

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

Melbourne—Tuesday, 22 October 2019

#### MEMBERS

Mr Cesar Melhem—Chair

Mr Clifford Hayes—Deputy Chair

Mr Bruce Atkinson

Ms Melina Bath

Mr Jeff Bourman

Mr David Limbrick

Mr Andy Meddick

Dr Samantha Ratnam

Ms Nina Taylor

Ms Sonja Terpstra

#### PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Georgie Crozier

Dr Catherine Cumming

Mr David Davis

Mr Tim Quilty

**WITNESSES**

Cr Danae Bosler, Mayor,

Mr Chris Leivers, Director, City Works and Assets, and

Mr Joseph Agostino, Yarra City Council; and

Mr Andrew Croft, Waste Management Coordinator, Banyule City Council.

**The CHAIR:** The Committee is hearing evidence today in relation to the Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management, and the evidence is being recorded. I would like to welcome witnesses Mr Croft from Banyule City Council and Mayor Bosler, and also from Yarra City Council we have got Mr Leivers and Mr Agostino. Thank you for making yourselves available today. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you give today is protected by law. However, any comment repeated outside this hearing may not be protected. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the Committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament. All evidence is being recorded—I have stated that earlier—and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript within the next few days. We have got 40 minutes for this. As you were here earlier for the previous submissions, can I ask you if we are able to keep the presentation to 5 minutes. If I could ask you to highlight the big-ticket items in your specific council, not repeating what other councils have done, that would be excellent. Who would like to go first?

**Cr BOSLER:** I will start first if that is okay. Thank you so much for having me. I am absolutely excited to be here, and I am very appreciative that you did not roster me on at the same time as Comrade Mayor Dick—I might actually get the chance to say something, so I am most appreciative of that!

I will contain my comments. I am sorry that the pack said that Yarra did not make a submission, because we did make a submission and Cesar did receive it. I will keep my comments very brief, but basically Yarra City Council is a wonderful case study for you. We are actually trialling four bins right now, so I have said to the Minister we are happy to be a guinea pig for any trials that you want to do. Yarra is so keen and so enthusiastic to work with the State Government in this space on trials. We have four bins right now in Abbotsford. We are trialling with 1300 households there. Please ask us questions about MUDs or mixed use for apartments because we have some good data about apartments there that I would be really excited to talk about.

The highlights that I would like to draw your attention to that I think are really exciting are, as I said, we are one of the few councils—we would claim the only council across Victoria—that is doing this trial that is four bins where we are separating out at the point of household. We are separating out glass from the rest of our recycling, and we recognise exactly why that needs to happen. I know Dick made references to, ‘Could we keep it in the one bin?’. We strongly believe it has to be separated out at the point of consumption because the contamination risk is just too high, and glass, as you know, is such a glorious, valuable commodity and we can do so much with it. Right now with our glass separation—Joe and Chris will correct me if I am getting my stats wrong here—90 per cent of the glass that we are collecting separately is going straight back into being used as glass products, like bottles. Only the residual 10 per cent is going into our roads.

So when you separate it out and it is a high-quality product, it just keeps on going. Glass just keeps on going around for thousands of years. It is lovely; it is a wonderful asset there. Food and organic waste: I know, Nina, you were passionate about this in your council days as well. In Yarra we are higher than average by other local government areas. Just under half of our waste is food waste, and we cannot just put that down to the hipster cafes; we need to take responsibility for that as well, as food consumers in Yarra. We are really excited that we have been able to separate out our food and organic waste as well, with great success. The interesting thing that I am sure you will be asking questions about now that we are four months into this trial that runs for a year—and our thanks to Sustainability Victoria for their ongoing support and financial assistance there—is that the contamination rates have plummeted. We have gone from contamination rates of 15 per cent to 3 per cent. That is outstanding. I would put that down in a huge part to—and this is where we would love to work with the State Government on—the education component of it. We did not just rock up on 1 July and wheel four bins out to the front of your house. We went through a really substantial process with that community of consultation and

pop-up stalls. I was out at pop-up stalls with residents. We were doing letterbox drops. On the bin days we had staff walking the streets working with residents, knocking on doors. Like, you cannot just rock up on the day and shove four bins out the front of people's houses; you have to work with that community about what that looks like.

I will say we have got a pretty amazing community. I have had residents contact me—especially after the *War On Waste* TV show—who have never reached out to council before, saying, 'What's council doing about this?'. So I think it is entirely a strength and the responsibility of council to take this up. If you ask anyone in the street, 'What's the role of council?', they will say to you, 'Roads, rates and rubbish'. Our residents know it is on our doorstep, and they want us to take up the fight there. So the education component is usually important. It helps with the contamination reduction—from 15 per cent to 3 per cent—and also we are having wonderful successes. The biggest problem for us was we had good rates in households and then less good rates of contamination in MUDs or apartment blocks, and how we have been able to get that down is a really key component there. The only other thing I was just going to say, because I know it was a question that was asked beforehand, is that Yarra City Council is one of eight councils out of 79 that does not have a waste charge. So we are absorbing this entirely through our rates, recognising that we have a rate cap that we meet, and we meet the rate cap that has been imposed on us by the State Government. So we are absorbing this within our own budget.

