

Submission to Palmerston North City Council Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2024-2030.

Contact Details

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Overview

A submission on behalf of Environment Network Manawātū in particular its Palmerston North City focused member groups regarding all aspects of the given proposal.

ENM would like the opportunity to speak to this submission.

Background

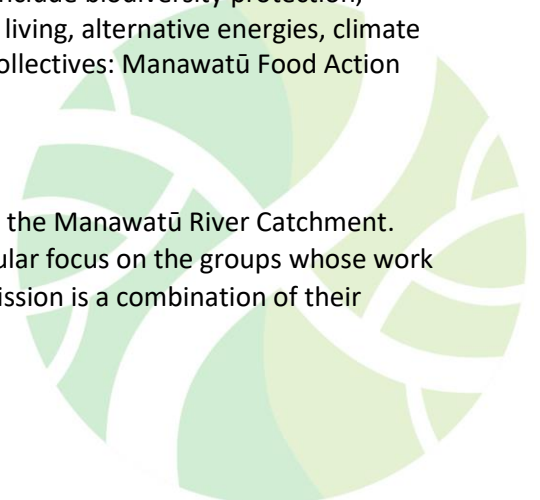
ENM exists to connect and inspire communities for environmental action. We are the environment hub for the Manawātū region providing sector leadership, building capacity and capability, and creating community.

Understanding that all life is part of a thriving, self-sustaining ecosystem our vision is that the ecological and human communities in the Manawātū River catchment, are living in harmony.

We work strategically to demonstrate best-practice as a member-led environmental organisation. We promote environmental activities and advocate for positive environmental outcomes. We connect volunteers, support organisational sustainability, provide educational opportunities, and seek to increase the stream of funding to the sector. We support and enable our membership through meeting needs, holding space, and creating opportunities for increased connections. We celebrate the diverse passions of our 65+ member groups, that include biodiversity protection, freshwater quality, food resilience, waste reduction, sustainable living, alternative energies, climate action and active transport. The network is organised into two collectives: Manawātū Food Action Network and Manawātū River Source to Sea

Submission Context

Our network is composed of groups and organisations who span the Manawātū River Catchment. We consulted with them as part of this submission with a particular focus on the groups whose work takes place within Palmerston North City Boundaries. This submission is a combination of their



thoughts, and our organisational knowledge of 23 years of work in the sector. All our 65+ member groups have had the opportunity to view and provide feedback on this document.

Submission

Issue 1. Food Scraps and Green Waste

We support the introduction of a city-wide kerbside collection service that includes both food scraps and green waste.

We believe this is best done in collaboration with localised food composting systems. ENM recently completed a successful 10-week community composting trial in Palmerston North, with the aim of encouraging and enabling people to compost their food waste locally. As well as turning a waste product into a valuable resource, the pilot increased social cohesion, as participants taking their waste to the composting sites made new connections. To reduce food waste to landfill, we also encourage PNCC to support local food recycling/composting and surplus food redistribution initiatives, for example Community Fruit Harvest Manawatū, Just Zilch and the work Supergrans Manawatū does in collaboration with these two entities to preserve food. These are **not** noted in the draft WMMP.

Issue 2. Review of services

We support the plan to investigate different ways of delivering kerbside collection services.

We understand that PNCC is the last council in New Zealand to directly provide a kerbside waste collection service alongside recycling collection. We also understand that this gives council valuable insight into the composition of waste, and information to help educate the public and commercial sector on how it can be effectively minimised. We also understand that this is not necessarily the aim of for-profit waste collectors who market larger bins, and incentivise the filling of them, often with items that could be recycled or composted. We support your proposal to investigate if your role as a waste collector is limiting our ability to regulate other waste collectors.

We note reference in the potential licensing of waste collectors. We would hope that this would mean a more uniform focus on minimisation and that better data collection, and regulations can be enforced.

Issue 3 Waste minimisation targets:

We support the inclusion of performance standards aim for 30% of household kerbside waste to be diverted from landfill by July 2026 rising to 50% by July 2030 as your waste minimisation target.

We understand that to mitigate increased costs and to protect the environment that waste reduction and reuse is optimal, and that **community education** goes hand in hand with this. We notice this is a budgeted part of the WMMP. We also strongly advocate for the responsible management of waste so that it has minimal impact on the environment. We champion the work of **Palmerston North Repair Café** as a strong waste minimisation initiative in the region, which serves to reduce the number of items sent to landfill, educates the public in how to mend, and creates an important sense of community connection and cohesion.

We highly encourage the promotion of product stewardship and the re-use of packaging such as glass bottles, where possible. Having a refund scheme that encourages people to collect and return to manufacturers is an important lever to reduce waste to landfill. We encourage PNCC to consider supporting local initiatives toward reuse as well as using its voice to advocate for improved national policy on packaging and implementation of product stewardship schemes.

