



## ECNT & COOLmob's submission to City of Darwin's Waste Management Strategy

The **Environment Centre NT (ECNT)** is the peak community sector environment organisation in the Northern Territory, Australia raising awareness amongst community, government, business and industry about environmental issues. We also assist people to reduce their environmental impact and support community members to participate in decision making processes and action.

**COOLmob** is the sustainable living initiative of the Environment Centre NT (ECNT) with a mission **“to help and inspire our community to live sustainably and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.”** COOLmob's role is to engage and keep the community interested in positive action. This in the past has been achieved by developing behaviour change strategies, conducting home energy audits, partnering with governments, industry bodies, community groups, businesses, schools and experts to advocate for the removal of sustainable living barriers in the Top End and provide accurate information to the community.

**Waste Free NT (WFNT)** is a volunteer group supported by ECNT who are a growing group of passionate individuals encouraging people to minimise their landfill waste we produce in the NT through education, events and projects. WFNT received a City of Darwin grant in 2018 to establish the 'Wash against Waste' Community Hub; a trailer design that will both functional as a wash station and also a point of education, open discussion and community collaboration. The trailer can be used at our local markets and small events to dramatically reduce the landfill waste they produce, particularly single use plastics. The trailer is expected to be up and running by February 2019.

We welcome a City of Darwin waste management strategy as the current diversion rate of 12% waste from landfill is alarmingly low and unsustainable, particularly when there is extensive available knowledge around the impacts of waste emissions on climate change and the possibilities to divert waste and increase resource recovery.

Education to all sectors of the community is going to be paramount to achieving any goals set out in a waste management strategy, and encourage the City of Darwin to look to other parts of Australia and the world for examples of successful waste diversion programs and best practise benchmarks. Waste has a cost, and this cost is growing, and without this communicated effectively to the community, the Council will not be successful in reaching any waste goals.

This submission will go through the City of Darwin's Background Paper and make suggestions and comments against what has been explored and proposed.

### **1. Capture current public interest and desire for effective behaviour change and to increase household diversion**

There is currently a high degree of public interest in waste in Australia, and the NT, due to a range of factors including those listed below, making the introduction of a waste strategy which presents a strong argument palatable by the public.

- the recent ABC program War on Waste
- Increased awareness of the impacts of single use plastics in the media due to successful international campaigns such as Plastic Free July
- Changes in market forces resulting in developing countries halting imports of Australian plastic waste
- Growing public concern around the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from all types of waste including food, fashion, plastics etc
- Growing public concern and realisation around climate change

This is a rare opportunity to create local, regulated change at a time when the community is looking to the government to take a stance on the issues resulting from our waste generation. The general support from the



community for the City of Darwin's single use plastic ban demonstrates their desire for the City of Darwin to embed bold targets and strategies to minimise the amount of waste being sent to landfill.

Community based reuse projects are effective in not only encouraging reuse, but also in engaging the community in a conversation about waste. ECNT through their programs Waste Free NT and COOLmob are able to assist with developing and delivering programs centred on community reuse, through conducting workshops or programs such as:

- DIY Beeswax Wrap making
- Liaising with the Darwin Plastic Makerspace for workshops
- Food waste leftovers into new dishes like fermented foods
- Repair Café for bikes, wooden furniture, clothes mending etc

**Recommendation: Increase waste education programs centred on hands on, project based behaviour change.**

### Fees and Charges

- The ECNT and COOLmob support a waste rate charge increase that is comparable to other local Councils providing this increase prioritises source separation at the home, including in multi-unit dwellings and is accompanied by thorough, objective based waste education projects
- Introduce a fee at Shoal Bay for disposal of various types of household waste including general waste and bulky waste, referring to items such as furniture, gym equipment, and non-recoverable kitchen and building waste that has come from the household source. It is considered best practise in Australia to charge a fee and is a successful incentive to encourage source separation.
- If the fees change, consider whether it is financially viable to offer optional bin sizes, motivating people to send less to landfill.
- Strongly encourage increasing prices for commercial operators to dispose of waste as this will incentivise self-sorting and recycling as much as possible

**Recommendation: Increase Domestic Fees and Charges as well as introducing gate fees and increasing the price structure of tipping costs at Shoal Bay Transfer Station**

### 3. Waste Diversion Targets

- Recommend that Darwin implement target diversion rates for each waste sector as this ensures the Council is accountable and it a great tool to educate and keep the community involved in assisting to achieve the targets
- Conduct an audit for baseline data in each stream, followed by audits every two years to influence education
- Council should compare waste diversion targets with other Councils in the area or that are also in isolated locations to ensure targets are ambitious but considerate of context.

