Auckland’s Waste Assessment 2017

Appendix H: Summary of Stakeholder Engagement Sessions
SUMMARY OF AUCKLAND WASTE ASSESSMENT
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

May 2017

Background

Auckland Council undertook non-statutory pre-consultation engagement with waste stakeholders on the 2017 Waste Assessment and, to seek their views and inputs prior to drafting the 2018 Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP).

This report summarises the sessions that were held with a broad cross-section of waste stakeholders during May and June 2017.

Who was invited

A list of waste stakeholders was drawn up using:

- Waste bylaw list of licensed waste collectors and facilities
- Current council contracts
- Staff contacts and industry knowledge
- Direct approaches to council by waste industry businesses and community groups
- List of previous waste assessment consultees

Stakeholders were invited to attend in groups of around 10 at a time, to allow for in-depth feedback and discussions. These were typically grouped according to market sector: e.g. community groups, waste collectors, construction and demolition companies, waste diverters, etc.

Seven different sessions were held. These were attended by a total of around 70 people.

Council staff attending meetings included Ian Stipple (Manager - Waste Solutions), Parul Sood (Manager – Waste Planning) and Michael Backhurst (Senior Waste Planning Specialist).

Feedback

A generic Powerpoint presentation (provided under separate cover) was presented to each group, with the final few slides tailored according to the audience at the session: viz. community groups, green waste collectors, construction and demolition industry, recyclers, etc.

Following the Council’s presentation, there was an open feedback period of around 30 minutes during which the consultees were encouraged to share their views on the waste assessment and their own observations on the current state-of-play and issues arising within the waste sector. Council staff provided input to the open discussion sessions, centred on the five key focus areas proposed for the next WMMP:

1. Advocacy to central government
2. Organic waste initiatives, especially commercial organics
3. Continue developing the Resource Recovery Network (RRN)
4. Construction and demolition waste initiatives, e.g. mandate Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Plans
5. Extend councils in-house waste reduction target
At each meeting it was made clear that the formal consultative phase (scheduled for late 2017 / early 2018) was the appropriate time for the waste stakeholders to put forward detailed views. The main themes emerging from feedback and comments are discussed below. These are not intended to be a full and detailed transcript of each session; they are merely intended to give a flavour of issues that were discussed and general feedback received.

**Main Themes of the Feedback**

1. **Advocacy to Central Government**
   a. **Increase Waste Levy**
      o There was general support for Auckland Council to lobby for an increase of the waste levy from its current level of $10 / tonne, with participants noting overseas examples where increasing landfill tax has been an important driver for higher diversion. There was support for differential levy rates depending on waste type (e.g. inert waste going to clean or managed fill would attract a lower rate) or area (regions with high landfill charges could charge a lower rate).

      o Some participants raised concerns that increasing levies will increase illegal dumping.

      o Participants suggested Auckland Council needed to collaborate more with other councils and the waste industry when advocating, such as through joint submissions. WasteMinz could also play a bigger role in advocacy.

   b. **Product Stewardship**
      o There was wide-ranging support for continuing Councils advocacy for a Container Deposit Scheme and Container Deposit Legislation (CDL).

2. **Organics and commercial organics**
   a. **Domestic food waste**
      o Most participants supported the proposed domestic food waste collection although some questioned why Auckland Council has only gone with food collection at kerbside rather than the collection of mixed food and garden waste.

      o A couple of participants suggested that sending food waste to landfills is an efficient means of generating renewable energy, and there was a perception problem with landfill.

      o There was some concern that Council must continue to support home composting of food scraps.

   b. **Commercial organics**
      o It was noted that commercial organisations will only be keen to divert organic waste if it doesn’t cost them more money than landfilling options.

      o Landfill operators indicated their data suggests there are more organics going to landfill than estimates shown by Auckland Council.
Some participants suggested we should focus more on getting synthetic or fossil-fuel based materials out of landfill.

Organic waste processors prefer to deal with bulk pre-consumer rather than packaged post-consumer food waste, as the cost to remove packaging makes it cost-prohibitive. There is also an increased pathogen risk. Local and central government should work with the industry around packaging rules that are conducive to separation of packaging and food waste. However it’s a national problem so we should be working on this at a national level rather than locally.

