

Getting *more* ▶▶▶▶ from our recycling systems

Good practice performance measures for kerbside recycling systems

▶▶▶▶ *an overview*

Introduction

All Councils in the Sydney, Hunter, Central Coast and Illawarra regions and many rural and regional Councils offer kerbside recycling services for dry recyclables, such as paper, newsprint, magazines, cardboard packaging, liquid paperboard, PET and HDPE plastics, glass bottles, and steel and aluminium containers. In order to help Councils deliver better kerbside recycling systems, a jointly funded NSW government and industry initiative under the National Packaging Covenant has established 'good practice' performance measures for key elements of kerbside recycling systems. This is a summary of that document.

Project methodology

Twenty one metropolitan Councils volunteered data for the project. There were also face-to-face interviews with waste officers from 15 Sydney Councils to discuss their recycling systems, structures and approaches, in order to establish common patterns or elements that seemed to deliver improved performance.

Summary of key findings

Table 1 outlines the good practice measures that have been established. These are preliminary. In some cases the National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) data for all metropolitan Councils were used to adjust the research findings. All the measures need further testing with more data from Councils. Tonnage cost and contamination rates, in particular, need verification due to the low response rate or limited availability of data from Councils. Performance measures for Councils outside the Sydney metropolitan area may be different.

From the available data, 'net diversion' (total proportion of domestic waste diverted to the recycling stream) was found to be the strongest measure of kerbside recycling performance. Some Councils are achieving net diversion rates of up to 46% of the total household waste stream (garbage, garden organics and recyclables). A number of higher performing Councils were found to be capturing between 0.32 and 0.39 tonnes of kerbside recyclables per household per year.

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Table 1 - Preliminary good practice measures

Performance Measure	Unit	Description	Good practice measure		Survey response rate %	
			Baseline	Target		
1	Household net yield	Kg/hh/wk	Total kerbside recyclables collected per household, excluding gross contamination.	≥ 4.0	≥ 5.5	100
	Per capita net yield	Kg/pp/wk	Quantity of kerbside recyclables collected per person, excluding gross contamination.	≥ 1.5	≥ 2.1	100
2	Net diversion rate	%	Total proportion of domestic waste diverted to the recycling stream.	19%	≥ 29%	100
3	Contamination rate	%	Contaminants placed in recycling bins by householders	N/A	≤ 3.5%	100
4	Service cost per household	\$/hh/year	Annual cost of collection and MRF acceptance of kerbside recyclables per household.*	Target range = \$24 to \$49		86
5	Tonnage cost	\$/tonne	Cost per net tonne of kerbside recyclables collected and accepted at MRF.*	Target range = \$143 to \$225		38

The study also found that Councils most likely to be achieving better recycling tend to provide a 'three-bin' system for garbage, mixed containers and paper respectively; or a 120-litre garbage bin and 240-litre (split or co-mingled) recycling bin. They also provide at least fortnightly collections for PET, HDPE, steel, aluminium, glass, paper, cardboard, and liquidpaperboard and have an established community education strategy.

The document also provides guidance on bin colours. These are consistent with best practice guidelines issued by EcoRecycle Victoria. The following bin colours are preferred at this time:

- Domestic garbage bins should be dark green, grey or black with dark green, grey, black or red lids but red lids are preferred;
- Domestic recyclables (fully co-mingled or containers only) should be green or black bins with yellow lids;
- Blue lids for domestic paper-only bins or sections of bins;
- Organics bins should be dark green or black with bright green/lime lids.

Next steps

The good practice performance measures that have been established are a good start and will give us something to build on. However, we need more data from all Councils to verify and, where necessary, adjust these preliminary measures and to establish whether different measures are needed for Councils in the Hunter, Central Coast, Illawarra and regional areas.

Councils are encouraged to calculate their own performance and compare them to the 'good practice' measures. The report contains methodologies to help Councils do this, which do not require any more data than what is already being compiled for NEPM reporting or for the Department of Local Government survey.

The Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) is also offering to calculate the performance of any individual Council and provide the results to that Council. A fax-back form is provided at the end of the report for Councils to make this request.

A copy of '**Getting more from our recycling systems - Good practice performance measures for kerbside recycling systems**' can be downloaded from the Internet at www.environment.nsw.gov.au.

For further information contact

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