Draft Solid Waste Management & Minimisation Bylaw

Supplementary Information

To support hearings and deliberations 16 October 2024

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1. Meeting with Master Builders and Certified Builders representatives

On 12 September, Council officers met with Kate Moses (Jennian Homes, President Master Builders, Ashburton), Andrea Lee (Fowler Homes, Ashburton & Immediate Past President, Master Builders, Ashburton) & Jonathan Rive (J Rive Construction & President, Certified Builders, Ashburton).

This meeting was in response to the consultation document. Kate, Andrea & Jonathan approached us to clarify the proposal and to give some feedback from a construction sector viewpoint.

At the meeting they raised some questions, which we answered in writing on 16 September as follows:

1. **How much recycled material actually gets recycled?**
   In New Zealand, most estimates of diversion from landfill for recyclable materials are in the 28-30% range – we do poorly in comparison with other developed countries and the best of them (Germany, Austria, Wales) are around 50% or recyclables diverted from landfill. A lot of that is recyclables going straight into the wrong bin.

   If I understand your question correctly, you are asking about how much material that has been separated and sorted by the householder or business owner or builder is in fact re-used or recycled – and how much ends up still going in the landfill despite having been sorted. We couldn't find any data on that.

   Normally, there are three reasons why recycled materials end up in a landfill.
   1. The recycled material is a contaminated load. The recyclables are mixed up with other items that can't be recycled and the whole load is treated as rubbish. Most of what comes from our public litter bins is contaminated and something like 1% of our kerbside yellow bins are contaminated.
   2. Markets disappear or cannot take the materials for whatever reason leaving landfill as the lowest cost disposal method.
   3. Waste goes to unreliable operators (sometimes overseas) and is dumped not repurposed.

2. **Where does all Ashburton's plastic recycling actually go?**
   Ashburton's plastics from Kerbside collection get sorted into their like materials (1,2 and 5's) and sent to different locations for further processing. In New Zealand, our number 1 plastics are recycled into new products onshore. Number 2 and 5 plastics are further sorted, cleaned, and chipped or shredded to become a commodity that can be sold to create more products. Some of these products are produced onshore.

   Building plastics that can be recycled are polystyrene, some soft plastics (pink batt wrapping and pellet wrap) as well as large items like paint pails.

3. **If a more selective recycling process for construction waste was developed, would it reduce costs or will it require extra staff to deliver it and therefore higher costs?**
   If, for example, Council was to establish a series of bins for recyclable building materials at the Resource Recovery Parks that builders could bring their recycled materials to, this may not require a great deal of extra staff resources but there may well be costs getting the materials to a market. Most glass in NZ is repurposed in Auckland. Soft plastics can be repurposed but there are few collection points in the South Island and most processing is in the North Island. Whether Council would pass those costs on at the weighbridge or elsewhere is something to be determined.

At the meeting they also gave us feedback on the WMMP proposal. That feedback drew on their own experiences managing building waste, as well as lessons from the building sector locally and nationally. The feedback included:

1. Every builder is unique. Some are Group Housing companies that have to follow the rules of the Group. Some operate under license and have greater autonomy. Some pursue sustainable building approaches, including optimizing recycling, as part of their value proposition as a business. All of them have to win work and deliver value for their customers in a competitive market.
2. There are a number of barriers to WMMPs as a tool to increase diversion from landfill. These include:
   a. Preparing a WMMP is more paperwork and therefore more compliance cost; and
   b. Builders are not necessarily natural administrators, and some find the paperwork end of the business really stressful; and
   c. Every job is unique so every plan is, to some extent, also unique; and
   d. Managing multiple staff and sub-contractors to follow the plan across the life of the project is time-consuming and can be frustrating; and
   e. Most sites have limited space which makes it difficult to operate a multi-skip solution. Experience in large subdivisions in Auckland, where multi-skip solutions were offered on vacant sections in the subdivision to reduce cartage was it worked for sections close to the skips but not for sections further away from the skips.
   f. There are companies that will take the skip away to an off-site sorting facility but these options are expensive; and
   g. If builders choose to sort on their own premises, this requires space that some do not have; and
   h. If they do sort then they need space to store what they keep for re-use; and
   i. If they are not going to reuse a product themselves, then they need to find someone who will take it.
3. Some products are more difficult to get rid of, such as soft plastics. Some product manufacturers offer “takeback’ services, but not all of them. Those services are often located in larger centres, so being outside a metropolitan centre is more limiting because we don’t generate the volumes to warrant local processing.
4. Some products attract fees for commercial operators but are free for residential households. e.g. polystyrene. So if the builder unpacks and installs a new kitchen/household worth of appliances with the attendant polystyrene packaging, that attracts a cost to dispose of that either gets charged back to their customers or absorbed by the builder. If they leave it on site and the customer takes it in, it’s free.
5. The representatives from Master Builders and Certified Builders felt that the most useful things Council could do to support builders with recycling of materials would be:
   a. An education session (at the Resource Recovery Park) for local builders and sub-contractors on what materials can be recycled and reused (and what can’t); and
   b. Information for builders on where they can take (or send) their reusable materials where this is not gathered locally.

