

## Caitlin Connally

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**From:** Damien Wieland [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 10 May 2019 2:58 PM  
**To:** recyclinginquiry  
**Subject:** Northern Grampians Shire Council Submission - Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management  
**Attachments:** NGSC Submission Recycling and Waste Management Parl of Vic Inquiry 100519.pdf

Dear Committee Members,

Please find attached a submission from Northern Grampians Shire Council for the Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management.

If the Committee wish for our Council to present at future hearings, please don't hesitate to contact me to organise this.

Kind regards,

Damien

**Damien Wieland**  
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## Submission - Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

### 1. Purpose

To provide background information to the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Victoria's Environment and Planning Committee *Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management* about the current practices and challenges faced by Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC) managing recycling and waste.

### 2. Background

Located in the Wimmera Region of Central West Victoria, Northern Grampians Local Government Area covers 5,918 square kilometers and includes the towns of Stawell, St Arnaud, Great Western, Halls Gap, Marnoo, Glenorchy, Stuart Mill and Navarre.

This region offers a fantastic rural lifestyle and unique natural environment that is underpinned by an economy based on agriculture, health and social services, manufacturing, mining, renewable energy generation and tourism.

However, we also face challenges of changing weather and climate impacts, poor health and social outcomes, higher infrastructure and maintenance costs and an aging population.

The provision of waste management services makes up a large component of Council's annual budget, with the greatest asset cost, the maintenance of a rural road network of some 3,367 kms.

As a small rural shire with a limited rates base that encompasses a large geographical area, our ongoing infrastructure and asset costs leave us with very little margin in the council budget to respond to emerging challenges, such as the increased recycling costs faced by local government following the Chinese Government's National Sword policy to restrict the import of recycled materials.

### 3. Waste Management Strategy (Draft)

Council is currently developing a Waste Management Strategy to consider current and future waste management and resource recovery in Northern Grampians Shire. The strategy identifies short, medium and long term strategic priorities for sustainable waste management and provides a focus on the targets to be achieved over the next ten years.

### 4. Waste Management Program

NGSC's waste management program includes kerbside collections, transfer stations, public place waste management and community education. Over 4,000 tonnes of municipal waste and 1,200 tonnes of recycling are processed from residential and public litter bins and transfer stations across the shire each year.

NGSC undertakes 283,584 waste lifts and 141,792 recycling lifts across the shire per year.



## 5. Kerbside Waste and Recycling Services

NGSC provides kerbside garbage and recycling collection service for townships and along rural collection routes.

Council provides a dual service kerbside waste and recycling collection service (120L waste bin and 240L recycling bin) at a cost per property of \$467.00 per year. This is a separate charge on top of the general municipal rate. NGSC does not currently offer a kerbside green waste collection service.

An additional 120L waste service at \$159.00 per year or additional 240L recycling service at \$190.00 per year is available on application.

There are some circumstances where businesses, organisations or individuals may be eligible for an exemption from Council's kerbside collection charge.

To be eligible for an exemption from Council's kerbside collection charge, the following criteria must be met:

- operate a commercial business from a commercial premise
- operate an industrial business from an industrial premise
- a property where council has determined not to apply rates due to the nature of the organisation using the property and demonstrate it has entered into a formal arrangement for a garbage and/or recycling collection service from a commercial contractor

In addition to the above criteria, non-rateable properties can be exempt from the collection service with a statutory declaration from the organisations involved stating that the waste and recycle materials will be managed responsibly within its means.

## 6. Transfer Stations

To service almost 12,000 residents and various industry, commercial operations and business in the area, Council operates two transfer stations, located in Halls Gap and St Arnaud, with a third transfer station in Stawell privately owned and operated by Wimmera Mallee Waste.

Council's transfer station gate fees are calculated using a uniform subsidy which ensures transfer station users and Council contribute an equal amount to the cost of waste management. This means the amount residents and ratepayers are asked to pay at the transfer station gate is equal to the amount that Council also contributes towards disposing of, or recycling, that item.



