

Changes to waste and recycling services: 4-bin survey

Thanks for participating

In October – November 2021 Horsham Rural City Council conducted an online and hard copy survey of residents thoughts on its current kerbside waste collection service and proposed changes to the service model.

There was a record response to this survey (over 1000) highlighting the level of passion and interest the community has for waste management.

Thanks to everyone who took the time to do the survey.



What we heard

The most significant issues raised with regard to a change to the current kerbside service were:



Bin odour associated with fortnightly pickup



Bins being too large (e.g. for elderly)



Bins being too small particularly for families



Cost increases of the proposed new service



Storage space for bins, especially units or flats

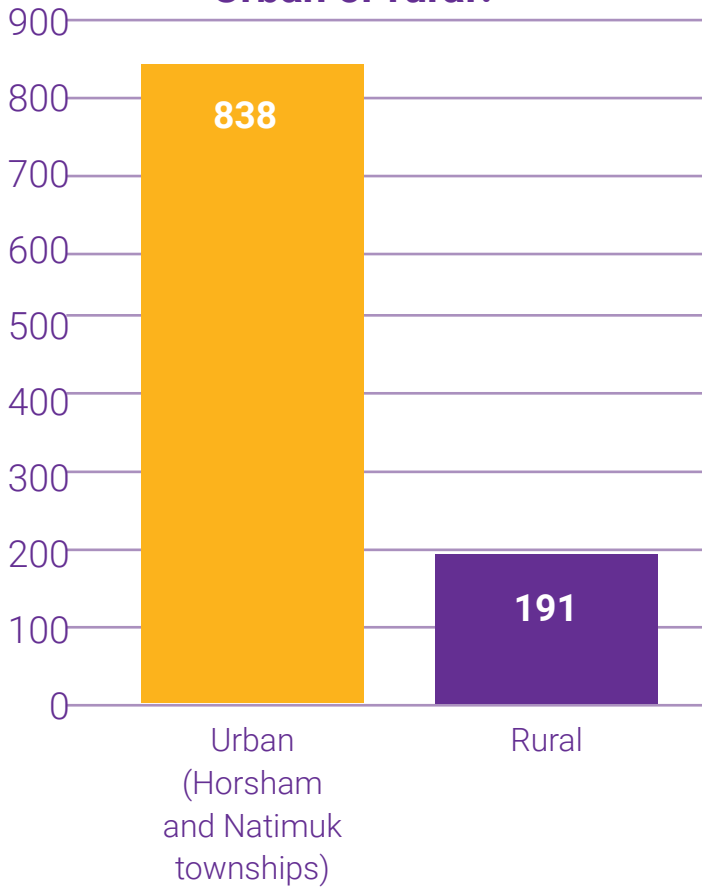


A desire of some residence to be able to opt out of the new system

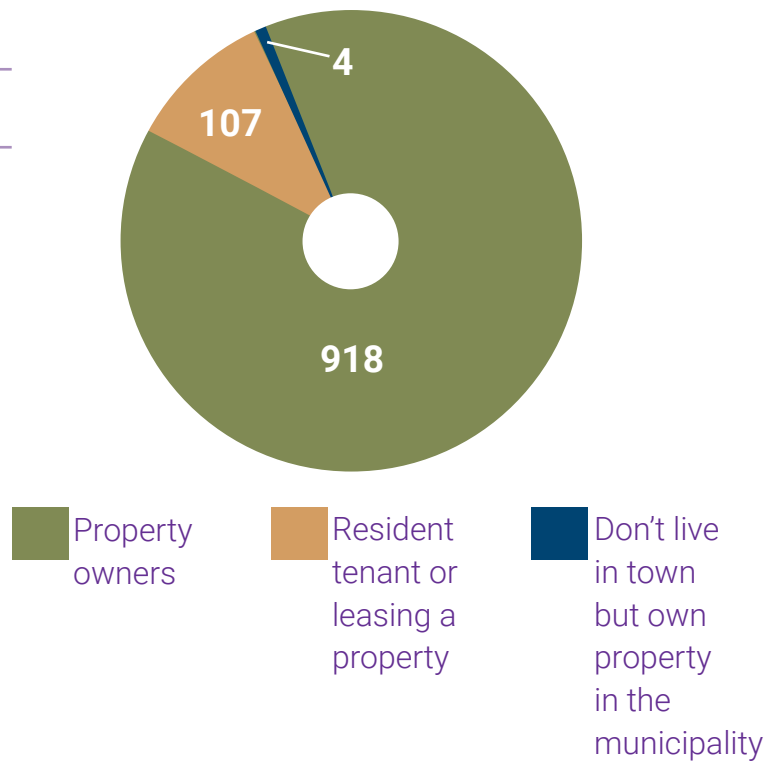
Who we heard from

HRCC received 1024 survey responses, representing the highest formal response HRCC has ever received on a community issue. 838 Urban and 191 Rural survey responses were received.

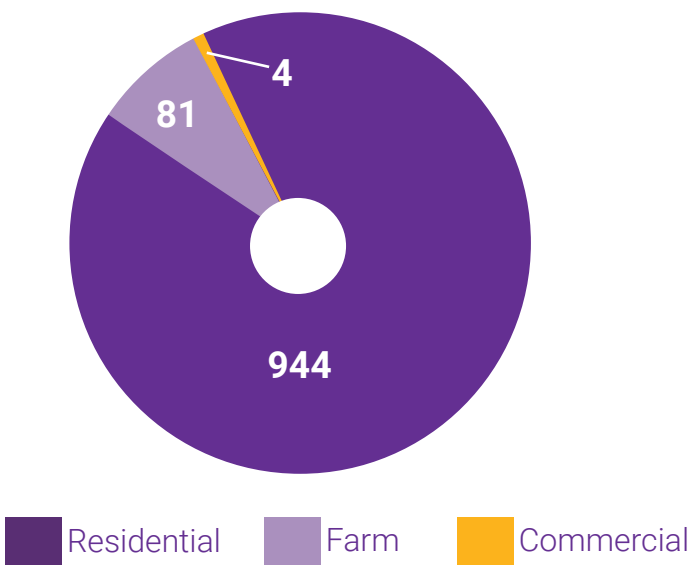
Urban or rural?