**Mr CROFT:** Andrew Croft from Banyule City Council. Just to start, in the next two days the waste expo is on at the exhibition centre, if you want to see things like the dehydrators that were mentioned. They are on display, so do take the opportunity to walk down there. It is a bit quicker to register in advance before you go—it is quicker to get in the building. If you do want to see some of that technology and meet some professionals in the industry—things like compacting bins, dehydrators, landfill equipment—in the next two days is your chance to see it.

Thank you for the opportunity. Banyule City Council offers a range of services. We pay for our waste in our rate cap as well. We have an in-house garbage collection fleet, which is unusual. We do it all in-house—garbage, kerbside recycling, and garden organics—for about 50 000 premises. We service commercial premises as well, for businesses. We do our own dumped rubbish in house, we have a booked hard waste collection at call for residents and we operate a large transfer station servicing Banyule, Darebin, Manningham, Yarra to some extent and also Boroondara—that is sort of its catchment—and servicing the commercial waste industry, so the apartment buildings around Melbourne. So we get a lot of material.

We also run Waste Wise and a Rethink education centre, which is attached to the Visy MRF. It provides 2½ hour theatrical performances to schoolchildren, also adult groups, teaching about where products come from, how those products are made into new products and the process for recovering and recycling. It is highly regarded. It has been going for 20 years. We have had 85 000 people through. We have more capacity to take more school groups through, if people are prepared to pay for that funding. It was commended by the Auditor-General as an example of how waste education should be undertaken in Victoria: targeted, entertaining, effective and a long-term commitment. I will put it to anyone: there are very few people who will stand and have local government or State Government talk to them for 2½ hours about anything, and they enjoy it.

Last year we were one of two local governments audited by VAGO. Not many people or organisations enjoy audits, but we commend the VAGO team audit officers for their professionalism, engagement, curiosity and willingness to learn and listen. We highly support the recommendations of the VAGO report and we are looking forward to the findings and the commitments the agencies deliver next year.

Prior to that we actually completed our Towards Zero waste management plan, which is our four-year strategy. The most difficult part was not having clear, articulated timetables for State Government investment in projects. That meant that we needed to make decisions on our own. We had to guess what the State might do. Having a linkage between our own planning, the State planning and where are the opportunities for funding or focus is really important for helping us to develop a meaningful plan and planning for capital investment.

The downside of not having a standalone plan is local government is left to find its own devices, to make decisions about what it wants to do. Sometimes they are out of keeping with both State and Federal

Government. We have talked about it today—the most obvious example is bin lid covers. They are all over the place—clown colours might be a good way to describe them. It makes education really, really difficult. That—choosing the wrong colours—is repeating itself at the moment in local government, so purple has been rolled out for glass bins. That under national standards is the colour for cytotoxic waste, not glass.

**Mr DAVIS:** And recycled water.

**Mr CROFT:** Yes. One of the things I highlight is this document came out last year from Sustainability Victoria. Banyule and quite a few councils had a part in it. It is basically the design specifications for multi-unit developments—so apartment buildings, townhouses and developments—and it is bound in the planning scheme as the key reference document, so it should really be influencing right through the planning fraternity to VCAT about buildings are designed. Knowledge in the industry of those prepare plans is terrible. I look at every building in Banyule of three dwellings or more and most of them are non-compliant.

**Mr DAVIS:** What is the name of that exactly?

**Mr CROFT:** This is the *Waste Management and Recycling in Multi-unit Developments: Better Practice Guide* by Sustainability Victoria. It has been around for a few years. It was updated again last year and it is having another review now. I would highly recommend this document obviously for planners and being aware of it, the industry about being trained about it. It talks about chutes, it talks about organic chutes, it talks about building space, how much space is required, and volume production.

**Mr HAYES:** That is the sort of policy that VCAT does not have to look at though, isn't it?

**Mr CROFT:** Well, VAGO in its findings found that all Government departments and agencies were complicit in the problems in waste, so I assume VCAT falls into that definition. One of the recommendations is strengthening the planning scheme, and this is the document behind that—that supports that. Similarly, things like bins and standards and kerbside collection should also have similar sorts of manuals so there is consistency between Government departments. You talked about an overriding agency for waste—not necessarily an agency but certainly a bible. When I was in New South Wales 10 years ago Victoria had the best documentation on waste. I would say it has fallen behind, but this certainly is a step in the right direction. I would encourage more standards and guidelines to be developed so that it trains new waste managers, because a lot of people fall into this sector—they do not start in it—and also for those in the private sector that are approving buildings, so that they have that understanding.

The last issue—in the 5 minutes—I want to highlight today is the importance that transfer stations play in our waste management strategies. They tend to be overlooked. They are important because they fundamentally provide a place for difficult loads—large quantities like trailers or households. They are also very, very important for things like product stewardship, so Paintback. They are underwriting the e-waste ban to landfill under the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme. Historically there has been an expectation that urban constrained sites, like Banyule has, will be able to accommodate new projects for free.

I can tell you the public expects that recycling is free when they drop off items as in their view they have done the right thing and should not be charged for it. What that does is it puts us in a dilemma where we want to expand our recycling offerings. We came up with a business case for a modest expansion of the facility to accommodate what might come. We came up with the price of \$6 million. Now, considering that they are for products that generate revenue and our transfer station captures more than Banyule, how do you justify that? Do we need to charge product stewardship? Do we need to have a levy? I can tell you that from a customer point of view, having run the payment booth ourselves, people are very upset about the price of waste. They do not like paying for it, whereas if they have prepaid for the item, then they are much more accommodating and try to facilitate.

