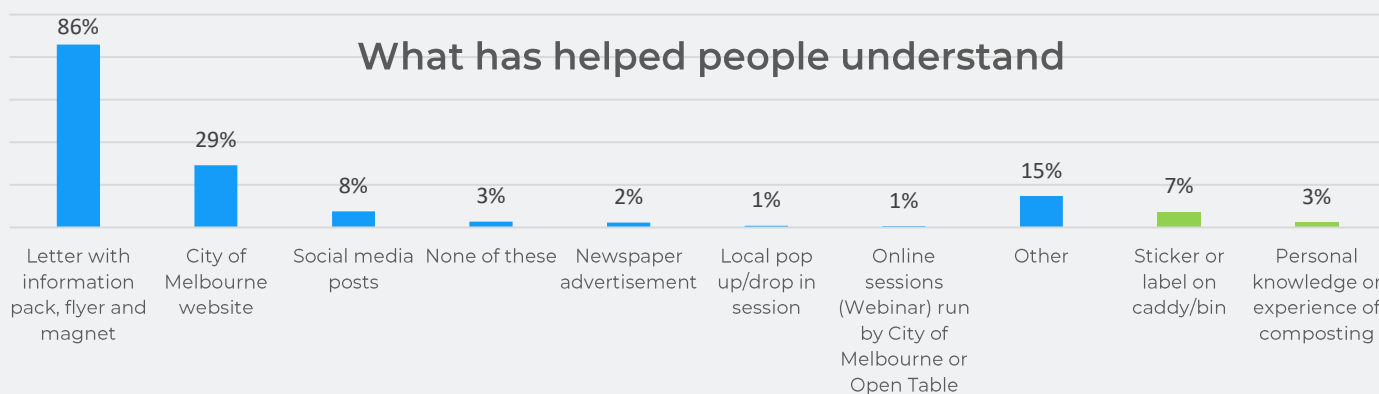
KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT CAN GO IN THE ORGANIC WASTE BIN



- > Over half of respondents (54%) felt they had 'excellent knowledge'.
- > Only 2% of respondents felt they just had 'some idea', and 0% had 'no idea'. These results indicate reasonably high levels of awareness around the criteria for organic waste, with some room for education of the 44% who felt they had a 'pretty good idea'.

What has helped you understand how to use the service?

Note: Only respondents who **currently use** the service were asked this question (n=611). Respondents could select more than one option so percentages for this question do not add to 100%.



- > By far the most helpful information source was the letter with information pack, flyer, and magnet, selected by 86% of respondents.
- > The City of Melbourne website was found helpful by just under a third of respondents (29%).
- > The two most popular free-text responses from those who selected 'other' have been added in green. Note that these may have been selected more frequently if they were given as options and are therefore likely under-reported in the results.

'Other comments'

89 comments

Over half of respondents who selected 'other' stated that the stickers or labels on the new bin/caddy were helpful in explaining how to use the new food and garden waste service. Others stated that they had previous knowledge of how to compost as they had been doing it at home or had a similar system in a different area before moving to Melbourne, or that knowledgeable family, friends, or housemates were helpful.

Additional comments about effectiveness of messaging

Overall, there were more comments in support of the effectiveness of messaging around the new food and garden waste service than criticisms. Suggestions for improvement were frequently supportive comments urging that the messaging achieve broad reach to ensure effective use of the service. Additionally, there were a number of specific queries and expressions of confusion about how to use the service properly.

Praise for messaging

141 comments

As well as general statements about the messaging being clear or informative, people specified their appreciation for the on-bin/caddy sticker with its effective visuals, pictures, and infographics, and the information sheets and magnets that came with the bin. They also valued having multiple channels for information, such as the website as well as hard-copy materials.

The information that came with the bin was great and all we needed. The sticker on the top of the kitchen caddy was especially helpful.

Suggestions for improvement in messaging

127 comments

Suggestions to encourage uptake included using different channels and languages to reach people, like posters, TV advertisements, community newspapers, and door knocking. Respondents felt messaging should be clear and ongoing, and should emphasise the environmental importance of the service.

A considerable number of respondents asked for more information or detail about what can go in each bin, and requested regularly updated online information and short video tutorials, bigger and more comprehensive images on the bins, more 'kitchen' messaging like the magnets already used, or regular flyers to remind people

Some people seem to think it is a scary or 'dirty' form of 'recycling' - messaging to reinforce this is not the case may be helpful. I simply love it - so more positive messages from converts perhaps?

what could go in the bins. A moderate number felt they lacked adequate information/experience to use the service confidently, or that they hadn't received much (or any) prior warning. Some respondents felt that more communication and reminders on the collection schedule were necessary to ensure everyone was aware of the change.

