#### Reviewing Food and Garden Organics (FOGO) Services

Engagement Summary Report

May 2024

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# Introduction

## Project background

In June 2022 Council endorsed the [**Don’t Waste It! Waste Management Strategy (2022–2025)**](https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/fopoincg/attachment-1-don-t-waste-it-2022-25-waste-management-strategy.pdf) (**The Strategy**). The Strategy set out how we would transform our current waste and recycling services over the next four years to best serve our diverse and expanding community. A key part of this included the introduction of additional recycling services including a separated food and garden organics (**FOGO**) service.

FOGO materials make up almost half of the waste our households send to landfill. As the materials break down, they produce methane – a greenhouse gas that is significantly more potent than carbon dioxide. Collecting FOGO materials separately reduces greenhouse gas emissions and results in compost that is then used to improve the soil quality of Victorian farms.

In January 2023, Council delivered the first phase of the FOGO rollout. This phase targeted single-unit dwellings (**SUDs**), including standalone houses and townhouses. Approximately 14,500 properties received the FOGO service during the rollout.

The Strategy outlines key targets for the FOGO service:

* 20 to 30% reduction in FOGO materials in the garbage stream for properties using a kerbside service by 2025
* 10 to 15% reduction in FOGO materials in the garbage stream for properties using a communal service by 2025
* 80 to 90% of kerbside FOGO bins visually inspected through Council audits contain contamination within a level accepted by our FOGO processor (~5%)

## What we set out to achieve

The community engagement process was designed to provide all SUDs that received a FOGO service during the January 2023 rollout the opportunity to share their feedback on the new service.

The purpose of the engagement project was to achieve the following:

* gather direct feedback on what is working well with the FOGO service
* pinpoint areas where Council can provide further assistance / support
* determine the barriers in utilising the FOGO bin, particularly regarding food waste disposal
* understand how to best communicate waste and recycling information to residents moving forward.

## About this report

This report summarises the feedback collected from residents during the consultation period.

### Before reading this report

The following should be considered in reading of this report:

* The information in this report is based on qualitative research and does not necessarily reflect the views of a statistically representative sample of the community.
* City of Port Phillip strives to include diverse voices in our engagement activities. We acknowledge however that some people are likely to have experienced barriers to participation in the activities that are outlined in this report – including people with a disability, multicultural communities, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others.
* The information and views presented in this report are a summary of the opinions, perceptions and feedback gathered through the Have Your Say survey. The feedback has not been independently validated. As such, some information maybe factually incorrect, unfeasible, or outside of the scope of this project.
* This report summarises key feedback from participants and does not preclude the project team from considering community feedback that has previously been provided in another format.
* The report summarises the feedback from engagement activities. While every effort is made to include the full breadth of feedback provided, not all comments, views or advice is shown in the findings of this report. Where appropriate, a mix of quotes, themes and metrics are used to convey community feedback.

# What we did

Between 12 February 2024 and 10 March 2024, we launched the ‘Have Your Say’ survey to gain community feedback on the FOGO service for SUDs. The survey was promoted in the following ways:

* A sample of 974 postcards were mailed directly to residents with the service. This sample represented a range of locations across the municipality.
* 100 postcards were placed at St Kilda Town Hall and across our five libraries.
* Four social media posts were run across City of Port Phillip owned / affiliated channels including one paid post.
* Five articles were published across five different e-newsletters.

## Reach and participation

### Reach through communication activities

During this project, we heard from 174 participants. An additional 48 respondents completed the survey from multi-unit dwellings (MUDs). These 48 responses have not been included in this evaluation as the survey focused on SUDs.

**An additional survey will be available for residents living in MUDs later in 2024.**

Table 1 Summary of tactics to promote the online survey

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Activity | Reach / Insights |
| Direct mailout(postcards)  | 974 |
| Postcards distributed at St Kilda Town Hall and libraries  | 100 |
| Sustainability e-Newsletter (issued 20/02/2024) | Subscriber list: 3.4K people (approximately) |
| Divercity e-Newsletter (issued 14/2/24) | Subscriber list: 15K people (approximately) |
| Library e-Newsletter (issued 27/2/2024) | Subscriber list: 6.6K people (approximately) |
| Port Phillip Eco-Centre e-Newsletter (Issue 1/3/2024)(They also ran a Facebook (organic) 'story' to their page (early March '24)) | Subscriber list: 5.7K people (approximately) |
| Engagement newsletter (Have Your Say) February edition  | Subscriber list: 3164 (approximately) |
| Paid FB / Instagram post, budget = $50, ran for one week | Reach: 3147 people  |
| Facebook (organic) post to main CoPP channel (ran 12/2/24) | Reach: 2491 people (higher than typical for an organic post  |
| Instagram (organic) post to main CoPP channel (ran 12/2/24) | Reach: 854 – lower than typical for an organic post  |

# Who we heard from

## Demographics

We received survey responses from a wide range of people living in SUDs. Approximately 174 participants shared their feedback with us on the FOGO service. Please note, that the analysis below includes residents in both SUDs and MUDs.

