

Relevant Information for Council

FILE: X087085 **DATE:** 20 February 2026

TO: Lord Mayor and Councillors

FROM: Veronica Lee, Executive Director City Services

THROUGH: Monica Barone PSM, Chief Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Information Relevant To Item 7.3 – Post Exhibition - Waste Reduction and Circular Materials Strategy 2026-2035

For Noting

This memo is for the information of the Lord Mayor and Councillors.

Purpose

To provide additional information to Council regarding the Post Exhibition – Waste Reduction and Circular Materials Strategy 2026-2035 and the roll-out of the City's food organics service to all residents.

Background

At the meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Committee on 16 February 2026, further information was sought on the following:

Food organics and community composting

The City's Waste Reduction and Circular Materials Strategy 2026 -2035 does not prevent the community from composting organic waste. The City supports households to compost through our community gardens, running regular composting talks and workshops for the community at the City Farm and our community composting guidelines.

The City supports 19 community gardens in the local area, most of which have onsite composting systems. Four community gardens also participate in the City's food scraps recycling trial to reduce food waste going to landfill and encourage recycling. The organic material produced from the food scraps recycling trial has been used in some City parks and at the Sydney City Farm with good results. Sydney City Farm also host regular free composting talks and demonstrations.

A new Community Greening Framework is in development to guide future footpath gardening, community gardening and community greening volunteer activity in the City. Composting will continue to be encouraged subject to meeting the City's community greening principles and requirements in the Framework, including compost systems being managed to be safe, and free of odours and vermin.

The City has also resolved to provide a food organics (FO) service to all our residents by 1 July 2030 as per the NSW Government mandate arising from the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 for local governments to provide a FO or Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection service to all residential households.

The main reasons that a food organics only service type was chosen (and not a combined food and garden organics service) is that it can be processed by a broader range of processing facilities (including circular solutions like insect farming) and produces higher environmental benefits when kept separate from garden organics. Further, the majority of City households do not have an existing garden organics bin and FO provides us with an opportunity to rollout smaller bins to those properties that have limited storage space. Garden organics will remain as a separate bin for households, allowing the City to continue to process this material into quality compost.

To ensure the food organics service is rolled out effectively, the City is focused on only delivering programs and engagement campaigns that will support the implementation of a FO service to our households. To do this, our priority will be educating the community on how to use a FO service, it's benefits and what is accepted in a FO bin.

It should be noted that FO accepts all food waste types. Composting does not accept meat, dairy or processed foods.

FO rollout/timeline and options for acceleration

To achieve the best results for residents and Council, the recommended approach is for staff to focus on rolling out the FO service to all residents in 2028.

At this stage, the City plans to start a phased implementation in mid 2028, with all households being able to access the FO service by mid 2029. This aligns with the timeframe of '2028-2030' noted in the [Information Relevant To Item 7.3](#) - Planning For a Food Organics Recycling Service to All Households from the 17 March 2025 Council meeting which provided a more detailed timeframe than the Environment and Climate Change Committee [report](#) of 10 March 2025.

Meeting this implementation date will require significant planning and time as shown in the table below that captures key stages and estimated completion dates.

Timeline for Service Rollout

Project Stage	Service Component	Task	Estimated Timeframe
1. Build the plan	Processing	Insect farming trial contract extension	January 2025 – June 2027

Project Stage	Service Component	Task	Estimated Timeframe
	Collection	Collection cost benefit analysis to enable assessment of the collection options – in development	Late 2025 - early 2026
	Collection	Collection service business case and cost modelling	Early - mid 2026
	Processing	Processing tender development	Early 2026 – late 2026
	Collection	Council decision – Collection type	Dependent on business case
	Collection – option a)	Collection Service Tender* <i>*If Council resolves to outsource</i>	Mid 2026 - mid 2027
	Collection – option b)	Secure, recruit and procure depot space, staff and plant and equipment* <i>*If Council resolves to insource</i>	Late 2026 - early 2028
	Processing	Processing tender out to market	Late 2026 – early 2027
	Collection	Procure bins, caddies and liners	Late 2026 - mid 2027
	Processing	Council decision – Processing type	Early 2027
	All	Draft communications and education plan	Mid - late 2027
2. Implement	All	Communication and education campaign	2028 - 2030
	Collection	Bin roll-out	2028
	Collection	Collection transition	2028
	Processing	Processing contract commencement	2028

Project Stage	Service Component	Task	Estimated Timeframe
	All	Service commencement	Mid 2028 – Mid 2029

Data on households participating in the FO trial

The food scraps service is currently available to more than 24,354 households in the City. This is made up of 23,000 apartments (in 342 buildings) and 1,354 houses.

Participation is affected by resident transience which can cause service drop off. However the total number of households that have access to the service is consistently growing. When residents that live in houses, move out or no longer want to participate in the service, houses from the waitlist are added. Reduction in participation from households in apartment buildings is managed through education programs and caddy installations in building foyers to encourage more or new households to use food organic bins.

Marked up Strategy

As requested at the Committee meeting, a version of the Strategy more clearly detailing the changes to the Strategy is attached for reference (note there may be some formatting/font inconsistencies).

Memo from Veronica Lee, Executive Director City Services

Prepared by: Kath McLaughlin, Resource Recovery Manager

Attachments

Attachment A. Waste Reduction and Circular Materials Strategy 2026-2035 (with tracked changes)

Approved

P. M. Barone

MONICA BARONE PSM

Chief Executive Officer

Attachment A

**Waste Reduction and Circular Materials
Strategy 2026-2035 (with tracked changes)**

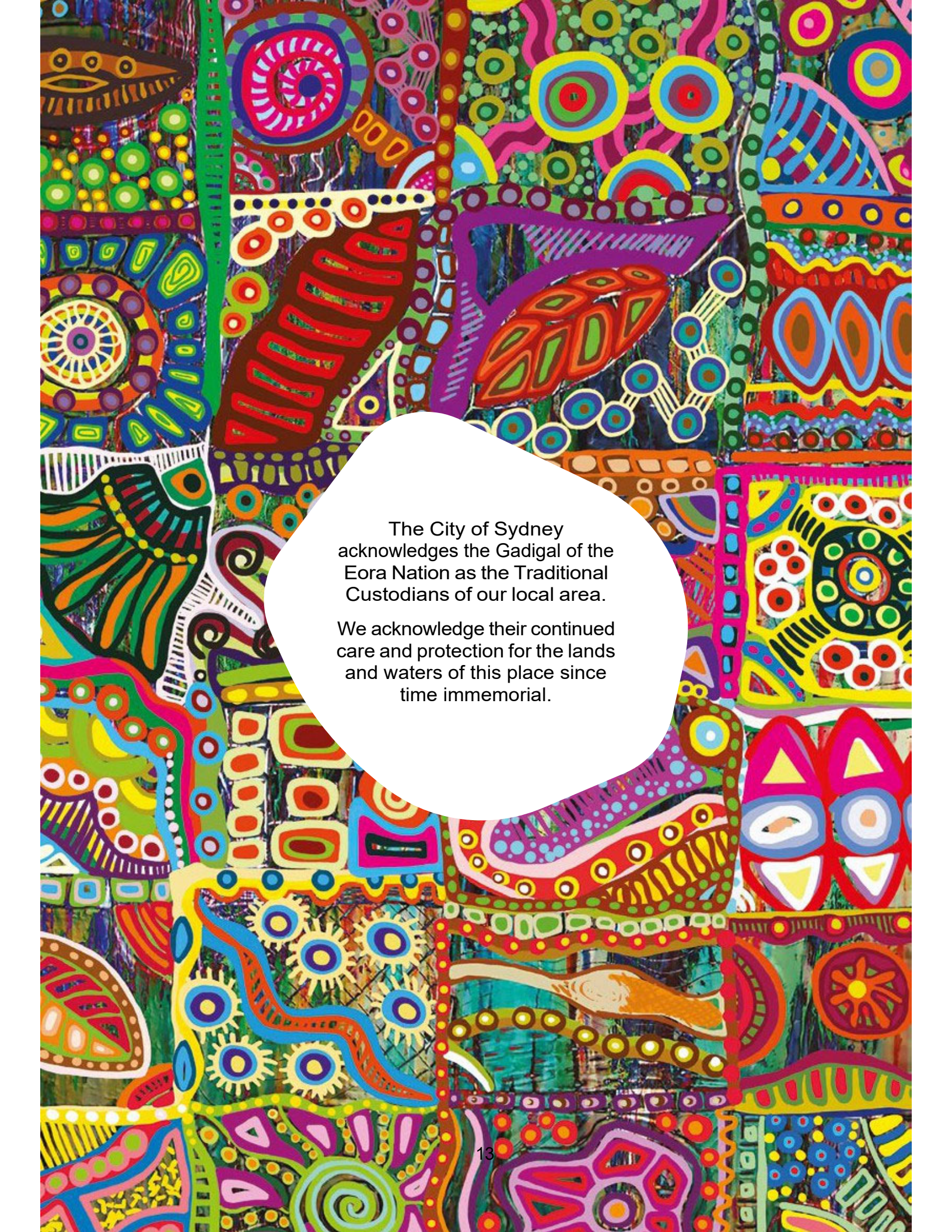


Final
February 2026

Waste reduction and circular materials strategy 2025~~6~~–2035

The City of Sydney acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation
as the Traditional Custodians of our local area

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The City of Sydney
acknowledges the Gadigal of the
Eora Nation as the Traditional
Custodians of our local area.

