

Dear Antonia,

Thanks for the opportunity to provide feedback, for Maroondah's waste strategy.

I submit this feedback as a resident of Maroondah Council. But I am also a sustainability and waste specialist and freelance consultant for local councils, schools, businesses and not-for-profit organisations, such as Zero Waste Victoria.

I think the strategy is thorough and is set to position Maroondah as a council who's seen to be proactively and innovatively managing.

The stand out consideration, is that I would recommend against subsidies for the purchase of mulchers, as this subsidy could be better placed funding quality machinery for community access, rather than encouraging the purchase of machinery for households, that may only use it several times a year.

I have noted my feedback in order of appearance in the strategy draft

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of my comments to gain clarification, please be in touch. [Kirsty@sustainabilitypathways.com.au](mailto:Kirsty@sustainabilitypathways.com.au)

- **Regarding Advanced waste treatment procurement.**

It's good to note that Maroondah, will only commit to the new facility if potential negative outcomes are appropriately addressed. Because there is a risk of community backlash, if they're not properly informed, and/or of there are perceived environmental or social risks.

AWRRT has the potential to manage residual waste that would have otherwise gone to landfill. And reducing landfill is something people want to support. A significant important consideration, is contractual arrangements around this. And this relevance of this is often disregarded.

Facilities that use waste for feedstock to fuel energy production, typically require minimum amounts of waste, to be viable. The risk of this to the community, is the council being locked into contracts to supply a minimum amount of waste. Which could inhibit recovery of resources for recycling or waste avoidance practices.

Therefore **council should ensure that contractual arrangements are on a 'waste arising basis'**, meaning there is only an obligation to deliver waste that cannot be diverted through other waste reduction schemes. This allows for future innovations to divert greater amounts of waste and recover material, without an obligation for council to supply a minimum amount of waste for feedstock.

There are also other social and environmental considerations, that may not affect Maroondah directly. But the disposal of our waste should not impact other communities, so there is a lot to consider with this.

- **FOGO**

I support FOGO services, as long as they allow for the continuation of home and community composting. A declaration should be available for home composters, so they don't need to pay for a service they don't require.

- Education also needs to be provided about FOGO with readily available on a website or app with FAQ's, so people don't freak out with kitchen compost systems, when things go wrong. Eg when they find critters like maggots jump out, and sterilise their house – literally as a result – because

they had no idea. True story, she was totally freaked out.

- **Standardised bin lids**

I support the concept of standardised bin lids across Victoria. However the amount of waste this will potentially create if bins are replaced is significant.

Maroondah could consider replacing only the lids, or if this isn't practical, placing stickers on the lid and/or bin in the appropriate colour scheme. This approach will save rate-payer money and reduce waste.

- **Repair Café's**

Operational grants for repair cafés would be highly valued by the community. As would the provision of facilities to operate them via inkind grants.

Repair cafés rely heavily on volunteers, and this takes a lot to coordinate. Being able to pay a co-ordinator would take the burden off these groups, and allow them to achieve a greater reach. This would generally be a part time position, or could be supported by community houses.

- **Subsidising reusable nappies and sanitary**

I strongly support reusable nappies and sanitary. However while I understand why they are categorised together, it could be better received if these are itemised separately – at least when it comes to promotion of it.

The Victorian government has announced it will provide school students to free sanitary products. However, at the time of this submission, they are only providing disposable sanitary. Young girls should be able to make an informed choice. Education around this would be incredibly valuable.

It's also important the information about cloth nappies, is readily available to expectant mothers. It would be great if hospitals in Maroondah were encouraged to use cloth nappies again. When I had my first child the hospital only provided cloth nappies. 2 years later this had totally changed, which is unfortunate.

- **Mulching subsidies**

*I recommend against providing subsidies for home mulchers.* A decent mulcher costs upwards of \$2,000, and takes space to store. Cheaper mulchers will only manage sticks, and don't perform as well. Most home owners will only use mulchers a few times a year.

It would be better to consider making quality mulchers available on loan scheme. An accessible fee could apply with discounts for concession card holders.

With better mulchers available, larger branches can be managed, and the education around the value of mulching to use on site, would also add value too.

- **Additional recycling bins**

Before offering additional recycling bins, I recommend offering education or consultation to ensure the bins are being used appropriately. Kerbside waste audits show there are significant amounts of items incorrectly placed in recycling. This should be assessed before offering a second recycle bin.

Any additional fees should also be considered, with an appropriate option to waive the fee in select circumstances. Some councils offer additional recycling bins at no additional cost or

reduced cost, for larger families or those with medical conditions.

- **Waste transfer station**

It would provide greater accessibility for council to provide waste-transfer station or accessible collection points for extended recycling programs.

While I've been known to hold something for months until I can dispose of it properly, most people would prefer deal with it in a timelier manner. And will not store waste for 2-3 months waiting for councils next drop-off / collection.

- **Recycled content purchasing policy**

I whole-heartedly support a recycled-content purchasing policy. If we aren't using recycled products, then we are not recycling

- **Educating and informing council staff**

Educating and informing Council staff is essential. This should be done, for all staff members, especially those who work in public facilities, so that council can set a best practise example.

- **Educational waste sticker**

It's important to date this information and have a means of easily replacing stickers and other waste education materials, if and when required. Too often I've seen council bins with out-of-date information. So providing this in a means which is easy to update will be highly beneficial.

- **Games**

I see games as a novelty for kids. But if it's proven to work, then good luck with it.

- **Incentives to reduce waste**

It would be great see incentives offered to households who reduce the amount of waste to landfill by avoiding packaging and items that can't be recycled. I'm not the only one in Maroondah who has an empty general waste bin, most of the time. And while I don't need the incentive, or recognition. By promoting what others are achieving, can inspire others to reduce waste too.

- **Mobile phone app**

I love the idea of an app, especially for items that can be recycled, but not in kerbside collections. However would it be more valuable, if this was done on a state level, rather than every council having their own app.

This would make it more user friendly for people who work and live in different council areas.

Maybe in an ideal world - but it really should be done on a state level

- **Education programs**

Education programs are an essential component to create behaviour change and improve sustainable actions. Councils which have a team of internal sustainability / waste education staff, and outsource for events and to support specific campaigns eg. Introduction of FOGO, tend to have greater community support. With more people trying to recycle right, and avoid, reuse etc. Which is always great to see.

- **Advocating for better outcomes**

Advocating to the state and federal government is important for all local councils, but most of them don't do it, as often as they could. While there are representative organisations for councils, who may do this, if the government calls for submissions, it strengthens the message when councils make their own submission too. It also gives an opportunity to inform the process

directly for the community, rather than relying on a peak body that may make generalisations that don't always specifically apply to every council.

Advocacy from councils, has never been more important, because councils are the ones that are doing the work to manage the waste, so they should be involved in informing policy and strategy that are developed for this.

- **Single-use plastic**

It's great to see that Maroondah is looking to develop a policy to single-use plastic. It's best practise to replace this with something that's reusable, as non-plastic single-use often still creates avoidable waste.

While promoting that it's plastic-free has an appeal, replacing single-use, with single use, is often creating one problem, by replacing it with another.