**Transfer station fees**

<b>General/household rubbish</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Recyclables</b>	<b>Cost</b>
120L wheelie bin	\$24 ea	Vehicle batteries	\$10 ea
240L wheelie bin	\$26 ea	Commingled (household) recyclables	\$10 per load
Sedan boot load	\$22 ea	Concrete	\$36 m3
Station wagon boot load	\$23 ea	Fridges, freezers and air conditioners	\$35 ea
Single axle trailer / ute (level)	\$29 ea	Gas cylinders and fire extinguishers	\$32 ea
Single axle trailer / ute (heaped)	\$36 ea	Mattress - any size	\$37 ea
Single axle trailer / ute (caged)	\$54 ea	Motor oil (max 20L)	\$10 ea
Tandem axle trailer / ute (level)	\$65 ea	Scrap metal	\$10 per load
Tandem axle trailer / ute (heaped)	\$90 ea	Tyres: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car \$30 ea</li> <li>• Light truck/4WD \$31 ea</li> <li>• Truck \$38 ea</li> <li>• Tractor - small (&lt;1m diameter) \$126 ea</li> <li>• Tractor - large (1-2m diameter) \$230.00 ea</li> </ul>	
Tandem axle trailer / ute (caged)	\$126 ea	DrumMUSTER (must be triple rinsed, dried and no lids)	Free
Clean soil	\$176 per m2	E-Waste	Free
Demolition and mechanically compacted waste	\$56 ea		
Domestic/household waste	\$36 per m2		

<b>Green Waste</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Green Waste</b>	<b>Cost</b>
120L wheelie bin	\$15 ea	Single axle trailer / ute (heaped)	\$30 ea
240L wheelie bin	\$17 ea	Single axle trailer / ute (caged)	\$42 ea
Sedan boot load	\$18 ea	Tandem axle trailer / ute (level)	\$50 ea
Station wagon boot load	\$20 ea	Tandem axle trailer / ute (heaped)	\$70 ea
Single axle trailer / ute (level)	\$25 ea	Tandem axle trailer / ute (caged)	\$98 ea

## 7. Public Place Waste Management

There are 163 public place litter bins throughout the shire. These bins are emptied on varied schedules, with services being increased in high use areas during seasonal times, school holidays, during events and throughout daylight savings.

Halls Gap is set in the foothills of the Grampians National Park and the main entry point to the Grampians Peaks Trail. In the year ending September 2018 the Grampians attracted over 2.3 million tourism visits - Halls Gap is a major driver of this result. With large visitor numbers concentrated over the holiday periods, the volume of waste produced there is extremely high. This is further compounded by Parks Victoria's waste-in, waste-out policy directing visitors to take out what they bring in. This results in many campers and bushwalkers bringing their litter to dispose of in Council's public litter bins in Halls Gap.

Council also supports community events, providing a recycling trailer and is the liaison with waste management contractors to ensure environmentally responsible and sustainable waste practices are in place at local events.

## 8. Community Education and Best Practice

Council run a biennial community education program. This program encourages residents to view waste as a resource and providing them with the knowledge and skills required to participate effectively in waste avoidance and resource recovery. This includes workshops, campaigns in local newspapers, television and radio, displays and promotions for various local events.

We have recently hosted a series of Roads, Rates and Rubbish community engagement sessions, where we sought feedback from local residents and ratepayers about Council's management of these issues, infrastructure and services.



Council has also been active in supporting positive programs in our local schools. An example of this is the fantastic work by students at St Arnaud Primary School to be selected as a Resource Smart School. The student's have taken the initiative to form a 'Green Team' to reduce the waste produced at the school by sorting and managing waste into landfill, organic waste and recycling. Council has supported the students to install a bin system in each classroom to sort this waste.

The school also has a number of orange-lidded bins at school that are dedicated to recycling type 2 plastics, cardboard/paper and aluminium cans. These bins are provided and collected by our local St Arnaud recycling yard EcoSwish. These initiatives have resulted in the reduction of waste going into landfill each week. At the beginning of 2018 the school was producing between 8 and 11 full sized wheelie bins each week. Through the efforts and education of the Green Team, this was reduced to an average of just three. This was a massive benefit to the environment and the school budget – representing a weekly saving of about \$80 in waste removal.