We acknowledge their continued
care and protection for the lands
and waters of this place since
time immemorial.

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Message from the Lord Mayor



Sydney's future depends on how resources are used and managed today. Within the city and beyond, producing, consuming and disposing unsustainably depletes finite natural materials, generates waste and harms the environment.

Overcoming these challenges demands a transformative new approach, one rooted in the transition to a circular economy, keeping natural materials in use for as long as possible and designing out waste from the start.

The City of Sydney has long shown bold environmental leadership and we know moving to a circular economy is vital to preserve precious natural resources and meet our waste and emissions reduction goals.

Our communities have told us managing waste sustainably is important to them too. They'd like to see increased access to recycling programs, including for food scraps and more information about proper waste disposal and continued advocacy to reduce the impact of plastic in the environment.

Since 2018, we've awarded more than \$400,000 in grants for circular economy and ~~resource-recovery~~ **recycling** projects. Our own innovative circular projects include turning food waste from our buildings into soil conditioner for our parks. We've expanded our services for tricky-to-recycle items and partnered with major events to reduce waste – working with Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to phase out plastic glitter and balloons is just one example.

Our efforts have also extended beyond local borders because we know waste systems operate across boundaries. Through region-wide initiatives such as Resilient Sydney, we've been working with other councils to push for better waste processing and the state government is now collaborating more closely with councils to solve the issue.

But the challenges before us require even greater action – and local councils can't shoulder this responsibility alone. The federal and state governments must identify, fund and regulate large-scale solutions. Accelerated waste infrastructure at the state level is essential, as are revised regulatory and economic systems that encourage rather than penalise sustainable choices.

At the City of Sydney, we're more than ready to play our part, and as this strategy shows, our focus for the next decade includes ambitious actions to achieve our vision for a circular economy. We'll tackle textile waste, collect food scraps across our area and test scalable new solutions for processing this valuable resource locally. Our NSW-first trial already uses insects to transform food waste.

We'll also use our grant programs to boost reuse and repair, support businesses to go circular and champion the use of sustainable design in local developments and within our own.

Building a circular economy in Sydney will require collective effort from governments, businesses and residents. Join us in shaping a thriving circular future, where sustainable principles fuel innovation, resilience and growth.



Clover Moore AO
Lord Mayor of Sydney

Our vision for circular Sydney

In partnership with
our communities,
we will strive to
make Sydney a
city where nothing
is wasted.

Waste reduction and circular materials strategy 2026–2035



Introduction

Our new waste reduction and circular materials strategy continues the vision of Sustainable Sydney 2030–2050.

It charts a bold course for Sydney as a thriving circular economy, where sustainable production and consumption ensure finite natural materials are valued, cared for and kept in continuous use, safeguarding them for future generations.

In this envisioned future, these practices will enable a substantial reduction in waste and help combat the harms of climate change.

Our communities have made clear this is important to them. They want us to take decisive action to reduce our city's footprint and transition to a more regenerative, resilient local economy, lead by example and continue to govern in a sustainable way.

Since our last waste strategy, we've made significant progress towards a more sustainable and resource-efficient city.

We've increased recycling services available to our residents, promoted reuse and repair through training and events, deepened community education on avoiding waste and boosted funding for organisations driving circular outcomes.

Innovation in our waste processing contracts has ensured more materials are recycled into valuable new products. We use recycled crushed glass to pave our roads and turn food waste from our buildings into soil conditioner for our parks.

Outside our immediate area, we've also been working closely with other councils and state and federal agencies to advocate for policies that better support the recirculation of materials.

Collectively, these actions have helped reduce waste across our own operations, within our residential communities and in the businesses we partner with.



Our free clothes swaps foster community reuse.
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan / City of Sydney



Our community engagement stalls offer waste avoidance tips to residents and visitors in our area.
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan / City of Sydney

But while we've made strides, there is still more to do. Right now, waste sent to landfill accounts for 10% of our total area emissions. Meeting our adopted city-wide target of net zero emissions by 2035 – critical to a liveable, equitable city – will require much more waste reduction, supported by better management of materials.

The NSW Government has also announced that without new waste solutions, Greater Sydney's landfill capacity will be exhausted within the next decade.¹

As such, this strategy celebrates our successes and sets our ambition for an even more sustainable, resilient future, in which deeply embedded circular principles drive down waste and minimise our city's environmental impact.

To realise this ambition, the strategy outlines clear pathways across 5 directions, each focused on the elements required to transition to a more circular economy.

These include a collective commitment to careful consumption, widespread reuse, repair and recycling, smarter design and construction, careful waste management and good governance.

Across its 5 directions, the strategy discusses the roles of residents, businesses and visitors, along with our role as the local government.

It also speaks to the responsibilities of other levels of government and industry, and highlights our role within broader frameworks, illustrating how our actions contribute to the regional, national and global waste and materials ecosystem.

The strategy outlines how we'll measure success in our shift to a circular economy, presenting a set of ambitious targets for our organisation, residents and local area.

Beyond setting out our bold approach, this strategy provides a chance for us to share knowledge about the circular economy, making it easier for everyone to join us on the path to a more sustainable future.

The circular economy

At present, our society operates on a linear economic model, where natural materials extracted from the earth are used to make new products and often disposed of in landfill, or worse, released directly into the environment.

This take, make, use, dispose approach is driving unsustainable trends in production and consumption, depleting finite natural resources and creating substantial amounts of waste.

It's clear a transformative new approach is needed and over the last decade the circular economy has emerged as this alternative.

The circular economy is a different way to look at production and consumption, challenging the need for new things made from new materials.

Recycling extends the life of products and materials, but a circular economy goes further. It designs products for repeated cycles of reuse, repair and refurbishment, keeping valuable materials in use for as long as possible before recycling or disposal is needed.

Principles of the circular economy

1. Design out waste and pollution

Many products are currently designed without sustainable end-of-life pathways, sealing their eventual fate as landfill waste.

If a new product does need to be created, it should be designed to enable reuse, repair, refurbishment and, as a last resort, recycling.

2. Keep materials at their highest value

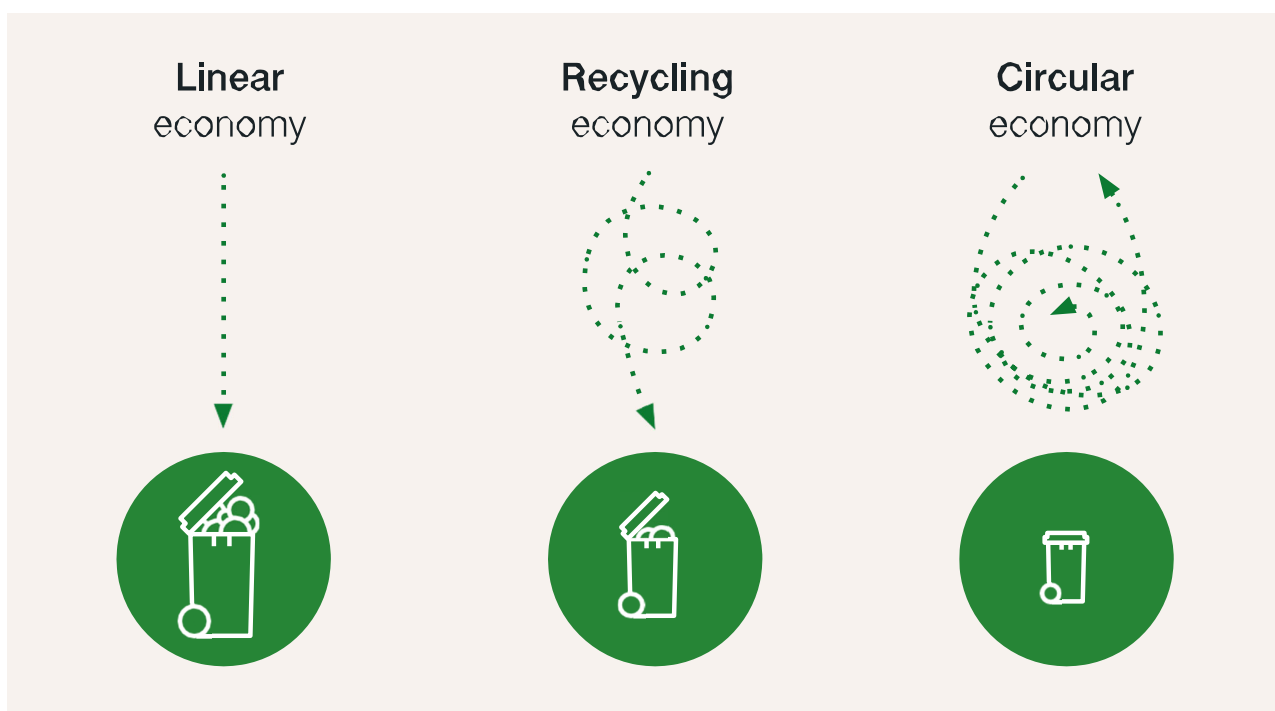
Products and their materials have intrinsic value, which should be maintained through reuse, repair and refurbishment.

Recycling, which requires dismantlement and significantly reduces value, should only take place once other options have been explored.

3. Regenerate nature

A linear economy repeatedly takes raw materials from the earth, depleting and disturbing natural systems.

