

**6.3 WASTE STRATEGY PROJECT - TWO BULK HARD WASTE OPTIONS APPRAISAL – UPDATE
VERGE VALET VINCENT TRIAL**

Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- 1. NOTES the feedback from the Verge Valet Vincent Trial; and**
- 2. APPROVES the extension of the current Verge Valet trial and contract for 12 months (July 2023- June 2024) noting that a further report will be presented to Council on the progress of the trial and associated bulk verge services in March 2024.**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide results from the current Verge Valet Vincent trial and consider an extension for a further twelve months.

BACKGROUND:

The City's Waste Strategy 2018 – 2023 has a Vision of "Zero waste to landfill by 2028". The Strategy recognises the previous collection methodology for bulk hard waste was out dated and encouraged the generation of waste.

During the bulk hard waste collection in February 2019, the City received numerous complaints from the community, with concerns including:

- thoughtless scavenging (often overnight), creating amenity and safety issues/concerns;
- adverse impact on visual amenity – including ransacked piles and litter;
- presentation time too long, leading to further illegal dumping on existing piles; and
- verge access/obstruction issues.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 2 April 2019, Council requested Administration to provide alternative options, including financial modelling. Initial options and modelling were provided at the 25 June 2019 Ordinary Council Meeting. Council subsequently resolved (it):

- "1. NOTES options presented for future hard waste (junk) services, resulting from a service review undertaken as part of Waste Strategy Project 2; and*
- 2. DOES NOT support Option One - Cease to Provide the Service;*
- 3. REQUESTS further investigation of options that may be more tailored to suit the City of Vincent community, including but not limited to:*
 - 3.1 maintenance of an annual service with inclusion of meaningful ways to achieve higher diversion from landfill and reduce amenity and verge obstruction issues;*
 - 3.2 more detailed free on-demand (on-request) services options, including consideration of neighbourhood or street based collection services; and*
 - 3.3 opportunities for recyclable and reusable goods to be offered for free on verges and/or timed to coincide with events linked to recycling, such as the Garage Sale Trail weekend;*

4. REQUESTS

- 4.1 *that further refined options are presented to the Community Engagement Panel for feedback prior to community consultation and to inform development of the Public Engagement and Communications Strategy;*
- 4.2 *that the proposed detailed Public Engagement and Communications Strategy includes objectives and rationale for any change in service and is presented to Council with the refined options for bulk hard waste collection prior to community consultation; and*
- 4.3 *that procurement of a bulk hard waste service in February 2020 be undertaken, with a shorter bulk waste presentation period to minimise dumping, visual amenity and verge access issues.”*

It is relevant to note that the Bulk Hard Waste (Junk) Collection service was postponed to July 2020 due to COVID but incorporated the shorter presentation period in accordance with item 4.3 of the above resolution.

The City engaged the services of Talis Consultants, to assist with the provision of further refined options, including financial modelling. As part of this modelling, various scheduled and on-request collection scenarios were considered.

Six refined options were subsequently taken to the Community Engagement Panel on 7 March 2020 (as per request items 4.1 & 4.2 above).

Options considered:

- 1a - Scheduled – limit time material is presented 48 hours prior
- 1b - Scheduled – limit time material is presented and limit volume 2m³
- 2a – On-request skip bin – charged/service
- 2b – On-request skip bin – no charge
- 3a – On-request – uncontained 2m³, 48 hours prior, charged
- 3b – On-request – uncontained 2m³, 48 hours prior, no charge

The two Street/Neighbourhood based collection options, although considered and discussed, were not specifically included in the ranking, as they cannot operate as core “stand-alone” service options and as such were considered complementary measures to the on-request service options.

The Community Panel Workshop was held on Saturday 7 March 2020, with thirteen Community Panel residents participating. Feedback was sought through small group discussions and individual participant surveys.

Three breakout groups provided feedback and reached broad consensus that the City should adopt:

- an on-request, uncontained bulk waste collection service;
- limit volume to 2m³ per collection;
- costs for the service included within the City’s annual rates (rather than a user pays service).

