

MAYOR'S MINUTE

4 March 2023



DAVID ROBERTSON MAYOR, SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL

TRANSFER STATIONS AND WASTE FEES

Southern Grampians manages a total of eight Transfer Stations around the region, located in Hamilton, Dunkeld, Coleraine, Cavendish, Glenthompson, Peshurst, Branxholme and Balmoral. The Hamilton transfer station is open seven days with the outer townships open a minimum two days a week (excluding public holidays).

We also provide kerbside services in townships for general waste, recyclables, FOGO and will be introducing a fourth addition for glass as required by the State Government in the not-so-distant future. Last financial year, we serviced over 6,344 general waste kerbside collection bins with almost 4,000 tonnes of recyclables and green waste generated from those kerbside services.

Waste disposal and separation of waste is a core service that Council provides to the community, but it comes at a cost. Transfer Station fees are always a hot topic. I am often asked 'why are the fees so high?'. I'd like to take the opportunity to explain why charges are set the way that they are.

Recycling that comes through our gate at the transfer station is transported to our recycling contractor for processing, where it is broken down into reusable fabrications. These facilities do not take our recycling for free – it's service we as a Council must pay for. For example, recyclables cost \$99/tonne which doesn't include the cartage costs. This isn't a cost we can absorb or subsidise – it's a user pays service.

All green waste dumped at the transfer station costs us up to \$40,000 a year to chip and mulch alone. Contrary to popular commentary, we do not resell this for a profit. It contains weeds and as such we cannot resell or reuse without separation – which comes at a cost also. So we do charge to residents to get rid of this – because it costs us to process it.

While general waste management costs Council \$255.81/per tonne to process which includes cartage to Corangamite, landfill gate fees and EPA Levy. Our staff costs are not included in this figure. Annually, we transfer approximately 4,900 tonnes of general waste to Corangamite.

So let me be clear.

Council does not make a profit from Transfer Station fees. Fees collected solely cover the costs involved in disposing of our regions waste, ongoing facility maintenance, and appropriate staffing. I would encourage all residents who use our transfer stations to take this into consideration when contemplating associated fees.

Our FOGO or Food Organics and Garden Organics introduced in 2020, is a program that turns our organic waste items like food scraps and garden clippings into a compost. Now for those who challenge the need for FOGO – this was a State Government requirement. However, this program has already seen an increase in our waste diversion from landfill up from 44.23% in 2017/18 to 79.24% in 2021/22. That is a metric that we as a community can feel proud of.

Council continues to explore alternative and cost-efficient waste options for the Southern Grampians.

ALTERNATIVE RECYCLING OPTIONS

There are several items that residents can dispose of for free at the Hamilton Transfer Station including microwaves, small household batteries, degassed fridges, fluorescent tubes, mobile phone charges, televisions, computers, printers and associated hardware. We also accept steel products for no cost.

You can drop small alkaline/lithium batteries at Aldi supermarkets for no charge, printer charges at Harvey Norman, and mobile phones at Telstra or Optus stores. If you have clothing or furniture in good condition, take to appropriate second-hand stores and donate.

Alternatively, if you find yourself filling your kerbside bins full the to brim each fortnight and frequenting the transfer stations with your overflow waste – take your time to reflect upon your own household practices and see where you can minimise your own waste.

Composting, chickens, reusable bags and cutting down on plastic items when you shop can all contribute to a reduced reliance on waste services.

A reminder please that our Transfer Station Attendants do not set the fees and charges for these facilities. These are set and influenced by the costs involved to process the waste. Transfer Station Attendants are doing their job which is to service our community and should not face verbal abuse from those unhappy with waste charges.

We are all part of the Southern Grampians community so please remember this when using Transfer Station facilities and any Council services.

Thanks again for all residents who donated their time for the Clean Up Australia Day activities across the region and also to Hamilton Rotary for their contributions to the efforts.