One of the concepts—if we are talking about the landfill levy versus, say, the circular design—is in the diagram that was circulated. There is no design component in that, so that is where the decision is made. The waste industry is at the tail end, whereas the design is where everything happens. So if you have got a price that affects design choices or manufacturers and importers, that is more important, because a business can say,

‘Hey, if I make my product more environmentally friendly, I do not have to pay the levy. I save some money because I do not have to pay the tax, therefore I can have a competitive proposition ahead of my competitors’.

Really, when you are a consumer, you are dealing with the products on the shelf. So recycled content in packaging products has been low, because if you increase your percentage of recycled plastics the colour darkens. So you are less visible on the shelf, you do not seem as fresh and as clean a product. When you are influencing waste production, you need to really have it in the design phase because that determines how much is recyclable, how sustainable it is, how easy it is to recycle and reuse in the process.

After food organics, which is topical, the next big one on my list is disposable nappies. Once food is removed from the bin, it is one in five items by weight in the kerbside bin—it is 20 per cent.

**Dr RATNAM:** Nappies?

**Mr CROFT:** There have been international projects before about recycling nappies. They have tended to fall over. There is one in Europe at the moment that has started.

**Mr DAVIS:** You are not advocating we all go back to cloth though?

**Mr CROFT:** Well, we have a cloth program, where we are actually teaching people what a modern cloth nappy is and how to be successful with it, and the cost savings are enough for the average Australian parent, male or female, to afford a house cleaner for 2 hours a fortnight. So cloth nappies—I would invite you to come to one of our seminars. We actually provide as part of that training process—because it is about training and breaking some of the myths—a couple of samples, so I am more than happy to do that.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Just on that, what about adult nappies, because adults need to wear nappies as well.

**Mr CROFT:** You can have them made larger.

**Mr DAVIS:** They are available.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** People with disabilities or—

**Mr DAVIS:** Indeed, incontinence.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** incontinence, whatever—people with dementia. There is actually a large cohort of people.

**Mr CROFT:** There is, but in terms of who I deal with as a kerbside customer you are obviously dealing with more infants, but there are adults in that niche. One of the challenges with rolling out a high-performance FOGO where you are collecting the garbage bin fortnightly is how you manage those households. That can be: pay extra and we will pick your bin up every week for that period of time. That makes the cloth nappy more financial.

**Mr DAVIS:** What has the take-up on the cloth nappies been? How many, what percentage?

**Mr CROFT:** The concept of the cloth nappy is an old terry towel. The modern nappy options—there are five different options and depending on your circumstances it is different, but it is not as hard as you think.

**Mr DAVIS:** So what is the take-up?

**Mr CROFT:** It is low. It is low, but that is education and perception. That is what you need to change.

We talked about food organics and garden organics. A lot of people do not like that idea—that is about perception versus reality. They are the challenges and social challenges that you need to make as a community in change.

The City of Yarra has talked about their glass culture, so you can work on changing behaviour. It takes time investment.

**Mr DAVIS:** Do you do that through mothers groups, or how do you do this? Dare I say, in the sense it could be a fathers group.

**Mr CROFT:** We have just started it as a pilot this year. We have been able to do that through Facebook and mothers groups. We are just doing it as an initial take-up and the response has been really good.

**Mr DAVIS:** But low.

**Mr CROFT:** The place to get that contact would be at immunisation evenings, because you are going to see just about every parent to talk about the options. So that is something that we will tackle to start, but we have just run the first series and we will expand from that into other communities. There are a number of councils across Melbourne that have different pilot programs. I know that Frankston has a sort of similar program to the one we have. Cardinia has a rebate program. So there is some more data about participation, but it is about that effecting change.

**Mr DAVIS:** So you do have data?

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Croft. Can I move on to questions.

**Mr HAYES:** Just following up on that, Mr Croft, have you also looked at the possibility of compostable nappies? Do they have any possibilities?

**Mr CROFT:** Compostable nappies, my understanding is they are the most expensive option possible. So you would choose one of the other two. Composting generally—we, in partnership with Veolia, have been trying to get our festival waste composted through the organics-processing vessel. The compostable packaging—so it is a commercial product called BioPak. It is a compostable product, and it is certified. They are still doing trials about how you get that right in-vessel, the proprietor. One of the challenges with looking at compostable packaging if you are mixing it with food organics is the amount of packaging used versus food organics and garden organics. There is a magnitude beyond, so you effectively end up with vessels full of compostable packaging rather than food and material. From my perspective and my knowledge, it is a work in progress, that area.

**Mr HAYES:** Yes, interesting.

**Cr BOSLER:** Can we just respond to the nappies question as well, because it seems to be—

**The CHAIR:** Yes, sure. Please do. What are you doing with nappies?

**Cr BOSLER:** Do you want to take that one, Joe?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** I guess we were a bit surprised at the amount. It was less than what we thought. In the trial area we have got 1300 households, some of those multi-unit developments, and we will talk about that later. But I would have to say we probably had half-a-dozen people in that area who came up and said, ‘We would have a problem with a nappy’, and we took them through the process of how they might deal with that, so obviously cloth nappies is one avenue. The other one was realistically you should be emptying the content of a disposable nappy into your sewerage system before you put it in the bin. There are ways of containing that smell, with a plastic bag. We took them through a whole process and that pushback has actually stopped, because we also went to fortnightly garbage. We went from weekly to fortnightly in that area. But if you have a look at the birthrate, and this is just children’s nappies by the way, not the elderly, we have about 1400 births a year in Yarra roughly. When you calculate that out, we had even considered doing a special run for a nappy service if we should require that. We have got fully electric vehicles that we are devolving. One is in use at the moment. So we were even considering that as part of the solution, working with people and saying, ‘Look, if you really do have a problem, we’ll set up a run so that we can actually eliminate that issue’.

