Waste Services Strategy

2026-2036

Mildura Rural City Council

Acknowledgement of Country

Mildura Rural City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land which now comprise the Mildura Rural City municipality. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate and respect their continuing culture and acknowledge the memories of their ancestors.

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Executive Summary

A review has been carried out to assess how waste services are delivered across our region. The goal is to make services easier to use, more cost-effective, and better for the environment — now and into the future.

The review looked at everything from kerbside bins to transfer stations, landfills, illegal dumping, and community education. A three-tier assessment of options was undertaken for each of the Waste Service areas.

Why do we need a Waste Services Strategy?

Our community is growing, waste rules are changing, and the cost of running waste services continues to rise. Council wants to make sure services remain:

- Affordable
- Reliable
- Environmentally responsible
- Easy for residents to use

This Strategy helps Council plan for the next ten years.

Strategy Vision

Mildura Rural City Council will deliver waste and resource recovery services that are sustainable, accessible, financially responsible and responsive to community needs. Over the life of this Strategy, Council will work to reduce waste to landfill, improve recycling outcomes, strengthen community understanding of correct waste disposal, and support a more circular local economy.

How was the Strategy Developed?

Council engaged SMEC Australia Pty Ltd to undertake a review of Council's Waste services and develop a strategy for the provision of a long term, sustainable waste service for our community. SMEC engaged with Council waste and finance staff, along with using all relevant data and information to identify actions for implementation.

For each area, the two comparisons were undertaken:

- Business as Usual (keep things the same)
- Alternative options (new or improved ways of doing things)

SMEC then engaged AEC Group to develop a 10-year budget model for waste services using the recommendations from the SMEC work.

The detailed findings of this work, together with the key issues identified across Council's waste services, have informed the development of this high-level Strategy and the actions required to deliver the vision and outcomes outlined in the Council Plan 2025–2029:

Strategic Objective	Action	Measure	Action Owner	Timeframe for delivery
Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill	Expand the range of accepted materials at waste facilities and transfer stations—such as textiles and soft plastics—as opportunities and capacity allow.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Ongoing
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system.	Conduct a service feasibility study to investigate potential expansion of kerbside services to areas not currently serviced – such as Werrimull & Cullulleraine.	Tonnes of waste, organics, recycling and glass collected through the kerbside system	Manager Waste Services	Medium Term
Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill				
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system.	Transition the Mildura Landfill to a Transfer Station operating model to support long-term sustainable waste management.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Short Term
Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill				
Achieve long-term operational cost sustainability to enable a resilient waste services system.				
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system.	Undertake a review of Ouyen Landfill's operating hours to ensure they are aligned with operational demand and support improved service efficiency.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Short Term
Achieve long-term operational cost sustainability to enable a resilient waste services system.				

Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system. Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill Achieve long-term operational cost sustainability to enable a resilient waste services system.	Review the utilisation of rural transfer stations and evaluate alternative waste service models for areas where facilities have closed or operate via bin bank systems.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Short Term
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system. Deliver effective, future-ready litter management systems that minimise environmental pollution and support a cleaner, more sustainable municipality.	Investigate the feasibility of a hard waste collection service.	Decrease in the number of illegal dumping reports	Manager Waste Services	Long Term
Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill Strengthen community capability and awareness to drive informed recycling behaviours and responsible waste disposal practices.	Expand waste education initiatives that drive behaviour change, boost recycling, and reduce waste generation.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill Decrease contamination rates in the Kerbside service to: 3% or less in the FOGO bin 10% or less in the recycling bin 2% or less in the glass bin	Manager Waste Services	Ongoing

Introduction

What is Waste?

Under the Environment Protection Act 2017, waste includes any unwanted or surplus material—whether solid, liquid, gaseous, or radioactive—that is discarded, discharged, emitted, or otherwise released into the environment. This also covers materials intended for or undergoing resource recovery.

The Act places responsibility on everyone to ensure waste is managed correctly, meaning materials must be placed in the appropriate systems for recycling or disposal. Incorrect disposal can lead to pollution, environmental harm and impact human health.

The waste hierarchy prioritises waste management actions based on what delivers the best environmental outcome. It places avoidance and reduction at the top, followed by reuse, recycling, and recovery, with disposal to landfill as the last resort.

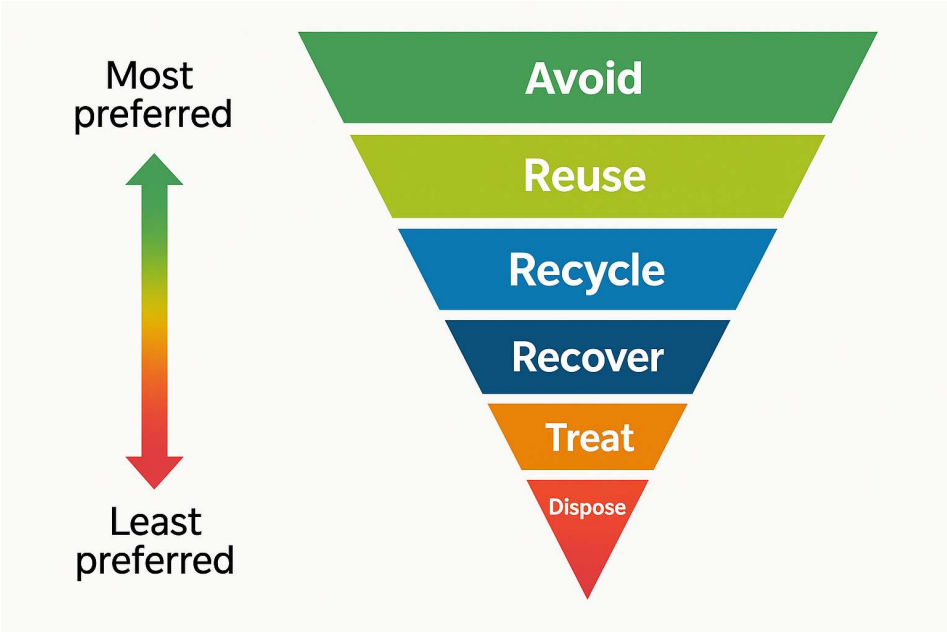

Figure 1: Waste Management Hierarchy

What is a circular economy?