Anaerobic digestion (AD) was mooted as the best treatment option for post-consumer food waste, especially with the right AD method and infrastructure, such as investment in front end machinery to remove plastic packaging.

c. **Green / Garden waste**
   - Participants commented that there is a need for better data on the composition of ‘green’ waste, as much of it might be large trees that can’t easily be composted. Also, how much of the green waste is mixed with other waste and difficult to segregate e.g. contaminated with building rubble.
   - Waste data needs to be further split into: processible green waste; processible green waste going to landfill; non-processible green waste (e.g. trees); contaminated green waste.
   - There are good overseas examples of technological solutions to treating contaminated green waste.
   - We also need more education on sorting green garden waste from other non-compostable waste.
   - Green waste operators suggested that users of their service tend to be affluent; households are unlikely to spend $120 a year on a subscription service if the alternative is putting food on table. Market penetration is therefore less than 10 per cent of Auckland households. Householders would benefit from a transfer station bulk option that’s cost effective.

3. **Continue developing the Resource Recovery Network (RRN)**
   - There was general support from participants. Community stakeholders were keen for Auckland Council to further expand the network, and offer more resource recovery services to businesses through the RRN.

4. **Construction & Demolition (C & D) initiatives**
   - Participants agreed that currently there is little diversion of materials on C & D sites, and measures to support segregation would be welcomed.
- There needs to be better data on the composition of C & D waste.

a. Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery (WARR) Plans
- There was widespread support for mandating WARR plans for construction and demolition projects. However, a participant suggested these should be called waste avoidance plans and that they need to focus on two waste types:
  - Avoid / minimise / re-use of used deconstruction materials
  - Avoid / minimise / re-use new materials
- It was also noted that to be effective WARR plans need to set and enforce waste reduction targets, e.g. 80% diversion rate.
- A WARR plan without enforcement and monitoring will not change behaviour on-site. Time pressure on work sites may gazump waste sorting. The challenge will be especially with owner-operator and small contractors. Auckland Council will therefore need to ensure monitoring and enforcement of waste plan conditions and targets.
- One participant suggested having the equivalent of a PCBU (person conducting a business or an undertaking) liable and responsible for waste on-site. Another participant suggested a ‘green site’ induction for contractors and tradespersons.
- Participants also raised concerns around the lack of material specifications to allow the use of recycled or recovered materials, such as crushed concrete. If, for example, NZTA or AT would allow recycled aggregate to be used in roading, then there would be a very large and immediate diversion of concrete.

b. Waste brokering service
- Participants noted that Civil Share, a Trade Me - type website for construction waste, already exists.
- Given the time and space issues on C&D sites, waste materials need to be removed off-site quickly, so any brokering service needs to be very responsive.

5. Extend Auckland Council in-house target
- This was universally supported by participants. The commercial sector looks to local and central government for waste management best practice.
- However, some participants commented that Auckland Councils procurement processes gets in the way of waste reduction objectives, and need to include waste objectives in procurement documents, not just price. How will Auckland Council reconcile conflicting objectives between least-cost procurement and waste minimisation? Council should also stipulate using only recycled / recyclable materials in procurement
6. **Other issues raised**
   a. **Waste hierarchy and circular economy**
      o A minority of participants suggested Auckland embrace waste to energy solutions commonly used in Europe.
   
   b. **Cleanfill and managed fill**
      o It was noted that there is an increasing amount of contaminated soils going to landfill. Are there other options to deal with this, e.g. could contaminated soils go to managed fill instead?
      o Council has a duty of care to monitor the type of waste going to cleanfills and managed fills.
   
   c. **Kerbside recycling**
      o One participant noted that source separated recycling produces better quality materials than comingled.
      o It was also suggested that Auckland Council try changing behaviour to reduce the high rate of kerbside recycling contamination; e.g. Council contractors should reject contaminated bins at the kerbside, so residents quickly learn what can be recycled.
      o It was noted that the traditional markets for recycling in China are now not accepting all the recycling sent there; Council should insist on local paper and glass recyclers rather than shipping materials overseas.
   
   d. **Education**
      o Some participants suggested Auckland Council provide more information to the general public and small business on how to recycle and options available to them to reduce their waste.
      o Both industry and community stakeholders commented that there needs to be more information and transparency on the recycling process and how materials are recycled to provide reassurance that recycling is worth the effort.
   
   e. **Litter**
      o Participants agreed there needs to be both stronger enforcement and more education.