

Green Waste

Responses to Frequently Asked Questions & Overview

Q. *You charge me for delivering green waste to the tip, then mulch the waste and onsell it at a profit: you are making money twice.*

A. Townsville City Council does not sell mulched green waste from the tip. Council pays a contractor to shred green waste which then becomes the property of the contractor. Some of the mulched green waste is bought back by Council at a discounted rate, for use in public landscaping, parks and gardens. The benefits of this system include;

- * reduction of gas generation and leaching in landfill;
- * saving landfill space by not having to bury large amounts of green waste;
- * the production of a useful product (mulch). The contractor can sell this product to offset the cost of shredding and keep his processing charges at a level which Council can afford to sustain. (The cost to Council of green waste recycling in the financial year 2001-2002 was more than \$340,000).

Q. *I pay my rates for Council services that include a free tip: now you charge me for it.*

A. The waste management charge paid by ratepayers who use the waste collection service is the Full Cost Price of that service, including an annual disposal charge for the capacity of the bin collected. Those who don't use the the collection service or those who generate more than the capacity collected weekly are now required to contribute to the cost of disposing of the additional waste. Council's landfill operations are generally funded by gate charges, not by rates income. Commercial operators have paid tip charges for many years, including garden waste and "skip" operators removing waste from residential premises. The increasing costs of environmental compliance dictate that those who use the facility most should pay the bulk of the costs. Previous standards required of "dumps" do not offer a sustainable option and tomorrow's generation should not have to pay to dispose of today's waste. Townsville Council has long resisted domestic tipping charges and is one of the last major Queensland local governments (along with Thuringowa) to implement them. Also, three "free" weekends will be provided for domestic tippers,

when no charges will apply. The dates of these weekends has not yet been agreed between Townsville and Thuringowa.. Citiwaste is developing a “waste minimisation kit” for customers requiring such advice and these should be available shortly.

Q. *Why doesn't Council provide a transfer station in town?*

A. Such a transfer station would be another cost to the community, in particular to those using the facility. Also, the structural, environmental and social (NIMBY) costs would be difficult to justify when the distance to the existing landfill is less than 20 kilometres from the GPO.

Q. *How is it that a private contractor (Peter Flannigan) can provide a profitable green waste wheelie bin service for \$76 per bin when the Council cannot?*

A. Townsville City Council currently provides residential properties with a collection service capacity of 360 litres a week (240 litres of waste per week and 240 litres of recycling waste per fortnight) for \$2.72 or \$1.85 for just the waste collection. A contractor providing a fortnightly service for \$2.92 (\$76 a year) must also pay disposal or processing costs.

Council conducted trials of green waste collection in the mid 1990's but decided against proceeding because a survey of participants showed reluctance to meet the ongoing (forecast) costs.

Q. *If I put green waste in my ordinary wheelie bin, won't that fill the tip up quickly?*

A. The objective is to keep most organic matter OUT of landfill. While some organic material is necessary to promote bio-reaction in landfill mass, there is generally enough from general refuse. It is highly preferable for people to take some responsibility for their own waste and Council strongly recommends home composting.

Q. *Does Townsville City Council support recycling?*

A. Council has conducted kerbside collection for more than 10 years and last year (2001-2002) spent well over \$1.6-million. In an effort to curtail spiralling costs, and after an extensive review, Council has now embarked on a “best practice” kerbside collection service. From November 1st 2002 new purpose-built recycling collection

trucks will be employed to empty the 240-litre recycling bins, and a new Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) will be commissioned from January 1st 2003. This is a joint venture with Thuringowa Council and Visy Recycling aimed at providing a state-of-the-art recycling centre to cater for the sorting needs of the whole of North Queensland.

Q. *What action has Council planned for future landfill operations?*

A. Council must accommodate higher infrastructure and operating costs to protect the environment as well as the future cost of closure and remediation of current landfills. Council has developed detailed plans for a Waste Reception and Recycling Facility at Vantassel Street landfill. Budget provision has been made for the start of Stage One construction during the current (2002-2003) financial year. The completed facility will not only provide better environmental performance but also provide improved conditions for residential customers with a paved and roofed drop-off area, and enhanced public liability and occupational health and safety outcomes.