A circular economy is a system aimed at reducing waste where resources are kept in a continually flowing loop. Consumption of raw materials is minimised and resources are kept in use as long as possible. Materials are only disposed of when they have no further use. A circular economy reduces consumption of finite natural resources and limits waste sent to landfill, thereby reducing environmental impacts.

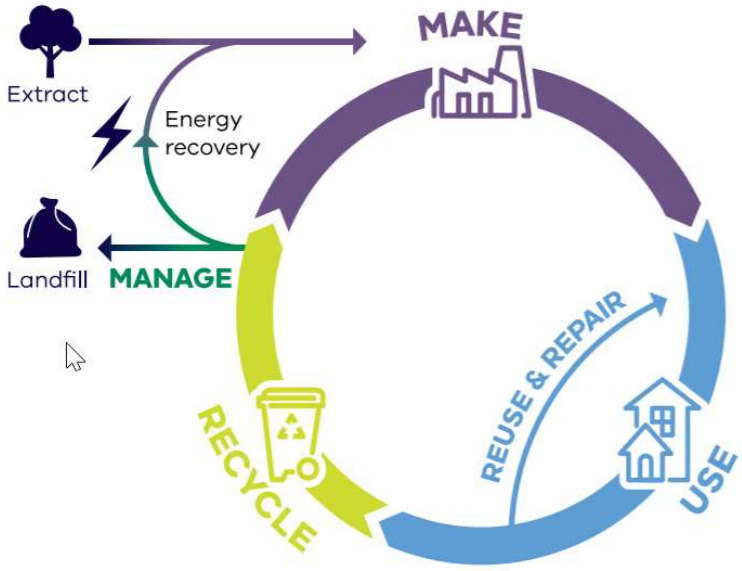

Figure 2: Resource Flows in a Circular Economy
Source: Recycling Victoria: A new economy, The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2020.

Waste Generation

Nationally in 2022-23, Australia produced an estimated 75.6 million tonnes of waste (At a glance - DCCEEW).

As per the *Circular Economy Market Report (Recycling Victoria, 2025),* in 2022–23, Victoria generated 14.5 million tonnes of material, of which 9.9 million tonnes was recovered for reprocessing. This means the State's recovery rate is 69%.

In 2022–23, Mildura Rural City Council municipality had a waste recovery rate of 54%. This is below State averages and leave room for improvement within our municipality.

Waste Minimisation

Waste minimisation means reducing the amount of waste generated in the first place and making better use of materials before they become waste. This includes avoiding waste at the source, reusing materials, reducing contamination in recycling and organics streams, encouraging repair and sharing, and influencing purchasing and packaging choices that

generate less waste overall. Prioritising waste minimisation can reduce the volume of material sent to landfill, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and help contain long-term waste service costs.

Scope of this Strategy

This Strategy provides the strategic direction for Council's waste and resource recovery services over a 10-year period. It applies to the planning, delivery, review and improvement of Council-managed waste services, including kerbside collection, landfills, transfer stations, bin bank services, public litter collection, street sweeping, illegal dumping response and waste education.

The Strategy also recognises Council's role in responding to legislative reform, working with regulators and stakeholders, and engaging with the community to support behaviour change and service improvement.

This Strategy provides strategic direction only, with specific projects, service changes and funding decisions to be considered through Council's annual planning, budget and decision-making processes.

Strategic Principles

The implementation of this Strategy will be guided by the following principles:

- Environmental responsibility – prioritising waste avoidance and minimisation, reuse, recycling and recovery in accordance with the waste hierarchy.
- Financial sustainability – delivering services that are affordable, efficient and supported by sustainable funding approaches.
- Equity of access – recognising the needs of urban, township and rural communities across a large and diverse municipality.
- Compliance and risk management – meeting legislative, regulatory and environmental obligations and proactively managing operational risks.
- Evidence-based decision making – using service data, financial modelling, audits and community feedback to inform future decisions.
- Community partnership – supporting residents, businesses and visitors to play an active role in reducing waste and improving recycling outcomes.
- Adaptability and innovation – responding to changing legislation, infrastructure opportunities and emerging service models over time.

Current State

Current Waste Services

Mildura Rural City Council delivers a wide range of waste and resource-recovery services aimed at keeping the municipality clean, safe, and environmentally responsible. Key services include:

Service	Description
Kerbside Bin Services	Weekly food & garden waste, fortnightly recycling and waste collection and monthly glass collection to residents and businesses.
Landfills	Two operational landfills at Mildura and Ouyen where local residents can recycle and dispose of their waste. Two closed landfills at Koorlong and Murrayville
Transfer Stations	Eight transfer stations at Mildura, Ouyen, Cullulleraine, Werrimull, Nangiloc, Walpeup, Underbool and Murrayville where local residents can recycle and dispose of their waste
Bin banks	Banks of bins (not kerbside service) at Meringur, Mittyack, Linga, Torrita, Boinka, Tutye, Cowangie and Carina (skip at Lindsay Point)
Public litter collection	Collection of public litter bins across the municipality
Street Sweeping	Two road sweepers that clean roads
Mall Cleaning	Sweeping and cleaning of the Central Business District (CBD) in Mildura focusing on the Mall.
Illegal dumping, syringe and deceased animal collection	Collection and disposal of illegal dumping, incorrectly disposed syringes and deceased animals on Council public land and roads
Waste Education	Community engagement and education on waste and recycling

Some key statistics on waste generation and trends for the region can be found in Appendix 1.

Current Issues for Council

Long-term viable waste services

As part of Council's broader general waste strategy, the primary objective is to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of waste service delivery in Mildura, while still supporting improved resource recovery outcomes.

Mildura Landfill accounts for a disproportionately high share of operational expenditure. This is primarily due to the significant EPA levy costs associated with the large quantities of clean fill used for daily cover, relative to the volume of waste received on site.

Mildura Landfill, first licensed in the 1970s, operates as an above-ground, unlined monocell constructed on natural ground, without an engineered base liner or sub-cells. This configuration does not meet EPA best-practice landfill standards.

For the Sunraysia region, there are two licensed operational landfills with Mildura being one and Buronga Landfill in Wentworth Shire Council (NSW) being the other. Key differences of the landfills include:

- Mildura Landfill is not constructed to EPA best practice where Buronga Landfill now is.
- Mildura Landfill has to pay an EPA levy for every tonne of waste that goes to landfill where Buronga Landfill doesn't pay an EPA levy.
- Mildura Landfill has encroachment issues where we have sensitive uses within the buffer area of the landfill and Buronga Landfill doesn't.