Several respondents discussed communication around the supply of bin bags, wanting to know where to get more, which types are approved for use, and whether there are more cost-effective options.

Lastly, several respondents sought more information on the treatment processes and where the waste goes, as it was felt knowing this would help people care more and encourage them to participate.

Education is a long-term process. Don't stop! And don't stop reminding people that every little bit makes a difference.

Additional comments on the service

163 comments

There were a very large number of comments on both waste collection generally and on the food and garden waste service that were not directly related to messaging or communication.

Around fifty comments discussed recycling, primarily calling for weekly collection to resume. A few comments requested separated glass recycling and soft plastics recycling.

A considerable number of comments raised issues with the green bins, including complaints of insufficient bin liners or difficulty of supply, or comments around the bin being too big or the need for more bin size options.

Fortnightly collection of general waste was called for by a moderate number of respondents, ideally with recycling returned to weekly.

A small number of respondents urged that the council speed up the rollout of the service for everyone, including apartment and unit dwellers.

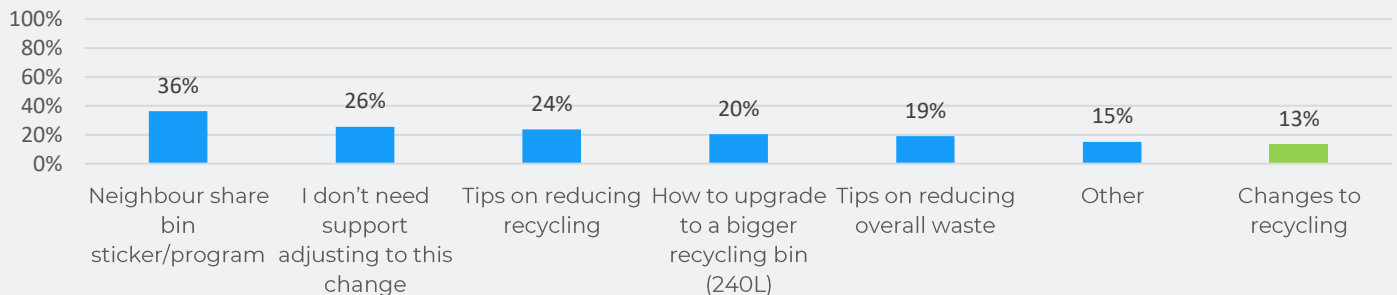
Around fifty comments expressed general appreciation for the waste service(s) provided by City of Melbourne. Several additional comments praised the distribution of bin bags.

The reduction in the recycling bin pick up to once a fortnight is far from ideal. The bin overflows every week, we don't have room to upsize it. People may start putting their recyclable rubbish into the normal rubbish bin which obviously counteracts to point of this exercise

Rolling it out

What might help you adjust to this change?

What would help respondents adjust to change



- > The most common response to this question was the neighbour share bin sticker/program to enable neighbours to share their recycling bin when the space is available, which 36% of respondents felt would help them adjust to the change.
- > Around a quarter of respondents (26%) felt that they did not need help adjusting to the change at all, or that the tips and tricks on reducing recycling would help them adjust (24%).
- > 'Other' responses were given by 15% of respondents, who could write their views in a free-text box. The majority of these comments discussed recycling, in particular the frequency of recycling collection. These comments are represented in green in the above chart. Note that this option may have been selected more frequently if it was given as an option in the survey question, and therefore it is likely under-reported in these results.

'Other' comments

147 comments

Two thirds of the 'other' comments discussed recycling, most of them calling for weekly recycling collection. Others requested an additional or larger bin, while some raised issues with storing bins. A few other comments called for a separate recycling bin for glass, soft plastics collection, an additional council recycling bin at the end of each street, and extra recycling pickups for cardboard.

A considerable number of respondents felt that green waste or general waste could be collected fortnightly.

Several respondents believed that improved communications, including more information on the waste collection timetable, tips on how to properly separate waste, and providing general clarity around the new service would help them adjust to the change.

Communication about the roll out

RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED: How would you like us to tell you about the upcoming food and organics service being rolled out? A list of options was presented for respondents to select their preferred option to receive communication about the new initiative.