**Mr LEIVERS:** That is really on the basis that the other changes we have made to fortnightly, other than for the FOGO, have been accepted so we can do less collections, but the sticking point was people with nappies. We thought cloth was a good alternative, but we probably do not think 100 per cent will go to cloth, so running

a nappy service with an EV vehicle is a way of meeting their needs and getting support for the broader four-bin system.

**Mr HAYES:** But without cloth, what would happen to those nappies? They would just go into the—

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Garbage.

**Mr HAYES:** into the garbage stream.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Into the garbage bin at the moment. There had been some research—and Europe, by the way, is recycling nappies, so they have technology to do that.

**Mr HAYES:** Is that cloth nappies?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** No, the plastic ones, the disposables. So there are systems in Europe that actually process those and get material back out of it. There had been some work done on it in Australia, but unfortunately the person who was running it has passed away, so it has not got legs yet. But the technology is actually there.

**Mr HAYES:** Okay. I just wanted to ask about the FOGO too. Have you got restaurants taking part in the FOGO scheme, and how have you managed to do that and coordinate that?

**Mr LEIVERS:** Yes, we have a small number of cafes and the like, but we have also partnered with a couple of large waste producers like the Epworth hospital and Victoria Gardens, so we have put in anaerobic digesters with them, which is an approach we are also taking with large multi-unit developments.

**Mr HAYES:** So you are treating all your FOGO yourself within the council boundaries?

**Mr LEIVERS:** We take it to Veolia. The collections that we do for households we take to Veolia, but there are some anaerobic digesters in those multi-units and commercial properties.

**Mr HAYES:** Yes. And there are problems with anaerobic, as you know, with methane production.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** If I could just add to that, Chris, with the trials we are doing in the multi-units, it actually processes it into an inert product—that is just food, though. That material then goes to Yarra Valley Water for energy, so you can still enrich with gas. They mine the gas off that at the Craigieburn plant.

**Dr RATNAM:** That is the anaerobic digesters that you are talking about or something else?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** The onsite digesters—

**Dr RATNAM:** Onsite, at apartments.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** provide us with an inert product, which reduces your volume and reduces transport. That material is then taken to Yarra Valley Water. They run it through their gasification plant and they use it to mine the energy from that, so they are producing electricity.

**Mr HAYES:** So they are taking the methane out.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Yes, they are mining the methane.

**Dr RATNAM:** Right. So the methane is captured. Great. Excellent.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Thanks for your submission; it has been really interesting. Just a question on the nappy side of it, having dealt with all manner of those things in the past: when you talk about nappies and what you can do with them, so your disposable versus your cloth, has there been any analysis, for example, in trying to encourage people to go to cloth nappies, about the water, the detergents, the chemicals, that kind of thing? Have you done an analysis of what might be more, I guess, environmentally sustainable from that point of view, as opposed to disposables versus cloth—like the whole thing of it? You know, the purchasing. Does that make sense?

**Mr CROFT:** Yes. The answer is no, we have not done that full research. In terms of the price, a lot of it is informal. There is a Facebook group that you basically tell what nappy you have, tell what model machine you have—they will give you basically the formula to get the best out of that process. It is a community grassroots-type approach. One of the companies that we are using to supply the nappies, their nappies are collectables, so there can be a real underground movement—

**Mr DAVIS:** As it were.

**Mr CROFT:** in terms of interest in specific areas of waste—yes, as it were. But obviously a nappy takes—I cannot remember how many years it is—centuries to decompose in a landfill, so you have got the embodied energy in that and the transport component, whereas depending on where your energy comes from for your wash cycle and the water, it can be quite efficient.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Water and detergent, chemicals, bleach—that is the other side of it with cloth.

**Mr CROFT:** That is right, but a white disposable nappy is probably somehow dyed, coloured, produced, manufactured and used once, whereas a modern cloth nappy can be made from a range of fibres—bamboo, cotton, cloth. They are essentially the same components, but with more layers so as an adult you do not get wet, a wicking layer that takes it away from the child and then an absorbent layer in between. They are all fundamentally the same; it is just different pros and cons as to how they are.

**Cr BOSLER:** I just think, to add to that, it is about the component that we really pride ourselves on, which is the community responsiveness, in that sometimes you will be able to do a cloth nappy for a few months and then sometimes you are going to need it and you cannot. There are a range of factors. Let Mum and Dad decide that. We are wanting to be responsive and say, ‘Okay, for the next few months, you know, 26 Abbottsford Street is going to need something special’. It is about that working with the community to say what they need and how they are going.