This outcome was also reflected as the preferred option in the individual survey responses.

Respondents also indicated that they would like the option of a second, on-request collection to be available at cost to the resident (i.e. a user pays additional service).

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 21 July 2020, Council received and noted the Community Engagement Panel Outcomes Report and approved the Public Engagement and Communications Strategy.

In delivering this Public Engagement and Communications Strategy, the City engaged the specialist services of CATALYSE Pty Ltd to undertake the community perception survey, which was undertaken between 7 August and 22 August 2020. The main objective of the consultation was to seek feedback and gauge community support on the various verge collection service options presented and provide opportunity for resident concerns to be heard and responded to; the results enabling the City to gain a clearer community wide view and help inform next steps.

The baseline data was demographically weighted to assist in tailoring marketing materials and strategies to reach the unengaged segments of the community.

CATALYSE Pty presented the findings of the community perception survey at 22 September 2020 Council Workshop.

The survey showed that there is a strong environmental sentiment as 91% of respondents believe reducing waste helps to reduce the impact of climate change and global warming, which is a 6% increase from the last survey carried out 2019.

The preference between scheduled and on-request services was marginal – with 42% preferring on-request and 8% undecided.

Based on the survey findings, Administration recommended an 18 month trial of an on-request collection service (uncontained with a limited volume) from January 2022; this was subsequently approved at the 23 March 2021 Council meeting.

This trial was considered to offer the best environment outcome, aligned to the City's Waste Strategy and waste targets, whilst addressing the on-going illegal dumping, public amenity and safety concerns and complaints regarding the traditional bulk verge system.

Administration considered best-practice examples of on-request services and awarded the contract to Western Metropolitan Regional Council (WMRC) and their on-request collection system "Verge Valet".

Update on Verge Valet Trial

Since implementation of the Verge Valet trial in the City of Vincent twelve months ago, the system has received very positive feedback from participating residents. Participants have cited their ability to choose their collection date, its flexibility, ease of use, and speed and quality of service amongst the key highlights.

Participant feedback is captured as part of the booking process and residents are able to rate: The Booking System Service (Figure 1), The Collection Service (Figure 2), the Overall Service (Figure 3), and their preference in regards to which service they verge system they prefer, i.e. the previous traditional bulk service vs. Verge Valet (Figures 4), as well as the opportunity to leave comments on any aspect of the service.

Since the service has been implemented, over 200 residents rated the service and its ease of use.

Over 80% gave the service a 5 Star rating, with statements including:

"I like that we can use it when we actually need it and don't need to store broken or bulky items for long periods of time. Plus I seem to forget when the bulk verge collections are approaching and then have a mad rush to get everything sorted at the last minute / or miss something because I have had to store it somewhere out of the way and then forgot about it."

"I liked the text message confirming expected time of arrival. Much better than traditional bulk verge collection as the neighbourhood looks much cleaner and you can request as required"

"Nothing to suggest. The whole service went off without a hitch. I appreciated there were reminders sent out and also that you could track the time of arrival of the contractors. And that the actual time of collection was as promised."

Only 5% stated gave the service a 1 Star rating. In these instances this rating was mainly due to resident error, such as waste being presented too late (which resulted in a futile booking), or too much waste presented.

64% of all booking participants preferred the service over the old scheduled bulk system. Only 17% preferred the old system, and this was mainly due to preferences around the unlimited amount of waste they could previously present (now restricted to 3m³). Comments included:

"Only reason I prefer bulk collection is you can dispose of more rubbish. If we had 2 valets a year I'd prefer that."

"Would prefer if more than 3cubic metres worth of waste cd be collected. Say 5 cubic metres."

Whilst 19% of the participants rated their preference to the previous system as “indifferent”, it is worth noting that 78% of these also rated the Verge Valet service with 5 stars.