The focus should move from extraction to regeneration, where nutrient-rich biological material is returned to the earth and nature is allowed to maintain healthy ecosystems.



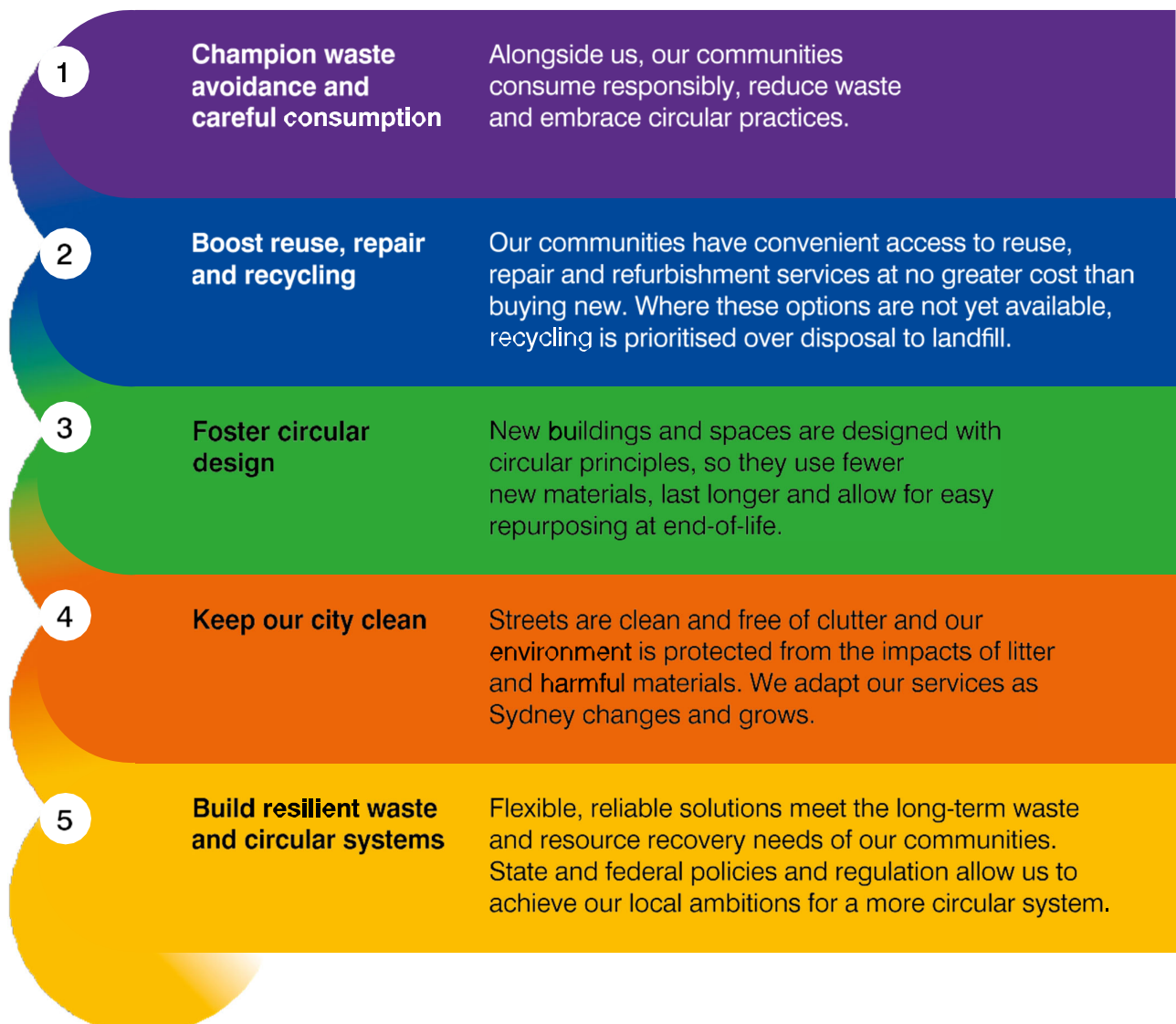
In the linear economy, many products and materials are only used once then sent to landfill, driving production, consumption and waste. A recycling economy gives items a second life but the circular economy goes further, keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible.

How we'll move Sydney to a circular economy

The pathways to achieving our vision for a more circular economy will occur across many different parts of our organisation and city.

We'll focus our efforts through 5 key directions, each with a long-term ambition and an accompanying set of targeted actions.

Each direction represents a distinct approach to the elements needed to create a more circular economy, including a shared commitment to responsible consumption, broad recirculation of materials, better design, careful waste management and good governance.



Key steps

To fulfil the ambitions of our 5 directions and realise our vision for a more circular economy, we'll carry out 39 focused actions for our organisation and communities. Included in these actions are the following key activities:

- **Choosing suppliers and products that** ~~Leveraging our buying power to~~ support the shift to a circular economy.
- Supporting small businesses in our area to become more circular by providing access to training and grants.
- Inspiring our residents to reduce their waste through targeted communications campaigns.
- Acting on textile waste by providing new recycling options for unwearable items and creating more opportunities for our residents to understand and practice sustainable shopping and clothes repair.
- Extending our residential food scraps recycling program and trialling new innovations for processing this valuable resource locally.
- Increasing support for reuse and repair projects through our grants.
- Championing the use of circular design in new local developments by creating detailed guidelines to support the building sector.
- ~~Tackling our urban waste management challenges~~ **improper waste disposal in our public spaces** with a dedicated program to address **identified** ~~problem~~ areas **of concern** and using creative ways to cut down single-use items and litter.
- Continuing to provide flexible, reliable waste and ~~resource recovery~~ **recycling** services that meet the long-term needs of our growing and changing communities.
- Advocating for the accelerated development of adequate waste infrastructure and for projects that support a circular economy.



We'll work to boost reuse and repair in our area.
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan / City of Sydney

How we'll measure success

To keep us aligned with the long-term ambitions of our 5 directions, we've set a series of targets that will allow us to meaningfully measure our progress.

By June 2030	By June 2035
For our organisation:	
90% diversion from landfill with 50% source separated recycling from our managed properties	90% diversion from landfill with 60% source separated recycling from our managed properties
60% resource recovery of waste from our office strip-outs and fit-outs	70% resource recovery of waste from our office strip-outs and fit-outs
20% reduction in total waste generated from our managed properties (June 2019 baseline)	25% reduction in total waste generated from our managed properties (June 2019 baseline)
90% resource recovery of construction and demolition waste generated and managed by us	95% resource recovery of construction and demolition waste generated and managed by us
60% resource recovery of waste from our parks, streets and public places	70% resource recovery of waste from our parks, streets and public places
For our residents:	
35% source separated recycling of residential waste	40% source separated recycling of residential waste
80% resource recovery of residential waste	90% resource recovery of residential waste
10% reduction in total residential waste generation per capita (June 2023 baseline)	15% reduction in total residential waste generation per capita (June 2023 baseline)
For our local area:	
80% resource recovery of commercial and industrial waste	90% resource recovery of commercial and industrial waste
10% reduction in total commercial and industrial waste generation (June 2019 baseline)	15% reduction in total commercial and industrial waste generation (June 2019 baseline)

Notes:

- All targets are weight based.
- Resource recovery means ~~diversion from landfill~~ **taking useful materials out of the waste stream so they can be reused, recycled or turn into energy.**

The current waste landscape

Waste and materials in our area today

Our local government area is one of the largest and fastest growing in Australia.

Home to nearly 245,000 residents today and an anticipated 27,000 more by 2035,² our area also hosts around 22,000 businesses and 520,000 jobs.³ In total, the city is used by an estimated 1 million people each day.

This scale of activity generates a broad range of waste, and it's important to understand the main sources, the materials involved and where it goes. This highlights where future efforts to reduce waste and recirculate materials are best focused.

Our organisational waste

We generate waste in our buildings and from our construction work to maintain and upgrade our streets and public spaces.

Since these areas are under our control, we can closely manage the type and volume of waste produced, as well as what happens to it.

At our buildings, waste currently totals around 950 tonnes each year and consists of materials like food, paper and packaging. We divert more than 90% of it from landfill and are now focused on securing higher value for these materials through increased recycling.

Our construction and demolition projects generate about 28,000 tonnes of waste each year, largely made up of materials such as asphalt, concrete, pavers and steel. The recycling rate is very high and we are committed to maintaining this as well as exploring more ways to reduce and reuse

these materials.

Residential and public place waste

Waste is also produced by our residents and in the public places we manage.

While we don't have the same direct control over this waste, we are responsible for its collection, and can influence volumes and reduce disposal by educating residents and visitors.

Our residents currently generate around 64,000 tonnes of waste each year. About 65% of this goes into red lid bins and is later processed to extract metals for recycling, while the rest is collected for recycling and recovery through our yellow lid bin, pick-up and drop-off services.

Food is the most prevalent material in the red lid bin, along with recyclable items such as metal, glass and paper. In the yellow lid bin, these standard recyclable items are most common, but they're sometimes accompanied by contaminants like textiles and bagged items.

Meanwhile, electronics, textiles and large cardboard are the most common materials collected in our pick-up and drop-off recycling services, which focus on items that can't be recycled in the yellow lid bin.

Around 50% of our residential waste is diverted from landfill.

