

Frequently Asked Questions – Kerbside Recycling

1. Why is Council introducing this service?

Whitsunday Regional Council has considered introducing kerbside several times in recent years but finally in 2017 Council has decided that the time is right to introduce the service now. Many visitors from around the world find it hard to understand why a pristine tourism destination on the doorstep of the Great Barrier Reef does not recycle.

2. What are the benefits of recycling?

Many recyclable materials are cheaper to produce than virgin materials, for example recycling aluminium uses only about 5% of the energy required to create aluminium from bauxite. Recycling requires less raw material to be mined. Recycling saves valuable materials from being wasted in landfill sites. This increases the life of the landfill site – each landfill cell costs more than \$1M to construct.

3. How will the service work?

Each eligible property will be issued with a 240 litre wheeled bin with a yellow lid to distinguish it from a normal garbage bin. The bins will be collected once per fortnight and the recyclables will be taken to a Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) for sorting and baling / bulking before being sent on to re-processors and made into new products.

4. In what part of the Region will recycling be introduced?

Kerbside recycling is being introduced across the Whitsunday Region – in the townships of Airlie Beach, Bowen, Cannonvale, Collinsville / Scottville, Proserpine and all other communities where there is currently a weekly wheelie bin collection service.

5. Will all properties receive the service?

The service is initially being rolled out to all single-occupancy properties in the Region which currently have a weekly wheelie bin collection. Multi-occupancy properties like unit complexes may not be included at the start of the rollout. Circumstances at each of these properties are different and a one-bin-per-unit approach may not be practical in many of them. Council will need to work with the property owners and residents to ensure that we find the best solution for each individual property.

6. I live in a rural property. Will I receive the new service?

If you currently have a weekly wheelie bin collection then yes you will. If you do not currently have a wheelie bin collection you will only be included in the kerbside recycling service if Council decides to include your area in its garbage collection area.

7. I live in a unit complex and our waste gets collected from a large industrial type bin. Will I receive the new service?

Many unit complexes have different collection arrangements from standard wheelie bin households. Council will work with property owners and residents to work out the best solution for each unit complex on a case-by-case basis. This may take some time to work through but Council will keep you informed. There may be a small number of properties where it is not possible to introduce this service.

8. What items can I recycle in my new bin?

Items which Council can currently recycle are paper, cardboard, newspapers, magazines, steel and aluminium cans and aerosols, glass bottles and jars, and most plastic bottles.

9. Plastic bags can be recycled. Can I put these in my recycling bin?

No! Please do not put plastic bags in your recycling bin. Yes, they can be recycled – please use supermarket recycling schemes for this. Plastic bags cause problems for the MRF operators – they can become tangled in the sorting machines and cause them to jam. Also MRF operators cannot see what is inside a plastic bag – it could be food waste or other contaminants, and so please do not place recyclables in plastic bags before placing them in the recycling bin.

10. What about other things made out of plastic. Can these be included?

Many plastic items are recyclable but only certain plastics can be collected in the kerbside recycling service. The size, shape and material of some plastic objects make them difficult to separate at the MRF and some items can cause machinery to jam. The MRF is fitted with the latest separation equipment which can separate all the common plastic bottles from each other with a very high degree of accuracy. Please only place plastic bottles in your recycling bin. Hopefully reliable recycling options for other plastics will be introduced in future.

11. Scrap metal is recycling. Can I put this in my recycling bin?

Both Ferrous metals (Iron, steel) and non-ferrous metals (like Copper, Brass, aluminium) have always been recyclable. The size of many metal objects can cause problems at the MRF and so you should use other routes to recycle these items, for example a scrap metal dealer or scrap metal recycling point at Council's waste sites.

12. I have heard about recycling for computers and TVs being introduced. Can these go in the recycling bin?

Council has special drop off points for e-waste (computers, monitors, TVs, keyboards, printers etc) at all four waste sites (Bowen, Cannonvale, Collinsville and Kelsey Creek). Please use these drop off points and please do not place them in the recycling bin.

13. What should I NOT place in my recycling bin?

Please do NOT place the following in your recycling bin: food waste, syringes, disposal nappies, animal manure, ash, plastic bags, wood, concrete, soil, clothing and fabrics, ceramics, Pyrex, pottery, mirrors, garden waste, scrap metal, e-waste (computers & TVs), electrical items and cords, batteries, large plastic items other than bottles (such as toys, shoes, suitcases, rope).

14. Should I wash tins and cans before placing them in the recycling bin?

This is not necessary for the recycling process but may help if you are concerned about odours

15. Do I need to remove lids from bottles and jars?

Yes, please remove these and place them in the recycling bin

16. When should I put my bin out for collection?

As with the current garbage collection, bins should be placed out at the kerbside by 6.00 am on collection day

17. My recycling bin has not been collected. What should I do?

Please call Council on 1300 WRC QLD (972 753) to report this. If the bin was simply missed by the contractor, our service standard is to return within 24 hours. Collection vehicles are fitted with computerised recording systems which can record problems with a bin (such as bin not out on time, overloaded, contaminated, second bin etc). If your bin was missed due to a problem like this we will contact you.

18. Where do all the recyclables go after they have been collected?

The recyclables will all be taken to a Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) in Mackay where they will be separated. Each separate commodity will then be baled or bulked up before being transported on to the final re-processors and made into new products. Recyclables from Bowen and Collinsville may be taken to a MRF in Townsville to undergo the same process.

19. Is the service compulsory?

Yes, the service will be provided to all eligible properties in the waste collection area.

20. I live in a rural area with no wheelie bin collection. Is it possible for me to receive a recycling bin without having a normal garbage bin collection?

Kerbside Recycling is only being introduced in areas where there is already a waste collection service. If garbage service is introduced in your area, recycling will be introduced following this.

21. What if my bin is contaminated with non-recyclable waste?

Mistakes happen, and sometimes residents try to recycle items which cannot be recycled, thinking they are “doing the right thing” and Council understands this. If someone deliberately repeatedly contaminates their bin however, Council’s contractor will not empty the bin since too much contamination in a load can condemn the whole load to landfill, wasting the efforts of those residents who have recycled correctly. If this happens, it will be up to the resident to dispose of the waste in the bin. If the problem persists Council would cease emptying the bin.

22. I have heard that the recyclables are being taken to Mackay. Why can’t they be recycled nearer home?

All of Whitsunday’s recycling waste is being sorted at a state-of-the-art MRF in Mackay. Recyclables from Bowen may go to a MRF in Townsville. It is simply not cost-effective for Council to operate a MRF. The latest MRFs operate expensive hi-tech equipment – there would not be enough waste in the Whitsunday Region to keep it occupied full-time. Besides, many of the materials being recycled have to travel further than Mackay before reaching their final destinations.