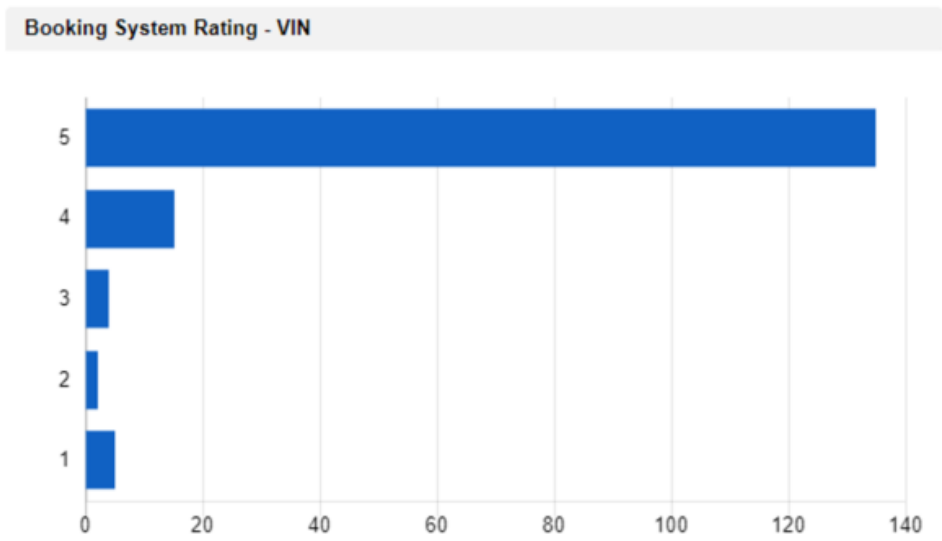


Figure 1 – Booking System Rating

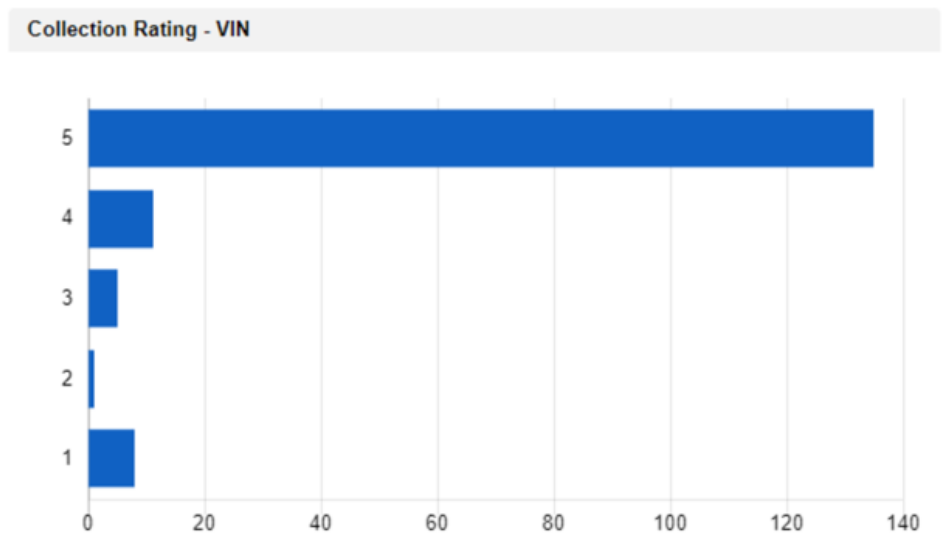


Figure 2 – Collection Rating

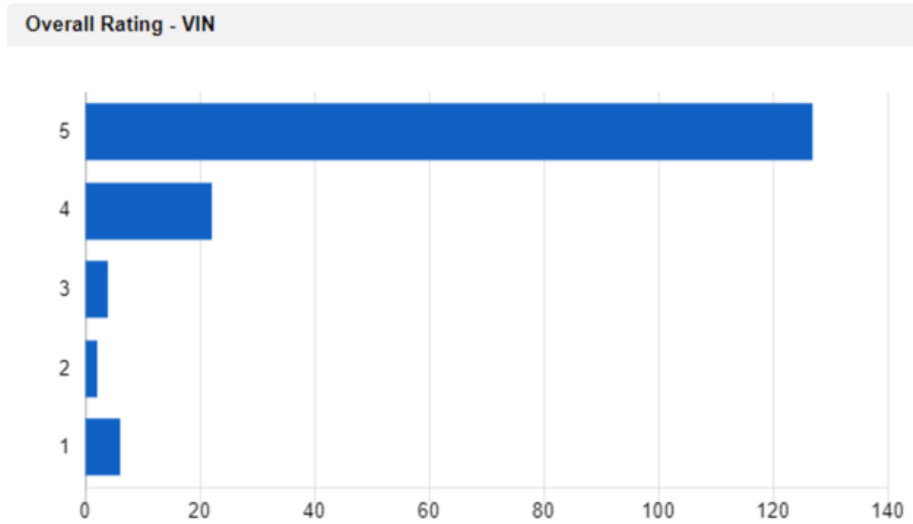


Figure 3 – Overall Rating

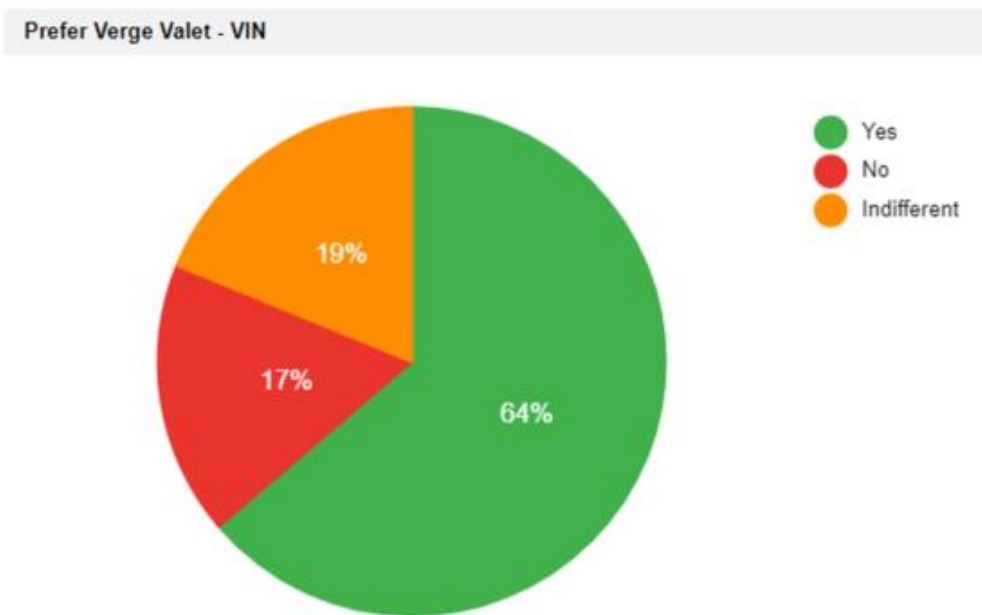


Figure 4 – Verge Valet Preference

The overall recovery rate for its bulk hard waste material is high currently sitting at around 67%. Recovery averaged 38% via the previous system.

The online booking system incorporates waste education information regarding reuse options, reminding residents to explore alternative avenues (such as Charities or Buy Nothing Groups) prior to booking a collection. It also ensures consistent communication and provides further guidance around waste avoidance behaviours, whilst offering easy access to the service.

For the 2021/22 financial year (between service commencement in Feb 2022 and June 2022), 1325 Verge Valet collections were carried out and 202 tonnes were collected and processed (averaging 152kg per household). This represents a participation rate of around 8% of households.

However, it should be noted that the City completed a last one-off scheduled, unlimited-volume bulk verge collection in July 2021, which resulted in the collection of a further 543 tonnes of bulk hard waste.

So far, in the current financial year, 1468 collections have been completed and 245 tonnes of bulk hard waste have been collected and processed (averaging 167kg per household).

As anticipated - and experienced with other Verge Valet participating local governments – there was a spike in booking requests at the end of the financial year, with residents booking to ensure they did not lose their annual allocation. June bookings were approximately 43% up on the prior two months. To support this increased operational demand, the City allowed residents booking up to 30th June to use their allowance up to the end of July.