Because of this, the long-term future of Mildura Landfill was assessed to determine whether it can operate sustainably, and consideration should be given to whether Buronga Landfill is the more viable long-term waste-disposal option for the region.

Along with the landfill, the current operating model for rural transfer stations is financially unsustainable. Visitation rates are extremely low, and revenue generation is minimal—one site recorded only $600 in gate fee income for the entire financial year—highlighting the need for a revised service approach to reduce ongoing losses.

Council could potentially explore innovative solutions such as a mobile recycling centre – which provides a flexible, cost-effective solution for managing waste and recyclables in regional and rural communities.

The current cost structure utilised by Council does not allow for full cost recovery of waste services. Under the current model, Council applies a single waste charge only to properties receiving a kerbside collection service. This model does not recover the full cost of operating other critical waste services and facilities—including transfer stations, landfills, and public litter bins—beyond the limited revenue generated through gate fees. Council is also providing bin bank services with no associated cost-recovery mechanism from the users of the bins.

This results in a structural funding shortfall, leaving existing services under-recovered and exposing Council to escalating financial risks as service demands increase over time.

Reducing waste to landfill

Mildura operates a large number of transfer stations across the municipality; however, much of the material received at these sites is transported off-site for external processing. This approach limits opportunities for local innovation and reduces Council's ability to meet environmental and resource recovery targets.

By improving cost efficiencies across our waste operations, we can redirect funds to expand on-site recycling capabilities and increase the range of materials collected and/or processed locally, supporting both financial sustainability and improved recovery outcomes.

Current efforts are largely focused on managing waste after it has been created, through collection, processing and disposal systems. While these services remain essential, future work should place greater emphasis on preventing waste generation. Where opportunities arise, advocacy around packaging should support the reduction of unnecessary and hard-to-recycle materials, encourage more reusable and recyclable packaging formats, and promote

product stewardship approaches that place greater responsibility on producers. While Council has limited direct control over packaging design, it can use its voice through regional partnerships, industry engagement and government advocacy to support changes that reduce waste at the source and improve recovery outcomes for the community.

Increasing community knowledge about recycling

Data is showing that we have low diversion of waste from the kerbside waste bin and high contamination rates in the kerbside organics and recycling bins. Based on the current kerbside audit, 53% of what is put into the kerbside waste bin could instead be placed into the organics or recycling bins. This means over half, on average, of people's waste bins could be recycled in the organics or recycling bins.

Council is also awaiting the final release of the State Government's Household Waste and Recycling Service Standards (RV, 2024). These standards are expected to influence how Council delivers kerbside services, and any resulting changes will need to be clearly communicated to residents.

There is sufficient waste education collateral available; however, additional resources are required to deliver this information to the community in a meaningful and proactive way. This includes activities such as implementing behaviour change programs and targeted education for residents who consistently contaminate their bins and to overcome the barriers of why people are not recycling through the kerbside system.

Litter & Illegal Dumping

Illegal dumping continues to rise across the region, with reported incidents increasing each year. Although Council is currently reviewing and updating the Litter & Illegal Dumping Strategy, the issue is also addressed within this Waste Services Strategy due to its direct impact on cost efficiency, operational resourcing, and Council's waste-diversion objectives.

Community engagement is currently underway to try and identify what the barriers are to residents and businesses from disposing of waste correctly. This work will then inform what behaviour change actions Council could implement to overcome these barriers. Hard waste services are not currently offered to residents. There is an opportunity to explore a hard-waste service to help reduce illegal dumping and improve waste outcomes.

Strategic Context

Waste legislation and policy

Waste Services provided by Council is shaped by the actions, strategies, and legislative requirements of all levels of government, as well as Council's own plans and policies. This strategy aligns with national and state priorities and targets, while strengthening the vision, priorities, and strategic directions set out in the Community & Council Plan.

National

- National Waste Policy (2018) and National Waste Policy Action Plan (2024)
- Recycling & Waste Reduction Act 2020

State

- Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021
- Recycling Victoria: A new economy (2020)
- Environment Protection Act 2017
- Local Government Act 2020

Local

- Council Plan 2025-2029
- Community Vision 2021-2040
- Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050
- Community Climate Response Plan 2024-2029
- Environmental Engagement Action Plan 2024-2028
- Local Law No 2 – Community local law

Community Vision 2021-2040

The Vision describes what everyone wants for our region and community into the future, with five important pillars supporting this direction.

Council Plan 2025-2029

The framework connects strategic, operational, and process-level goals, clarifying the relationship between our strategic direction and the results required to achieve the Community Vision.

The new framework will see Council move away from primarily measuring activities, and towards outcome-based measurements that demonstrate the value our work is creating for the community.

Recycling Victoria – A new economy (2020)

In February 2020, the State Government released their 10-year policy and action plan for waste and recycling in Victoria called *Recycling Victoria – A new economy*. The plan outlines the sweeping plan of reforms to establish a recycling system that Victorian's can rely on.

This new legislation will see households transition to a four-bin system, separating glass from other recycling. As part of this reform all households are getting access to services for four waste and recycling streams. This includes separate streams for glass, food organics and garden organics (FOGO), mixed recyclables and household waste.

New State Government service standards for household waste and recycling will set requirements for how these services are delivered, meaning we will need to make additional changes to our current practices.

The above legislation and regulations are one of the reasons Council has already established the four-bin system in recent years.

Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050

This strategy sets out Council's approach to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, in line with the current Victorian Government target. It defines Council's emissions boundary and presents an emissions inventory across relevant scopes and priority areas.

The priority areas identified are fleet, landfill, buildings and facilities, street lighting, and Scope 3 emissions, including water use, air travel and office paper. Fleet emissions will be reduced through efficient route planning, fleet rationalisation, and the introduction of electric and hydrogen vehicles.

Landfill is the largest source of emissions, accounting for approximately 68 per cent of Council's total emissions inventory. Because landfill emissions continue over time, actions taken now to reduce them may not result in measurable decreases for several years.

