

NE WASTE REGIONAL WASTE STRATEGY 2022...2027



DECEMBER 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

North East Waste acknowledges the unceded sovereign traditional lands of the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yaegl nations, upon which we operate, and we pay our respects to Custodians of the old ways, today's leaders and the knowledge holders of tomorrow. We hope our work helps to protect and enhance this country's lands, oceans, skies and communities.



'This program is funded and supported by the NSW EPA through the Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041.'



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INTRODUCTION

North East Waste is a voluntary regional waste group, formed in 1997 with Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore City, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire Councils as its membership. It covers over 21,000 sq km and has an increasing population of over 307,000 residents. NE Waste is governed by a Memorandum of Agreement, with each Council having a vote and delegate at quarterly meetings. NE Waste is funded by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), contributions from Councils and grant funding.

Since 2013 a Regional Waste Strategy has been in place to set the strategic direction of waste management in the region through a coordinated and collaborative approach that optimises our skills and resource sharing opportunities. The key drivers for this approach have been

political, economic, and environmental imperatives including the requirements of the State Government targets and initiatives, the need to protect the environment and the economic benefits of sharing resources.

Over the past 9 years, under the NSW EPA's Waste Less Recycle More initiative, significant progress has been made in areas such as organics collection and processing, managing household problem wastes, waste avoidance and improved engagement of the commercial sector. However, the traditional challenges of limited landfill capacity in the region and a reliance on export of residual waste to South East Queensland remain and have been further exacerbated by the advent of the bushfires, the pandemic, and most recently the 2022 floods. A new approach is required to meet these challenges,

backed by genuine cooperation and innovative waste prevention measures, if we are to achieve a more resilient region.

This new Strategy will respond to the NSW EPA's Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 (WASM), the more sustainable aspirations of other regional planning instruments and our member Councils own waste strategies. We intend to build on our past successes and develop new approaches to waste management that focus on retaining, enhancing, and circulating, not simply recovering, our regional resources.

North East Waste will continue to work closely with all stakeholders in our region, the NSW EPA and other agencies to fulfill the objectives and adhere to the principles outlined in this document.

Vision & PURPOSE

Our vision is to achieve more sustainable waste management and better resource recovery in the North East Waste region through a proactive, collaborative approach with our regional member Councils, the NSW EPA and the Northern Rivers community.

The purpose of this Strategy is to set out the direction North East Waste will take to achieve better waste avoidance, reduction and resource recovery for our region while supporting the targets of the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041: Stage 1 – 2021-2027 and the National Waste Policy Action Plan.

We aim to do this by:

- Delivering targeted and effective projects that engage and build capacity in our communities to improve waste minimisation and management outcomes.
- Creating strong Council partnerships that support collaboration and optimise resource sharing and funding opportunities.
- Involving the community through social enterprises and the development of local markets in recovered resources.
- Identifying gaps in infrastructure and secondary processing.
- Pursuing sustainable procurement opportunities that support reuse and recycling.
- Adhering to the principles of regional cooperation, the circular economy and the waste hierarchy.
- Communicating and sharing our knowledge while striving for leadership and innovation in waste.



Guiding PRINCIPLES

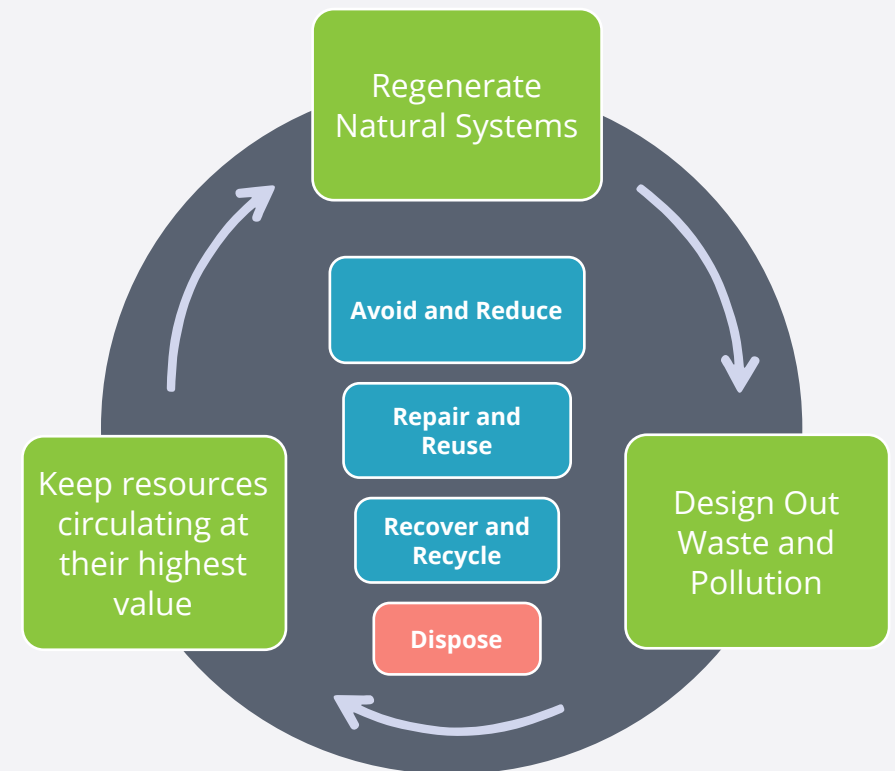
The principles that guide our actions need to be forefront in our mind when developing and implementing this Strategy. Fundamental to our operations is the need to collaborate regionally, support the waste hierarchy and move towards a more circular economy that reduces our emissions.