In the public places we manage, around 8,000 tonnes of waste is currently produced each year. This includes waste placed in our street litter bins, collected from our streets and parks, and cleaned from our stormwater drains.

The waste in these areas is a mix of organic materials, packaging and illegally dumped bulkier items such as furniture and tyres, and just over 50% of it is diverted from landfill.

Commercial and construction waste

Local businesses and construction projects generate waste as well.

We don't control or collect this waste, but we do recognise its significant impact and strive to influence reduction, reuse and recycling.

Among businesses in our area, we estimate 567,000 tonnes of commercial and industrial waste is generated each year.

This contains a variety of materials, mainly metals, plastics, food, paper, cardboard and wood, and around 47% is recycled while the remainder goes to landfill.

More than 300,000 tonnes of materials can be reduced, reused or recycled in the future.

Alongside this, we estimate more than 1 million tonnes of construction and demolition waste is produced in our area each year.

Bricks, concrete and soil make up the bulk of this waste, and while over 75% is recycled, this sector also represents significant opportunities for further reduction and reuse.

Waste in the circular economy

Moving to a circular economy is essential, but the process won't be quick or perfect.

During and after the shift, there will still be items without pathways for reuse, repair, refurbishment or recycling.

This means our communities will still rely on many of the waste, recycling and cleansing services we provide.

While we might expect to see a reduction in waste volumes and to adapt our service levels appropriately, we will continue to provide the essential support our communities need.

Control

Our buildings



950t

Our construction and demolition



28,000t

Manage and influence

Our managed parks, streets and public spaces



8,000t

Our residents



64,000t

Influence

Local area commercial and industrial



567,000t

Local area construction and demolition



over 1Mt

manage and influence pathways for it. Data current at 2023/24.



We play a crucial role in managing waste. Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney

Waste responsibilities

In Australia, responsibility for managing and reducing waste is split across federal, state and local governments.

The federal and state governments make waste management laws and set national and state waste reduction targets, which are often similar.

Waste is also regulated by the state government, using mechanisms that include a levy to discourage landfilling.

Local governments are responsible for helping to achieve the national and state targets for the waste streams we collect.

We also have our own waste reduction targets for our organisation and communities.

The ambition of the national and state targets is welcome, but we know the 2025 targets will not be met and it is unlikely that many of the 2030 targets will be achieved on time.

The federal and state governments must do more to identify, fund and regulate large, scalable solutions.

National waste reduction targets⁴

1. Ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres
2. Reduce total waste generated in Australia by 10% per person by 2030
3. 80% average resource recovery rate from all waste streams by 2030
4. Significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry
5. Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025
6. Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030

NSW waste reduction targets⁵

1. Reduce total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030
2. Have an 80% average recovery rate from all waste streams by 2030
3. Significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry
4. Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025
5. Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030

Challenges and opportunities

Challenges

Any change brings challenges, and as we transition to a circular economy, we'll need to navigate a range of issues and considerations.



Product design and disposal issues

At present, many products are designed with landfill as the only end-of-life option. Plus, even if better options like recycling are considered, this can be hindered by collection challenges and costs to update industry infrastructure, which can't recycle many of the complex products in use today.



Regulatory and policy barriers

Existing federal and state policies fall short in supporting circularity, leaving the reuse, repair and recycling industries underfunded compared to those that extract raw materials from the earth. One result is that recycling can often cost more than landfill disposal, even with state landfill levies in place.



The appeal of the new and convenient

Since current systems don't adequately support reuse, repair and recycling, it's often cheaper and easier for consumers to buy new products instead. Reuse and repair practices aren't yet normalised either, so new products can be more appealing even if they're not the sustainable choice.



The realities of city living

About 80% of our residents live in apartments,⁶ creating competing demands for space. This can make it harder to reuse, repair and recycle. Plus, in dense urban areas like ours, there's less space to grow food and to compost.



A growing and changing city

Our population is growing and changing, which may increase resource use and waste. It will also create more competition for space on the street. This increased competition, coupled with our city-wide push to expand walking and cycling areas for better accessibility and lower emissions, will present new complexities for collecting and managing waste.

Opportunities

Although there will be challenges, transitioning to a circular economy will bring profound benefits to our area – environmental, social and economic.



Better environmental outcomes

Widespread circular practices will benefit our local environment and reduce our global impact, resulting in fewer emissions, less pollution, and protection of natural resources and biodiversity.



Cost and resource savings

When local businesses and organisations go circular, they'll find smart ways to save money and cut costs. This could be by using repurposed materials, sharing equipment or making products that last longer and are easier to fix.



New local jobs and markets

With some support, businesses operating on circular principles will be able to buy and sell at scale. This will create new jobs and markets, boosting our economy and building community wealth.



Greater innovation

The shift to a circular economy will drive radical innovation as systems are rethought, redesigned and rebuilt in a circular way. It will create new design methods, new processes and new ways for organisations to collaborate.



More connected communities

In many ways, the transition to a circular economy will happen at a person-to-person level, bringing together individuals to preserve resources and reduce waste. This will create more engaged and connected communities.



Sustainable local food systems

Transitioning to a circular economy will support the development of sustainable local food systems, where produce is grown locally with minimal impact and any waste is used to nourish the earth.



Increased local resilience

Circular businesses will rely less on international suppliers for materials and resources, making them less vulnerable to global trade issues, pandemics and other large-scale shocks. Localised production hubs and food systems will make our communities more resilient to shocks and challenges too.



Direction 1: Champion waste avoidance and careful consumption

'We envision the city as a leader in reversing climate change and restoring the natural environment by giving back more than it takes.'

Sydney 2050 Citizens' Jury⁷

Our ambition

Alongside us, our communities consume responsibly, reduce waste and embrace circular practices.



Responsible consumption in action.
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan / City of Sydney

Why this is important

The current economic model of take, make, use, dispose has fostered the misconception that raw natural materials are in endless supply.

As a result, products are often made from new rather than recycled materials and designed without sustainable end-of-life pathways, with few regulatory or financial barriers to deter this.

Similarly, consumers are rarely prompted to reflect on the impact of their purchases or to opt for more sustainable alternatives.

This in turn creates considerable waste and other environmental impacts. Nearly 30% of all local consumption-related emissions are linked to the purchase of goods and services.

To keep these impacts from escalating – and ideally, to reduce them – there must be a stronger shared awareness of making and choosing more sustainable products, plus the right support to do it as our city grows. Also essential is an understanding that these alternatives can prevent waste and other environmental harms.

This must all be rooted in circular economy thinking, with broad recognition that materials are finite, valuable and require wise use to support current and future needs.

What we're doing already

There are many ways we're championing waste avoidance and careful consumption in our area:

- Turning food waste from our offices into fertiliser for our parks.
- Replacing paper towels with hand dryers in our bathrooms and single-use serveware with reusables at many events.
- Equipping our residents with waste avoidance knowledge through community information stalls, webinars, communications campaigns, a tailored online Q&A service and a search tool.
- Upskilling our residents about localised, low-waste food production at Sydney City Farm, our urban agriculture site.
- Working with industry to increase circularity and reduce waste in commercial offices, hotels, entertainment venues and more.
- Awarding grants for circular economy and waste avoidance ideas, such as an accelerator program for circular economy startups.

What we want in the future

Reduced consumption of products made from new materials, without loss of consumer convenience or economic growth.

We want to use our procurement power to drive change in supply chains and service delivery models, so products and services used in our area are created and provided in a more sustainable, circular way.

Empowering local businesses, big and small, is also crucial for bold action on circularity and avoiding waste. Alongside this, we want to support broad innovation and collaboration on circular projects, fostering better practices and strengthening social cohesion.

Similarly, more education and support will deepen our communities' understanding of responsible consumption, waste avoidance and other circular practices, and make it easy for anyone to participate.

We also want to offer opportunities for our residents to understand and benefit from natural and regenerative systems, as these aid greatly in avoiding waste.

How we'll get there

Actions we'll take for our organisation:

- Review the goods and services we procure to see where we can consider alternative models that avoid buying new.
- Identify procurement mechanisms to support the development of circular economy systems.
- Develop guidance about how to choose furniture and furnishings that incorporate circular principles for design, use and end-of-life.
- Investigate opportunities to further reduce reliance on single-use items.
- Identify mechanisms across procurement and design to increase circularity and minimise disposal of textiles.

Actions we'll take for our communities:

- Create targeted communications campaigns that inspire our residents to reduce their waste.
- Increase opportunities for our residents to grow appropriate, nutritious food and to compost at home.
- Create convenient opportunities for our residents to locally share and swap household items.
- Maintain waste avoidance education and engagement activities for our residents, schools and community groups.
- Support capacity-building programs focused on waste reduction and circularity for businesses in our area.
- Showcase emerging circular economy innovations in our area and help businesses and organisations connect and collaborate.
- Trial and test new ideas that commercialise circular economy innovations.
- Collaborate with government and industry to reduce waste and promote circular solutions through our sustainability partnerships.

Snapshots of success



Sustainable office fit-outs are an impactful way to reduce waste.
Photo: Stephanie Zingsheim / City of Sydney

Turning the tables on office fit-out waste

Australia generates at least 30,000 tonnes of commercial furniture waste each year – and 95% of it ends up in landfill.⁸

This trend is fuelled by a few factors, including inflexible design and an overuse of parts that are hard to repair, reuse or recycle.

Recognising this problem in our own city, the Better Buildings Partnership stepped up.