The current trial and associated contract end on 30 June 2023. There is an option to extend the contract for a further 12 months. To provide sufficient information and community feedback to enable Council to make an informed decision, Administration is seeking to exercise the extension option (refer also 'Comments' Section below).

CONSULTATION/ADVERTISING:

A benefit of extending the Verge Valet system is that it is already established with excellent supporting communications material and trained customer service personnel well versed in answering FAQ's and any customer concerns.

LEGAL/POLICY:

Aligns with the City's Waste Strategy 2018-2023 and the Waste Strategy 2030.

Legislation: *The Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2007.*

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Low: Trial already underway and well received. The City will subsequently continue to promote the service changes and encourage correct waste behaviours within the boundaries of the trial.

Low: Risk that WMRC may not have capacity to continue services should the city not pursue the trial extension.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS:

Project 2 of the City's Waste Strategy 2018-2023 will assist in the delivery of: the City's Waste Strategy, the Waste Strategy 2030 and the City's SCP objectives.

This is in keeping with the City's *Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028*:

Enhanced Environment

We have minimised our impact on the environment.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

This is in keeping with the following key sustainability outcomes of the *City's Sustainable Environment Strategy 2019-2024*.

Waste Reduction

Will support the City's Waste Strategy vision of sending 'Zero Waste to Landfill'.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS:

This is in keeping with the following priority health outcomes of the City's *Public Health Plan 2020-2025*:

Reduced exposure to environmental health risks

FINANCIAL/BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

The initial twelve month budget estimate for this trial was anticipated to be in the region of \$245,000. This figure was based on implementation/uptake data from the existing three participating councils (i.e. Towns of Mosman Park, Cottesloe and Cambridge). The City budgeted \$122,500 in FY 2021/22.

The 2021/22 year-end cost was slightly higher than anticipated at \$127,000 (+ \$4500). The budget for 2022-23 is \$252,000 (including for a 3% CPI increase), as the scheme was still in its infancy and phasing data limited.

The popularity of the scheme has led to increased uptake this financial year and as of end of January (i.e. the first complete 12 months cycle) total costs were \$294,000. If uptake remains at this level for the remainder of the year, it is anticipated that this service will be approximately \$42,000 over budget at year end.

This is still considered to be value for money given that it is inclusive of the established customer service, online booking system and communication materials and has been extremely well received by the community. It has also effectively addressed the amenity issues and concerns, which were the subject of many community complaints.

There is provision within the current agreement to extend the trial for a further 12 months, by mutual agreement. WMRC have advised that it currently has capacity to extend these services should the City wish to progress this option.

Regulation 11(2)(e) of the Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations states that tenders do not have to be publicly invited if the goods or services are to be supplied by or obtained through the government of the State or the Commonwealth or any of its agencies, or by a local government or a regional local government.

COMMENTS:

Whilst it is acknowledged that the Verge Valet trial is still underway (ending June 30), an extension of the current trial will allow Administration to collate additional data on this and interrelated services including FOGO and its impact on Bulk Verge Green Waste tonnages; noting that this has been reduced to one annual collection this year (from 2), scheduled for April/May. It will also allow sufficient time to seek independent community feedback.

Administration will be completing another Waste Community Scorecard in the upcoming months. The last Community Scorecard on waste services was carried out in August 2019. Given the significant changes in Waste Services over the last 3 years – including: end of commercial services, FOGO implementation, bulk green waste collection changes, and the Verge Valet trial – now is an opportune time for the City to seek feedback and gauge community sentiment toward these new and changed services. This community engagement may also assist in identifying potential projects for inclusion in the City's next Waste Strategy.

The City does not have capacity to bring this service in house without significant financial investment and the current market for on-demand service providers is not well established.

A 12-month contract extension would afford Administration more time seek community feedback and collate additional data, to enable Council to make an informed decision on the most suitable approach for the City of Vincent's bulk verge services going forward.

Given the popularity of the current system and improvement to community amenity, Administration seeks Council approve an extension to the trial.