

MID MURRAY COUNCIL'S WASTE MANAGEMENT REVIEW TO IDENTIFY SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Waste management services across the Mid Murray Council district are being reviewed, with the community invited to share their feedback through an online survey on how the system can be enhanced.

The review is focussed on improving Council's waste services to ensure they continue to meet the community's needs, while also delivering greater efficiency and cost savings to Council.

The review process will benchmark Council's services with those provided in other Local Government areas, identify opportunities for improvement, analyse data from its 10 transfer stations and Cambrai landfill and assess how the current services support Council's long-term strategic direction.

Several changes are being considered as part of the review, including:

- Expanding the existing kerbside recycling collection to include rural residents;
- Delivering a new green waste kerbside bin collection service for properties in towns and possibly rural areas;
- Reviewing the operation of Council's 10 transfer stations; and
- Reviewing the current transfer station voucher system.

Mid Murray Mayor Dave Burgess said the review process and the community consultation survey would provide valuable information for Council as it considers the future of its waste services.

"Waste management provides essential services to our community, however, it is a high cost area for Council," he said.

"While Council recovers costs where we can, we are also mindful of the increasing impact of the State Government's Solid Waste Levy and the need to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill to lower this cost, as well as supporting our environment through increased recycling and reuse opportunities.

"Community needs also change over time, so it's essential that we hear from our residents about whether our existing services are meeting their requirements, or whether there's room for improvement."

For every \$1 spent on waste management services, Council estimates it currently recovers just 17 cents.

About 4000 tonnes of waste is currently sent to the Cambrai landfill each year, attracting a Solid Waste Levy cost of \$286,000. Council also spends about \$30,000 to process materials (green waste, concrete, timber, irrigation, pipe, tyres and mattresses) taken to its 10 transfer stations into reusable forms. While it receives income for other waste and recyclables, Council and ratepayers also need to pay for the district's kerbside waste collection system.

The Council has made progressive improvements to its waste management services in recent years, starting with the introduction of kerbside collection in townships and the completion of the roll-out of its rural Individual Bin Waste Collection service in late 2019.

Director of Infrastructure and Field Services David Hassett said the majority of households across the district now have the convenience of an individual-bin collection service, rather than having to dispose of their household rubbish at transfer stations or public bin banks.

“During 2019/20, when we completed the individual bin roll-out, we saw a 14.5% drop in the visits to our transfer stations from the previous year,” Mr Hassett says.

“This has been an encouraging change, and we’ve received positive feedback from residents who have welcomed having access to their own individual bins.

“This leads us to the natural next step in the process, which is to review what types of waste are now coming into our transfer stations, who is using these facilities and whether they’re still meeting the community’s needs.”

Council currently offers a voucher system for ratepayers that allows them to drop off two level 8x5 trailer loads of waste at a transfer station at no charge each year, as a service to the Community, funded through general rate revenue. However, the current system is expensive, and with the increase in electronic rates notices, it has become difficult to administer and monitor.

“The voucher system has acted almost as our ‘hard rubbish’ service for many years now, but changes to how we deliver our rates notices have made it much more difficult to deliver,” Mr Hassett said.

“We’d like to hear from people about whether this system is still working for them, or whether there are other viable alternatives such as having designated free hard rubbish drop-off days at the transfer stations.”

About 56% of people using the transfer station paid no fees at the gate in 2019/20, (through the voucher system, free green waste days, disposal of no charge recyclables etc) and about 38% of the rubbish taken to the stations was classed as ‘household rubbish’, much of which had to be sent to landfill.

Community feedback collected in the online survey will be used by Council – along with data from the transfer stations and Cambrai landfill, as well as benchmarking data from other Councils – to develop recommendations for improvements to the district’s waste management services to be presented to Council in October 2020.

To have your say, fill in the online survey on the Council website, (www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au/community/public-consultation) before 2 September 2020. Anyone wishing to speak with someone directly on the issue, can contact the Council (08) 8569 0100.

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