



**Case study:
Food
organics and
garden
organics
collection in
Shellharbour**

Photo: Shellharbour
(Shellharbour City Council)

‘Council has taken opportunity of the EPA’s Waste Less, Recycle More funding to deliver the best possible waste management program.’

**Marianne Saliba,
Mayor of
Shellharbour City**

FOGO mojo sparks major organics recycling drive

Embracing a program to recycle food organics and garden organics (FOGO) has saved Shellharbour City Council ratepayers \$219,000 in waste levy payments in the first year alone and extended the lifespan of the region’s landfill facility.

The FOGO service explained

With the help of a \$370,866 grant from the NSW Environment Protection Authority’s (EPA’s) Organics Infrastructure Fund, Shellharbour City Council introduced a weekly FOGO collection service in 2016.

Residents sort food waste into the green-lid bin, along with green waste, rather than the previous system of disposing of food scraps in the red-lid bin.

Each household is also provided with a 7 litre kitchen caddy to simplify food scrap collection.

Homemade bin liners are popular as, to stop plastic contamination, residents are not allowed to use compostable bio bags in green-lid bins.

Rather than use compostable bio bags in the bin, which the council found led to more plastic contamination, residents are encouraged to use folded newspaper to make origami-style bin liners for their caddy and place the wrapped food waste directly into their green-lid bin.

Why is FOGO important?

Recycling food and waste scraps is good for the environment and the community.

In just one year the council's FOGO program reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill from red-lid bins by 1,616 tonnes. This, in turn, extended the lifespan of the landfill and reduced the waste levy payments made by Shellharbour City Council residents.



Photo: Shellharbour City Council staff heading out with kitchen caddies. (Shellharbour City Council)

Is FOGO mojo widespread?

The weekly FOGO collection service was rolled out to 25,845 households in the Shellharbour local government area in July 2016.

The new collection service was promoted with catchy phrases, such as 'Have you found your FOGO mojo?', 'Are you good to FOGO?' and 'Choose the right bin, don't just throw it in'.

The council hosted 28 community events across the region, including lunchtime and twilight BBQs, and ran waste education sessions at 67 schools in conjunction with their waste collector, Remondis. The new collection service was promoted on social media and the council website; in print; and via local TV, radio and cinema ads. A phone line was set up to respond to enquiries and answer any questions about the new service.

The FOGO system has saved 601 households \$140 each on their annual rates thanks to residents downsizing their red-lid bin from a 240 litre bin to a 140 litre bin.

An IRIS survey in July 2017 found 96% of Shellharbour residents were aware of the FOGO collection service.



Photo: Teaching the next generation about sustainability. (Shellharbour City Council)

The council also deliberately tailored promotional and educational messages to reach different groups. For example, research had identified that 24-35 year olds were the most difficult to reach, so a specific TV ad campaign was designed to target this demographic.

An IRIS survey in July 2017 found the kitchen caddy was being used to collect food waste scraps by 64% of residents, with 23% using a different container, while 13% opted to put their food waste straight into their FOGO bin.

Getting sustainable results

The move to a FOGO collection service has benefited the hip pocket of ratepayers and helped extend the life of the landfill by at least 12 months. During the first year of operation the Shellharbour residential FOGO collection service:

- collected 9,114 tonnes of FOGO waste from green-lid bins and reduced the amount of waste going to landfill from red-lid bins by 1,616 tonnes
- reduced the contamination rate in green-lid bins to less than 1% and saved ratepayers \$219,291 in waste levy payments.

A survey of residents found a high level of satisfaction with the FOGO service, with 72% reporting that separating food waste wasn't a challenging chore.

The Environment Protection Authority's Organics Collections Grants provide up to \$1.3 million to councils and business to introduce new food only or food and garden collection services. They are administered by the Environmental Trust and open for applications over several funding rounds.

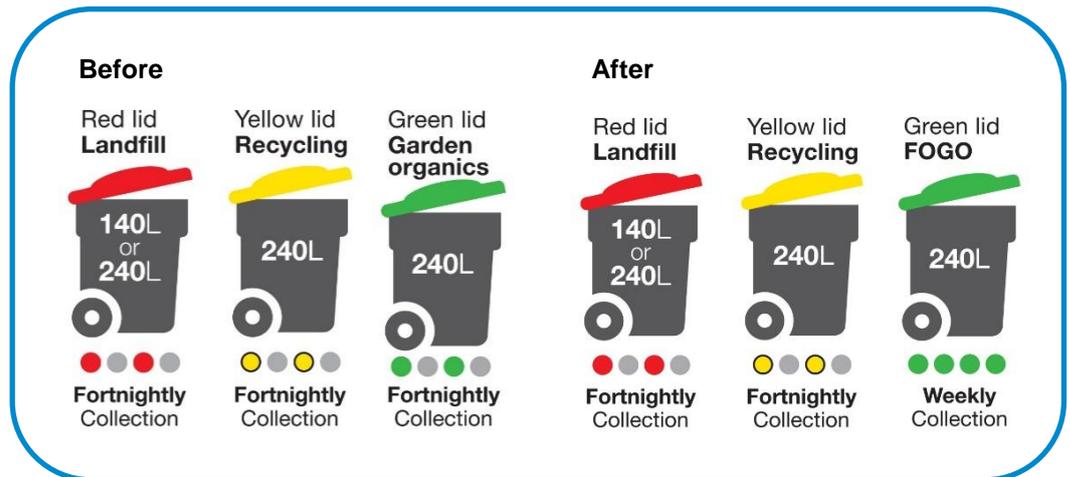


Figure: Changes to Shellharbour City Council's kerbside bin collection service

Looking forward

Shellharbour City Council secured \$1.8 million funding through the EPA's Organics Infrastructure Fund which, together with a council investment of \$2.9 million, was used to build a state-of-the-art in tunnel organics processing facility at the Dunmore Resource Recovery Facility.

The new facility and FOGO waste collection program have established a sustainable, practical and effective management system for FOGO waste that positions the community well for the future.

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