**Mr CROFT:** Yes. The tailored approach for different households works. We have another program that we kicked off this year. We are using what is called a Green Cone biodigester. It is buried in your garden. It is in the manual. It is buried in the soil in your yard in a sunny spot. It can even go in around a townhouse. You dig a hole about 80 centimetres wide and probably 80 centimetres deep, make sure it drains. You can put in your meat, bones, compost—not garden matter—and it just breaks down into soil and is used by the plants next to it. So there is no collection for council, there is no processing; the resident does not have to empty it. The ones we have been using in our council depot we have had for 10 years. It uses the power of microbes and the sun. That is suitable for a detached house or a townhouse with a garden. So you can have different solutions in different places. It obviously takes effort to be involved in it, but there are a range of options.

**Dr RATNAM:** Thanks very much as well for your submissions—we have received all of your submissions and they are all very good—and for presenting today, and all the innovation as well that you are doing at a local level. I want to ask about that. Just to capture it, Banyule are doing organics now?

**Mr CROFT:** No.

**Dr RATNAM:** No, not yet?

**Mr CROFT:** Sorry. Garden organics, yes.

**Dr RATNAM:** Garden organics. And are there plans to introduce food organics?

**Mr CROFT:** We have certainly looked at it as a council, although we have made no resolutions in that regard.

**Dr RATNAM:** Can you talk us through what the barriers are?

**Mr CROFT:** We were thinking pretty strongly about it, and we have done a business case, but between the SKM issues and the China issues that we have got and what was going on on the VAGO front, the feeling was that with the State Government doing the policy, we would rather sync in with that, because with the media

messaging going out about recycling, we did not want a position where we were changing the service and then having to compete with the noise of everything else in telling the community what we were doing to make that change. So to defer for a little while, while everything beds down over 2020 with the policy direction, is a sensible course of action.

**Dr RATNAM:** In some ways that is a challenge. It is a challenge that can be worked through, but that is what other councils are facing too.

**Mr CROFT:** So for Banyule, if we were to change one bin, we would be looking at a \$5 million or \$5.5 million project. So that kind of investment you do not do on a hunch.

**Dr RATNAM:** On that note, with Yarra, I am really interested—and we asked the previous councils as well—in how it is working. I hear you are absorbing the costs through rates. It would be good to know if you are able to talk about the quantum of that. How you are getting around the apartments would be good to hear about; we would be interested in solutions. And the only other question I had was around procurement targets. You talked about some of that being targets within your own council in terms of using it for roads. For both councils: what is your thinking in terms procurement targets; would it help; what work are you doing in that regard—again, looking for solutions at a statewide level that could incentivise the market?

**Cr BOSLER:** I will let Chris and Joe do all the stats on the costs. We are quite open with you about how much it has cost for the trial and the support that we have got from Sustainability Victoria.

I just wanted to speak—and it is not to rebut Banyule City Council but to say that our community has sought that we be proactive on this and we have already voted in support. Earlier this year we voted for a rollout of four bins. No doubt that will come back around again next year when the trial gets into the final stages, and I think if we voted to not continue this the community would literally tip chairs across Yarra. We are being very responsive to what our community wants. We desperately want to work with other local councils, we desperately want to work with State Government, but our community is actually demanding that we take action on this, and it is in line with our strategies, our policies, and we need to act on them, as I am sure many folks around the table will recognise. We have got a mandate from the community to take action up on this.

Chris can talk through the stats.

**Mr LEIVERS:** To follow on from that, I think that is absolutely right, but we do have the same challenge in terms of wanting to be in concert with the State—not too far in front that we are bleeding edge or too far behind that our community does not think we are doing what they want us to do. So whilst we have done the trial and we think we can roll it out, we do not necessarily want to roll it out independently and then have something come out from the State Government that we are inconsistent with, and that might be bin lids, it might be specifications, it might be a whole range of things.

**The CHAIR:** Hang on, what colour bins are you using?

**Mr LEIVERS:** We have got red, yellow, green and purple.

**Dr RATNAM:** Purple for glass?

**Mr LEIVERS:** Purple for glass.

**The CHAIR:** So you are saying the fourth bin should be purple?

**Mr LEIVERS:** We are not saying it should be. We are saying in the absence of anything, we have—

**The CHAIR:** No, no, because you are the first one—you and Hobsons Bay. What is Hobsons Bay's colour?

**Cr MARSDEN:** I am going for orange, but that is just my personal choice.

**The CHAIR:** We are going purple; the decision is made! Mr Leivers?

**Mr LEIVERS:** I might deal with the MUDs first, if that is okay—multi-unit developments. Seventy per cent of Yarra, by population, are in multi-unit developments. So we have really needed to work through how do we approach that, and Joe can talk to some of the detail if I miss it or do not get it right.

There are 32 multi-unit development sites within our trial area, and that is about 350 units. It is a challenge to get a system that can work for inner-city, peri-urban and regional, undoubtedly. So we have put a fair bit of work into this, and to simplify it we have had to do a fair bit of education with those sites, particularly with the managers of those sites—so the owners corp or the manager of that area—a lot of education but then enforcement, and by enforcement I mean leaving bins when they are contaminated. That has taken us in a very short period from high rates of contamination to low rates of contamination—

**Cr BOSLER:** It works.

**Mr LEIVERS:** and the contamination is now about the same as a household, because what we said to the manager was, ‘This is what we expect; you haven’t been able to achieve that this time. You’re going to have to get a commercial collector to collect that’.

