

16 REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

16.1 Household bulky waste drop-off alternatives

CSP Objective: Outcome 2.3: We use natural resources sustainably, focusing on protection, restoration, maintenance and enhancement.

CSP Strategy: 2.3.1 Responsibly manage resources and waste. Promote recycling and FOGO to reduce the amount of waste we send to landfill.

Delivery Program: 2.3.1.3 Provide high quality waste and resource recovery services.

Item 16.1

Summary

The purpose of this report is to present Council with options for the future management of Household Bulky Waste (HBW). The report does not seek to predetermine a final service model. Instead, it recommends that Council present the available options to the community through a consultation and engagement process for feedback, before making a final service decision.

Financial implication

The current HBW drop-off service has had an average annual cost of approximately \$207,000 over each of the past three financial years. This is funded through the Domestic Waste Management Charge (DWMC).

Three options for future HBW disposal have been presented that focus on compliance with the Performance Improvement Order by proposing alternatives that do not present significant cost increases.

Risk Implication

Risk is the central issue for this report. The current drop-off event at the Minnamurra Waste Recycling Facility, presents very high safety and operational risks. The site is not fit for this purpose because it was not designed to operate a high-volume public bulky waste event while also continuing normal waste facility activities. Recent incidents in HBW events have included a stockpile fire in 2024, presumably from incorrect battery disposal and various lost-time injuries involving Council employees.

Despite implementing controls recommended by an comprehensive independent safety report, at the March 2026 event a Council employee was unfortunately injured after being impacted by a resident's vehicle at the check-in point to the HBW event.

Staff safety is paramount to the workplace and this level of risk is unacceptable for the workforce. Council has a low risk appetite and values staff safety. Subsequently a business case has been prepared for three options for future HBW disposal that assesses the Strategic, Operational, Reputational, Financial and Environmental risk implications for each option.

The continued operation of a HBW drop-off service from the MWRF also conflicts with the endorsed service review recommendations on the long term waste operations on the site and its potential as a catalyst site for future consolidation of the Waste and

Report of the Director Infrastructure and Operations

16.1 Household bulky waste drop-off alternatives (cont)

Works depots. It is to be noted from the outset that Kiama Council does not operate a landfill and all streams of waste leave the current facility. The existing cell is capped and maintained in accord with legislation.

Policy

At the Council meeting of 18 November 2025, the report on the '*Business Case arising from the service review: Domestic Waste Services – change of waste management at Minnamurra Depot*' was endorsed. This report made recommendations for a review of the HBW service.

The three options for the future HBW service align with Council's Community Strategic Plan outcome for sustainable natural resource use and the strategy to responsibly manage resources and waste.

The options also need to be considered in the context of the Performance Improvement Order, amended 30 June 2026. These financial improvement obligations, including the need to avoid unnecessary service cost escalation and to communicate service costs transparently to the community are critically important for demonstrating financial sustainability.

Consultation (internal)

Internal consultation has included Waste Services and Communications and Engagement.

Communication/Community engagement

It is recommended that Council undertake community consultation and engagement before deciding whether to cease, replace or retain the current HBW drop-off model. The engagement process should present each option in a clear and balanced way, including the practical service changes, safety risks, environmental outcomes, access considerations and estimated costs and whether they meet the requirements of the PIO.

The consultation material should clearly state the estimated financial impact of each option, including any rebate amount, user-pays fees, voucher value, costs that have not been considered and the implications for the DWMC.

Attachments

Nil

Enclosures

- 1 Business Case - Household Bulky Waste Alternatives - September 2026 [⇒](#)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receive and note the Household Bulky Waste Alternatives Business Case.

Report of the Director Infrastructure and Operations

16.1 Household bulky waste drop-off alternatives (cont)

2. Endorse community consultation on the available Household Bulky Waste service options that clearly explain the safety, financial, environmental and access implications of each option, including indicative cost estimates, potential rebates, voucher values, user-pays fees and potential increases to the Domestic Waste Management Charge.
3. Following conclusion of the community consultation, receive a further report for consideration, detailing the public exhibition outcomes, any proposed changes and recommendations regarding the future Household Bulky Waste service.

