



Yarra Climate Action Now
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Yarra Climate Action Now Submission re Yarra Waste Minimisation Strategy 2018–2022

The change in the name of Yarra’s Waste Strategy over the years indicates the change in thinking about waste. In 2009 it was the Waste Management Plan, in 2014 it was the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy. This year it is the Waste Minimisation Strategy. Now that we can no longer send our recyclables to China and forget about them, working out how we deal with waste has become critical, and reduction of waste is the key.

An emphasis on waste minimisation, ie not producing the waste in the first place, has been at the heart of YCAN’s demands for a number of years, and we commend this strategy for its strong focus on waste reduction and the fact that waste minimisation is the focus, with a “greater emphasis on how we purchase, consume and use resources”.

We are pleased to see that prevention of greenhouse gas production is acknowledged as a primary goal of the strategy, through the reduction of organic matter going to landfill (and producing methane), and through using less man-made materials, mainly plastics, the basis for which is non-renewable resources such as crude oil.

Reducing the amount of food waste and diverting it from going to landfill continues to be a most urgent issue. YCAN is particularly pleased to see that, at last, the City of Yarra is moving towards an organics collection, and in particular a food waste collection. We strongly support the decision to trial a combined food organics and garden organics (FOGO) system which, as well as food waste, has the capacity to capture the garden waste that residents are currently putting in their general bins. It is also less of a behaviour change than food-waste only collection in the household. Residents who are currently putting food waste in their general bin will only have to get used to putting it in a different bin. Provision of a household organics bin is something YCAN has been arguing for for at least five years, also something council has steadfastly avoided. When those organics bins are eventually rolled out, it will be a cause for celebration!

Another welcome aspect of the Waste Minimisation Strategy is the selection of a suitable small-scale food scraps processing technology to trial for use at particular locations such as the Clifton Hill Depot, on-site at larger

MUDs and at commercial premises. YCAN will be following the results with great interest.

The exploration of closer collaboration with other councils to roll out waste campaigns and projects is also a sensible tactic.

We are delighted to see that the Proudly Plastic Free Campaign proposed by YCAN has been included in the Strategy. YCAN stands ready to support such a campaign, and rally community members to assist. We note that there is a suggested budget, but no actual allocation, and we will be vigorously lobbying for its funding through budget submissions.

We believe that the Victorian State Government has not yet done its share in supporting inner-Melbourne councils in solving the waste issues that face a densely populated municipality. We urge Yarra Council to call on the state government:

- to implement a stronger regulatory approach on waste reduction, including the banning of single-use plastics such as shopping bags, drinking straws and plastic take-away food containers
- to utilise the millions of dollars that are currently accumulating in the Sustainability Fund, which is expected to rise to \$531 million this financial year
- to shift the responsibility onto businesses to deal with the waste they produce
- to introduce a container deposit scheme
- and to provide funding for local governments to reduce the amount of food waste going to landfill, noting that Yarra residents often do not have the capacity to undertake composting in their households.

We note that a number of items in the Draft Waste Minimisation Strategy are not funded. Firstly, there is the funding of replacing out-dated stickers on residential recycling bins (Action 1.6). Reaching every household in the municipality is always a difficult task. Here is an opportunity to bring current waste systems to everyone's attention. Out-dated information has the potential to confuse and turn off those who might already be disinclined to recycle. YCAN does not consider this to be an optional budget item.

Other unfunded items in the waste minimisation strategy are: education and engagement campaigns (Action 1.3); a review of disposal of cooking fats and oils into stormwater drains (Action 3.6); establishment of a policy to support a circular economy in council's own operations through purchasing products made of recyclable (and recycled) materials, and not purchasing waste-producing, single-use products such as bottled water, plastic cutlery and disposable cups (Action 4.7). (We've added a few details there that didn't appear in the strategy!); and, of most interest to YCAN, the Proudly Plastic Free campaign (Action 5.10). These are all important strategies.

It is YCAN's view that the public has never been more aware of the importance of waste minimisation than they are at this point in time. There is a desire to do the right thing, reinforced by other bodies with much more reach than Council (eg the ABC with its ongoing War on Waste programs; Woolworths with the recent decision not to stock plastic straws). We urge council to fund the Proudly Plastic Free campaign to take advantage of this moment in time, and not to let the idea languish for four years.

We are keenly aware of budget restrictions that may tempt councillors to oppose endorsing the extra cost of the unfunded items in the strategy. However, we note that (excluding the replacement of bin stickers) the total cost of these other unfunded items is only \$43,000.

YCAN takes this opportunity to remind Council that, if funded, programs that reduce the amount of waste going to landfill continue to pay environmental and financial dividends well beyond the coming financial year. Failing to take action is never cost neutral where waste is concerned. There will be a cost. Not only in financial terms for next year and the years to follow, but also in terms of damage to the environment and our atmosphere.

We commend officers for this waste strategy and urge council to fully fund the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2018–2022 so that it can deliver these essential actions.

Carole Wilkinson
On behalf of YCAN