A balance needs to be struck between these principles and meeting the challenges local government face in the current resource recovery environment.

Through regional collaboration we can provide consistent messaging to reduce waste generation, recover more resources and find solutions to deal with what's left over. We can do this by exploring opportunities, facilitating connections, and providing Councils with a safe forum to share ideas and consider options. This collaboration gives Councils a conduit to State Government and provides a regional perspective to the State's regulatory and programs space that Councils don't have the capacity to engage in.

We continue to advocate adherence to the waste hierarchy and its fundamental tenets guide our planning and aspirations. We feel it fits within the broader principles of moving towards a more circular economy and is still relevant in the waste management activities we undertake, as the circular system encompasses avoiding and minimising waste and promoting the continual reuse of resources. In our transition to a more circular economy we aspire to the principle that to be truly circular means zero waste where nothing is thrown away, because waste is designed out by making things for repair, disassembly and reuse. However, we acknowledge that this remains an aspirational goal as the mechanisms required to reach this point are beyond the capacity of a regional waste group.

The Waste Hierarchy and WASM Principles for a circular economy



Background/ POLICY CONTEXT



BACKGROUND

This is the third in a series of strategies developed over the past 10 years to meet the challenging and changing landscape of waste management. There is an increased emphasis in this Strategy on reducing emissions and finding circular economy solutions, to help meet some of these challenges and to redefine concepts of 'waste' in our communities.

This Strategy has been developed in consultation with the NSW EPA and its structure is determined by their guidelines. Extensive consultation has also been undertaken with Councils' waste and education staff to accommodate and reflect the objectives of our members' current waste strategies, particularly as they work towards circular economy and zero waste outcomes. To further ensure its effective implementation, input has been provided by the NE Waste project coordinators, who were responsible for developing and delivering projects under the previous strategy 2013-21.

In NSW, waste activities and strategy are primarily governed by the State under the direction of the NSW EPA and at a Federal level by the National Waste Policy and the Product Stewardship Scheme. This Strategy sits within this legislative framework and supports the intention and targets of the following instruments:

NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041:

- Stage 1 – 2021-2027 that focuses on the environmental benefits and economic opportunities in how we manage our waste.
- NSW Plastics Action Plan that focuses on problem plastics, litter and research.
- The Circular Economy Policy Statement, which sets out the guiding principles to transition the State towards a circular economy.
- Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020–2030, aimed at reducing and offsetting carbon emissions, including from waste, to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- The National Waste Action Plan 2019 and Annexure 2022, which outlines the targets and actions required to deliver the 2018 National Waste Policy.