**The CHAIR:** So it is a bit like how you treat your kids if they do not tidy up their room?

**Mr LEIVERS:** In some ways, yes, and of course what we did have to do is prior to that phase we did an audit of their infrastructure onsite and we made some changes to ensure that they had the right infrastructure. This goes to the point I think that was made earlier by City of Port Phillip about the design of multi-unit developments. So we are taking the data that we are getting from this trial and information we are getting to inform future developments in Yarra, and potentially document like the multi-unit one done by Sustainability Vic, because there are some learnings, and I would concur that most developments are not built in a way to support the way I think we need to move with the collection.

**Dr RATNAM:** So it is space—enough space for the different types of bins—and then it is behaviour in terms of getting a large group of people to sort properly.

**Mr LEIVERS:** When there is a single chute it is very easy to put it in and forget about it, but when the manager knows that it is going to be left there, they make an effort with the community. And I should say we have got a fairly engaged community in Abbotsford. I suspect there are areas that would be less inclined to cooperate, but certainly it has been a success for us.

**Dr RATNAM:** Have you trialled on buildings that do not have the municipal collection, because a lot of apartment buildings now provide it as part of the contract, don’t they? So how are you all getting around that?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Yes, they do. But one of them is an apartment building that we do not service; it is private. It has probably got about 150 dwellings in it and that is where we have trialled the machine.

**Dr RATNAM:** The machine? Oh, right.

**Mr LEIVERS:** The digester.

**Dr RATNAM:** The digester. Great. Okay.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** The other thing with apartments is that it is not just allowing for the difference. With each waste management plan that we approve, we demand that they are treating every single stream of waste. But the other thing is access. To save space, there is very little access for council vehicles. What happens in the end is that they need to get a special vehicle, and rather than moving their waste once a week, they are doing it daily, and that is just purely to save space. We cannot access those, so we have to very much be influencing the design to allow us to have the best possible waste services.

**Dr RATNAM:** Great. And procurement was the other question. What are you doing on procurement, and is there anything the State can do to help with that?

**Mr LEIVERS:** Part of our trial has been to separate glass from paper. One thing I did just want to pick up on, and it sort of responds to the Mayor’s previous comments about glass and paper in the same bin, is that our

view has been that taking the glass out has been fantastic for glass, and it has actually been very good for paper and cardboard as well because you are not compacting the glass into the paper and cardboard, so you can then re-use it. That is partly what is behind our trial. I think our Mayor said before that 90 per cent of our glass can be re-used as glass, and we have got a genuine circular economy by taking that to Owens-Illinois, who are then working in partnership with CUB, who is within the City of Yarra, and they are making it back into beer bottles and other bottles. That resonates with our community—that they can have a local manufacturer using their glass.

**Mr HAYES:** That is terrific.

**Mr LEIVERS:** What was the rest of the question?

**Dr RATNAM:** So onto the procurement targets—do you have targets and a policy? Are they working? What could help increase that use?

**Mr LEIVERS:** The balance of our glass goes into roads, so we do that. With our road and our concrete contracts, we already by choice have an amount, and we actually ask the contractors to specify the best they can do and then that is a weighted decision for us. We do not specify that it has got to be 30 per cent, 20 per cent or other, but we weight it. That is the approach we take generally in procurement.

**Cr BOSLER:** But any contribution the State Government can make in terms of their procurement as well will drive a market that works for us too.

**Mr LEIVERS:** There have been comments to us about the value of glass in roads. I guess my view, and I think our view, is that as the residual level of glass is 10 per cent it is a good use of glass, but using glass that can be turned back into glass in roads is not a good use of the glass.

**Dr RATNAM:** So we need to prioritise re-use. Thank you.

**Ms TAYLOR:** I was just interested, Andrew, in the comments you made about a disconnect between those guidelines and some planners. I am just making sure that I have unpacked that correctly.

**Mr CROFT:** A long time ago I had a conversation with a group of planners; I wanted to talk about waste, and the response was, ‘Don’t they just take it away?’. It is that superficial understanding of what waste management is that is the challenge. Planners have a lot on their plates—

**Ms TAYLOR:** Yes, of course.

**Mr CROFT:** so they are not expected to know everything. They are not expected to say, ‘Well, I’m putting my wheelie bins in my garage, but I didn’t make my garage any bigger in my plans so I can’t put my car and my bins in, so they’re going to have to go out the front’. So there are lots of little nuances that you pick up when you look at these plans. In terms of design—and space is what all developers are fighting for on the ground floor—they are all going to pretty much try and just service a small room and pick it up as many times as they can with a truck—a really small truck, which is a problem for your inner areas.

One of the innovations going on in Australia, I think it is in Maroochydore—they are looking at fitting their CBD with a vacuum system. Basically it is a set of tubes and pipes that aggregates that material all in a central location. All the planning documentation is on their website. They are doing a whole-of-CBD approach effectively in Maroochydore in Queensland. That system could theoretically be connected up to an apartment building, so they are all part of that process. As a tenant, you might have a little scan card. You scan the card, and it opens the thing and records that load against you. It goes into the system against you. There are a range of innovations overseas about approaches. Any development of 500 units or more in Singapore has to have a vacuum system.

Banyule is in a very preliminary stage, and one of our concepts at this stage in talking about a big development site that we have in partnership with another one is whether or not we put a vacuum system in. That is to free the ground space in the building for other uses apart from waste. There is a lot of scope to improve knowledge

and technology and how waste is collected in our inner-urban areas. As our cities densify, some of those things become more apparent or more financially appealing than what we have done in the past.