Guided by us, the partnership includes leading property owners and influencers, and since 2011, we've worked together to make Sydney's buildings more sustainable.

In 2023, the partnership asked industry stakeholders about the challenges of office fit-out waste, and based on these findings, teamed up with the Green Building Council of Australia to create a new toolkit for circular office fit-outs.

Aimed at office fit-out project teams, this toolkit presents circular, sustainable design strategies to prevent waste at every phase of the process, from pre-design and concept design to the detailed plans.

Inspiring and useful, the toolkit is helping pave the way for more circular fit-outs in our area.

Working on an office fit-out?
[Make it low-waste with the circular toolkit.](#)



Our food scraps become fertiliser for our parks.
Photo: Abril Felman / City of Sydney



Revolve ReCYCLING save bikes from landfill.
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney

From food waste to fertiliser

A wide-scale food scraps recycling program is helping us manage our waste.

Trialing and scaling for success

In 2018, 2 of our properties began a food scraps recycling trial, which helped cut their monthly landfill waste by 30%.

Encouraged by these results, we've now introduced food scraps recycling at 12 properties. The scraps are taken to a processing facility south of Sydney and given a second life as compost, soil or mulch.

Exploring a localised approach

Building on this success, we began to explore on-site food scraps recycling, and in 2021 we bought food dehydrators to turn leftovers from 3 of our properties into soil conditioner for our parks.

The units processed 8,250kg in their first full year of operation, and this localised, circular project has also helped cut our transport emissions, since we now need to send fewer scraps away for recycling.

Supporting green business transformation

Our grants help local small businesses and startups explore circular practices and operate more sustainably.

Tech startup Greener has developed a digital tool that helps small businesses make green choices. The tool is now used by many businesses in our area, from restaurants and bars to homeware stores.

Not-for-profit Revolve ReCYCLING ran a pilot to collect and redeploy unwanted bikes in our area. The pilot was a success and the Revolve team now collects up to 500 bikes each month to refurbish, rehome or recycle.

Startup space Fishburners unveiled Australia's first accelerator program for early-stage circular economy businesses. Working on exciting ideas for textiles, technology and more, the 12 participating startups received mentoring, education and chances to connect with industry experts and investors.

Got a bright idea about how to fuel the circular economy? [Apply for a grant.](#)



Hands-on learning at Sydney City Farm.
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

Sydney City Farm: cultivating sustainable food systems

Sydney City Farm is a place for our communities to connect with nature and learn more about localised, low-waste food production.

Located in St Peters, this 5,000 square metre urban farm hosts events throughout the year, from workshops, talks and webinars to school group sessions and family-friendly open days.

All activities speak to the unique needs of our communities, with topics like urban composting and worm farming, creating edible gardens in rental homes and growing bush food in cities.

Regular guided farm walks also introduce concepts such as seasonal planting, which is important for growing delicious produce in a low-impact way.

The farm runs a large volunteer program too, allowing interested locals to gain planting, weeding and harvesting experience.

Each year, volunteers help grow around 400kg of seasonal, organic fruit and vegetables, all donated to local charities.

A vibrant, sustainable alternative to large-scale food systems, Sydney City Farm gives our communities the knowledge and skills to make more sustainable choices themselves.

Want to develop your gardening skills and learn how to grow food?
[Get involved at Sydney City Farm.](#)



Direction 2: Boost reuse, repair and recycling

‘The most sustainable product is
one that already exists.’

Adam Siegel⁹

Our ambition

Our communities have convenient access to reuse, repair and refurbishment services at no greater cost than buying new. Where these options are not yet available, recycling is prioritised over disposal to landfill.



Free clothes repair workshop for our residents.
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan / City of Sydney

Why this is important

Creating new products demands extracting finite materials from the earth – an inherently unsustainable process, especially at current rates of production and consumption.

Producing goods also creates environmental harm, often requiring large amounts of water, chemicals and energy.

The most effective way to reverse this is to recirculate existing materials and products for as long as possible, reducing the need for new, but at present, the systems to support this aren't mature enough.

As a result, reuse and repair are often less accessible and more costly than buying new, while recycling practices are still developing.

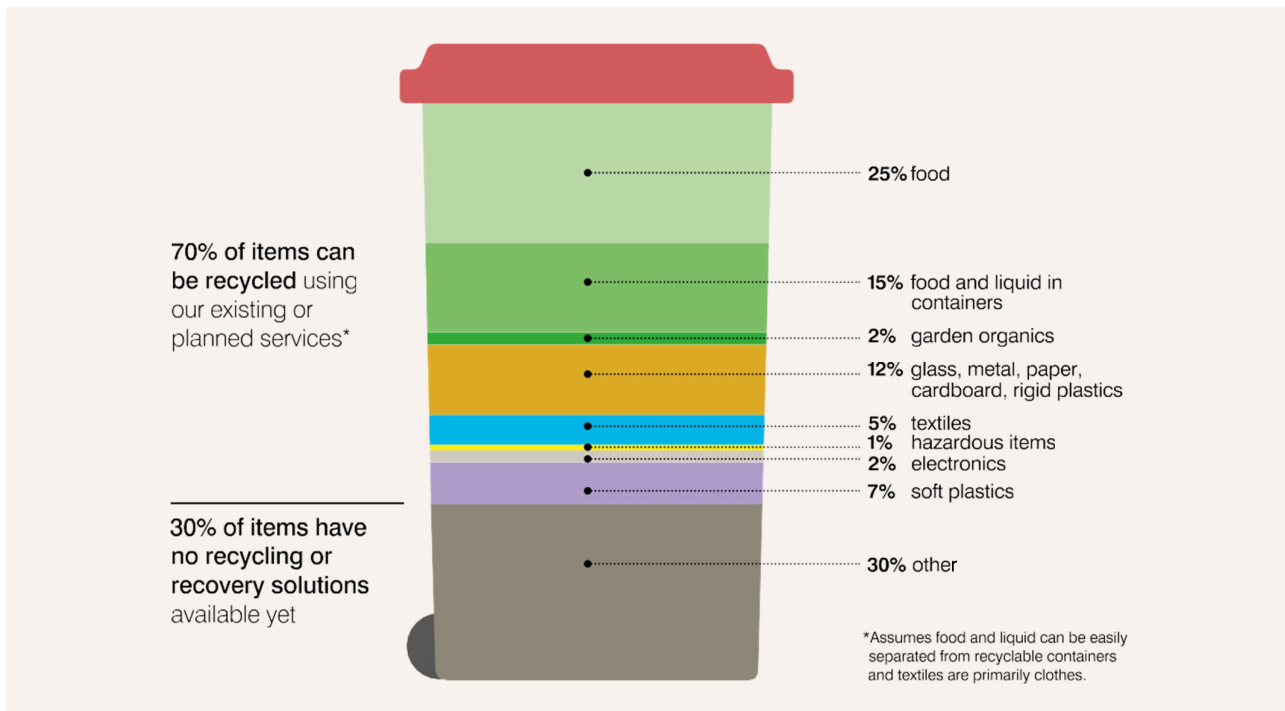
We can see this in our own area, where audits showed more than 25% of the furniture left out for household bulky waste pick-up is suitable for reuse. We also know our residents' red lid bins frequently contain recyclable items like glass, cardboard and electronics.

All this underscores the urgent need for more entrenched, accessible reuse, repair and recycling systems, bolstered by greater community awareness and participation.

What we're doing already

There are many ways we're fostering reuse, repair and recycling in our area:

- Reusing furniture and office equipment and recycling our electronics, employee uniforms and more.
- Using recycled materials in building major roads, cycleways and footpaths.
- Hosting reuse and repair events for our residents, including clothes swaps, toy swaps and mending workshops.
- Providing residents with pick-up and drop-off options to recycle tricky items like electronics, paint and polystyrene.
- Auditing residential bin contents to identify where extra recycling options could be provided.
- Awarding grants to organisations working on reuse, repair and recycling, including a furniture rehoming charity, a furniture repair workshop and a design practice developing recycled yarn.



Many items placed in red lid bins could be recycled instead. Percentages for item groups add to 99%, reflecting minor rounding adjustments. Data based on bin audits completed in 2023.

What we want in the future

Broad, convenient and cost-effective access to reuse, repair and refurbishment services, helping drive demand, boost participation and grow repair and refurbishment skills across our area.

We also want to make it easier for our residents to effectively participate in our recycling services. These include our kerbside yellow lid bin and food scraps recycling services, plus our Return and Earn stations and pick-up and drop-off options for tricky-to-recycle items.

Alongside this, we'll aim to keep adapting and evolving our services to meet the changing needs of our residents and the items they use, which may eventually require disposal.

We're already set to expand our recycling services for unwearable textiles and we'll seek to reintroduce soft plastics recycling as soon as the necessary industry infrastructure is in place.

To become circular, our society needs to both keep recycling and use more recycled products – so we also want to help create a thriving market for recycled materials.

How we'll get there

Actions we'll take for our organisation:

- Measure and report on the recycled content used in major construction materials we buy.

Actions we'll take for our communities:

- Create pathways to support increased reuse, repair and refurbishment in our area, including grants and a furniture rehoming trial.
- Advocate for suppliers of co-living and on-campus accommodation to explore alternative models such as leasing for furniture and home appliances.
- Extend residential food scraps collection across our area by 2030, in line with the state government mandate.
- Expand opportunities for our residents to recycle tricky items such as unwearable textiles.
- Grow tailored programs to increase participation and reduce contamination in recycling services for apartment buildings and social housing in our area.
- Explore opportunities to expand Return and Earn collection points in our area.