### Age

In total, 187 participants provided their age through the survey. The ages are skewed towards older community members when compared to the 2021 Census data for the City of Port Phillip. **More than 65 per cent of respondents were aged 50 and over, with the most aged 50 to 59 years (29.4 per cent).**

### Gender

In total, 181 participants provided their gender. **Almost two-thirds of respondents (68 per cent) identified as ‘female’.**

# What we heard

### Use of the garbage bin

In the beginning of the survey, residents were asked to indicate how full their garbage bin was each week before the FOGO service was introduced. 34.9 per cent of residents indicated that their garbage bin was over three-quarters full, with an additional 7.0 per cent indicating the garbage bin was overflowing.

Following the introduction of the FOGO service, 73.1 per cent of residents have noticed a reduction in the fullness of their garbage stream, indicating that FOGO materials, including food scraps, grass cuttings, leaves and twigs, are being diverted from the garbage bin and into the new FOGO bins.

On the contrary, 25.7 per cent state they haven’t noticed a change. This indicates that the FOGO bin is still not being utilised to its full potential given that 56.7 per cent of our garbage stream consisted of FOGO materials prior to the introduction of the kerbside FOGO bin.

### Barriers to using the FOGO bin

The survey asked specific questions about how residents used their FOGO bins. Responses highlighted that there are barriers to using the FOGO bin to divert food waste from the garbage stream. This finding is reconfirmed through the results of the 2023 municipal waste audits which showed that 30.7 per cent of food waste remains within the garbage bin. This is despite these properties having access to a FOGO bin.

While 75.6 per cent of respondents indicated that they used their FOGO bin for food organics and garden organics, 14.0 per cent indicated they only use it for garden organics. When asked why they don’t use it for food organics, over half stated it was because they use a home composting system.

An additional 20.0 per cent highlighted issues with smells / pests. Not generating enough food waste was also highlighted as a reason and was commonly due to age or being a one-person household.

### Support from Council

To further encourage the use of the FOGO bin for food waste, respondents were asked how Council can provide additional support. Just under one-quarter of respondents indicated that they would prefer printed materials and an additional 17.0 per cent would like online resources.

Requests were also made for additional FOGO caddy liners or Council bin cleaning. Of the respondents that answered ‘Other’, 36.0 per cent said that no further information was required.

The waste and recycling landscape is constantly changing, and it is important that Council communicates with residents in a format that maximises engagement. The survey responses indicate that Council e-newsletters and direct mailouts are the preferred way for residents to receive waste and recycling information from Council. Additional suggestions directly from respondents also included emails, updates on the Council website and within rates notices.

Survey respondents were also asked if there were any items that they did not know how to correctly dispose of. Thirty-three responses were received highlighting the problem items below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **FOOD ORGANICS** | **GARDEN ORGANICS** | **OTHER** |
| Meat (one response) | Palm tree fronds (one response) | Pet waste (one response) |
| Bones (incl. cooked bones) (four responses) |  | Cat litter (all types) (two responses) |
| Fruit pips / seeds (two responses) |  | Bamboo cutlery (one response) |
| Nut shells (one response) |  | Tea bags (five responses) |
| Eggs shells (one response) |  | Paper bags (food delivery services) (two responses) |
| Oysters (three responses) |  | Compostable / biodegradable packaging (three responses) |
|  |  | Paper towel / serviettes (two responses) |

Satisfaction with the FOGO service

Despite the previous questions regarding barriers to using the FOGO bin, only 31.7 per cent of residents identified challenges. Of the 31.7 per cent, almost half said it was due to the smell of the FOGO bin / FOGO caddy and the potential attraction of insects or rodents. One-quarter of respondents experiencing challenges noted storage limitations as the cause. Missed FOGO bins accounted for 6.4 per cent of responses.

Overall satisfaction with the FOGO service is very high, with 84.0 per cent of residents indicating that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the FOGO service. 7.7 per cent of residents were not satisfied with the service, citing the following reasons:

* They did not want the bin and are required to pay a fee for the service (six respondents).
* They do not generate enough FOGO materials for an additional bin / don’t have space (two respondents).
* They have not noticed a reduction in their garbage bin fullness (one respondent).
* They have experienced issues with the bin not being emptied (one respondent).

# How to find out more

## How this report will be used

Thank you to everyone who provided their feedback through the survey. The report was shared with internal waste and communications staff to help inform the ongoing service delivery and to shape future engagement initiatives.

An additional consultation piece will be undertaken for residents living in apartments and units who use a Council FOGO service.