Through the provision of Terracycle recycling options in our office this year, we have found that there is a huge demand from the public to recycle their health-related waste. We have discovered that the scope of this issue is well beyond us to deal with on a box-by-box scale. Waste audits around the country will no doubt show that there is a significant level of medical waste (including personal use blister packs for medicine packaging) going to landfill, and the industry needs to be made to take responsibility for this through national-level policy change. We strongly encourage PNCC to use their voice to seek change on national and industry levels.

Additional commentary

Demolition waste and soft plastics

We are aware from recent LTP community consultations that there is conversation beginning around more centralised soft plastics and demolition waste recycling facilities. We support the centralisation of this and councils collaborating to achieve better for-purpose outcomes in these spaces.

Repair Café's

This is a growing movement globally and Aotearoa/New Zealand is no exception. Six new cafés alone are being launched in April, bringing our national total to 44. Palmerston North Repair Café is proud to be part of this movement and to have been funded by the Resource Recovery Fund for the last two consecutive years. With strong organisational coordination, volunteer support and public use, we understand our café to be a small, but shiny jewel in the crown of our city-wide waste minimisation efforts. It is pinpointed and referenced directly in the draft WMMP as a key initiative. We suggest, in this understanding that it should be taken out of the contestable funding arena and be recognised and resourced as a key initiative.

The Repair Café is just one example of a suite of work undertaken by ENM toward reducing waste to landfill. The scope of community groups to work together strongly toward resource recovery in creative and collaborative ways should be recognised and supported with adequate resourcing. There are many strong examples around the country where creative community-led solutions have been developed that provide excellent resource recovery and community outcomes.

The MRF

We support the redevelopment of this facility to make it more fit for purpose. We advocate, as part of this plan a facility to recover useable 'waste' to be recovered and sold. We use the example of the Waimarino (Ohakune) Reuse Shop which is operated by Ethical Waste a private contractor who operates the site. This was opened in April 2020 and has become a community hub for locals and visitors.

Outcomes and objectives.

We support the concise, clear outcome statement in the WMMP. 'We want to minimise all waste and its impact on the environment.'

We also support the six key objectives with commentary on the following:

Objective one: Promote waste reduction. There is good promotion around how members of the public can reduce their waste. However, there is less evidence of how this works in the private sector who produce high volumes of waste. Increased communication around what happens in this space would be motivating; the onus to take individual responsibility often cause people to

disengage or become anxious to the sheer scale of the problem. Evidencing what is being done on a larger scale can be heartening and increase engagement.

Objective three: provide support to for-purpose organisations and local communities to recover, reuse, re-purpose or regenerate products. We understand this to be through grants provided through the Resource Recovery Fund, and through supporting those completing community clean ups with bags and rubbish disposal. In symbiosis with this, ENM is in the process of developing a clean up 'tool kit' which members of the community can borrow for events. This includes gloves, pick up sticks, high vis vests, waders, and bag holders. 'A Cleaner Palmy' uses these resources, as have Whakapai Hauora on a recent roadside clean up.

We believe what is needed is support for community-led development of waste minimisation initiatives. The previous version of the WMMP included the Zero Waste Action Group, with the model being led from council, rather than community with limited success. Despite this, there is increased emerging interest in the community space in resource recovery options, and ideas that could be developed further. ENM proposes that what is really needed is for these conversations to be truly community-led, and for allocated resourcing to be adequate to support the community's ideas to grow and thrive. In our experience, community-led development of ideas and support of groups to undertake new initiatives require a full-time resource to enable adequate relationship building, facilitation of conversations, development of ideas and strategic actions, and seeking additional resourcing to undertake prioritised initiatives.

Objective three. Divert Waste from Landfill. We have previously highlighted the small, but significant successes of Palmerston North Repair Café in this area. ENM has recently created partnerships so that people have option to recycle lids of all kinds, in the understanding that these are not accepted as part of municipal waste collection. We understand the benefits of offering this service to be many other than the actual upcycling aspect itself. It creates conversations, and connections for people who share their waste minimisation efforts and concerns and feel grateful that there are other options available to them.

Objective Four: Provide waste collection services including kerbside collection, the Ashhurst Transfer Station and public space rubbish bins. We suggest the increased provision of bins close to our rivers and streams. We understand that these may be in hard to empty places, but information from our 2022 'Beam along the Stream' event linked to the plastic pollution challenge suggested that more rubbish in key spaces would stop waste entering the waterways.

To conclude

It is the role of ENM to connect and inspire communities for environmental action, and to underpin and support their mahi. PNCC recognizes us as Sector Lead for the Environment and resources us for our role. We are appreciative for the partnership and healthy relationship with PNCC's Waste Minimisation team that we continue to have, and the conversations and initiatives it gives life to. We are supportive of the pre-emptive redraft of the WMMP as part of the LTP process to glean more comprehensive feedback, at a time when its evident that council needs to be increasingly proactive in the waste minimisation space.