Snapshots of success



Learning more about reuse and repair will help reduce waste to landfill.
Photo: Alec Smart / The Bower

Inspiring new skills and habits

The Bower is an award-winning Sydney charity that champions reuse and repair through workshops, courses, events and more.

We've proudly supported The Bower since 2014, and in 2023 and 2024, we gave a grant to help its team present Australia's first Festival of Repair.

Held in Redfern, this trailblazing 2-week festival was designed to build new skills and inspire new habits, so more items are repaired and reused rather than sent to landfill.

At hands-on workshops and demonstrations led by skilled local craftspeople, festival attendees learnt how to repair their clothes, electronics, furniture, bikes and musical instruments.

Hundreds of attendees traded preloved fashion at a clothes swap and others enjoyed a weekend market day, discovering recycled and upcycled treasures and meeting our waste avoidance educators.

Sustainable design methods were showcased at the festival too, with expert talks about tiny homes and how to use reclaimed and recycled materials in new building projects.

The festival welcomed around 1,500 people and received great community feedback.

Tricky recycling made simple

Products and packaging have become far more complex in recent decades, but the mainstream recycling industry hasn't caught up yet.

This has made for lots of tricky items our residents can't recycle in the yellow lid bin – and to stop them from going to landfill, we've had to think outside the box.

Charting new paths for tricky items

We began providing our residents with ways to recycle tricky items more than 10 years ago.

Quarterly drive-through drop-offs for electronics, yearly drop-offs for chemicals and 10 walk-up recycling stations for batteries, mobile phones and light bulbs helped our residents live more sustainably.

Then, as products and packaging kept evolving, our residents told us they'd like more ways to recycle more items – so we got to work.

New services to meet new needs

In 2020, we revamped and relaunched our quarterly drop-off event as Recycle It Saturday. We also developed a doorstep pick-up service for residents to recycle tricky items from home.

In 2022, we updated our recycling stations at 16 community locations and rounded out the year by launching a walkable weekly drop-off centre at our Bay Street depot in Ultimo.

We worked hard to ensure these expanded services could accept a wide range of items, and now our residents can recycle polystyrene, clothes, metals, x-rays, electronics, coffee pods, blister packs and more.

With great feedback and uptake, these services have already helped residents save over 345 tonnes of items from landfill.

Have old electronics, clothes, paint or polystyrene? [Try our recycling services for tricky items.](#)



Recycle It Saturday.
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan / City of Sydney



Doorstep recycling service.
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney



Ultimo recycling pop-up.
Photo: Chris Southwood / City of Sydney



Our uniform recycling program has had a great response.
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan / City of Sydney

Fashioning a sustainable future

Clothing in Australia has a huge carbon footprint, largely due to the unsustainable ways clothes are made, used and disposed of.

It will take everyone to reverse this trend, and as a local council we can both empower our residents and lead by example with sustainable choices.

Helping our residents reuse and repair

From 2021 to 2024, we held a series of clothing reuse and repair events for our residents.

Nearly 2,000 people attended our 10 clothes swaps and 34 repair and upcycling workshops, swapping over 1.5 tonnes of items and learning easy ways to extend the life of their clothes.

Encouraged by the response, we plan to continue these events and have enjoyed sharing lessons with recent community-led swaps, helping contribute to their success too.

Recycling uniforms

In 2023 and 2024, we trialled a uniform recycling program with our cleansing and parks teams.

We collected and sent the teams' old uniforms to an Australian textile recovery company, who sorted the uniforms for reuse or recycling.

Good condition, non-branded garments were donated to charity, while items in a poor state or with logos were recycled into infill fibre for pet bedding, furniture and insulation.

We collected more than 500kg of uniforms during the trial and have now made it a permanent program, with plans to deepen its impact by expanding to more teams in our organisation.



Direction 3: Foster circular design

‘The age of the circular economy is coming, and the built environment has a substantive opportunity to contribute to its development.’

Green Building Council of Australia¹⁰

Our ambition

New buildings and spaces are designed with circular principles, so they use fewer new materials, last longer and allow for easy repurposing at end-of-life.



This Zetland childcare centre repurposes old hospital buildings.
Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

Why this is important

In Australia, construction generates the same volume of emissions as the transport industry.¹¹ It also produces the most waste.¹²

But while the transport industry is accelerating towards electrification, the construction sector has been slower to adopt more sustainable practices.

Coupled with a predicted increase in demand for development, this means the impact of the construction industry is only set to grow.

We'll see this demand in our own area, where projected population growth will require an increase in housing, community facilities and open spaces to ensure the city remains a liveable and enjoyable place.

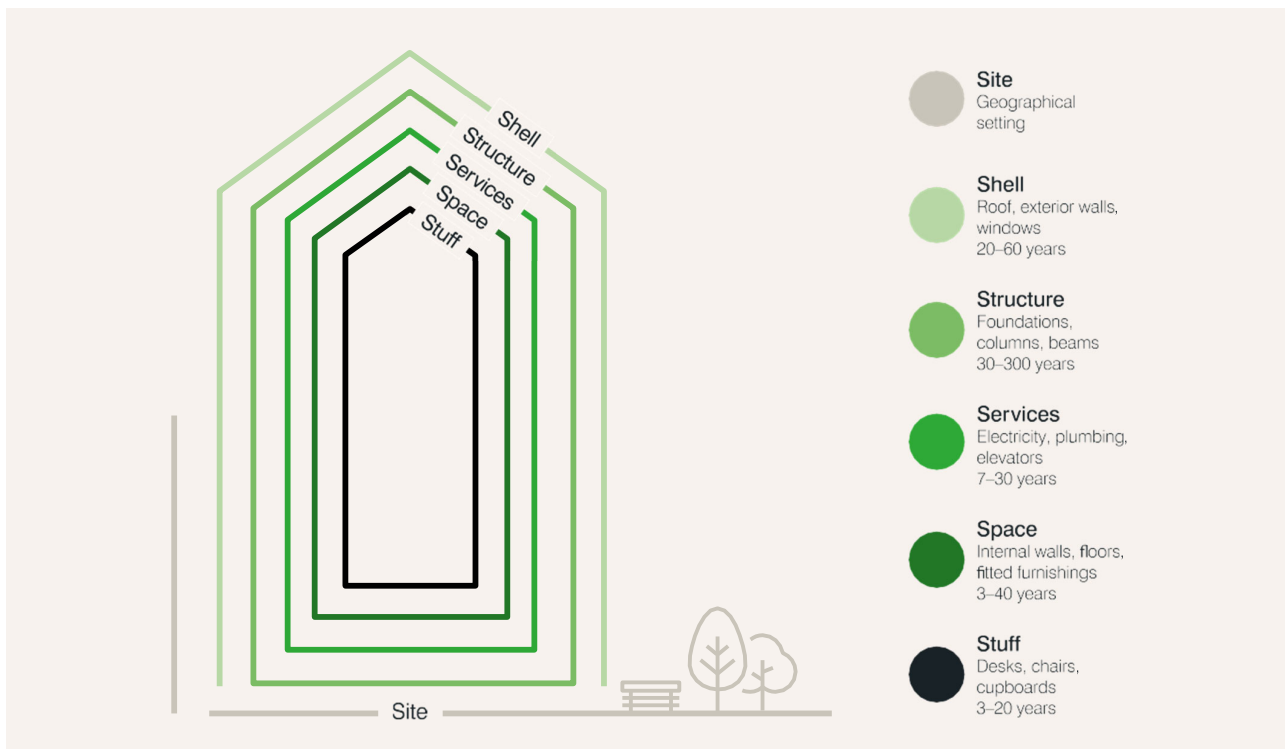
In the next 5 years alone, we'll seek to support nearly 19,000 new homes being built in our area, as tasked by the state government.¹³

With intensive new construction inevitable, a bold, broad embrace of circular design is more important than ever, so the negative effects of this construction can be minimised as much as possible.

What we're doing already

There are many ways we're fostering circular design in our area:

- Developing guidelines to ensure our community buildings are designed to avoid unnecessary waste.
- Requiring circular design considerations in our major new depot redevelopment.
- Creating circular design guidelines for architects, developers and contractors.
- Updating our local planning rules so underused city basements can be more easily repurposed for urban agriculture.
- Working with industry to champion circular office fit-outs in our area.
- Awarding grants for circular design related ideas, such as using smart design technology to reduce building material waste and creating circular fit-out guidelines for retail and hospitality venues.



We want to see more buildings designed as sets of largely independent layers based on lifespan, enabling disassembly not demolition and allowing materials to be preserved for reuse. Diagram adapted from Arup.

What we want in the future

A consistent approach to circular design at the federal, state and local levels, with all parties moving towards the same goals.

We want to champion the circular design transition in our own projects and guide the move for other developments, ensuring that as our population grows, the focus is on designing and building better, rather than on simply creating more.

This means that when we interact with those looking to build in our area, we'll encourage circular design strategies such as using repurposed, low-carbon materials or treating each building component as a separate layer to allow for flexible use and easier disassembly, preserving materials and reducing the need for demolition.