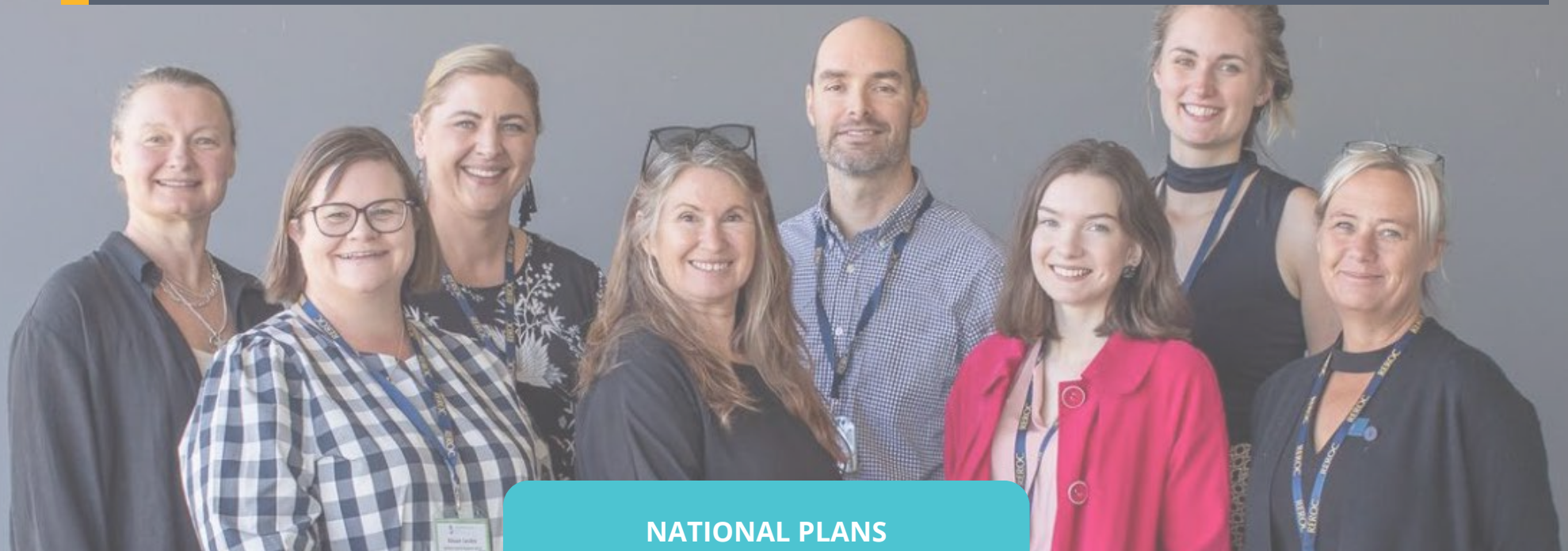
The targets for these Initiatives are to:

- Reduce the waste generated per person by 10%, increase resource recovery to 80%, triple the plastics recycling rate and halve the organic waste going to landfill by 2030.
- By 2025 the target is to phase out problem plastics and reduce litter by 30% (60% by 2030).
- Significantly increase the use of recycled content by government and industry.

In addition to these higher level targets our Strategy needs to encompass more regional aspirations. Therefore, in developing this document we:

- Worked extensively with other regional waste groups in NSW;
- Incorporated the aspirations and ideas of our member Councils through their own waste strategies and circular economy initiatives;
- Considered other regional plans such as the Draft North Coast Regional Plan 2041, which sets a 20-year strategic land use planning framework for our region.

Strategic placement of the regional response to the WASM strategy with other plans and strategies



NATIONAL PLANS

National Waste Policy Action Plan



LOCAL PLANS

- North Coast Regional Plan 2041
- Local council strategic plans
- Local council waste management plans
- Local council community plans



This Strategy

Regional WASM

WASM Regional
Response



STATE PLANS

- Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041
- NSW Plastics Action Plan
- NSW Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030

Our Performance & OUTCOMES TO DATE



Despite the challenges of the past 4 years and an increasing population, NE Waste Councils have reduced the amount of waste and recycling collected at kerbside in the region since 2018-19, with an overall downward trend until the flood event of 2021-22. The recycling rate has remained constant at around 59%, and despite fires, floods and COVID-19 presenting significant waste management challenges, our region has performed strongly against the State average of 46.1 percent for 2021-22.

These results have been achieved through the delivery of multiple programs and projects over many years and are too numerous to list however, highlights include the delivery of many core projects such as

- Food Waste Avoidance/Diversion Programs
- Recycle Right Campaign
- School And Community Engagement Initiatives
- Business Programs & Circular Cafes
- Food Donation
- Asbestos Awareness
- Illegal Dumping & Litter
- Community Recycling Of Household Problem Wastes
- Regional Emergency Response Support for Waste Management (Covid-19 & Floods)

Collection and Diversion

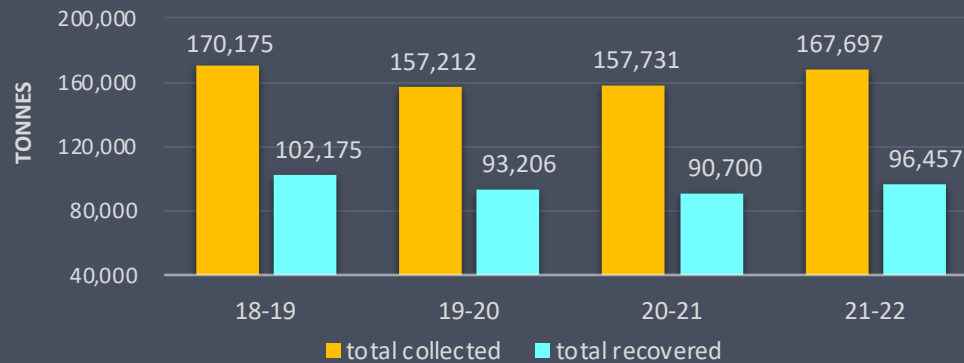
We calculate our annual tonnages by combining the waste collected at our kerbsides with waste and resources taken to landfills and transfer stations across the region.

