

23 February 2024



**Waikato
wellbeing
project**

Hinonga
toiora o
Waikato

Hamilton City Council

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on Hamilton City Council's Waste Management and Minimisation Strategy Review.

In addition to national and waste reduction targets and as part of its commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Waikato Wellbeing Project (WWP- [Waikato Wellbeing Project | Waikato Wellbeing Project](#)) has a goal of the region reducing its waste to landfill by 50% by 2030. Your strategy and other sources of information make it clear that at the moment, unless there are substantial changes, this will not occur.

As also clearly laid out in your strategy, this is not an issue of technical uncertainty. The current composition of our waste streams and the significant potential to achieve major reductions in landfill disposal are reasonably well known. The challenge appears to be how to make these changes at the scale of the individual household and business, who have choices every day about what materials to purchase and how to make sustainable disposal, repair or reuse decisions.

The WWP congratulates the council on its strategy and broadly supports the focus areas, outcomes and actions set out. Some specific comments and observations are below for your consideration.

- We agree that the 28% increase in total waste since 2017 is large. It might be helpful to provide some context to this figure as well. For example, Hamilton's population has grown by only approximately 12% in that time, however the city's GDP has increased by 28% (2023 prices, Infometrics¹).
- This indicates that waste volumes are closely correlated with economic activity, more so than with population growth. A key opportunity is therefore to uncouple these two dynamics, as is set out in various places in your strategy.
- As 87% of the waste stream is non-residential, the above information confirms where the greatest priority is from a volume point of view
- The strategy refers to methane as "toxic". The issue with methane relates to its potential as a greenhouse gas. Methane is generally considered an inert gas from a human health point of view². It might be more accurate to refer to it as a "potent greenhouse gas."
- From a residential point of view, the diagrams on pages 16 and 17 are very powerful and point to the significant diversion potential there is from the current waste stream. The WWP has co-funded research with MfE and WRC into ways to reduce the organic fraction of domestic waste in the Waikato, and this research is about to be finalised and released.
- Given the high diversion potential for domestic waste, it is important to fully understand the reasons for the current low diversion levels and what options there are to improve this. The

¹ [ecoprofile.infometrics.co.nz/Hamilton City/Gdp/Growth](https://ecoprofile.infometrics.co.nz/Hamilton%20City/Gdp/Growth)

² [METHANE - Emergency and Continuous Exposure Limits for Selected Airborne Contaminants - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#)

council's current actions around organic waste are fully supported, and the strategy refers to further incentives and sanctions/regulation.

- There might be an opportunity to also look at this from a more economic and human behaviour perspective. People respond to a variety of signals to guide their decisions, and price is one of those. If desirable actions are priced lower relative to those which are less desirable, then (all other things being equal) the right outcomes should be achieved³. This is the logic for example of the ETS for carbon dioxide emissions, and presumably also the waste levy. It may well be that at present these price signals are not set at a level to fully contribute towards the desired outcomes.
- There may be an opportunity for the council to think about other innovative price signalling methods (by it or others) which could further encourage people to take the actions set out in the strategy.

Finally, we note that the drive towards our shared waste reduction targets is a regional, national and international priority that will require us to all work together. There is an opportunity for the council to develop further relationships with community groups within Hamilton to develop a network of Community Resource Recovery Centres (CRRCs).

These centres will enhance their Resource Recovery Network which includes the behaviour change programmes (council and community), the various people and groups involved in economy/circular economy initiatives and even the waste diversion activities at the transfer stations. The CRRCs will also support the call from Ministry for the Environment for greater waste minimisation, readiness for product stewardship and the Climate Change Commissions call for 'zero carbon'.

Hamilton City Council can join many of the Waikato TA's in developing CRRCs to support further collaboration around waste reduction and community wellbeing.

We look forward to the final version of the strategy and congratulate Hamilton City on its development.

We do not wish to be heard in support of this submission.

Ngaa mihi nui

Harvey Brookes

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Waikato Wellbeing Project

³ Recognizing the potential for unintended consequences- such as "fly tipping"