

Minutes

Refuse Disposal Facility Community Reference Group Portfolio Committee – Meeting 54

Date:	10 July 2023	Time:	5:30pm - 7:30pm
Location:	Encore Events Centre, Hoppers Crossing		
Chairperson:	Bruce Turner		
Attendees:	<p>Independent Chair Bruce Turner Phoenix Facilitation</p> <p>Wyndham City Councillors: Cr Peter Maynard Councillor (Iramoo Ward) Cr Heather Marcus Councillor (Iramoo Ward)</p> <p>Wyndham City Council Staff: Richard Maugueret Acting Director City Operations Darren Martin Acting Manager Waste Management and Disposal Chris Rachor RDF Operations Manager Ben Hart RDF Environmental Systems Officer</p> <p>Reference Group members: David Tsardakis Local Environment Group representative Hayley Scott Community representative Ian Domoney Community representative Joe Ferlazzo Community representative Karen Hucker Community representative</p>		
Apologies:	<p>Bianca Bragalenti Community representative Connie Menegazzo Adjacent landowner representative Milana Mansoor Community representative Paul Von Harder Ratepayer/Business/Advocacy Group representative Simon Clay Manager Waste Management and Disposal Stephen Thorpe Director City Operations</p>		

Program

Topic	Actions
1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies	
Bruce welcomed everyone to the meeting, went through the list of apologies and initiated a round table of introductions for the present members.	
When discussing apologies, Bruce passed to Ben who advised Milana Mansoor has formally requested to step down from her community representative role. Bruce noted a replacement representative would need to be recruited and suggested that a more targeted approach to recruitment, rather than more general advertising, could be appropriate.	
Bruce gave a brief summation of the Terms of Reference, outlining key elements including the role of the CRG and expectations of representatives.	

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Adoption of previous minutes

The draft notes from Meeting #53 (on 16 March) were accepted with a minor addition to Item 5, Bullet 3, Sub-Bullet 2 (elaborating a comment from Joe about the potential to have more drop-off points for specific waste types, in line with the '20 minute city' concept).

- With no other comments, the minutes of Meeting #53 have been updated and finalised.

The Action Tracker was provided at the meeting and brief updates (where possible) were provided.

4. RDF Membership renewal process update

Ben H advised that following Council endorsement of the recommended representatives, the membership renewal process for 2023 is complete.

Ben H also reiterated Milana's resignation from the position of Community representative and that there was to be further discussion on how to proceed with filling the vacant position.

5. Wyndham Waste Strategy and Waste Services

Darren provided a broad summary of key elements of the Wyndham Refuse Disposal Facility Strategic Plan (2019-2025) and an update on the Strategic Plan, noting:

- The Strategic Plan is currently being reviewed to assess how updated conditions might affect its implementation. This includes reviewing:
 - Waste trends as changes could potentially affect how resource or energy recovery strategies should be pursued and implemented; and
 - Changing costs which may affect the viability of some of the RDF's major projects.

Timeframes to implement the Strategic Plan were discussed. Other than noting that several items have run past the nominated timeframes, further discussion is not possible until after the reviews have been carried out.

The link to the Strategic Plan on Council's website is:

<https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/refuse-disposal-facility-strategic-plan#:~:text=The%20Wyndham%20RDF%20Strategic%20Plan,over%20after%20recovery%20of%20resources.>

Darren's summary prompted several discussions:

- Joe asked whether the long-term intention of the RDF was to sort or reprocess recyclable waste streams. The response was that while it depends on market conditions, there is no immediate intention to reprocess recyclable waste streams at the RDF itself. The first priority is to divert these streams away from landfill.
 - Bruce reiterated previous conversations (and key part of Council's vision for the RDF) around the idea of the RDF becoming a hub to provide resources for local businesses to carry out actual reprocessing operations ('green jobs').
- Karen asked whether there was progress reporting against the Strategic Plan. There is regular reporting, although Darren was uncertain as to its frequency (i.e., quarterly, 6-monthly etc.). Karen would like Council to confirm this so she can understand what the reporting cycle is.