These figures are reported annually to our Councils and the NSW EPA.

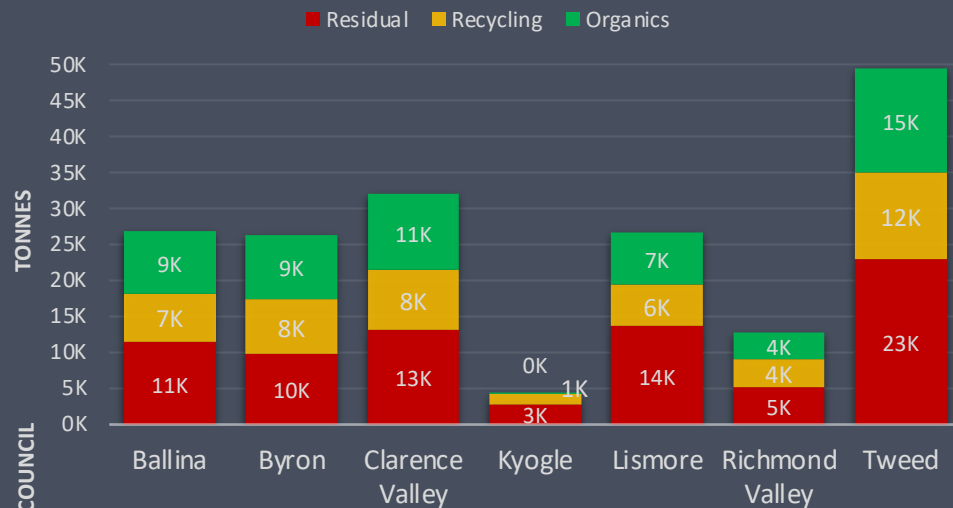
Our performance over time has improved and we have been able to maintain a recovery rate well above the State average, that we aim to increase with the implementation of this Strategy.

The increased uptake of Food and Garden Organic (FOGO) services has helped improve our recovery, diverting more than 60,000 tonnes of methane generating organic material from landfills in 21-22 (below). Now that systems are in place our aim is to further increase this diversion and target the organic material that remains in the household and commercial waste bins.

Tonnes Collected And Tonnes Recovered



Tonnes by waste stream in 2020/21



**RESIDUAL WASTE
DROPPED OFF**
20,495
TONNES

**RECYCLING
DROPPED OFF**
1,876
TONNES

**GARDEN ORGANICS
DROPPED OFF**
13,014
TONNES



Organics Management Programs

NE Waste Organics Management Programs cover avoidance, recovery and recycling with householders and businesses. The following have featured highly over the years supported by grant funding:

LOVE FOOD HATE WASTE



Love Food Hate Waste aims to divert good food from landfill and promoting household and business food waste avoidance through workshops, events, communication campaigns, school program, business audits, case studies and action plans.

SCRAP TOGETHER Campaign



Promoting household FOGO recycling, diverting food from landfill and decreasing contamination, the NSW EPA's Scrap Together campaign was delivered intensively in our region from June 2022 - December 2022. The resources will continue to be used and improved.

FOOD DONATION Program



Feasibility study led to a program to improve networking and collaboration between food donors and relief agencies to reduce the quantity of surplus edible food going to waste. A multimedia campaign has been developed including TV commercials, a toolkit, newsletter and professional development workshops for food donation agencies.

CIRCULAR CAFES



BY WORKING TOGETHER
WITH BUSINESS, OUR MEMBER
COUNCILS, AND WASTE SERVICE
PROVIDERS

OUR GOAL

WAS TO DIVERT 726 TONNES OF
FOOD WASTE FROM LANDFILL
WITHIN 12 MONTHS



Our business program worked with 100 cafes and restaurants across the region to introduce food waste avoidance and recycling and implement other resource recovery options.

Avoidance and Resource Recovery Programs

These are developed with our stakeholders and delivered for our regional community with support from NSW EPA funding.

COMMUNITY AND SCHOOLS ENGAGEMENT



Community and schools engagement is designed, delivered and evaluated on behalf of member Councils, through our Wipe out Waste Program and education team. It includes workshops, community events, school programs, partnerships, social media and annual programs including Plastic Free July, Second Hand Saturday and National Recycling Week.

ASBESTOS, ILLEGAL DUMPING & LITTER



Reduce the number of incidents of littering and illegal dumping and increase the frequency of public reporting through partnerships, improved infrastructure and prevention, communication campaigns, council training and capacity building. Improving public awareness around the safe management and disposal of household asbestos to reduce risk.

COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRES



Delivers a communication and education program that maximises community use of the regions network of 8 CRCs and 30 drop off stations. It has resulted in the recycling of 1,213 tonnes of household problem wastes over 6 years with an average saving of \$410,875 p.a. for member Councils.

RECYCLE RIGHT Campaign



Developed by NE Waste, filmed and designed locally, #Recycle Right is a multimedia communication program. It aims to increase resource recovery and reduce contamination.

Adopted and adapted by a further 30 Councils in 3 States.

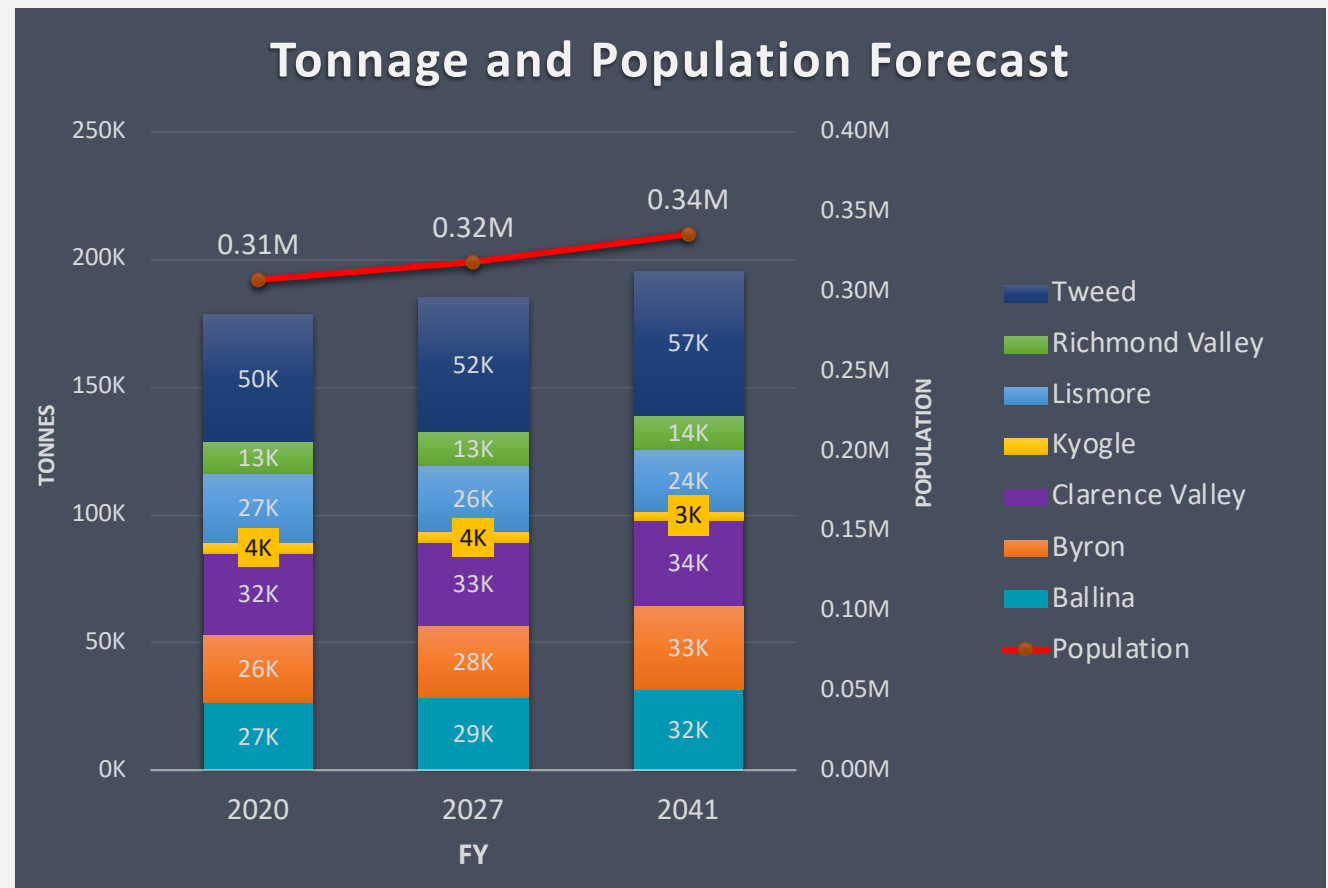
Population & PROJECTIONS

According to the ABS 2020, the region has a population of 307,047 living in 135,511 households. (see table) The average household contains 2.3 people.

There are 119,290 waste services provided, 116,701 recycling services and 90,776 FOGO services. All households have access to a drop off facility.