Item 16.1

Background

The current booked drop-off event model for Household Bulky Waste (HBW) at the Minnamurra Waste Recycling Facility (MWRF) remains a highly anticipated and popular service for the community. The model has provided reuse and recycling opportunities, with the business case identifying an average resource recovery rate of 56%. However, the service has become increasingly difficult to deliver safely and equitably because the MWRF is not fit for this event purpose, particularly when large numbers of residents, light vehicles, trailers, operational plant and Council staff are required to interact in a constrained site environment.

Following previous incidents, daily booking limits were introduced to reduce overcrowding and traffic risks, including that from queuing across the railway level crossing. While these limits improved site controls, they also increased community complaints from residents who felt they were paying for a service through the Domestic Waste Management Charge (DMWC) but could not access it. This further highlighted the inequity for those who could not attend the HBW event if they did not have access to trailers or suitable vehicles to transport bulky items to the MWRF, but were also paying for the service.

A business case has been prepared to assess the continued delivery of this service against alternatives and presents three options for consideration.

1. Discontinue the current drop-off event and maintain the existing user-pays on-call kerbside clean-up service.
2. Introduce a voucher system.
3. Do Nothing and maintain the current drop-off model (NB# this option does not meet workplace health and safety requirements for the workforce and presents significant operational risk).

Financial Assessment

The business case identifies that the current HBW drop-off service has had an average annual cost of approximately \$207,000 over each of the past three financial years. This is funded through the Domestic Waste Management Charge (DWMC). The business case focusses on compliance with the Performance Improvement Order by proposing alternatives that do not present significant cost increases.

Option 1 would discontinue the current drop-off event and provide a rebate to all residents based on the average annual event cost, while maintaining the existing user-pays on-call kerbside clean-up service. The current adopted fee for that service is

Report of the Director Infrastructure and Operations

16.1 Household bulky waste drop-off alternatives (cont)

\$121 per collection, with Council continuing to subsidise 40% of the full service delivery cost through the DWMC.

Option 2 would introduce a voucher system, with the business case calculating an indicative voucher value of \$19.77 per eligible household, equivalent to approximately 38 kilograms of landfill disposal at the proposed receiving facility. This option may provide strong service flexibility and resource recovery outcomes, but it requires careful administrative control as overall costs would depend on uptake, app establishment costs, ongoing administration and redemption rates.

Option 3 has the lowest change cost, but option does not meet workplace health and safety requirements for the workforce and presents significant operational risk that Management remain fundamentally concerned with. Continuing the current model will expose Council to higher indirect costs arising from safety controls and infrastructure upgrades, traffic management, staffing requirements, incident response, service interruption and potential injury-related impacts and insurance claims costs. In order to mitigate the on-site traffic management risks, this will necessitate the closure of public green waste drop-off for the duration of the event which will forgo expected gate revenue of approximately \$4500. It is also noted that when the site is redeveloped this service may be further impacted and subject to future changes.

Risk Assessment

The business case identifies and assesses the risk of each option for the purposes of having an open and transparent discussion / consultation with the community on each option.

There is an overall risk that changes to waste services will garner strong public reaction, potential campaigns of misinformation and resistance to any proposed changes. However, given the overriding risk to the workforce, management must take action and consider alternatives. Consultation of potential options will help staff to finalize the business case and present it to a future council meeting for decision making purposes.

Option 1 of discontinuing the current HBW drop-off event, will result in a significant risk reduction to Council. The MWRF is not fit for this purpose because it was not designed to operate a high-volume public bulky waste event while also continuing normal waste facility activities. Maintaining the current user-pays on-call kerbside clean-up service, while not entirely risk free due to the nature of the work being manual handling of bulky items, these risks are more manageable than the current drop-off event because work can be scheduled, paced and supervised in a more predictable way. Booked kerbside collections allow Council staff to plan daily workloads, inspect for non-compliant or unsafe materials, apply safe work procedures and avoid the surge conditions created when many residents attend the MWRF in a concentrated event period.