We also want to promote the importance of good design in enabling natural regeneration and sustainable food systems – essential elements for a circular economy. Our goal is to use our planning guidance and policies to create an environment where design that prioritises nature can succeed.

How we'll get there

Actions we'll take for our organisation:

- Review our design and construction activities to better incorporate circular design principles.
- Create a circular fit-out process for refurbishment of our managed properties.
- Audit materials for our major properties and assets projects to increase opportunities to retain, reuse and recycle.

Actions we'll take for our communities:

- Promote and encourage the use of circular design principles by developers, architects and construction contractors.
- Advocate for improved circular design standards in state and national built environment policies and for their use in significant planning projects in our area.
- Support the growth of urban agriculture within a sustainable food system and investigate how we might further design and plan for this in our area.

Snapshots of success



Our new guidelines will encourage circular design in our area.
Photo: Jamie Williams / City of Sydney

Stimulating circular design in local developments

Regularly interacting with those looking to design and build in our area makes us well-positioned to share knowledge and encourage circular design.

To achieve this, we're creating circular design guidelines for architects, designers, developers and building contractors.

Inspiring and useful, the guidelines will lay out the benefits of circular design, offer practical application strategies and show how it can benefit all parts of a project.

The guidelines will also introduce the build in layers concept, which enables deconstruction instead of demolition and allows materials to be preserved and reused.

Drawing on insights from design consultants, property developers and building companies, the guidelines will be tailored for local relevance and useful for new and existing developments of all types and sizes.

Circular design at work in our area

20 Martin Place

An unremarkable 1970s tower was transformed into a high-performing, 6-Green Star office building.

The building was stripped back to its steel frame, with tonnes of hazardous asbestos removed in the process.

A highly durable, environmentally responsive new façade was built on the original frame, using sustainable materials such as lower-carbon concrete. The design also incorporated flexible layouts and floorplans.

The project ultimately retained 5,500 tonnes of structural steel, achieved a 40% embodied carbon saving and set a world-class standard for energy efficiency in commercial buildings.

Camperdown Childcare

Circular design helped turn an old warehouse into a state-of-the-art childcare centre.

Reusable original elements, such as the roof trusses, were retained to minimise new construction and acknowledge site history.

New elements were designed as prefabricated modules, allowing for flexibility and reuse plus a more efficient build.

Low-impact materials helped reduce emissions, and a large roof cut-out created an outdoor play space in a great example of creative reuse.

With on-site construction and fit-out completed in just 12 weeks, an airy, adaptable centre ideal for early learning and development came to life.



Upgrades begin at 20 Martin Place. Photo: Built



20 Martin Place stripped back to its steel frame. Photo: Built



20 Martin Place transformed through circular design. Photo: Built



Direction 4: Keep our city clean

‘Our streets and public spaces
are the face we show the world.’

Sustainable Sydney 2030–2050¹⁴

Our ambition

Streets are clean and free of clutter and our environment is protected from the impacts of litter and harmful materials. We adapt our services as Sydney changes and grows.



A clean city benefits everyone.
Photo: Phoebe Pratt / City of Sydney

Why this is important

While the transition to a circular economy will greatly reduce waste, some will inevitably remain. It's crucial this waste is managed effectively as its impact can be considerable both within our area and beyond, especially in instances of improper disposal.

Litter, for example, can have a profound effect on our environment, polluting public spaces, parks and bushland, contaminating waterways and harming wildlife.

Three quarters of the marine debris in and around Sydney Harbour is made from plastic and comes from waste discarded in Greater Sydney.¹⁵ Illegal dumping and poorly stored bins can similarly affect safety, blocking roads and footpaths, creating public health risks and posing fire hazards.

Waste in the wrong place makes our area less pleasant for residents and visitors.

Creative, adaptable waste management, plus a shared sense of responsibility among residents and businesses, will counter these challenges and ensure our city remains clean, safe and welcoming for everyone.

What we're doing already

There are many ways we're keeping our city clean:

- Maintaining a 24/7 street cleansing schedule and collecting more than 14 tonnes of waste from our street litter bins and public spaces each day.
- Emptying around 107,000 residential bins each week, more than 99% on time.
- Resolving waste storage and collection issues at residential properties with a tailored building-by-building approach.
- Developing precinct-scale solutions for areas experiencing significant waste and safety issues.
- Reducing the impact of major events in our area through dedicated waste-sorting to maximise recycling rates.
- Committing funding for new vehicles and staff to manage increased leaf-drop.
- Raising awareness among residents and local businesses about issues that affect cleanliness, such as illegal dumping or litter from single-use plastic items.

How our cleansing team keeps Sydney clean

Every day:



1,000+ hours
cleaning streets and
collecting waste



1,700+
locations serviced



14+ tonnes of
waste picked up from
public bins and spaces



60+ vehicles
used for street cleaning
and collecting waste

Every year:



2+ million
attendees at 100+ events
provided with cleansing,
waste or recycling services

Cleansing team, responsible for our streets and public spaces, plays an important part in this.

What we want in the future

Buildings and spaces in our area are equipped with well-designed and integrated waste and recycling infrastructure.

We want to more rapidly respond to areas with recurring waste problems and work with local businesses to help guide the transition to more circular systems, resulting in less waste and litter in our public spaces.

Alongside this, we'll boost engagement with our residential waste and recycling services and motivate our residents to reuse or rehome unwanted items, so fewer materials are thrown out.

We also want to harness innovation and explore new systems to ensure people who visit our city can do so in a more sustainable way.

How we'll get there

Actions we'll take for our organisation:

- Investigate systems and innovations to increase recycling and recovery outcomes in our event waste services.

Actions we'll take for our communities:

- Create a dedicated program to address recurring waste issues where standard approaches do not work and bespoke solutions are required.
- Communicate our roles and responsibilities, including what waste services we provide and their service levels, as well as residents' responsibilities around their bins and waste collection.
- Check in regularly with residents and make sure waste charges are equitable.
- Update our waste management development controls and guidelines to respond to changes in technology, data, services, waste streams, and state policy and requirements.
- Talk to small businesses in our area to encourage good waste management practices and increased ~~resource recovery~~ **recycling or diversion of waste from landfill**.
- Track changes and growth in the use of our street litter bins and investigate options to reduce waste and increase ~~resource recovery~~ **recycling or diversion of waste from landfill**.

Snapshots of success



We're raising awareness about issues that affect the cleanliness of our city.
Photo: Getty Images

Combating single-use plastic

In 2022, the state government banned often-littered single-use plastic items to reduce their harm on the environment.

To amplify the bans, we spread the word among our residents and businesses, also encouraging the use of sustainable, reusable alternatives to replace the banned items.

For businesses, we promoted our toolkit on eliminating single-use items and our guidelines on reducing event waste.

For residents, we created online articles and ads about the banned items and reusable swaps, which attracted lots of attention and generated plenty of robust discussion.

Want to use fewer single-use items and reduce waste? [Here are our tips.](#)

Busting illegal dumping myths

Illegal dumping pollutes waterways, wastes valuable materials and makes our city less enjoyable to spend time in.

Yet we found 30% of Sydneysiders saw it as recycling and good for the environment, while 50% didn't know it was against the law.¹⁶

In 2022, we set out to combat these misbeliefs with billboards, ads and articles, emphasising the illegality of dumping and prompting our residents to fix, sell or donate their unwanted items instead.

This campaign reached more than 12,000 people and we repeated it to similar success several months later.

Have large, unwanted household items?
[Book a pick-up and we'll collect them.](#)



Our depot upgrade will help meet our teams' future needs.
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan / City of Sydney

Safeguarding our future needs

To continue providing core services such as cleansing and managing waste, we need resilient, futureproofed infrastructure. This is what's driving our upgrade of Bay Street depot.

Located in Ultimo, Bay Street is our oldest depot, operating for more than one century. The site has expanded as our city has grown and now it's time for a major update to support our next 100 years of operations.

As part of this transformation, the depot's heritage buildings will be retained and a new, multistorey structure will be built on the eastern side of the site.

The new design will prioritise flexibility, reflecting how our operations, technology and population may change and allowing modifications to be made with ease. Sustainability and resilience will be at the heart of the design too. The updated depot is intended to feature heat-resistant materials, maximise use of recycled water and support our continuing transition to a 100% electric fleet.

The design will also consider circular principles such as extending the life of materials.

Once complete, this redevelopment will keep our operations running smoothly for decades to come.

A photograph of a rooftop garden in Sydney. In the foreground, there are two modern metal chairs with striped cushions and a small round metal table. The garden is enclosed by a rusted metal wall and contains several young trees and various plants. In the background, the Sydney city skyline is visible, including the Sydney Tower and several high-rise buildings under a clear blue sky.

Direction 5: Build resilient waste and circular systems

‘Effective collaboration between state and local government is essential to meet shared infrastructure, recycling and circular economy aspirations.’

Greater Sydney Waste Leadership Forum¹⁷

Our ambition

Flexible, reliable solutions meet the long-term waste and resource recovery management needs of our communities. State and federal policies and regulation allow us to achieve our local ambitions for a more circular system.



Rooftop garden upgrade at The Pyrmont, part of our Smart Green Apartments program. Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

Why this is important

Collecting and managing waste and recycling is a core responsibility for councils.

Yet many councils, including ours, face significant challenges in managing this waste and transitioning to a circular economy.

With many material types to manage, we must rely on the private sector to process some or all of our waste and recycling.