Engagement and Governance

Governance for the Waste Services Strategy

Decision Making and Oversight - who is responsible for approving, guiding and monitoring the strategy:

- Councillors
- CEO
- General Manager Infrastructure & Assets
- Manager Waste Services

Delivery of Actions – who will lead and assist in the delivery of the strategy:

- Waste Services Team
- Media & Communications Team
- Finance Team
- Healthy Communities Team

External Partners – our key groups we need to engage with for successful delivery of the strategy:

- EPA Victoria (EPA) (includes Recycling Victoria from 1 July 2026)
- Community – residents, businesses & visitors
- Wentworth Shire Council

How these groups will work together:

- Project Control Groups for the implementation of actions
- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Reporting requirements for regulatory bodies (EPA & RV) and Council

Community Engagement Process

The development of this strategy has been prompted by recent State Government reforms and increasing financial pressures associated with delivering waste services in our geographically large and unique region. These changes have required Council to reassess how services are planned, funded, and delivered to ensure long-term sustainability and compliance. Community engagement will occur throughout the implementation of the identified actions to ensure the strategy remains responsive to local needs, reflects community expectations, and supports shared ownership of outcomes.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Implementation Approach

The actions identified in this Strategy will be delivered progressively over the 10-year period through Council's business planning, budget development and project prioritisation processes.

Implementation will be guided by the following approach:

- actions will be prioritised based on risk, affordability, service need and strategic benefit
- detailed business cases or feasibility assessments will be prepared where required for major service changes
- delivery timeframes may be refined as funding, infrastructure opportunities, regulatory settings and community needs evolve
- progress will be monitored through existing Council reporting processes and relevant regulatory reporting requirements
- community engagement will be undertaken where actions may affect service levels, access arrangements or customer experience

This approach will enable Council to respond to change while maintaining clear strategic direction over the life of the Strategy.

Strategic Objectives

1. Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system.
2. Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill
3. Achieve long-term operational cost sustainability to enable a resilient waste services system.
4. Deliver effective, future-ready litter management systems that minimise environmental pollution and support a cleaner, more sustainable municipality.
5. Strengthen community capability and awareness to drive informed recycling behaviours and responsible waste disposal practices.

Short Term – 1-3 years

Medium Term – 4-6 years

Long Term – 7-10 years

Ongoing – Every year of the strategy or as opportunity arises

Strategic Objective	Action	Measure	Action Owner	Timeframe for delivery
Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill	Expand the range of accepted materials at waste facilities and transfer stations—such as textiles and soft plastics—as opportunities and capacity allow.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Ongoing
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system. Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill	Conduct a service feasibility study to investigate potential expansion of kerbside services to areas not currently serviced – such as Werrimull & Cullulleraine.	Tonnes of waste, organics, recycling and glass collected through the kerbside system	Manager Waste Services	Medium Term
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system. Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill Achieve long-term operational cost sustainability to enable a resilient waste services system.	Transition the Mildura Landfill to a Transfer Station operating model to support long-term sustainable waste management.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Short Term
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system.	Undertake a review of Ouyen Landfill's operating hours to ensure they are aligned with operational demand and support improved service efficiency.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Short Term

Achieve long-term operational cost sustainability to enable a resilient waste services system.				
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system.	Review the utilisation of rural transfer stations and evaluate alternative waste service models for areas where facilities have closed or operate via bin bank systems.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Short Term
Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill				
Achieve long-term operational cost sustainability to enable a resilient waste services system.				
Deliver efficient recycling and waste disposal services so that all communities have access to a sustainable waste and recycling system.	Investigate the feasibility of a hard waste collection service.	Decrease in the number of illegal dumping reports	Manager Waste Services	Long Term
Deliver effective, future-ready litter management systems that minimise environmental pollution and support a cleaner, more sustainable municipality.				
Increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill	Expand waste education initiatives that drive behaviour change, boost recycling, and reduce waste generation.	Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill	Manager Waste Services	Ongoing
Strengthen community capability and awareness to drive informed recycling behaviours and responsible waste disposal practices.		Decrease contamination rates in the Kerbside service to: 3% or less in the FOGO bin 10% or less in the recycling bin 2% or less in the glass bin		

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting of Progress

Council undertakes regular reporting on waste and resource recovery indicators according to regulatory requirements. This includes reporting to different State Government bodies and within Council. Council also collects a wide range of data on waste services including tonnages of waste and recycling, customer numbers, financial costs and income and community engagement attendance.

Annual reporting on progress of actions within the Strategy and against the targets and objectives occurs as part of Council's reporting requirements to the community.

A review of the action plan will be undertaken at the five-year mark, reflecting the 10-year timeframe of this Strategy.

Targets to measure the performance of this strategy are:

- Tonnes of waste diverted from landfill
- Tonnes of waste, organics, recycling and glass collected through the kerbside system
- Decrease in the number of illegal dumping reports
- Increase in mean average score of community satisfaction for waste and resource recovery.
- Decrease contamination rates in the Kerbside service to:
    - 3% or less in the FOGO bin
    - 10% or less in the recycling bin
    - 2% or less in the glass bin

Managing Risk

Delivery of this Strategy is subject to risks that may affect timing, cost and implementation.

Key considerations include:

- ongoing changes to State Government waste and recycling policy and service standards
- future regulatory requirements and duties
- the availability and cost of waste processing, recycling and disposal infrastructure
- changes in landfill levy settings, contractor markets and transport costs
- community acceptance of future service changes, including potential changes to access arrangements or service models
- cross-border and regional dependencies that may influence future waste disposal pathways

Council will monitor these risks throughout the life of the Strategy and adjust implementation priorities where required.

Acknowledgement

Council recognises the technical analysis and advisory input provided by SMEC Australia Pty Ltd in preparing the Waste Service Models and Options Assessment and AEC Group for the financial modelling to inform the development of this Strategy.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Waste generation and trends

Below are some statistics from the range of Waste Services provided by Mildura Rural City Council.

