

From: Yarra Climate Action Now
Budget Submission re Organic Waste

We write again to implore Council to invest in a system for collecting organic waste from households and diverting it from our waste stream to a commercial enterprise where it can be converted into compost or biogas.

During the six years that YCAN members have been attending Yarra Council meetings, plans for municipality-wide processing of organic waste have dropped off Council's agenda completely.

Councillors and staff are aware that in the region of 52% of domestic rubbish in Yarra is organic waste. The costs of transporting this weekly to landfill are high, in terms of financial cost to Council and, of interest to YCAN, in the cost to our environment, by increasing methane released into the atmosphere. (Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, with a global warming potential 28 times that of carbon dioxide.)

According to information received from staff this year¹:

- the amount of domestic rubbish taken from Yarra to landfill in the year 2014-15 was 15,400 tonnes.
- Landfill fees and charges are \$91.92 per tonne.
- The cost of collection and transport of this rubbish to landfill was \$1.42 million dollars
- Total costs for general rubbish disposal is therefore \$3.06 million

The potential savings, if all organic waste were to be removed from the waste stream is 52% of that sum, ie **\$1.6 million**.

Not a one-off saving, but savings of that amount **EVERY YEAR** into the future. It is therefore well worth investing a meaningful sum of money in a system for collection and disposal of organic waste.

Council's efforts to reduce organic waste to date consist of encouraging residents to compost at home and participate in the Food Know How program. While both of these strategies are important, alone they are not sufficient to make a meaningful reduction in the amount of food waste going to landfill.

Not all residents have the space for a compost bin or a big enough area of garden to utilise the compost they produce. In fact 52% of Yarra residents live in high density housing, which offer limited or no opportunities for composting.

Not all residents have the time, the physical capability or the inclination to produce and distribute compost.

The level of recycling glass, plastic, aluminium etc in Yarra is high. The reason for this is because Council has made it easy for people to recycle. It provides bins for the purpose at home and in public places. It provides a drop-off point for items that can't go in the recycling bins.

If Council wants similar success with food waste it must provide the facilities for all residents.

Here are a few examples of how organic waste is handled in other places:

¹ Letter from Kim O'Connor, 30 June 2015

- **Greater Shepparton.** Green bins are provided to households for the collection of green and food waste. This organic waste is sent to a purpose-built facility where it is put in large tunnels, heated to 80 degrees and converted to compost. <http://greatershepparton.com.au/animals-environment-and-waste/waste-and-recycling/organic-green-lid-bin>
- **Colac Otway Shire** Residents are provided with a bench top food scraps bin and a green wheelie bin. Scraps are emptied from the small bin into the green bin for collection. Organic waste is transferred to the Naroghid Landfill where it is turned into compost onsite.²
- **South Australia.** All but one metropolitan council and six regional councils in SA participate in organics collection. Kitchen caddies and biodegradable liners (made of cornstarch) are provided to all households. Once bags are full they are tied up and placed in green collection bins. Councils send all organic waste to commercial facilities that convert it to compost. <http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/at-home/food-waste>
- **Sweden** Throughout Sweden there are systems for collecting organic waste, including large receptacles in streets where residents can take their organic waste. The waste is converted to biogas. 99% of all waste is recycled in Sweden. <http://malmo.se/English/Sustainable-City-Development/Recycling.html>
<http://www.molok.com>



Public recycling bins in Stockholm

Objective 1 in the *City of Yarra Waste Strategy 2014-18* is to “continue to work towards eliminating organics from the waste stream” (p.10). This objective is not to reduce organics in the waste stream by a small amount. It is **ELIMINATION** of organics from the waste stream. Yet again we have a strategy produced by Council without any pathway or funding to achieve its goals.

² Personal communication to Colac Otway Shire staff, 25 Nov 2015

It is well past time that Council allocated adequate funds to develop a municipality-wide process to meet its own objective with regard to organic waste. The investment will pay dividends into the future.