In addition, the current framework for planning and regulating waste in NSW is incomplete, unable to drive the growth in ~~resource recovery~~ recycling processes, technologies and products required to support a circular economy.

Similar gaps in federal frameworks also affect other critical elements required for transitioning to a circular economy, such as product stewardship.

Alongside our own work to maintain flexible, future-ready services and assets, responding to these gaps with a robust joint approach is crucial to achieving smarter waste management and thriving, resilient circular systems.

What we're doing already

There are many ways we're helping to build resilient waste and circular systems:

- Hosting the Resilient Sydney program on behalf of all metropolitan Sydney councils and working jointly on resilience and waste challenges.
- Playing an active part in region-wide circular economy projects coordinated by the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils.
- Participating in the Greater Sydney Waste Leadership Forum with the NSW Environment Protection Authority and other Greater Sydney councils.
- Contributing to state and federal level working groups seeking to strengthen circular systems.
- Advocating for stronger support from the state and federal governments to better manage waste and achieve circular results.
- Explore opportunities to work with the NSW Government, commercial business organisations and commercial waste collection companies to better coordinate commercial waste collections in the Sydney CBD.



To be recycled, items in the yellow lid bin must pass through many processes and facilities.

What we want in the future

Flexible, reliable, well-placed services and assets that support reduced waste and emissions.

We'll continue to explore innovations to ensure our services are fit for purpose, support our growing population and align with changing regulations.

Plus, we'll continue building a fleet of waste and cleansing vehicles that can access all parts of our city, particularly as walking and cycling areas are expanded and green spaces grow.

We want to work with neighbouring councils to support innovation and call for products that have more recycled content and end-of-life recycling options.

Meanwhile, it is critical that the market, strongly supported by government, build waste processing facilities that are accessible, affordable and contribute to emissions reduction, ~~resource-recovery~~ **recycling** and the circular economy.

State and federal governments must also incentivise manufacturers and retailers to value materials and design products that support the circular economy and reduce waste to landfill.

How we'll get there

Actions we'll take for our organisation:

- Plan for future cleansing and ~~resource-recovery~~ **recycling** that respond to how our area will grow and meet the needs of our communities.

Actions we'll take for our communities:

- Plan for renewal of our long-term processing contracts and review our services to further incentivise reducing waste, increase ~~resource-recovery~~ **recycling** and manage costs with minimal effect on residents.
- Trial innovative new services and products that will contribute to achieving our waste avoidance and emissions reduction targets.
- Participate in regional, state and federal partnerships and projects that support national waste and circular economy targets.
- Advocate at the state and federal level for adequate waste infrastructure and effective product stewardship regulation.
- Explore opportunities to work with the NSW Government, commercial business organisations and commercial waste collection companies to better coordinate commercial waste collections in the Sydney CBD.

Snapshots of success



The Metropolitan Sydney Mayoral Summit on Waste.
Photo: Nick Langley / City of Sydney

Working together on waste solutions for Greater Sydney

We consistently collaborate with neighbouring councils to strengthen waste and circular systems in our region. One way we do this is through our Resilient Sydney work.

Hosted by us on behalf of all metropolitan Sydney councils, the Resilient Sydney program is about preparing our region for big challenges – and ensuring we have effective, future-ready waste systems is a crucial part of this effort.

In mid-2023, Resilient Sydney partnered with the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils to coordinate the Metropolitan Sydney Mayoral Summit on Waste.

Held at Sydney Town Hall, the summit brought together nearly 140 Greater Sydney council leaders to discuss shared waste challenges and possible solutions, as well as how the region can move towards a circular economy.

The summit also sparked the creation of the Greater Sydney Waste Leadership Forum, which we helped set up through Resilient Sydney in late 2023.

At the forum, Greater Sydney councils work closely with the NSW Environment Protection Authority on reducing waste and enhancing the circular economy in our region.

Forum priorities include driving important waste and ~~resource recovery~~ **recycling** or reuse projects, supporting region-based partnerships and actively sharing information to help meet common goals.



Our innovative trial uses fly larvae to transform food waste.
Photo: Nick Langley / City of Sydney

Our insect-powered food scraps recycling trial

In early 2025, we started using insects to transform our residents' food scraps into animal feed and fertiliser, in a NSW-first trial with Australian innovator Goterra.

Known as insect farming, this method of food recycling is relatively new to Australia. It uses black soldier fly larvae to convert leftover food into nutrient-rich organic products, which are then sold to farms and businesses.

Compared to composting and other traditional food recycling methods, insect farming has a much smaller emissions footprint and requires a lot less space, making it a promising option for our growing urban area.

The trial itself involves residents' food scraps being processed right in the heart of our city, thanks to the compact infrastructure involved.

Insect farming also offsets the demand for resource-intensive agriculture and creates more circular systems. Insect-farmed animal feed, for example, can replace the need to grow new soybean crops.

An exciting step forward, this trial is helping advance our vision for a localised, low-impact residential food scraps recycling solution.

Want to recycle your food scraps?
[Find out how you can get involved.](#)

Actions and approach

Our actions

Direction I

Champion waste avoidance and careful consumption

For our organisation:

Review the goods and services we procure to see where we can consider alternative models that avoid buying new.

Identify procurement mechanisms to support the development of circular economy systems.

Develop guidance about how to choose furniture and furnishings that incorporate circular principles for design, use and end-of-life.

Investigate opportunities to further reduce reliance on single-use items.

Identify mechanisms across procurement and design to increase circularity and minimise disposal of textiles.

For our communities:

Create targeted communications campaigns that inspire our residents to reduce their waste.

Increase opportunities for our residents to grow appropriate, nutritious food and to compost at home.

Create convenient opportunities for our residents to locally share and swap household items.

Maintain waste avoidance education and engagement activities for our residents, schools and community groups.

Support capacity-building programs focused on waste reduction and circularity for businesses in our area.

Showcase emerging circular economy innovations in our area and help businesses and organisations connect and collaborate.

Trial and test new ideas that commercialise circular economy innovations.

Waste reduction and circular materials strategy 2026–2035

Collaborate with government and industry to reduce waste and promote circular solutions through our sustainability partnerships.

Direction 2

Boost reuse, repair and recycling

For our organisation:

Measure and report on the recycled content used in major construction materials we buy.

For our communities:

Create pathways to support increased reuse, repair and refurbishment in our area, including grants and a furniture rehoming trial.

Advocate for suppliers of co-living and on-campus accommodation to explore alternative models such as leasing for furniture and home appliances.

Extend residential food scraps collection across our area by 2030, in line with the state government mandate.

Expand opportunities for our residents to recycle tricky items such as unwearable textiles.

Grow tailored programs to increase participation and reduce contamination in recycling services for apartment buildings and social housing in our area.

Explore opportunities to expand Return and Earn collection points in our area.

Direction 3

Foster circular design

For our organisation:

Review our design and construction activities to better incorporate circular design principles.

Create a circular fit-out process for refurbishment of our managed properties.

Audit materials for our major properties and assets projects to increase opportunities to retain, reuse and recycle.

For our communities:

Promote and encourage the use of circular design principles by developers, architects and construction contractors.

Advocate for improved circular design standards in state and national built environment policies and for their use in significant planning projects in our area.

Support the growth of urban agriculture within a sustainable food system and investigate how we might further design and plan for this in our area.

Direction 4

Keep our city clean

For our organisation:

Investigate systems and innovations to increase recycling and recovery outcomes in our event waste services.

For our communities:

Create a dedicated program to address recurring waste issues where standard approaches do not work and bespoke solutions are required.

Communicate our roles and responsibilities, including what waste services we provide and their service levels, as well as residents' responsibilities around their bins and waste collection.

Check in regularly with residents and make sure waste charges are equitable.

Update our waste management development controls and guidelines to respond to changes in technology, data, services, waste streams, and state policy and requirements.

Talk to small businesses in our area to encourage good waste management practices and increased ~~resource recovery~~ recycling or diversion of waste from landfill.

Track changes and growth in the use of our street litter bins and investigate options to reduce waste and increase ~~resource recovery~~ recycling or diversion of waste from landfill.

Direction 5

Build resilient waste and circular systems

For our organisation:

Plan for future cleansing and ~~resource recovery~~ recycling services that respond to how our area will grow and meet the needs of our communities.

For our communities:

Plan for renewal of our long-term processing contracts and review our services to further incentivise reducing waste, increase ~~resource recovery~~ recycling and manage costs with minimal effect on residents.

Trial innovative new services and products that will contribute to achieving our waste avoidance and emissions reduction targets.

Participate in regional, state and federal partnerships and projects that support national waste and circular economy targets.

Advocate at the state and federal level for adequate waste infrastructure and effective product stewardship regulation.

Explore opportunities to work with the NSW Government, commercial business organisations and commercial waste collection companies to better coordinate commercial waste collections in the Sydney CBD.

How we'll achieve them

The directions and actions presented in this strategy represent the result of work with our employees, communities, industry and other government agencies.

We look forward to realising the vision of the strategy in partnership with them.

Our actions will be incorporated into our relevant operational and business plans.

We'll track and regularly report on our progress through our existing yearly plans and frameworks.

It's also expected that government and industry will initiate their own actions, and we'll continue to push for and help inform new policies and projects that drive forward the circular economy.



A planting day at Sydney City Farm. Photo: Renee Nowytarger / City of Sydney

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