Landfills & Transfer Stations

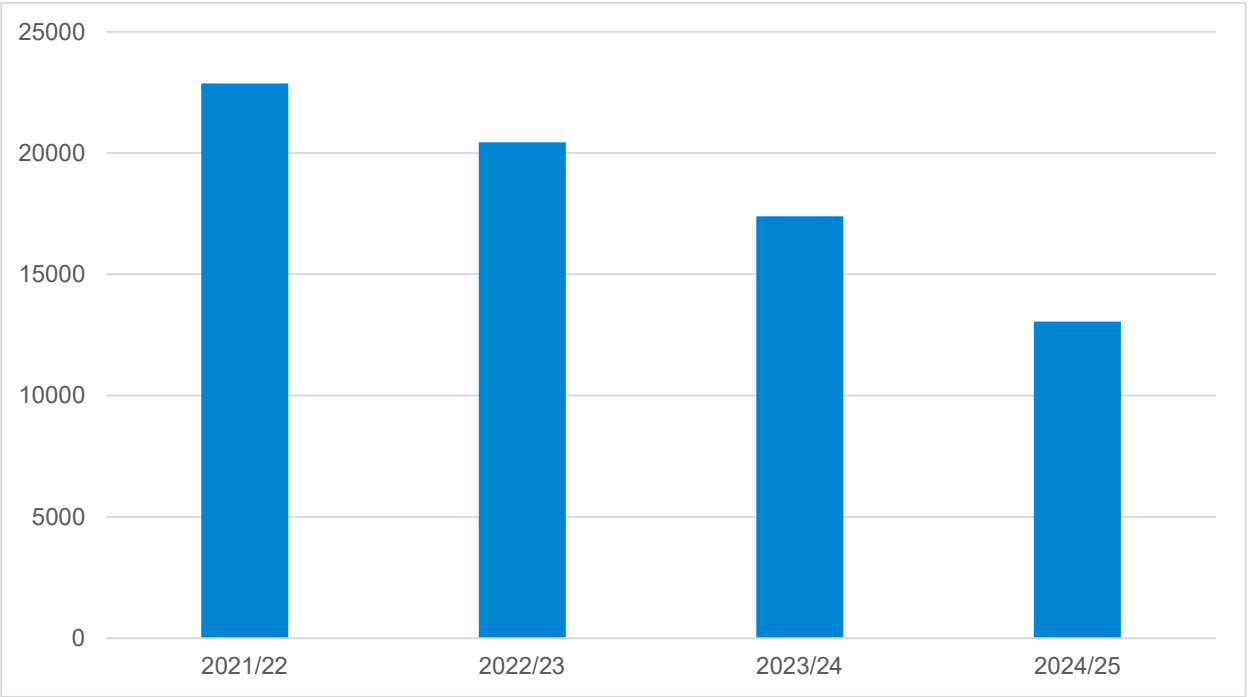

Figure 4: Tonnes of waste to Mildura Landfill

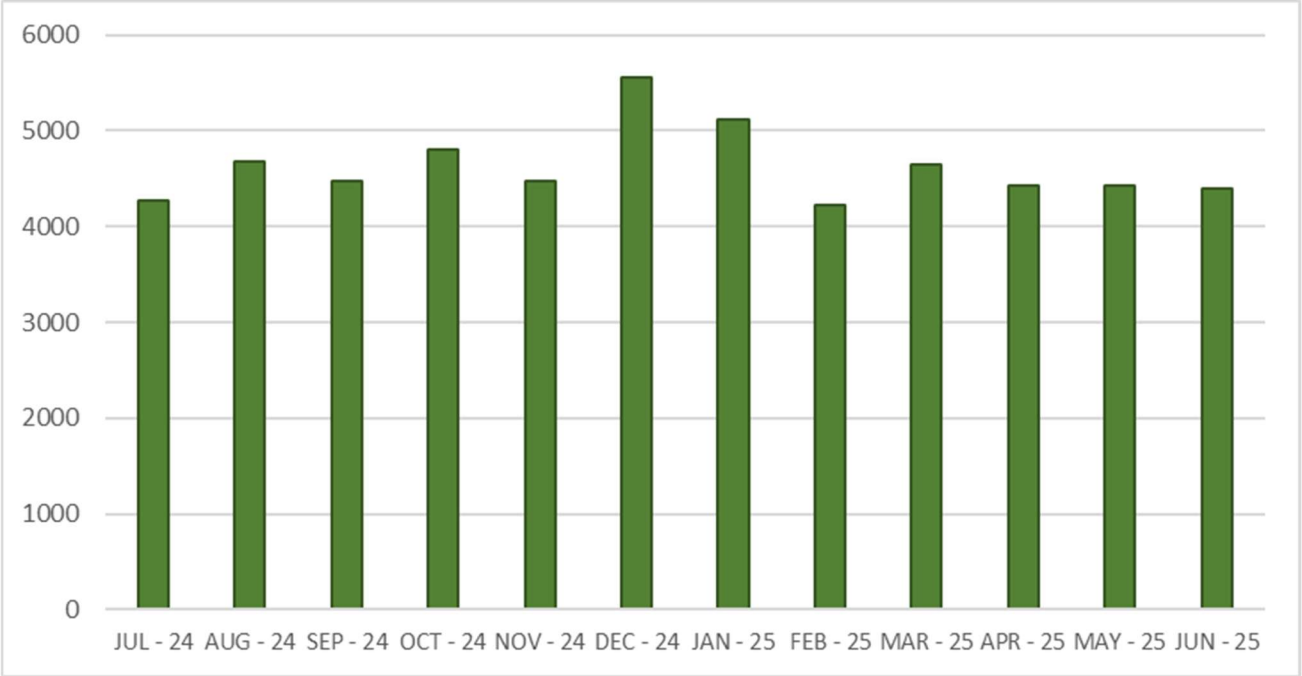

Figure 5: Number of Customers to Mildura Landfill for 24/25 Financial Year

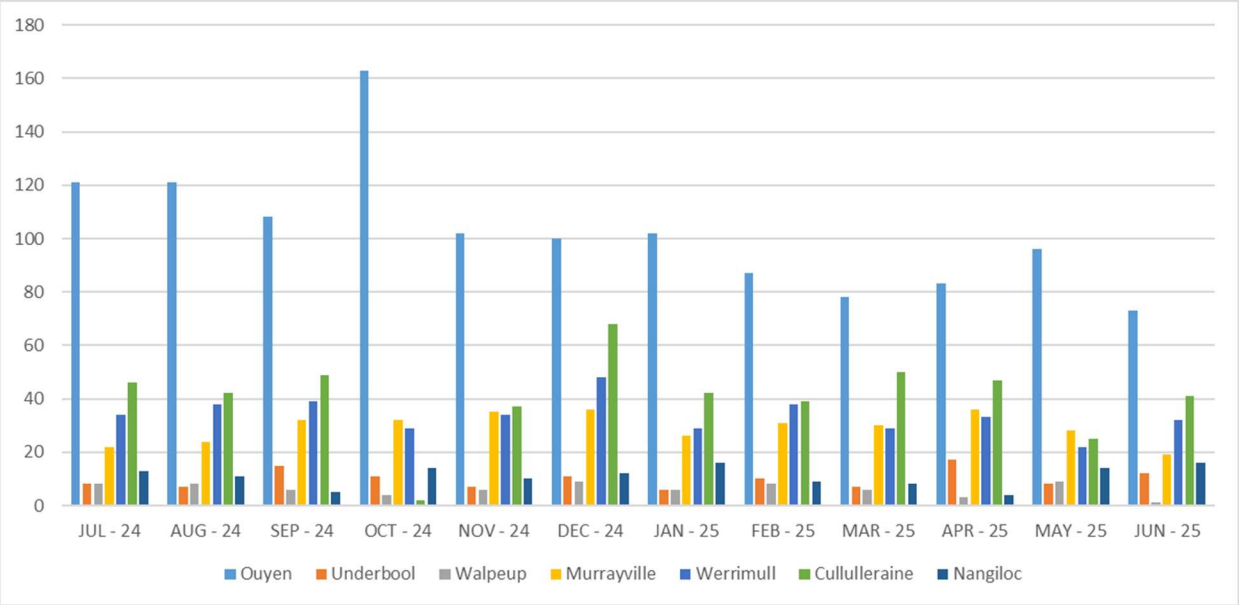