**Recommendation: Introduce an overall waste from landfill diversion target as well as individual waste diversion targets for each waste stream.**

### 4. Green waste

- If a green bin service is introduced for garden organics, Council needs to consider that the size of majority of green waste in Darwin will most likely not fit within a 240L bin. Council could consider partnering with local green waste companies as this would allow for large items, like palms, to be diverted from landfill.
- If Council introduces a food organics and garden organics (FOGO) collection service, it needs to be all inclusive including meat, bones, paper towel and compostable packaging. This will ensure it can be used by commercial operators, to service the markets, and to decrease likely contamination for domestic services.
- Council could consider introducing the FOGO system as an optional service for interested households. Optional programs are likely to result in low contamination levels as the participants are interested in taking an extra step



to divert their food waste. This could be coupled with an optional smaller red bin to even out costs for those attempting to decrease their waste footprint.

**Recommendation: Introduce a FOGO system that accepts garden waste and food waste, including meat, bones, paper towel and compostable packaging.**

## 5. Bulky goods and illegal dumping

Conduct a waste audit of what is being placed out in Cyclone collections. This will provide Council with baseline data around what the different items and volumes are being presented, and what percentage are contaminants.

An introduced gate fee will hopefully decrease the amount of useable bulky goods being sent to landfill outside of Cyclone clean ups by encouraging people to consider either re-purposing themselves, selling secondhand or giving away, or stopping in at the Tip Shop at Shoal Bay.

As there is a correlation between rising costs of disposal and increased illegal dumping, Council needs to consider how they will deal with this. Education is a major factor in decreasing illegal dumping as is targeted and consistent fining of dumped items when there is enough evidence of the owner. If dumping 'hotspots' surface, installing cameras to identify the person or car dumping items is a proven method of reduction and prosecution in other areas of Australia.

As there are areas within City of Darwin that are managed by other authorities and agencies, unseen illegal dumping is relatively easy to undertake. Key priorities to reduce illegal dumping include strengthening existing relationships with other land managers and exploring opportunities for improving data collection across all jurisdictions. Education programs and marketing also empower and engage the community in supporting efforts to reduce illegal dumping. Opportunities to engage with community groups should be explored with a view to increase passive surveillance and reporting of illegal dumping.

## 6. Litter

In Australia, it is the Councils, regional waste groups and State and Territory governments that tackle litter, mainly through a range of behaviour change programs. Darwin City Council needs to develop and implement targeted anti-litter campaigns via social networks and other media opportunities.

Darwin City Council needs to improve waste management at community events and advocate nationally for product stewardship in packaging wastes. Additionally, appropriate extension of public place bin networks is likely to reduce the incidence of litter in public spaces.

Consider running or funding 'clean-up' events which incorporate attractive activities to raise awareness around how prevalent litter is in Darwin. [Seaside Scavenge](#), an organisation from Sydney is a great example of how successful and engaging these events can be to engage with those who typically would not attend a community litter clean up. The Seaside Scavenge model allows for litter to be traded for funky second-hand clothes, shoes, jewellery, books & much more at an on-site second hand market. This, live music and workshops, talks on marine life and litter come together for a great community event!

Waste Free NT and COOLmob would be excited to run events like this, on behalf of the Council, in Darwin.

**Recommendation: Work with local and existing, strong community organisations who are tackling litter issues to increase their capacity.**



## 7. Commercial and industrial waste

As Council has little regulatory control over the waste generated from commercial and industrial properties, focus needs to be on incentivising businesses and multi-unit dwellings which operate under a commercial waste arrangement to decrease overall waste generation, increase recycling, increase source separation and decreasing food waste.

Council could implement a range of incentive programs which focus on these key four areas by drawing on successful programs already in motion around Australia. Education is fundamentally important to any success in decreased waste generation and increased landfill diversion and should be the basis of any programs.

Successful projects City of Darwin could draw inspiration from include the NSW EPA Business [Love Food Hate Waste](#), teaching businesses how to reduce their food waste, the NSW EPA [Bin Trim Program](#) which offers a free recycling service to businesses to maximize their recycling and minimize their landfill, the Melbourne Degraeves Street <https://www.mwrrg.vic.gov.au/assets/resource-files/Degraeves-Street-Recycling-MF-R1-Final-Report-Melbourne.pdf>

Waste Free NT and COOLmob are able to assist Council with education programs, as they both have demonstrated success in delivering effective, business and community waste education. Waste Free NT were extremely instrumental in providing the education to all stallholders at Darwin markets including Parap, Mindil, Rapid Creek, Malak and Nightcliff on the single use plastics ban coming into effect in 2019. They did this through one to one education using 'allowable' products and breaking down various barriers including language, cultural, market as well as perceived loss of business and customer dissatisfaction.

Additionally, Waste Free NT played a vital role in raising awareness and educating the community and about the need to move away from single use packaging, demonstrated through their bi-monthly stalls at the various food markets, engaging Facebook and Instagram pages, and workshops conducted at the Seabreeze Festival.