In 2014, NGSC transitioned to a cloud-based computing environment to provide staff the flexibility to work anywhere, anytime and from any-device. This not only allowed our organisation to improve collaboration via the implementation of an activity based working environment, but thanks to document sharing on the cloud, we became a paperless organisation. This has reduced annual printing and stationary costs by over 90% in just five years, and achieved an equally massive reduction in the amount of waste we generate.

## 9. Illegal Dumping

Littering and illegal dumping poses a threat to wildlife and the community and can lead to long-term contamination. NGSC is committed to reducing the occurrence of this activity.

Responsibility for the management of illegal dumping sits across the waste, environmental health and community safety teams at Council. Occasionally when dumping is reported to Council on Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) land, this is referred to DELWP for coordination and assistance to manage the process of removal.

The amount of illegally dumped materials is increasing, and is a high cost and burden to Council Depot staff.

Most dumping occurs in remote places - some of these are high-risk areas with unused mineshafts. Removal creates a number of hazards and risks for staff to locate it, identify it, assess how to handle it safely (especially when considering materials that may contain asbestos or there are issues of hygiene), followed by transport and safe disposal.

Council is strongly supportive of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Officers for the Protection of the Local Environment' (OPLE) pilot program. While Council were unsuccessful in its application for funding, we would welcome further funding to expand the program. We see a fantastic opportunity to share an OPEL EPA officer across neighbouring municipalities to reduce illegal dumping in the region.



## 10. Innovation

NGSC is currently developing a business case into the management of Food Organics, Garden Organics (FOGO) with the objective of significantly reducing organic waste going to landfills and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions.

With up to 40% of the general waste collected in kerbside collection bins estimated to be organic food waste, this has the potential to deliver a massive reduction in general waste collections going to landfill.

Council has also been proactive in driving collaboration with other councils in the region to investigate options to contract out shared kerbside waste and recycling as well as organics, achieving economies through scale.

NGSC has also developed a proposal install 15 waste and 15 recycling 'smart bins' in Halls Gap. Named as 'Big Belly Solar Bins', they use the power of the sun to charge a 12-volt battery which powers a compaction unit inside of the station. This means that when waste fills up inside of the bin and eventually reaches up to two fill-level sensors (located on either side of the bin), it will trigger the compaction unit to squash the collected waste. The outcome is that this bin can collect 5 times the amount of waste as a standard 120L wheelie bin. Once the bin is filled after compaction, it will send a notification via text or email that it is ready for collection, meaning that the bins only need to be emptied when they are full, eliminating unnecessary collections.

As well as creating a more efficient waste management system, the Big belly smart bin transforms public space cleanliness and aesthetics with total waste containment with its flagship hopper design – eliminating overflows, visible waste, windblown litter, and pest access. This supports our environmental services by maintaining clean, litter free public spaces. Collections in Australian councils have so far shown an 86% reduction in bin collections.

## 11. Increased Costs

The Chinese Government's National Sword policy to restrict the import of recycled materials, has added an extra \$136 per ton to our recycling costs in our shire.

What is rarely focused on is how much the coverage of this policy change has set back the efforts of people to personally manage the waste they generate, with many viewing that it is no longer worth the effort as it will only go into landfill anyway.

Campaigns to promote a war on waste had delivered transformative changes in attitudes with people in the community leading innovation to minimise our burden on the planet through sustainable practices.

This is momentum lost, and we now face the sad reality that it is currently cheaper to put waste into landfill than it is to recycle.



While many people have embraced the change to move away from single use plastic bags, particularly for their weekly supermarket shop, many small local retail businesses say the single use plastic bag ban has added an increased cost when they have to supply an alternative if a customer has not brought a bag with them.

## 12. Transportation and Processing

Transportation of waste is a major prohibitive cost limiting further innovation in regional and rural Victoria. Furthermore, the added emissions from long distance transport from the collection point to processing facilities in metropolitan Melbourne, significantly reduces the benefits of any efficiencies achieved from sustainable collection and sorting practices.