- > The most popular method of communication selected by respondents was 'email' (23%).
- > 'Letter/mail' and 'social media posts' were each selected by 15% of respondents who answered this question, while 'website' and 'displays in key locations – e.g., libraries and recreation centres' were each selected by 10% of respondents.

Benefits anticipated from using the service

Environment and behaviour change

632 comments

Respondents overwhelmingly praised the environmental benefits of decreasing waste to landfill and of reducing emissions from waste. The community also loved that organic waste would be recycled to nourish Melbourne's "magnificent public gardens" and to support soil regeneration. People felt the new system could raise awareness and encourage behaviour change in people's waste and consumption habits, and that the tangible, positive action enabled people to feel they were doing something good.

Less waste in the world, further organics for our earth, a step closer to a circular economy, more awareness of our personal waste which flows into other areas.

It makes other household members more mindful of the food they waste and has made them more conscientious about their food shopping habits.

Personal benefits

124 comments

The majority of these comments described how the new system made their waste disposal easier, more efficient or more convenient. Over half of these focused on the increased ease of getting rid of garden waste and said this encouraged them to be more regularly active in the garden. Other people noted it was good to be able to get rid of waste that can't be composted at home, or that the service is ideal for those who can't or don't want to compost themselves. Other benefits included having less general waste, being able to put the bins out less

It's so good. I'd really encourage anyone who has access to it to use it. It's very simple to use and it's surprising how much of what was going into general waste can be composted. The reduction in general waste has been remarkable.

frequently, or cleaner and drier general waste bins. Several other respondents offered praise for how user-friendly and convenient the new system is, appreciating the free bin liners and well-designed kitchen caddy.

However, a substantial number of respondents qualified their comments, noting that while the green waste was a positive initiative, they were unhappy with the recycling changes and felt that recyclable waste was now more likely to end up in the general waste bin.

Negative comments

47 comments

Just under half of these comments stated that there would be no benefits at all without elaborating as to why they felt this way, while a few explained that their compost set-up meant the new system offered them little extra benefit. Several respondents argued that any environmental or personal benefits were outweighed by the reduction in recycling services. A small number of comments raised problems with space and storage of bins. Other comments bemoaned the extra time and hassle of sorting waste, or expressed concerns about hygiene or health hazards.

Council and rates

10 comments

A small number of respondents felt that reducing landfill would save money, keeping rates affordable or allowing the council to use that money for other endeavours. A couple of comments indicated an improved perception of the council and its green credentials.

Barriers and concerns

Barriers

343 comments

The compostable bin liners were a barrier for a sizeable number of respondents. The main concern was supply, with respondents suggesting the council provide more as people don't know where to acquire them or find them too expensive. Issues with the liners ripping, dissolving, and leaking were also raised, with people noting they have to double-bag their green waste. Others suggested the bags should incorporate handles or ties.

A significant concern for a sizeable number of people was the change to the recycling collection schedule. A common theme amongst these comments was people resorting to putting their excess recyclable waste into their landfill bin once they ran out of room in the yellow bin.

SUGGESTIONS ABOUT RECYCLING

The following suggestions were offered to help alleviate issues with recycling:

Providing education around how to recycle, including details about what you need to do before placing recycling in the bin, such as washing items or removing shiny labels.

Communicating more widely that the recycling bin can be **upsized** for free.

Changing the schedule to **weekly recycling** and green waste collection, and fortnightly general waste.

The difficulties of storing an additional waste bin, especially for those who live in small dwellings or apartments, was raised by a considerable number of respondents. People felt there were now too many bins or that the bins were too big to reasonably store, and that the amount of household green waste did not justify such large bins. Others were worried about smell or pests, while some raised concerns around the kitchen caddy taking up space on the bench or having issues with smell or ants.

SUGGESTIONS ABOUT BIN AND KITCHEN CADDY

The following suggestions were offered to help alleviate issues with bin and caddy storage and bin size:

Households that generate only a small amount of green waste could **share bins** to reduce the number of bins needing to be issued, stored and collected.

Adopting a model used in some European countries, where **communal drop off points** are set up so that each individual dwelling does not require its own bins for recycling, green waste and general waste. This also allows further separation of waste, such as glass, cans, paper and plastics.

Ensuring that **parks and community spaces** also have a green waste bin to encourage people to separate organic waste from general waste when out and about as well.

Consider **bin dividers** to allow those with limited bin storage space to continue separating out their waste in a more space-economical way.

The kitchen caddy could be **redesigned** to be more aesthetically appealing, take up less bench space, and clip shut.