Action M54-5.1: Council to provide update on Strategic Plan

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- Cr. Marcus asked how clothing/fashion wastes are managed. Darren spoke reporting about how the key was to understand the waste stream and then look at how cycle. to best manage these wastes. Discussion turned to the issues and challenges associated with the trend towards “fast fashion”.
 - Ian asked about the level of expertise in Council for each specific waste stream, as it would be good to have people who could be referred to, to review and understand potential material reuse(s). Darren agreed that this would be good, but reiterated the current strategy was to divert as much from landfill as possible, with materials sent to specialist contractors for further reuse/reprocessing.
 - Karen asked about the reuse shop that used to operate at the RDF, noting that it would make a great social enterprise. Chris acknowledged it was the disruption of COVID-19 that caused the reuse-shop to close, and that Council needs to review how to best operate this service in the future. Some further discussion followed about how this provides an economical option for the public to access reclaimed materials and products.

Several times through this series of conversations, a theme appeared around the importance of continued and/or increased public education on waste issues. This related to education about both household/ individual practices (e.g. what to put in which bin, waste reduction and reuse/ recycling etc.) and availability of waste services within Wyndham.

6. Member’s Report

In reference to the 20-minute cities program, Joe noted there are areas inside Wyndham that are more than 20 minutes from the RDF (e.g., Truganina) and asked about plans for these areas. Joe also noted smaller “satellite” transfer stations could provide coverage for these areas. Darren responded that pop-up recycling centres are a current strategy, but that the feasibility of satellite facilities was being reviewed. This includes how potential satellite facilities might operate (i.e., whether focused on a small number of waste streams or accepting a broad range of materials).

Richard noted that the forthcoming container deposit scheme was relevant to this discussion of local waste collection opportunities. Cr. Maynard reported that changes had been made to tip tokens to make them interchangeable, green bins have been made more accessible to renters and there is a review underway of apps that will make tip tokens more accessible to renters. Cr. Maynard also reported Fruit-2-Work had tendered for a contract to collect recyclable materials in association with the container deposit scheme. Fruit-2-work is a certified social enterprise that provides employment opportunities for former prisoners.

David discussed that community environmental groups are getting ready for plantings to celebrate National Tree Day (27th July). David also advised that Nature West is managing the unique grassland corridor to the north of the RDF, in conjunction with the Australian Rail Transport Commission. This work includes collecting seeds of plants dying due stormwater damage – in particular the critically endangered Spiny Rice Flower. Cr Maynard noted Council’s tree planting day is on Sunday 30th July.

David’s report led to some discussion around grasses to be used on the Cell 4 landfill cap. Ben mentioned the RDF Projects team are interested to have discussion with David, but that this is awaiting Simon’s return.

Haley asked about what Council is doing about separating food wastes, prompting some general conversation on this topic. Ultimately, food waste solutions need to be implemented at the kerbside, as it is too challenging to sort out from a mixed waste stream.

Joe asked whether there were stickers available for the inside of bin lids, to explain what waste can go in each bin. Darren responded that there are, but Council is looking at other options (such as QR codes) as there are frequent changes in this advice. Cr Maynard also noted that Wyndham News also has information about what can be recycled. There was some further discussion about the practicality of a digital-only solution.

Cr. Marcus discussed the broader lack of strategic foresight in managing new/emerging waste streams.

Hayley asked about how waste management programs offered by Council are communicated. These are communicated across a range of media, including the internet, pamphlets, newspapers etc.

There were several conversation points around how the management of green waste/organics:

- Karen provided an example of how private (i.e. non-Council) green waste collection works in Castlemaine.
- Darren advised that a key waste management strategy is to get as much organics out of the municipal waste stream as possible. What organics can be separated will depend on the specific treatment processes adopted.
- Joe asked whether processed green waste generated in Wyndham was sold back to the community. Chris and Darren explained that it is not.
 - Veolia manages kerb-side green waste collection and rights to that waste stream remain with them after processing.
 - The RDF sorts residential green waste with minimal processing (rubbish removal), but otherwise it is stockpiled and collected by an external contractor for further processing and it is then supplied to market.
- Bruce led a discussion of how home gardeners can do a lot to remove green waste from the wider waste stream, through composting etc. Several representatives provided further comments/examples around this point and Ian asked whether Council sells worm farms.
 - Council do sell worm farms. Further information is available at: <https://www.wyndham.wormlovers.com.au/>

The theme of waste education and the need to improve outcomes of these programs continued to be raised, both as a separate discussion topic and as part of other conversations. As part of these conversations:

- Bruce discussed waste education actions already implemented by Council.
- Chris advised that several waste collection contractors offer waste education programs, with Darren noting Council also offers these services.
- Cr. Maynard discussed how citizen ceremonies in Wyndham include some waste education to new citizens, specifically an information pack containing information on waste management services offered by Council.