By 2041 our population is predicted to increase to 335,874. The amount of waste and recycling generated by the region at this time is expected to be in the vicinity of 196,000 tonnes; this is an additional 17,000 tonnes on top of the amount that was generated in 2020.

Population ABS 2020 Council	45,217 Ballina Shire	35,773 Byron Shire	51,730 Clarence Valley
8,788 Kyogle	43,667 Lismore City	23,490 Richmond Valley	98,382 Tweed Shire



Infrastructure & SERVICES

Infrastructure for recycling and organics processing is distributed evenly across the region. There are organics processing facilities at Stotts Creek in the north (FOGO - food and garden organics), Grafton in the south (FOGO) and at Byron (GO - garden organics only) in the middle of the region. There are material recycling facilities (MRF's) at Chinderah (Tweed Shire), Lismore and Grafton. There are 8 Community Recycling Centres (CRC's), 30 Community Recycling Stations (CRS's) and 4 Hazardous Waste Sheds for the collection and recycling or disposal of problem wastes (e.g. batteries and paint) and chemicals, giving good geographical coverage. All Councils have a tip or revolve shop to reuse and repurpose items and there are a number of more specialised opportunities for materials such as polystyrene, asbestos and timber.



Photo courtesy of Byron Echo News (echo.net.au)

The NE Waste region has a comprehensive kerbside collection service and a range of waste and recycling facilities (see below)