A **bin cleaning** service could be offered.

A considerable number of comments discussed worries around compliance, with people concerned others might not sort their waste correctly (either due to laziness or lack of education) or use the correct compostable bags, or that passers-by might contaminate their bins.

A moderate number of respondents also noted that knowing what can and can't go in the new green bin was a barrier to using the new service.

SUGGESTIONS TO CLARIFY ACCEPTED COMPOSTABLE WASTE

The following suggestions were offered to help people know what can go in the bin and what can't:

Making sure that information about what can and can't go in the bin is made **very clear**.

Issuing information about what can go in the bin via fridge magnets, or stickers on the bin lids to make information **easily accessible**.

Creating a **detailed list** including some of the more obscure items that can and can't go in (especially as different councils have different regulations).

No barriers

270 comments

A very large number of respondents stated they did not have any barriers or concerns.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

The following varied suggestions were offered:

More communication about the whole **treatment process** and where the waste ends up.

Reminders about which bins are collected each week.

Extending the initiative to **businesses**.

Giving the community the option to **access** the compost.

Engaging with building managers and caretakers to **promote** the scheme to residents.

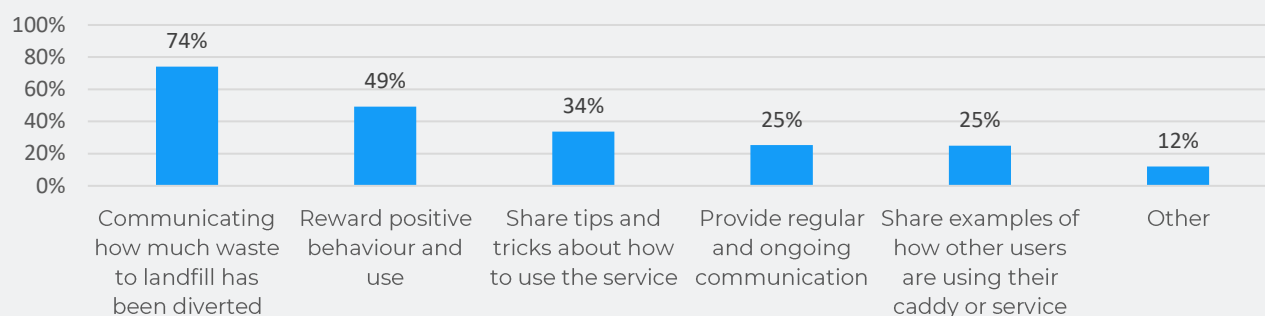
An **incentive** for those who participate at the beginning to get people involved.

Providing information on how to dispose of green waste that does not fit in the green bin.

Allowing **compostable packaging** to go in the green bin.

What will assist motivation to make change

What CoM can do to help motivate change



*Respondents had to select 3 options.

- > Communicating the positive impact of the change and how much landfill waste has been diverted was the most frequently chosen option, selected by almost three-quarters of respondents (74%).
- > Almost half of respondents (49%) felt that rewarding positive behaviour and use of the new system would help motivate change.
- > Thirty-four percent selected share tips and tricks on how to use the service.
- > Providing regular and ongoing communication and sharing examples of how others are using their caddy or the service were both selected by a quarter of respondents (25%).
- > Twelve percent of respondents selected 'other' and wrote comments which are discussed below.

'Other' comments

96 comments

A moderate number of comments were made about the green waste service, including: suggestions about bin liners (mostly calls to increase the free supply of these); calls to offer smaller bins; suggestions to 'close the loop' and give the community access to the compost produced by the new food and garden waste service; calls to reduce the frequency of pickup; and addressing issues of smell and hygiene by changing the design of the kitchen caddy or offering a bin cleaning service.

Several comments about information and communication noted that respondents don't need motivation or do not want further information about the new service. Several other comments called for more information on how to properly separate waste and more information on the new service, including composting demonstrations and more communication around the importance of composting and the difference made by the new waste service.

A small number of other comments suggested various ways to motivate change such as proper enforcement, including businesses in efforts to reduce waste, or encouraging the state government to have more uniform policies and practices around waste management.

Anything else respondents want to tell us

Concerns and logistics

214 comments

The most common concern by far was recycling, with respondents reiterating their disapproval of the change in the recycling collection schedule from weekly to fortnightly. Halving the rate of collection for recycling has left many with over-full recycling bins, and comments suggest that some people are now placing excess recycling in their landfill bin instead.