### **The following recommendations have been provided to the City of Darwin in our recent report assessing the implementation of the Plastic Wise program to ban single use plastics:**

1. Education/Engagement- The face to face delivery of examples of suitable plastic replacement products give stallholders the best opportunity to discuss their individual concerns. To make this more time effective it would be good to have a dedicated evening (on several occasions) to meet with all of the stallholders and the market association committee members. This way stallholder concerns can be discussed in an open way to avoid repeated questions. It would also be great to have guest speakers who have already made the transition to discuss 1) Customer satisfaction 2) Difficulties and solutions 3) Money saved. We recommend having a representative from CoD Waste department to take on questions about waste disposal and how this will positively affect the Darwin region – waste management plus biodiversity.
2. Using the Waste Free NT market stall as support - WFNT works to the capacity of its key committee members who work on a voluntary basis. Our 'Plastic Free Market' campaign has had a great following, though we have noticed the increase in people who want more in-depth information and more so are interested in what the best BYO containers are and want to be able to purchase them at the market. We are looking to secure financial support so that we can prepare a permanent "market kit" and a permanent display of suitable BYO reusable containers for our market stall. We recommend further collaboration with WFNT as to the best minimal waste, minimal plastic strategies for marketplaces and beyond.
3. Bin Audit- WFNT plan to follow up on the Parap Market audit (completed in February 2018) with a second audit in February/March of 2019, after the markets have switched to plastic free alternative and the Wash



against Waste trailer is in action. This will provide the beginnings of a good data set that we can use to analyse the changes in waste generation and disposal. We recommend CoD support of this action and use of the data to help put in place strategies for improvement.

See the ABC report on our first Parap market audit <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-26/war-on-waste-market-impact-revealed-environment-centre-nt/9484530>

4. Bin Station System - We recommend a trial at a selected marketplace where compost is collected including compostable packaging to better understand issues with compost collection, contamination and product types. A suggestion is to partner with Nightcliff Seabreeze Festival in 2019, who already set up a waste separation bin system that includes a compost collection for the public and stallholders. This would be a good opportunity for a compost collection trial with a possible company that may be interested in providing a fee for service compost facility for the City of Darwin.

## 8. Construction and demolition waste

As local government has little to no regulatory control over waste generated from C&I sources it is important that Council focuses on assisting and promoting the development of closed loop systems that incorporate local market opportunities.

Council should have minimum recycled content percentages in all areas of Council procurement. Capital works projects such as roads could easily incorporate recycled construction and demolition waste, decreasing their carbon footprint and increasing a demand for recycled goods on the market. This could be provided as a case study or advocacy to NT Government to use Territory wide.

Additionally, Council needs to begin educating the building industry about correct waste disposal and one simple step towards this is through increased signage at the landfill, increased fees for certain types of waste as well as increased surveillance on site to ensure transparency.

**Recommendation: Partner with industry to host education sessions for all sectors of C&D industry.**

**Recommendation: Focus on assisting and promoting the development of closed loop systems that incorporate local market opportunities.**

## 9. E-waste and other hazardous wastes

If Council fails to separate electronic waste and other problem wastes from the domestic and commercial general waste stream it will lead to harmful chemicals and materials ending up in landfill as well as making the recovery and recycling of other materials more difficult.

Problem wastes can include electronic waste and mobile phones, paint, batteries, smoke detectors, fluorescent lamps, gas bottles, motor oils and fluids, pesticides and other toxic and hazardous household products.

Council needs to improve the availability of community services for collecting problem wastes as well as increase education of current programs. Consistent education message for the correct disposal of household problem waste is essential to create behaviour change and motivate the community.



Waste FREE NT and or COOLmob would be willing to assist with waste education programs around electronic waste and problem waste disposal. COOLmob previously ran a grant funded e-waste education project in 2016, and Waste Free NT already advocate and educate the community on how to dispose of mobile phones, e-waste and other hazardous materials. We have attached our recently completed e-waste report which will also be provided to the NT Government. There are many recommendations in this report that the City of Darwin could implement. We have listed only those specific to Shoal Bay below.

**Recommendation: Implement hazardous waste and e-waste recycling programs and run largescale, community wide education campaign around this.**

**Recommendation: Install drop off points around Darwin and at Shoal Bay. Consider partnering with organisations and businesses to become drop off points.**

**Recommendation: Improve the e-waste storage facilities at Shoal Bay Transfer Station and others across the NT. At Shoal Bay this may mean upgrading the existing recycle shop shed as it was not purpose built for e-waste. The upgrade could involve construction to allow e-waste to be separated and stored, and for the repair and resale of usable items materials to be sold back to the community.**

**Recommendation: Provide renters with tip passes so they are able to access free drop off services for e-waste at Shoal Bay Transfer Station.**

**Recommendation: Incentivise households to reduce e-waste by creating a differential landfill levy for e-waste – user pays model. Currently all users pay the same municipal tax rates regardless of how much waste they present for pickup so there is no incentive to reduce waste (including e-waste) produced. This model is used in Holland and has led to a reduction in the proportion of e-waste in overall household waste.**

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the City of Darwin waste management strategy. This is an area the Environment Centre NT and associated groups are committed to, particularly in the area of school and community education. We look forward to working with the City of Darwin into 2019, supporting their Plastic Wise program and providing school education in waste reduction and recycling.

We have attached the following information to our Submission:

- COOLmob e-waste Education Project Report
- Waste Audit Report – Parap Market

Yours Sincerely

Shar Molloy

Director