Property owner, tenant, or own property in municipality



Residential, farm or commercial



What you said about...

WEEKLY WASTE

"General rubbish still needs to be collected on a weekly basis at no extra charge. In summer time it would attract too many blowflies and would stink!"

"240 L general rubbish bin needs to be collected on a weekly basis. We already fill bins weekly. Do not want stench around house for up to fortnight"

240 LITRE WASTE BIN

"General waste must be collected weekly in the 240 L bin, at NO extra charge!!! Expecting general waste to sit in a bin for a fortnight, especially in summer is absolutely appalling."

SMELL

"I do not want my regular bin service changed to fortnight I want a weekly collection service, I do not want maggots and smell hanging around for two weeks"

COST TOO HIGH

"To keep the 240 L waste and have it emptied weekly without extra cost. We should not be paying extra as proposed nor should the bin be emptied fortnightly, disgusting."

DON'T CHANGE

"Do not introduce the proposed service, as it is an unnecessary additional cost that ratepayers would need to pay for. Do not introduce the two additional bins to the current waste collection service."

Ways forward from here...

WEEKLY WASTE COLLECTION AND LARGER BINS

Concern over a reduction in size or frequency of bin collection was the most common issue identified in this survey. This is a valid concern as fortnightly pickup of 240 L bins under current utilization behaviours will not be sufficient to accommodate many HRCC residents.

Experience suggests that the diversion of organics from the general waste should also reduce the potential odour for most customers. Should a weekly service continue in conjunction with the addition of organic bins there would need to be an increased charge to residents (see below).

SMELL AND HYGIENE

Both smell and hygiene were a significant concern for many respondents. The odour and hygiene risks should be reduced for the general waste bin by the diversion of organic matter to the FOGO bin (excluding non-compostable nappies and personal hygiene products which are discussed below).

The smell and health issues created by green waste can be reduced by the use of compostable bags, which can be used in a kitchen caddy, and other behavioural changes that will need to be introduced and encouraged through a robust education and outreach program.

Non-recyclable nappies and other personal hygiene products that are disposed of in the general waste bin will require specific attention when developing the new waste management model. We will work together with our community to find solutions that suit them.

BIN STORAGE

We recognise this will be a problem for some customers especially in units/flats. Solutions may include shared larger bins at some premises. We will look to other Councils who have implemented this change to find solutions.

DON'T MAKE CHANGE

This change to waste collection is mandated by the State Government. The changes are intended to benefit everyone by reducing greenhouse gases and the amount of waste going to landfill. General recycling is made more viable by removing glass contamination from the rest of the recyclable waste.

Removing organics from landfill waste will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. When organics breakdown in the oxygen poor environment under the ground, methane is produced which is a very potent greenhouse gas. This does not happen when the organics compost above ground.

GLASS BIN

Glass needs to be separated from other recyclables as it is a key cause of contamination. Broken glass and especially smaller fragments get mixed in with paper and plastic making them unsuitable for recycling. There was a lot of variation in responses to the provision of a separate bin for glass with many respondents saying they would hardly ever fill the bin and others saying the glass bin needs to be larger.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

We need to provide better information and education to the community. This was explicitly mentioned in some responses but was also demonstrated by the lack of understanding of the issues shown in other responses. Key messages we need to communicate:

- Explanation of cost-recovery model of waste management at HRCC
- Difference between Urban/Rural services and corresponding difference in price
- Non-negotiables mandated by State Government
- Details on the cost of operating the different aspects of the system
- Costs of the different options being considered
- Where recycling goes and how the recycling system works more generally
- Advantages and benefits of the new scheme
- Practical constraints limited some preferred options

Cost recovery model

HRCC charges a separate waste fee to urban and rural customers with each paying for the level of service that they receive. The charges for waste management within the municipality are based on a cost recovery methodology and as such all costs are passed on to those receiving the service and are not part of the general rates charges. The State Government has mandated the introduction of the four-bin service for our “urban” kerbside collection customers.



That service increase comes with an increased cost. Unless we subsidise the service, costs must increase. The effect of a subsidy would be those ratepayers who don't receive the service would partially pay for the service. This seems manifestly unfair. While nobody wants increased costs, the only way to introduce new services and attempt to keep the financial impact to a minimum is to reduce the level of current services (unless efficiencies can be obtained).

This is the balance that will have to be weighed and considered carefully.

There was no option to keep weekly collection and not pay more because the waste service operates on a user pays (cost recovery) basis. The only way we could have larger bins or more frequent services is if customers pay more.

What happens next?

A vast amount of information was collected with this engagement process and the most significant findings have been highlighted in the early sections of this report.

The full engagement report has been made available to HRCC Councillors to inform their decisions on the next steps in HRCC's transition to a 4-bin system.

Further community engagement and education will be an essential component in the successful transition to a new system of waste management for the municipality.

At present, Council is on track to introduce the 4-bin system in April 2023.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT

<https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/Have-Your-Say/Waste-and-Recycling-Services>



or scan the QR code