Figure 6: Number of Customers to the Rural Transfer Stations for the 24/25 Financial Year

Kerbside Collection

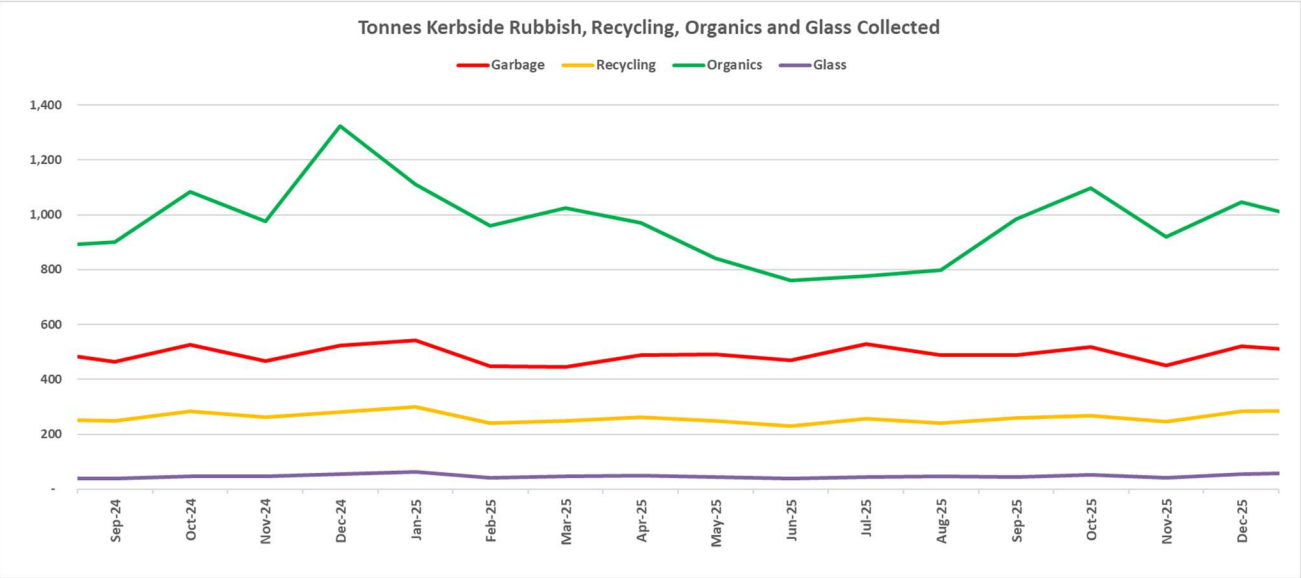

Figure 7: Tonnes of kerbside waste, recycling, organics and glass Collected from July 2024 to January 2026