Option 1 shifts the risk from a high-volume, public, site-based event at an unsuitable facility to a more controlled, scheduled and predictable operating model and allows stronger opportunities to manage staffing and performance, customer communication, load limits, route planning and safety controls.

Option 2 of introducing a voucher system relies on the transfer of operational processing to Shellharbour Council facility at Dunmore, but introduces new controls around App redemption, weighbridge processes, voucher validation, customer support

Report of the Director Infrastructure and Operations

16.1 Household bulky waste drop-off alternatives (cont)

and misuse prevention. There is an additional cost in the development and annual subscriptions of the waste specific App. This option may attract criticism for the low voucher value, from residents with limited digital access and those required to travel to Dunmore (or other possible sites) from southern areas.

Option 3 of maintaining the current HBW drop-off event at the MWRF, presents the highest safety and operational risk. As outlined above, the MWRF site has become increasingly unsuitable to accommodate this event. During events, residents arrive in cars, utes and trailers at the same time as Council staff, contractors, loaders, waste collection trucks and other facility users. This creates unavoidable interaction between plant, people and vehicles in a constrained operating area. The specific risks associated with Option 3 include traffic congestion, pressure on the surrounding road network and the potential for queuing to extend across the railway level crossing, adding significant pressure at the check-in point.

On site, the risks include fire, vehicle collisions, trailers reversing or maneuvering near pedestrians, residents leaving vehicles in active operational areas, poor visibility around loaded trailers, conflict between customer expectations and site controls, and elevated customer aggression when acceptable materials or unloading directions are challenged and the requirements are enforced by Council employees.

These risks are intensified because the event depends on temporary barriers, fencing, signage, traffic controls and deployment of additional trained staff rather than permanent infrastructure designed for this level of public access.

The business case records that safety concerns are not theoretical and were the subject of an independent safety assessment and report. Following the September 2024 event, a fire ignited in landfill material, leading to a reassessment of site constraints and additional controls such as daily visitor caps and staff inspecting each load for dangerous / flammable materials such as lithium batteries. Despite these controls, the March 2026 event unfortunately still resulted in a Council employee being injured after being impacted by a resident's vehicle at the HBW event check-in point. Fire is a significant risk to person, plant and property and the consequences of fires can be catastrophic. Likewise operating environments where staff are struck and injured by moving vehicles is unacceptable. Staff have a right to be safe at work and Management and staff remain concerned by the high levels of operational risk that workers and the public are exposed to during this event / service.

The business case also refers to previous incidents and lost-time injuries involving Council employees. This demonstrates that Option 3 continues to expose Council workers and the public to known hazards that have already resulted in harm, rather than merely presenting a possible future risk. Council has work, health and safety legislative requirements to ensure that workplace safety is managed appropriately and management remain concerned that the option of "doing nothing" is unacceptable in the face of the known risks.

The business case explores the possibility of using a voucher system to partner with Shellharbour City Council as a potential due its proximity and existing contract arrangement. Under the terms of the PIO Council cannot enter into new waste contracts for domestic household waste (bulky or otherwise). This does not rule out the possibility of a voucher system being relevant for other Local Government Areas, however further consultation with the Office of Local Government and neighboring

Report of the Director Infrastructure and Operations

16.1 Household bulky waste drop-off alternatives (cont)

Councils would need to occur. For the purposes of facilitating community consultation the nearest neighboring council with an existing contract was used.

Summary

Any future model should support safe service delivery, responsible waste management, landfill diversion, reuse and recycling, and clear accountability for service costs. Although the business case has recommended Option 1 – *‘Discontinue the current drop-off event and maintain the user-pays on-call kerbside clean-up service’*, due to the expected community impacts of any change, the recommended next step is to consult with the community and provide information about the benefits and issues of each option including safety risks, environmental outcomes, likely costs, potential rebates, voucher values and any additional fees or potential changes to the DWMC charge, before Council determines the preferred long-term HBW service model.

Item 16.1