2. Other Research

2.1 Government Approach to Reducing Construction and demolition waste going to landfill.

In its discussion document on the second Emissions Reduction Plan, the Government made the following statement:

"The Government has committed to waste minimisation investment priorities (for the Waste Minimisation Fund (WMF)) that will also support the reduction of emissions, including during the second emissions budget period. A proportion of the WMF will target infrastructure projects and systems that reduce organic waste and emissions (and other waste streams) within New Zealand, including those that:

- *divert organic waste, including from construction and demolition, and process it*
- *develop and implement schemes for businesses, manufacturers and consumers to take responsibility for the products they produce and buy (product stewardship schemes)*
- *expand and upgrade resource recovery facilities (including transfer stations)*
- *investigate and, where appropriate, develop infrastructure for renewable energy recovery of hard-to-recycle materials (e.g., wood waste)".*

Submissions on the discussion document closed in August 2024 and Government is required to publish its second ERP by the end of 2024.

2.2 Environment Select Committee briefing on reducing construction and demolition waste going to landfill

In August 2023, the Environment Select Committee reported back on its briefing on reducing construction and demolition waste. That report is included in the Stellar papers. Please be aware that:

- This reflects findings of a Select Committee under the previous Government, so its conclusions do not reflect the thinking or the priorities of the current Government.
- It does provide a useful summary of the operating environment and the challenges for waste diversion for construction and demolition waste. For example:

  "There are options for processing waste and diverting it from landfill. They include:

  - *preventing or reducing waste at a building's design and deconstruction phases*
  - *systematically recovering material during demolition*

- *reusing materials (including waste materials like offcuts)*
- *recycling and separating waste on-site.*

There are challenges to adopting these options.

We heard that, in New Zealand, infrastructure for processing and diverting waste is mostly available in the Auckland area. Waste reduction and recovery decisions are determined by builders, manufacturers, procurers, and others on an ad hoc basis. Decisions to recover, process, and reprocess materials are generally influenced by time and financial considerations. We heard that the expectations of clients and procurers can be important in promoting lower-waste construction projects.

We heard from organisations that have taken steps to reduce construction and demolition waste. These approaches have provided reusable materials, fixtures, and fittings to community organisations, including marae, churches, and rehabilitation programmes. They have provided opportunities for new contractors. Some of these initiatives have created employment in their communities. The TROW Group provides recovered materials to the Pacific Islands to support communities there. Timber from old public housing is being used to create new furniture and assist with skills training in Tonga.

Submitters generally consider that the management of construction and demolition waste is incentivised to focus on disposal rather than resource recovery. This is due to a lack of end-market demand for waste products, the inability to sort the material to a quality standard, and a lack of emphasis, incentives, and knowledge about waste minimisation across the system."

- It is supportive of waste management and minimisation plans. Our submitters, our discussions with the building sector, and our understanding of the services available outside the main centres lead Council officers to the view that information and education, plus central investment in resource recovery facilities and product stewardship schemes will be more helpful for Ashburton District.

- Comments on local government bylaws (referring to Porirua City and the greater Wellington region) does not make it clear that the Porirua approach is also discretionary (but more like Christchurch City than Ashburton District) and would drive more compliance costs as it extends beyond planning to requiring builders to report on waste diverted from landfill.

- Our capacity to analyse plans, let alone compare results with plans and act on that information, is limited and that capacity is being directed into day-to-day solid waste operations and the new solid waste contract including future FOGO kerbside collection. FOGO is a larger and more climate-sensitive waste stream than construction and demolition waste in Ashburton District.