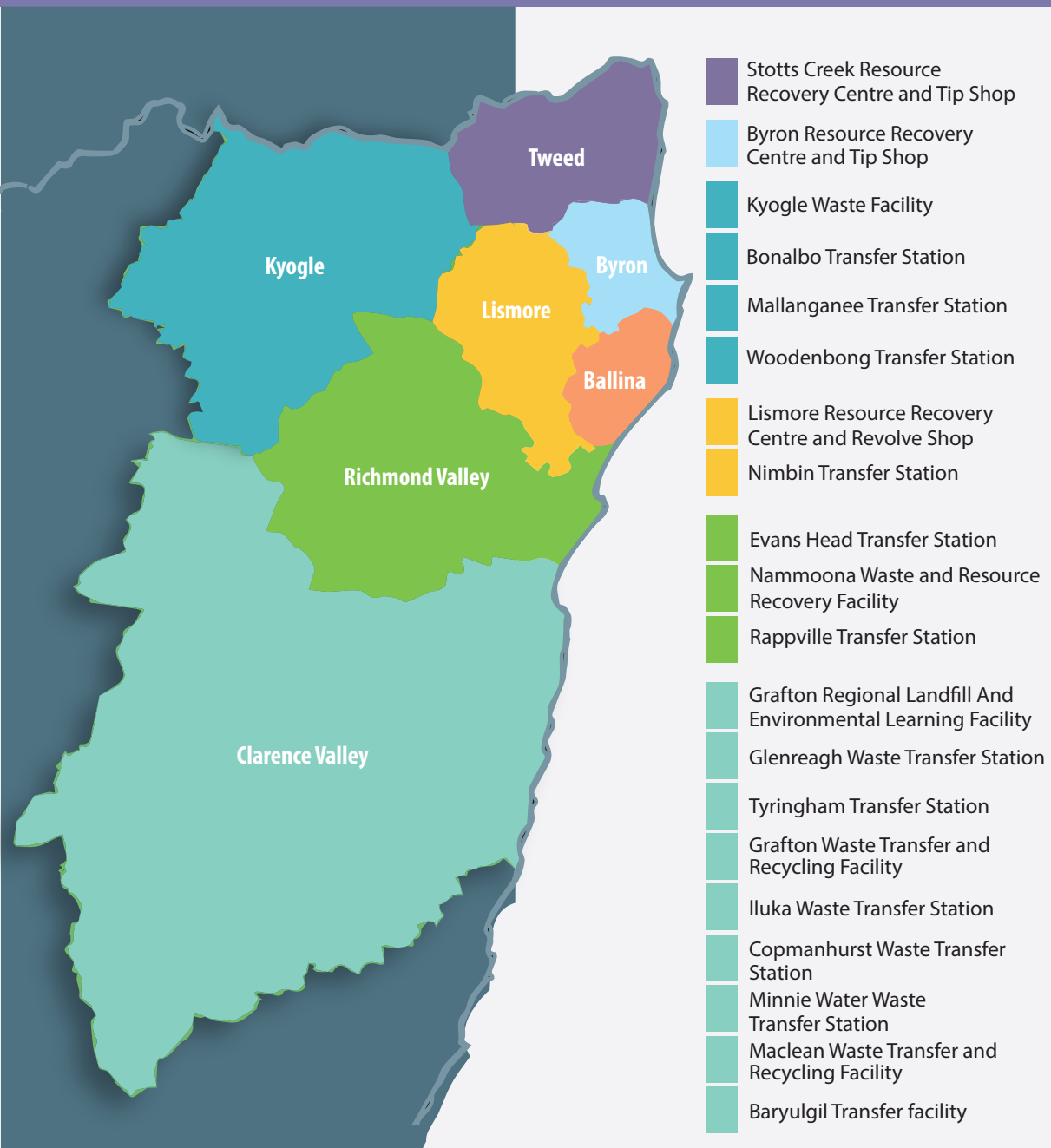


TABLE 1 | REGIONAL LANDFILL CAPACITY

Council Landfill	Capacity plus approved expansion (approx in tonnes)	Closure (year)	Potential unapproved (tonnes)	Landfill (L) or Transfer Station (TS)	MRF	Processing facility	Tip shop	CRC	Chemical Collection Shed	Landfill Gas capture/ flaring
Ballina Waste Management Facility (inactive)	2,500	2024-25	500,000	TS			★	★		
Byron Resource Recovery Centre (inactive)	10,000	2023	Nil	TS		MAF Composting, EPS	★	★		★
Clarence Valley Grafton Regional Landfill	416,000	2030	2,000,000	TS & L	★	Tunnel composting	★	★★	★	★
Kyogle Landfill	158,328	2052		TS & L			★	★		
Lismore Wyrallah Road Landfill	225,360	2028	500,000	TS & L		Glass Crusher, EPS	★	★	★	
Richmond Valley Namoona landfill	250,000	2037	Nil	TS & L			★	★	★	
Tweed Stotts Creek Resource Recovery Centre	849,572 (including 153,000 constructed)	2050+	1,000,000	TS & L		Tunnel composting	★	★	★	★

TABLE 3 | REGIONAL COLLECTION SERVICES

Council	Residential Kerbside waste and recycling	Kerbside FOGO	Commercial waste and recycling	Commercial FOGO	Bulk collection/ Vouchers
Ballina	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Byron	✓	✓	✓	✓	Vouchers
Clarence	✓	✓	✓	✓	Bulk
Kyogle	✓	In progress	✓	Opt in	Vouchers
Lismore	✓	✓	✓	✓	Vouchers
Richmond	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tweed	✓	✓	✓	✓	Book in



Kerbside food and garden organics (FOGO) collection began in Lismore City Council in 1999 - the first Council to introduce a kerbside collection in Australia. Since then, 5 councils have moved to a weekly FOGO and fortnightly waste and recycling service collection for residential properties. The frequency of commercial services for FOGO depends on their location, but a number of businesses, such as cafes, receive a twice weekly service. The last Council to adopt FOGO is Kyogle, who were successful in obtaining a grant in 2022 and will implement their new 3 bin system in July 2023.

In 2020 we worked with the NSW EPA to identify the level of carbon abatement we had achieved from our FOGO services. We will continue to pursue emissions reduction and quantify our carbon abatement under our new Strategy.

Total NE Waste region Greenhouse Gas savings due to FOGO services by Local Governments

75,269
tonnes CO₂e

Or the average emissions of around



34,178
cars p.a.



Challenges & RESPONSE

Delivering projects and finding common ground across a region of seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) is understandably challenging. Local governments are charged with providing best practice services and infrastructure to their constituents and must balance the costs and benefits of doing so across all their activities. They encompass a diversity of ideas and positions and naturally seek to deliver what is best for their individual communities. Navigating a way forward to regional solutions requires agreement from all member Councils and takes time, commitment and resources.

This Strategy recognises some of the challenges 'which includes:

- Adequate waste disposal options due to limited landfill capacity in some areas and a reliance on SEQ for disposal.
- A growing population resulting in increased waste generation, and our regional capacity to landfill, recover materials and provide services that cater for this increase.
- The significant quantities of organics, and other potentially recyclable materials, that remain in the landfill bin.
- Lack of regional solutions or new businesses to deal with hard to recycle wastes such as mattresses, plastics, textiles and composite materials.
- Keeping a collaborative dialogue that results in equitable and collective decision making.
- Uncertainty in a changing regulatory environment and shifting market place, as well as rapidly evolving technological innovation.
- Ability to respond to emergency/disaster waste management.



Flood waste clean up in Lismore, 2022.

- The high cost to transport resources and so broaden resource recovery services in regional and rural areas and the distance from the existing resource recovery processing facilities or markets.
- The difficulty for contingency planning due to our geographic location, diverse industries and population density differences.
- Securing funding and its misalignment with the increasing costs associated with waste management and the levy.