The other topic that was talked about was contamination management. Our garbage trucks have cameras on them so we can see what is put in the back of the hopper. You can see the bins, so if the bin is chipped we know what address it is and we can target that waste to that resident. In theory, if I connect to my rates system, after I have tipped the bin the driver says is contaminated, they could get a text message at 5 o'clock in the morning saying, 'Your bin was contaminated', and off you go.

**Ms TAYLOR:** That is good.

**Mr CROFT:** That aggressive management of contamination is really key to householders and education. That comes back to standards. What does a garbage bin look like? What technology does it have? What back-end systems support that waste system not just for compliance but also to make sure the education gets to the household you are after and you can deal with those. There is a lot in the space.

**Cr BOSLER:** I was just going to say on that one as well, Nina, that we recognise, as you said, that planners are not experts in waste management. That component of any planning application actually goes to our waste management team. It is not the planner that assesses the waste. You have to put in a waste management plan when you apply for an apartment. The planner does not assess that. That goes to the waste management team to assess it, and we have a really good framework for assessing it. I have never voted for a planning application that does not have the most rigorous waste management plan.

**Ms TAYLOR:** The only other limb to that was for future buildings. Do we need tighter controls and enforcement? It is probably an obvious question. I am probably putting a Dorothy Dixier, but is that a way to overcome this issue so you do not have this perpetual issue of having to put in anaerobic digesters and that kind of thing? I am just wondering.

**Mr CROFT:** It is sort of management by objective, I think, in the planning scheme, and that is one of the things VAGO has recommended to be tightened, so we will be talking to DELWP about what they have in mind in that area. I know SV and DELWP are working on this again as part of that tightening process.

**Cr BOSLER:** Joe?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Yes. We consider that compliance should be up front, so where we want to head is very much to get the planners back to the table and it is about designing it into the system to start with. We should not have to be following; we should be having them comply before they even move a resident in. That is where we actually want it.

**Mr HAYES:** Just one thing further on the planning system. Do you require that every developer should submit how they are going to dispose of waste off the site and where it goes, how much goes into recycling and landfill?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Yes. We break it right down into all the streams.

**Mr HAYES:** Yes; good.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** And we expect a solution for all of those. We have now included e-waste. We have a mechanism to review that every time a law changes or every time there is a change or every time there is an operational requirement. We just keep adding the materials as they come along.

**Mr DAVIS:** I have got three quick questions. The first relates to both councils. What share of your budget is—I do not mean parks and gardens—the waste management side of it? It would help us to know is it 10, 20 or whatever percentage of your overall council budget. The second thing related to that is it would help us if we had a breakdown of that budget too. You obviously might need to take that on notice, but an understanding of how that waste budget, if I can describe it that way, is constituted would be helpful for us. Secondly, on to the multi-unit development issue, where there is a tower and a series of apartments, some of them, it has been pointed out by others, are self-dealing with their waste. Are they charged a waste levy in every case?

**Cr BOSLER:** There are two parts there. I will answer the first part, and Joe has just told me 10 per cent of rates is our waste component.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** That is our current model, not our proposed model. The proposed model will cost more.

**Mr DAVIS:** Okay. I would be interested to know that, but also the breakdown of that would be helpful.

**Cr BOSLER:** The second part of the question was: is there an additional charge? Yarra City Council does not have a separated waste charge. We are one of eight of the 79 councils that do not separate out our waste charge. So no is the short answer.

**Mr DAVIS:** The simple point on that is if you live in an apartment complex and there are 30 units or 50 units, you are paying waste once and then you pay for a private collection in some cases?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Yes.

**Mr DAVIS:** This is actually quite an important price signal for those who might have such apartments.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** For us you pay rates and then extra.

**Mr DAVIS:** They are paying twice in effect, I think, is what that means.

**The CHAIR:** So give them a discount of 10 per cent on their rates.

**Mr DAVIS:** No, no. It is a significant charge, and it just means they are cross-subsidising the rest, as it were. I do not know what the situation is in Banyule. How does that work?

**Mr CROFT:** We have the same structure. We charge rates; we do not have a waste charge. We do have fees for upsizing some bins. We have a minimum component for an upsize. In terms of the collection component that council would theoretically charge, some people do argue there is a double up, but it is much more expensive to collect waste from a multi-unit development. So it is not like they would get a 50 per cent reduction; they might see a 15 per cent reduction in their cost.

**Mr DAVIS:** But if you do not collect waste there—because they have got a private arrangement—

**Mr CROFT:** Yes, so picking up with a side loader—do you pick up with a side loader in your area?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** We do rear loaders.

**Mr CROFT:** Picking up with a side loader is cheap, so that is a bin on the side—the traditional suburban one. A rear loader is more expensive if you pick up from the kerb. If you have to go into the building, it is much more expensive again, and then if you are using a tiny little truck it goes up again.

So one of the things with multi-unit developments is if they build a car park with low roofs and they get little trucks in, it is going to cost the residents more to run their building. They are some of the things, not so much in this guideline but certainly it is standard practice.

**Mr DAVIS:** But in the waste management plan that you are referring to. I understand that, but leaving aside the future stock, which I think is worthy of focus on, the current housing and apartment stock is there—and there are a number of people who are in those complexes who are in effect paying a waste charge where they do not get collections.