Without minimising the importance/need for waste education, it was also acknowledged that unfortunately there are those within the community who refuse to learn or adopt responsible waste practices.

Action M54-6.1: Council to circulate a list of what it is doing/communicating regarding waste/recycling to encourage best practice

7. RDF Operations and Works update

For new members, Ben provided a brief overview of the site and the main areas being discussed, including the active Cells (Cells 5 & 6) and the area being rehabilitated (Cells 4A – 4C).

Chris provided a summary of operations and related works:

- Residual waste (going to landfill) from the transfer station is trending down, following identification and closure of a loophole exploited by some small

commercial operators. A 30% reduction in this waste stream is expected for 2023 compared to 2022.

- The quantities of green waste, scrap steel and cardboard recovered and diverted from landfill is trending up.
- The RDF receives on average 50-100 mattresses per week, which are completely recycled.
- Cell 6 airspace is forecast to be consumed by late 2025.
- Bulk Materials Resource Recovery Centre plant setup is still ongoing and Council is looking for operators.
- The wheel wash facility is being upgraded
- Litter nets at the site are being upgraded with additional mobile nets have purchased for the tipping face and netting purchased for the north boundary adjacent Cell 6. Additional litter nets for the top of Cell 5 (to the east of Cell 6) are being investigated.

Ben provided a summary of environmental and related works:

- Typically around 2 to 2.5 million cubic meters of landfill gas is extracted per month, mostly used to generate power. In May 2023:
 - Approximately 3,600 MWh were produced; and
 - The equivalent of 22,000 tonnes of CO₂ were prevented from entering the atmosphere.
- A complaint was received in May 2023 from a neighbouring property. An investigation found it to be related to both reprofiling works in Cell 5 and weather conditions. The work method was modified prevent recurrence and no further complaints were received.
- Works are proceeding on the Improvement Notice, which largely relates to rehabilitation works at the site.
- Cell 4 rehabilitation works are on a temporary hiatus due to weather conditions. These will recommence in late 2023 (Nov/Dec) when weather conditions are drier.
- Noise monitoring was carried out in May 2023 to investigate a neighbour's complaint of low frequency noise from the LMS Biogas facility. With no access to the complainant's property, monitoring was carried out at the adjoining property, in a similar line and closer to the facility. The results show some exceedance of EPA limits in the 40 – 125Hz range, but also indicate no significant difference in low frequency noise between ambient conditions (i.e., no engines running) and when several and then all engines were running. This led to the conclusion that the LMS Biogas facility is not the source of nuisance low frequency noise at the complainant's property. Any further investigation to identify the source of nuisance noise at the property (regardless of potential source(s)) should be within the property, consistent with EPA guidelines.

Chris also provided a brief update on the progress of Cell 7 works, noting works are awaiting cell design approval.

During the update, there were several questions:

- There was a question about the impact of increasing gate fees on illegal dumping. This relationship was acknowledged along with a summary of considerations regarding this. It was noted there is about 6,500 tonnes/yr of illegally dump wastes in Wyndham and a wider discussion began about illegal dumping and responses to it.
- Karen asked how carbon-neutral the LMS Biogas facility is. Ben will follow up with LMS and report back in the next meeting.
- Joe asked if there are measures taken to protect water birds from swimming in the leachate ponds. There are currently no active measures, but this is not a significant issue. Birds are rarely seen in the leachate ponds and seem to prefer water in the former quarry voids.

Action M54-7.1: Council to provide a response about how carbon neutral LMS is.

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- Joe asked whether there are areas in Wyndham to dispose of asbestos waste and whether there is a way to be compensated. Darren noted that the RDF (i.e., both landfill and transfer station) is not licensed to accept asbestos waste. Joe suggested there could be a system of making 'clients' (ie residents) responsible for what contractors do with their waste; through a tracking system based on vouchers provided to clients having to be returned to Council by the contractors
 - There was some further conversation about waste transporters taking advantage of people providing them with tip vouchers for profit.

8. Meeting Close/ Details of Next Meeting

The meeting closed at 7.00pm.

Next meeting: 5.30 to 7.30 pm, 11 September 2023 at the Civic Centre.
Ian advised that he'll be an apology for this meeting.
