

Response to the Office of the Auditor General Audit of Local Government waste management service delivery

October 2020



Status of this Submission

This Submission has been prepared through the Municipal Waste Advisory Council (MWAC) for the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA). MWAC is a standing committee of WALGA, with delegated authority to represent the Association in all matters relating to solid waste management. MWAC's membership includes the major Regional Councils (waste management) as well as a number of Local Government representatives. This makes MWAC a unique forum through which all the major Local Government waste management organisations cooperate.

This Submission therefore represents the consolidated view of Western Australian Local Government. However, individual Local Governments and Regional Councils may have views that differ from the positions taken here.

This Submission was endorsed by the Municipal Waste Advisory Council on Wednesday 28 October 2020.

Introduction

The Association thanks the Office of the Auditor General for the rigorous assessment of Local Government waste management service delivery and the comprehensive consultation process which accompanied this audit. This Submission from the Association outlines the various activities that the Local Government sector is undertaking and key commitments regarding the recommendations in the Report.

The Key Findings in the Auditor General Report were:

- Local Government entities deliver essential waste collection and drop-off services but few are likely to meet State and community expectations to avoid and recover waste
- State and local waste planning and data capture is inadequate
- Wider uptake of existing better practice waste management methods could be key to improving waste recovery
- The State Government has made good progress since 2016, but LG entities need more support to address local challenges.

Response to Recommendations

The Auditor General's Report split the recommendations up into areas that different entities should progress either individually or together - Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Waste Authority and Local Government sector. The Association considers there are some areas, where the Local Government sector, working with WALGA, can lead the implementation of particular recommendations. Table 1 – 3 identify the recommendations and provide specific comment.

Table 1: Waste Authority and DWER should work together on these recommendations

Recommendation	WALGA comment
1. provide support to LG entities by: a. preparing a State waste infrastructure plan to ensure alignment with the State planning framework b. identifying local Perth, Peel and regional reprocessing facility requirements and markets	1 a and b – fully support the recommendation. As identified in the WALGA Submission to Infrastructure WA, some types of infrastructure planning are best undertaken at the State or Regional level and it is entirely appropriate that the State should undertake this work.

<p>for recyclable materials, particularly for organic materials</p> <p>c. continuing to develop better practice guidance for LG entities to manage key waste streams and problematic wastes</p> <p>d. engaging with individual Perth, Peel and regional LG entities to help understand, identify and address their local challenges, risks and waste management requirements</p>	<p>c. The Association would note that the Guidelines need to be developed collaboratively with Local Governments to ensure they are fit for purpose and will easily be understood and implemented by Local Governments.</p> <p>d. The Association can facilitate engagement with Local Governments to assist the Waste Authority and DWER in relation to this recommendation.</p>
<p>2. support LG entities to improve the accuracy of their waste and recycling data in line with the Waste Data Strategy by:</p> <p>a. providing additional training and guidance for LG entities on data collection, reporting and quality control requirements</p> <p>b. developing and implementing appropriate controls to minimise the risk of inaccurate data supplied by contractors</p>	<p>Support the recommendation, however noting that the new compulsory reporting requirements will assist in ensuring accurate data provision.</p>
<p>3. provide LG entities with materials that explain the cost and environmental benefits of adopting a 3-bin FOGO system</p>	<p>As the exact system / contractual arrangements in place will differ for each Local Government an overall cost/benefit for implementing FOGO will vary. The EMRC has developed a business case approach, which it has used with its member Local Governments, to assess the viability of FOGO. The Association has applied for a WasteSorted Grant to allow this process to be implemented with Local Governments.</p>
<p>4. engage with LG entities to develop consistent and regular statewide messages, education and behaviour change programs for all LG entities and contractors that align with Waste Strategy 2030 targets.</p>	<p>Through the Consistent Communication Collective the process of consistent and collaborative education and behaviour change is well in place. The Association will be seeking formal commitment, through a Memorandum of Understanding, from Local Governments and Preferred Suppliers to embed the consistent approach.</p>

Table 2: DLGSC, Waste Authority and DWER should work together on these recommendations

Recommendation	WALGA comment
<p>5. provide guidance for LG entities to collect and publicly report consistent waste and recovery financial and performance data.</p>	<p>Support recommendation. Regarding financial performance, Local Governments vary in how they charge for waste management services, so there are likely to be some inconsistencies. For example including the waste services charge in the overall rate, or charging it separately as a service fee. Feedback from Local Government also noted that some information relating to the financial considerations could be commercial in confidence.</p>

Table 3: Local Governments should

Recommendation	WALGA comment
6. provide regular community updates on efforts to recover waste and meet Waste Strategy 2030 targets and seek community feedback where appropriate	Recommendation supported. Promoting the achievements of the community in relation to waste avoidance and recovery will ensure the community understands that their efforts do make a difference.
7. consider preparing waste plans, which demonstrate how the LG will contribute to relevant Waste Strategy 2030 headline strategies. These plans should be publicly available	Local Governments in Perth/Peel and Regional Centres have been required to develop waste plans. If there is a requirement for other Local Governments to develop plans they need to be simplified versions of what has been released to date, which are specific to the size of the Local Government and align with the compulsory data reporting requirements.
8. include performance measures in contracts with service providers to recover more waste without adding significant costs	WALGA is currently working on a Guideline for Better Practice Procurement of Waste Services. This will assist in ensuring, at a sector wide level, measures such as this can be included.
9. consider providing incentives for the community to minimise waste production.	Many Local Governments provide incentives for waste minimisation, such as Plastic Free July. What is needed in this area is an evidence based approach which provides Local Governments with the impact of these approaches. This would give Local Governments a business case for waste avoidance, based on costs of intervention and potential savings as a result. For example, Plastic Free July quantified the waste avoidance as 27 kg per person.