Public Litter Collection

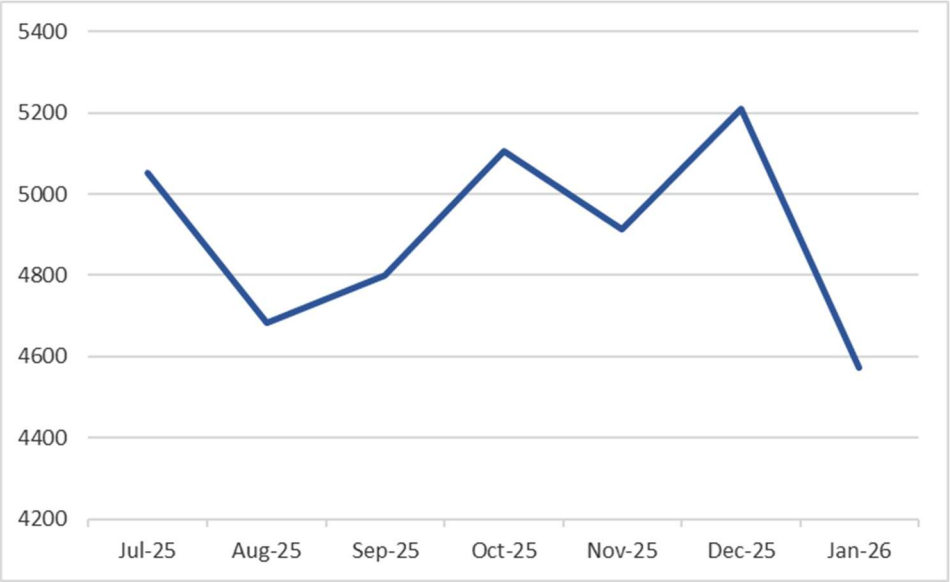

Figure 8: Number of Litter Bin Collected from July 2025 to January 2026

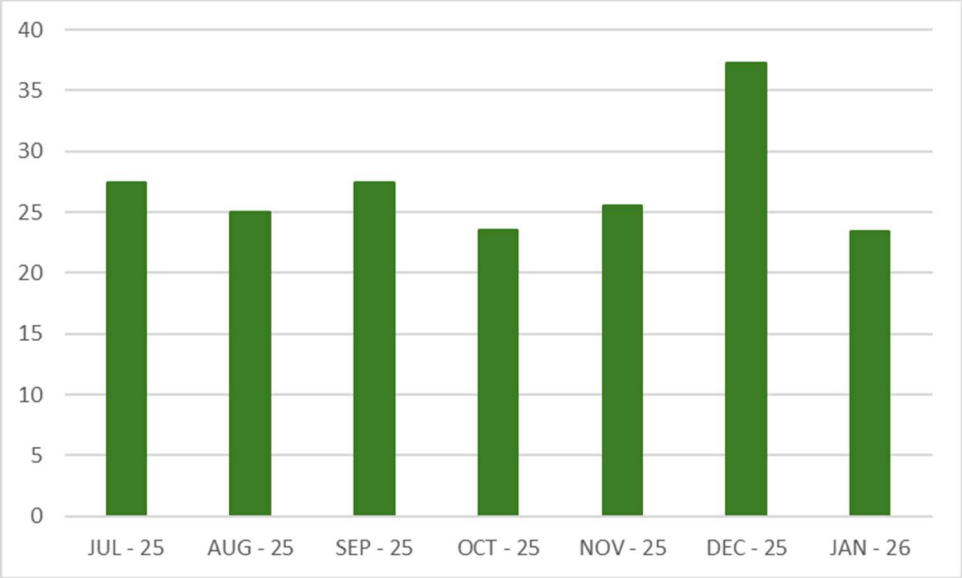

Figure 9: Tonnes of public litter collected from July 2025 to January 2026

Street Sweeping

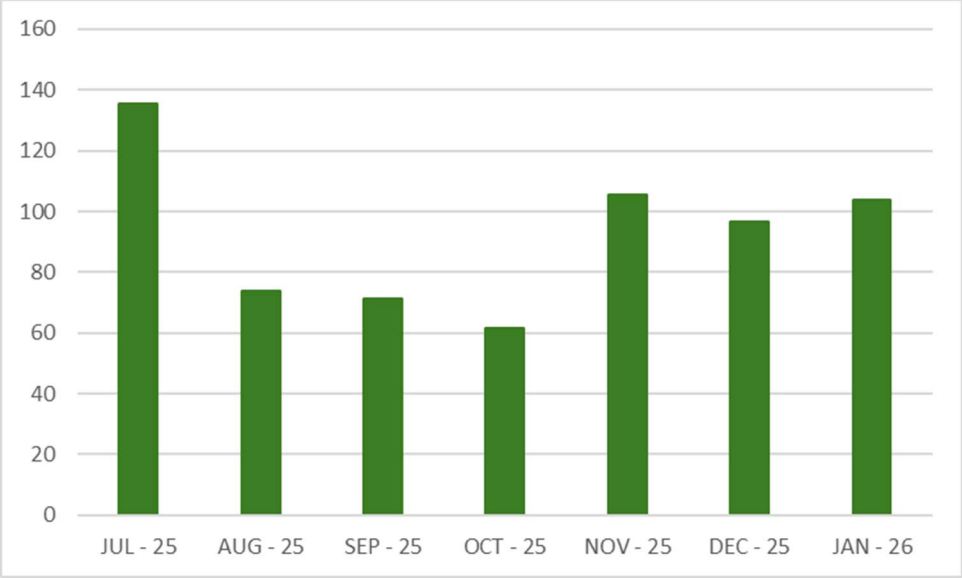

Figure 10: Tonnes of waste collected from Street Sweeping from July 2025 to January 2026