Concerns were also raised that the bins are too large to store or manoeuvre around small properties easily.

Respondents who were not yet eligible for the new food and garden waste service indicated a desire to be able to get involved and have access to the service, while some who had been included in the initial rollout reported issues such as not receiving all the items that they should have, such as missing bags or a caddy.

Positive comments

150 comments

Almost all the positive comments made by this group were general, with statements such as “Great initiative. Keep going”, or “Love the service”. Some respondents thanked the City of Melbourne for introducing the new food and garden waste service, or made other comments about appreciating the provision of free bin liners, valuing the environmental benefits of this program, finding the caddy bins well-designed, and enjoying the reduction in general waste as a result.

Suggestions

102 comments

A large number of suggestions were offered by respondents around how the service could be improved or considerations to ensure its effectiveness. The most common suggestion was around educating the public about waste management and the importance of composting organic waste, which they felt was the key to ensuring that the new system is effective and has good uptake.

Linking in with local schools, kindergartens and childcare could be good too. Kids are often the best ‘champions’ to their parents.

Community-based solutions were put forward, which suggested that some people, particularly those living in smaller inner-city dwellings, would prefer a more communal approach to waste management instead of individual bins for curbside collection. These suggestions included offering communal waste drop-off areas, setting up more public compost bins, entering partnerships with community gardening groups to allow compost to be used for community gardens, or creating a neighbour share scheme so that not every household needs to store their own bins.

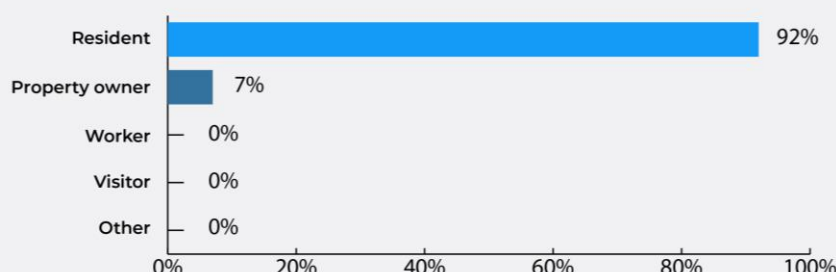
Respondents also addressed concerns about the bin liners, suggesting that the process of accessing bin liners should be made easier for people; that the bags should incorporate handles or ties so they are easier to tie up when full; and that the bin liners should be offered in larger sizes.

This is not a one-size-fits all solution - you should be talking with residents about any issues that they have with waste management and working together on solutions. There are too many bins now and many neighbours would be happy to share waste management facilities.

Respondent Characteristics

Respondent connections to City of Melbourne

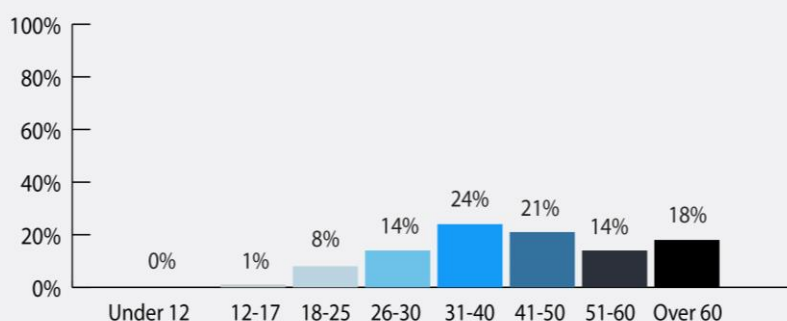
PRIMARY CONNECTION TO CITY OF MELBOURNE



- > By far the most common connection respondents had to the City of Melbourne was that they were residents.
- > Property owners were the second largest connection group, making up 7% of respondents.

Age

RESPONDENT AGES



- > The 31-40 years age group was most highly represented amongst survey respondents, making up almost a quarter of all respondents (24%).
- > Over three-quarters of respondents were over the age of 30 (77%), meaning that those under 30 were under-represented in this sample.

Postcode

Survey respondents lived in 20 different postcodes, with the top 5 being: 3051 (33%), 3031 (28%), 3003 (9%), 3053 (9%), and 3052 (7%). The remaining 15 postcodes were selected by 5% of respondents or less.

This report has been prepared by:

Global Research
150 Office Rd
Merivale
Christchurch 8014
New Zealand
+64 3 355 4562
www.globalresearch.nz



Global Research
Turning Information Into Insight