Over the next 5 years we aim to find responses to some of the challenges we have outlined above. To achieve this we will:

- Actively seek innovative solutions or markets for materials that present at our landfills and transfer stations and are more difficult to recover than traditional recyclables, such as soft plastics, textiles, solar panels and commercial wastes.
- Identify the technological, political and social appetite for regional infrastructure sharing or solutions e.g. MRFs or other facilities that achieve economies of scale, include contingency options and are palatable to all member Councils.
- Establish, update and maintain our waste database for robust planning and decision making.
- Develop a proactive regional disaster management plan for waste management in floods, fires and other natural disaster situations.
- Explore new and innovative ways to further reduce our emissions from waste management activities.

Discussions have started and funding has been allocated to begin developing a disaster management plan that

- Has processes and procedures in place to respond quickly to waste removal and disposal needs.
- Identifies communication protocols and contacts to liaise with in an emergency.
- Identifies and maps designated interim sites for different waste types e.g. hazardous wastes, green waste.
- Works to establish equity in waste and resource recovery programs within vulnerable communities.
- Progresses to provide additional and immediate support to any State Government plan.
- Lobbies State Government to provide funding support such as levy relief in times of natural disasters.
- Includes planning considerations to ensure floor heights and choice of materials is included in flood prone areas.

OUR PRIORITIES & WASM

In preparation of this Strategy our 7 Councils undertook a survey to determine our priorities to inform the future activities of our implementation plan. The survey clearly identified, in order of priority, the following area for action:



As a result of this survey and consultation with other waste groups 4 regional themes were established:



Avoid & Reduce



Recover



Protect

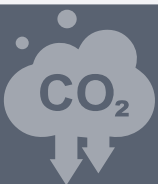


Collaborate

These regional themes were aligned to the 3 WASM Priority areas to develop our objectives:

- 1 Meeting our future infrastructure and service needs.


- 2 Reducing carbon emissions through better waste and materials management.

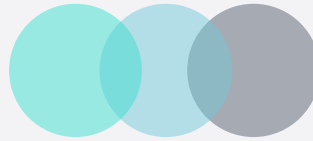

- 3 Building on our work to protect the environment and human health from waste pollution.



Key : **I**= Infrastructure and service needs, **C**= Reduce carbon emissions, **P**= Protect human health and the environment

RESPONSE to WASM		NSW EPA Priorities and Strategy Themes			
Objectives	WASM Priorities	Avoid Reduce	Recover Resources	Protect The Environment	Strategic Collaboration
Contribute to the reduction of total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030	C, P	●	●		
Contribute to average recovery rate of 80% for all streams by 2030	I, C, P		●		
Continue to divert organic waste from landfill	C, I	●	●		
Support the NSW Govt to meet their target of net Zero emissions by 2050 through better waste and materials management	C, P			●	
Investigate and support innovative circular solutions to regional waste management	I, C	●	●		
Engage the community to correctly dispose of problem and hazardous waste	P			●	
Support the implementation of the NSW Plastics Plan	C, P		●	●	
Reduce the impact of litter and/or Illegal dumping on the environment	P			●	
Actively encourage equity in waste and resource recovery programs within vulnerable communities	P, I				●
Encourage Councils to achieve sustainable procurement outcomes to close the loop for greater local Circular Economy outcomes	C	●	●		
Support future waste and resource recovery infrastructure needs	I		●		●
Facilitate regional collaboration to improve disaster resilience	P, I			●	●
Facilitate regional collaboration for improved waste management planning	I, C				●
Continue to foster effective communication and collaboration with all stakeholders	I				●
Continue to advocate and contribute to policy decisions on behalf of RWG members	I				●

Our INTENTION



The development of our Action Plan and implementation of this Strategy is dependent on

1 the continued support of our Councils and the NSW EPA for operational funds and

2 the availability and release of grant funding and our success in securing this funding stream

The development of a full range of potential delivery mechanisms (actions) for the strategy will be undertaken in consultation with our Councils waste managers and educators and our own project coordinators, and an annual Action Plan will be completed by June 2023. It is anticipated that this consultation process will occur annually to remain flexible to changing priorities.

The Action Plan forms the first step in implementing the objectives of this strategy. It will continue to be a working document that will be updated annually as its progress against the key performance indicators are evaluated. It will also be flexible enough to adapt any changing policy direction and emerging technologies.

In the interim, at quarterly meetings, the actions will be scrutinised as part of an ongoing monitoring plan to strengthen the strategy's implementation. This monitoring process will provide an opportunity to measure progress towards targets, check against original objectives and determine if our actions are on schedule. In this way, our implementation plan will be kept at the forefront of the groups discussions, providing a mechanism for the review of our objectives. It will also allow for early identification of barriers to implementation and adjustment for future activities.



NORTH EAST WASTE REGIONAL WASTE STRATEGY
2022 -2027

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