Projected increases in the volume of waste generated across the region support the need to establish a central waste and resource recovery facility or an aggregation point for ease of storage and transport prior to processing.

Access to building and demolition waste processing facilities in rural Victoria is another area that is often overlooked.

We continue to look at technologies such as: anaerobic digesters and other waste to energy technologies that can be utilised in close to source waste management to provide a local solution. Work has also been undertaken to investigate employing a strategic waste project officer working with the business attraction officer to stimulate some investment in that industry locally, however, while these ideas present exciting opportunities, Council cannot achieve this without direct assistance from the Australian and Victorian governments to bring waste and resource recovery facilities to the regions. Council believes that better targeted use of proceeds from the Municipal and Industrial Landfill Levy could go a long way to assisting with this objective.

## 13. The Stawell Tyre Intervention Project

The Stawell Tyre Intervention Project, the first of its type in Australia, was a whole-of-government initiative designed and implemented to avert a very real and significant environmental disaster.

The objective of the project was to remove and recycle approximately 2 million used tyres from an unmanaged privately owned tyre stockpile located on the outskirts of Stawell.

The Motorway Tyre site operated from the early 1990s until August 2008. The recycling and retreading operations ceased at that time and at that stage a substantial stockpile existed.

Post ceasing operations, access to the site was un-restricted allowing considerable illegal dumping to occur. The site passed through a number of owners in the interim with no limiting impact on the tyre stockpile.

Over many years, authorities had attempted without success to work with the site owner(s) to address the unacceptable risks associated with the stockpile.



In May 2017 the Country Fire Authority (CFA) determined that the stockpile presented “an unacceptable and significant fire and community safety risk.”

Following a thorough investigation by the EPA, NGSC, CFA and DELWP, the site was deemed to have been abandoned. In August 2017 the EPA took unprecedented action under the Environment Protection Act (1970) assuming control of the site.

What followed was a complex and expensive clean-up project, involving multiple government agencies and authorities.

The overall objective of safely clearing the site of all tyres (5,600 tonnes) prior to the 2017-18 fire season was achieved. This outcome is estimated to have averted a potential \$500 million risk that would have eventuated in the event of evacuation due to an emergency, in addition to the catastrophic consequences and immeasurable cost that were avoided of potential contamination of native flora and fauna, agriculture, ground and water table reserves.

Rather than cleaning up after an emergency situation, the site was safely, efficiently and cost-effectively remediated as a preventative measure rather than a post crisis or emergency management response. Ultimately, the key outcome of averting a potential disaster was achieved.

With the need to avoid dangerous stockpiling of hazardous substances and waste, the way the Stawell Tyre Intervention Project was managed should form as a template for how multiple levels of government and agencies can work together on a seamless and coordinated response to avert and reduce the risk of environmental and economic disaster.

## 14. Conclusion

It often falls to local government to manage and meet the costs of best practice guidelines, regulation requirements and new levels of compliance.

Council has been proactive to adapt to change to reduce and achieve best practice results in the reduction of waste. This includes the closure of the Marnoo Landfill (2014) and the St Arnaud Landfill (2017). Rehabilitation and management of these closed landfill sites is ongoing.

Council strongly supports the banning of e-waste going to landfill from 1 July 2019. However, there must be stricter legislation around import of cheap imports into Australia as we have to manage product end of life.

NGSC agrees that sending waste to landfill is the least preferred option for managing waste. It is expensive and not sustainable, but we cannot achieve transformative change without support to implement close to source waste management solutions.



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NGSC welcomes the Parliament of Victoria's Environment and Planning Committee *Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management*. We believe local government in regional and rural Victoria can play an active part in achieving sustainable outcomes to adapt to a circular economy where we make, use, and recycle through resource recovery to bring materials back into the cycle for remanufacturing. To achieve this it will require all levels of government and industry to work together on strategies, policies, regulations and the development of funding opportunities to enable us to take responsibility for product stewardship of the waste we all produce.

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