

Policy

Towards Zero Waste

Version 1.1

Adopted by Council at its meeting on 20 August 2020

Division:	Sustainable Communities and Environment
Section:	Resource Recovery
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Towards Zero Waste

1 Policy Objective

1. To ensure Council demonstrates leadership in reducing waste in its operations and service delivery by maximizing opportunities for resource reuse, repair, recycling and recovery, and in avoiding wasteful or toxic products and practices.
2. To clearly define a framework that supports Council and the community to pursue zero waste targets in order to:
 - a. Mitigate climate change and environmental impact where possible, protect health, create the jobs of the future, and promote sustainability; and
 - b. Plan and guide investment that facilitates and promotes outcomes that demonstrate zero waste principles.

The Towards Zero Waste (TZW) Policy provides Tweed Shire Council's (TSC) vision, principles and objectives which will be applied in the development and implementation of future strategies and practices that will include as a key focus zero waste practices and targets. This document articulates Council's organisational commitment to achieve pathways for improved outcomes where the objective of eliminating waste will be used to guide the development of future strategies and practices.

2 Policy Background

In 2018, Tweed Shire Council resolved to adopt a zero waste target across the Shire and include this objective in its Waste Strategies and Management Plans.

That year, the total waste and resources discarded in the Tweed Shire exceeded 62,000 tonnes. This was received and managed primarily through municipal kerbside collection services (60%), and as residual waste received at the Tweed Recycling and Landfill Centre as commercial, industrial and construction and demolition waste, and litter collected from public infrastructure and illegal dumping sites.

This included 9,620 tonnes of household recyclable material and 12,250 tonnes of household food organics and garden organic (FOGO) material which was collected in bin based household collection services, with this material taken to recycling and composting facilities for processing and recovery. In total, 33,590 tonnes or 54% of the total material disposed was recovered and diverted from landfill for reuse and recycling purposes.

The remaining 46% of this material was disposed of in landfill primarily because the commingled composition of household, commercial and construction and demolition waste is difficult or impractical to sort, treat and recover using current technologies. There is also a portion of the waste which is made up of toxic or harmful materials or products such as asbestos and building waste that cannot be safely recovered and reused.

Council's Resource Recovery Unit currently supports the diversion and management of Tweed waste by:

- a. Providing household waste collection, food organics and garden organics (FOGO) and recycling services;
- b. Managing the Tweed Recycling and Landfill Centre including the Tweed Junktion (reuse outlet);
- c. Supporting charity and opportunity shops to recover unwanted items of value for resale and reuse;

- d. Delivering waste minimisation and recycling education and behavior change programs;
- e. Providing and maintaining litter infrastructure in public places;
- f. Partnering with Councils and industries across the Northern Rivers region to investigate waste treatment and resource recovery solutions on a coordinated regional scale; and

2.1 What is Zero Waste?

International best practice policy defines a zero waste target as:

1. achieving at least 90% diversion from landfills, and
2. committing to a goal of reducing the amount of materials discarded, and any discards going to landfill as part of a continuous improvement system towards zero.

Zero waste refers to waste prevention and sustainable resource conservation practices, not just end-of-pipe waste management alone.

Zero waste is central to the circular economy model, which shifts the focus of the end-of-life of resources from a waste to be discarded, to a resource that can be recovered and used again. An overarching principle of the global circular economy movement is one of *shared responsibility* across the supply chain to maintain the value of products, packaging and materials. This ensures resources are kept in use, waste and pollution is designed out, the consumption of finite resources is minimised and new circular economy jobs are created.

Zero waste provides an avoidance strategy that benefits receiving environments, such as oceans and rivers, which are increasingly being impacted by litter and plastic pollution.

The Towards Zero Waste policy identifies the proposed approach for Council to navigate issues and to guide the development of strategies, activities and investments to pursue this aspirational objective.

3 Policy Statement

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of which Australia is a signatory, includes Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production. Goal 12 focusses on substantially reducing waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse. Goal 12 targets sustainable public procurement practices, global food waste at retail and consumer levels, and ensuring that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness.

There are three levels of responsibility that are shared by everyone, that relate to sustainable resource use and working toward a zero waste target:

1. Producer responsibility - at the start of the resource supply chain / waste problem; considering end-of life impacts as part of industrial production and design;
2. Community (consumer/citizen) responsibility - at the end of the resource supply chain / waste problem; considering consumption, discard use and disposal and avoidance options; and
3. Government responsibility - to bring both community and producer responsibilities together.

4 Policy

To achieve these objectives, Council will develop and implement strategies and implement actions across the following principles:

1. Avoid Waste:
 - a. Prioritise waste avoidance, encourage efficient use, reuse and repair,
 - b. Design and purchase products that minimise waste (particularly plastic packaging), are made to last and from which we can more easily recover materials,
2. Improve resource recovery
 - a. Support new businesses to establish in Tweed that will be part of a circular economy
 - b. Improve material collection systems and processes for recycling and recovery
 - c. Improve the quality of recycled material we process and produce
3. Increase the use of recycled materials and build demand and markets for recycled products.
4. Advocate at the state and federal government level to encourage the adoption of policies and mechanisms for manufacturers and suppliers that require the reduction or avoidance of waste and litter pollution.
5. Promote and enhance external programs and organisations that support the elimination and or reduction of wastes that are problematic for the community and the environment, such as pollution of waterways and oceans by plastics and litter.
6. Support programs that avoid the need to purchase products such as sharing, borrowing and leasing arrangements, to avoid unnecessary waste generation and resource use.
7. Improve education and information about the circular economy and zero waste in order to focus on the need for innovation or investment within businesses. This initiative will inform consumer decisions about better source separation, reduced contamination and reduce the use of single use plastic.

5 Consultation

The policy will be used to guide the development of a waste strategy and action plan. The consultation process will include the development of a Communication Plan which will incorporate:

- The development of a Policy fact sheet
- the establishment of a community reference group
- stakeholder engagement, and
- engagement with industry, peers and all levels of Government.

The Towards Zero Waste Policy would be a consideration in the development and ongoing management of all policies within Council.

6 Related Legislation

[Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997](#)

- <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1997/156>

[Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001](#)

- <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/2001/58>

7 Review Period

This policy and action plan will be reviewed within 12 months of the election of each new Council or more frequently in the event of any legislative changes or change in circumstances.

8 Useful Links

[Tweed Shire Council website](#)

- <http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/>

[Office of Local Government](#)

- <http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/>

[NSW Environmental Protection Agency](#)

- <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/>

[NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2014-2021](#)

<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/recycling-and-reuse/warr-strategy>

[NSW Circular Economy Policy Statement](#)

<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/recycling-and-reuse/response-to-china-national-sword/circular-economy-policy>

[2018 National Waste Policy](#) and [2019 Action Plan](#) –

<https://www.environment.gov.au/protection/waste-resource-recovery/national-waste-policy>

<https://www.environment.gov.au/protection/waste-resource-recovery/publications/national-waste-policy-action-plan>

[Ellen Macarthur Foundation](#)

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/>

[Zero Waste International Alliance](#)

<http://zwia.org/>

Version Control:

Version History		
Version #	Summary of changes made	Date changes made
1.0	<i>New Policy</i>	<i>Adopted on 20 August 2020</i>
1.1	Reviewed as part of Policies Review and no changes required.	16 June 2022