**Mr CROFT:** Yes, in their point of view. We have a project to do over the next 12 months to look at how we can provide more services to those units as a council, and that is primarily to get organics into those buildings because a lot of them do not have them. We also have a challenge where a lot of traditional single dwellings are being knocked down and they are having three or four houses put on them. They do not have enough kerbside frontage for a side loader. So they are now getting a private waste service, and we are saying: ‘How do we integrate this changing demography of housing within council’s remit rather than all going out separate?’

because for a townhouse to have a private service you are probably looking at triple the cost, so it is a big incentive.

**Cr BOSLER:** I would say that is a broader question about local government services. Yarra City Council offers 200 services and no resident uses all 200 services. We are all cross-subsidising each other's services. We are cross-subsidising child care, we are cross-subsidising leisure centre courses. We are collectively cross-subsidising the 200 services that we run in Yarra, and waste is one of them. It is a big one, but no resident is using every single service that we offer collectively—collectivism!

**Mr DAVIS:** Of course not, but they are not necessarily paying again, so I make that point.

**Cr BOSLER:** In Yarra we do not have a waste charge separated out, so it is the one.

**Mr LEIVERS:** Could I just make a couple of other comments about cost, and I do not think I answered Dr Ratnam's question about it earlier. Two quick points: one, it will cost more—there is no doubt—but one of the things we are trying to do is balance the cost by reducing the logistics. A lot of the cost in waste is actually in transporting, and if you can move to fortnightly from weekly for some of the services, you can actually offset that to some extent. Particularly with something like glass that can be collected less regularly because it is not putrescible, there is an opportunity for that.

The other is: we are hoping over time—and we have been working with local processors and local markets—that there will be actually a value in the material. So instead of paying to take your material somewhere—glass can be used for glass, paper can be paper, organics can be used on farms—there is actually a value in the product. What we are working towards and hoping will occur is that in Victoria and Australia there will be a value in that resource, because people will value it then but also it will reduce the cost of our service to collect it.

**Mr HAYES:** Introduce more mandatory procurement requirements and product stewardship; it should increase the value.

**Mr LEIVERS:** I think that is part of it.

**Mr DAVIS:** Finally, I want to come to nappies again. Just to put it on the record, when I dealt with the little cherubs, I was at that end and I was quite quick—as I think many parents are—in disposing of the matters at hand.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Hit it with a hose.

**Mr DAVIS:** Yes, but I think many parents might even hold their noses there doing it. My point being: is there a model somewhere that you could point to that we should look at with respect to nappies? Is there a municipality somewhere that you think has got it right on nappies?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Not at this stage, but the technology is there—

**Mr LEIVERS:** Not in Australia.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** so we are hoping that as part of this wave of redeveloping the kerbside system, someone is going to push that technology into the market. The technology is there, and I think it is just inevitable at some point. So as we start looking at other technologies, I think that nappies will be one of them.

**Mr DAVIS:** What is the cost of the nappy program? I get that the take-up is low, but in general—

**Mr AGOSTINO:** If we were to implement that?

**Mr DAVIS:** Yes.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** It is one wheelie, so it is probably \$150 000 a year.

**Mr LEIVERS:** That is for our additional collection service, not for the cloth.

**Mr DAVIS:** Yes. And is it the same?

**Mr CROFT:** There is one commercial service in Melbourne that provides nappies for a fee and collects them and washes them for you, so there is a private operator in that space.

**The CHAIR:** There are a number of them.

**Mr CROFT:** Yes. So we can benchmark. I actually have a price because I have asked for a project, but not off the top of my head. So there is a commercial push for it. If you do it yourself and you want the more expensive nappies, you are looking at about a \$750 investment up-front for the nappies, and I think it is about two, two and a half thousand dollars for disposable nappies for the average child, so theoretically you have got 1400 bucks up your sleeve if you go that route.

**Mr DAVIS:** Depending how quick they are in mastering the tasks at hand.

**Mr CROFT:** I was a stay-at-home parent for two years—your nose gets used to it.

**The CHAIR:** These companies actually bring them in. You just sit back and do not have to do anything. We have used it with our two children.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** Can I just clarify one thing before we move on? I need to get back to the MUDs—subsidising the private. We collect for 85 per cent of all the MUDs in Yarra, and we endeavour to work with every developer, saying ‘If you provide access we can pick it up, but if you don’t we can’t’. So when we did the waste charge modelling, which eventually council will get back to, we calculated that number, and if it was a private MUD we would discount that back. So if we had a waste charge we would discount that back every year, but we make every endeavour to get them to allow us access.

**Mr DAVIS:** Let me make another blunt point. Sometimes at the end of a building process the developer will let contracts for a period into the future, including waste contracts. Do you bid in for those at that point?

**Mr AGOSTINO:** We cannot get in. The problem is we do not have access to that building.

**Mr DAVIS:** No, no, even where you can get access, some of them will actually have their own private arrangements.

**Mr AGOSTINO:** No, the ones that we can service, so we are servicing 85 per cent of all the MUDs in Yarra as part of the rates service. So they get a weekly service.

**The CHAIR:** On that note, thank you very much for your contributions. A copy of the transcript will be sent to you, so if there are any corrections to be made please do so and send it back. Thank you very much, and have a lovely afternoon.

**Witnesses withdrew.**