Illegal Dumping

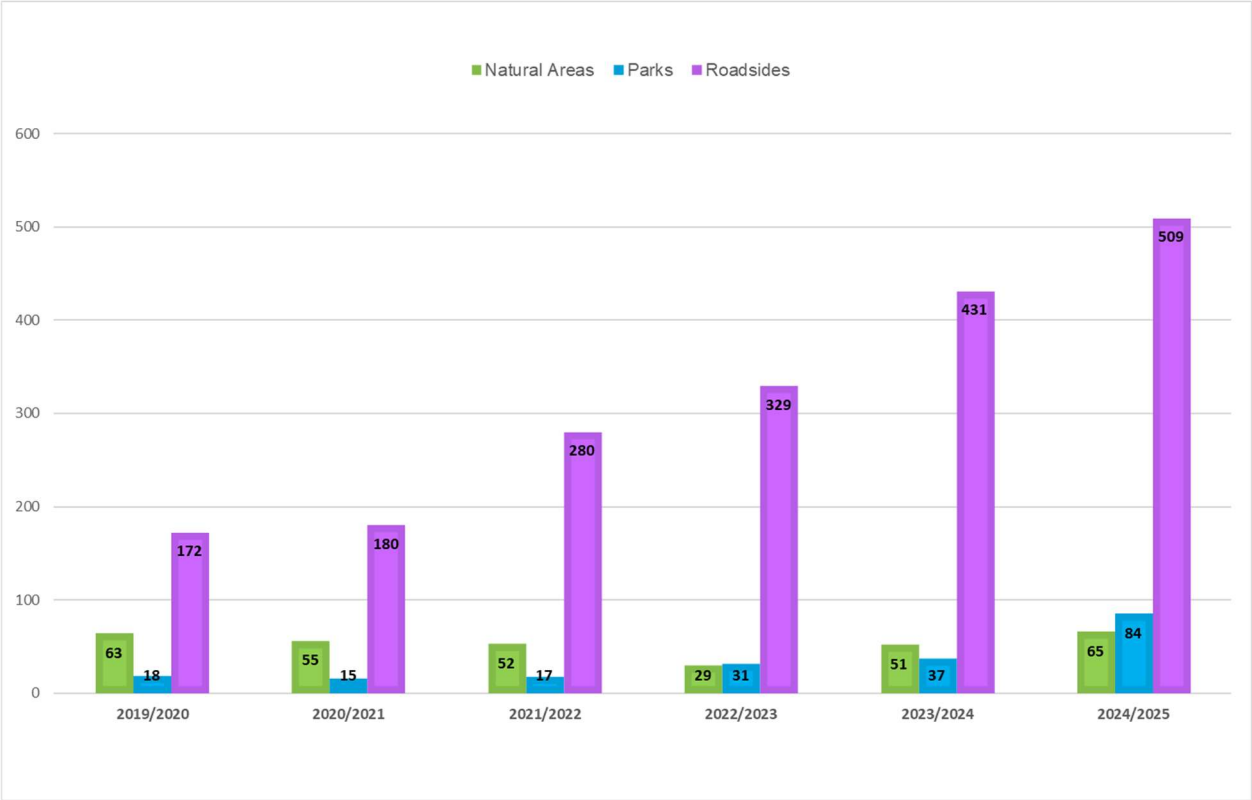

Figure11: Number of Illegal Dumping Reports

Recycling

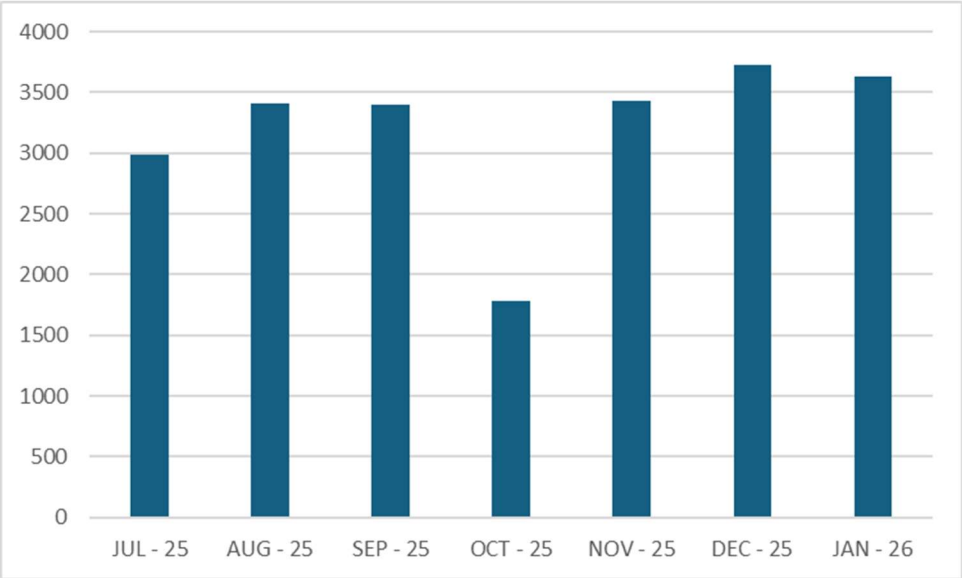

Figure 12: Tonnes recycled through Council waste facilities and kerbside collections

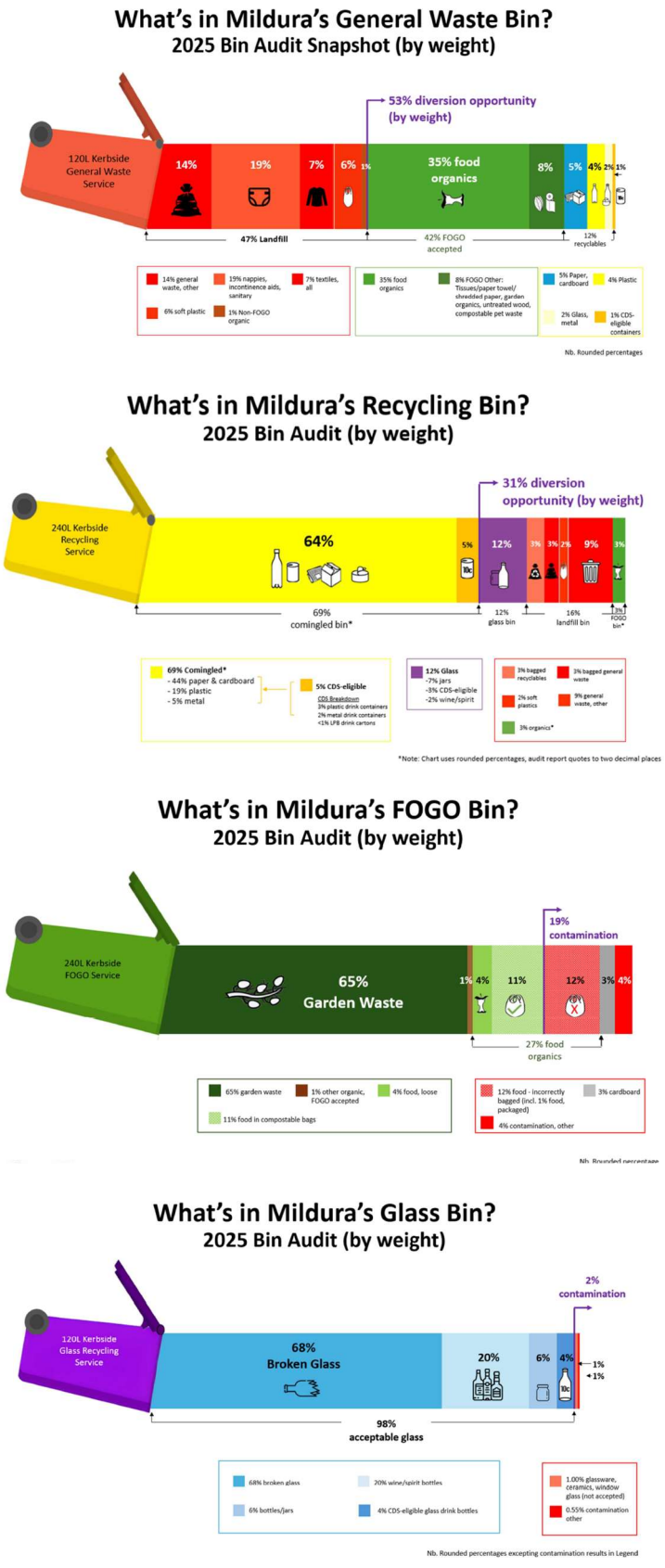

Figure 13: Snapshot of Council's four waste stream audit results for 2025 by JustWaste Consulting