

19. DOMESTIC REFUSE - ILLEGAL DUMPING

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee about the experiences of other New Zealand Cities when they moved to a waster pays system for domestic refuse collection.

BACKGROUND

The Council is considering a waster pays system for the black bag collection of domestic refuse in Christchurch, as was detailed in an earlier report to the Sustainable Transport & Utilities Committee in March 2002 (Resident Pays Refuse Bags). This possibility has raised concerns by the public and by Councillors about the incidence of illegal dumping of refuse. A desktop study involving contacting relevant staff in other centres, has been carried out on this issue and this report outlines the results.

WASTER-PAYS IN NEW ZEALAND

Waster-pays for domestic refuse has been established in many major centres around New Zealand (e.g. North Shore, Waitakere, Gisborne, Wellington, Upper and Lower Hutt, and Dunedin is in the submission process). In general, the price charged is around \$1.15 for each official refuse bag or sticker. In all cases the impact this charge had on the waste stream was significant. In Waitakere, for example, domestic waste fell by nearly 30% and in Northshore around 40% of the material produced from households is recycled and 90% of households participate in kerbside recycling.

Some of the main issues surrounding waster pays are illegal dumping, the use of unofficial bags or stickers and roadside litter created by recycling and refuse collection. Each of these issues will be discussed in turn.

ILLEGAL DUMPING OF REFUSE

Perhaps surprisingly in all of the above TLAs spoken to, the level of illegal dumping has either remained at a low level or decreased with the introduction of a waster pays system. The main reasons for this were: 1) additional education efforts were required to establish a waster pays system and to promote the complementary recycling schemes. Through this education people generally become more aware of the waste they produced and took more responsibility for it; and 2) only a certain sector of the public seem willing to dump illegally. This level remains relatively constant and was unchanged by the introduction of a waster pays system. Only the introduction of punitive measures reduced illegal dumping even further. Consequently, with the introduction of a waster pays system in Christchurch the Council would need to consider:

- Mechanisms for community cooperation in the reporting of offenders.
- Increasing Council resources to follow up on reported offences.
- Strengthening bylaws to increase powers and penalties.
- Cooperation with the police, regional council and neighbouring TLAs.

USE OF INCORRECT BAGS OR STICKERS

Overall, people used the correct bag or sticker for their domestic refuse when a waster pays service was introduced. In Waitakere the first waster pays collection service had 98% of households using the correct bags. Bags or stickers are commonly made available to the public through supermarkets, corner stores and petrol stations. The availability of the bags in both large and small quantities (e.g. packs of 5 bags) was seen as key to the public acceptability and use of the bags.

All centres noted the importance of early enforcement on the use of correct bags or stickers. In most centres, bright coloured stickers were placed on the incorrect bags detailing the reason the bag was not collected and the possibility of penalties. Wellington has a clean street policy where all the nonconforming bags are collected, but a note is placed in the mailbox informing the occupant of the infringement. People in Wellington that are repeat offenders receive house calls from a waste officer to discuss the matter. Consequently, with the introduction of a waster pays system in Christchurch the Council would need to consider the method of response to residents that do not use official bags or stickers.

ROADSIDE LITTER DERIVED FROM KERBSIDE COLLECTION

Introducing a waster pays system for domestic refuse in all cases increased the amount of recyclable materials collected. Most centres around New Zealand collect recyclables in 40 litre recycling crates similar to those in Christchurch. However, with the increased volume of material being collected many centres are now re-evaluating their collection options to avoid the spillage of materials and to improve the ease of use for residents (e.g. Northshore City Council is considering moving to a wheelie bin for recyclables).

In addition, refuse and recycling collection can be a significant source of roadside litter. A recent survey by Waitakere City Council estimated that these activities contribute up to 30% of the roadside litter. Because of this, the Waitakere City Council has adopted a licensing system, whereby, commercial operators collecting material from the kerbside are required to pay \$8.00 per tonne to pay for the litter collection costs. Consequently, with the introduction of a waster pays system in Christchurch the Council would need to consider:

- Better promotion of the correct method of presenting recyclables (e.g. paper in bundles and squashed plastic bottles or cans).
- In the short-term better advertising the availability of a second free recycling bin.
- In the longer-term the need for a larger recycling container.
- The need to license waste collectors.

Recommendation: The Council has yet to decide if it will introduce the waster pays system for the black bag collection of domestic refuse. If the Council decides to introduce waster pays, issues of implementation will be investigated and discussed as required.

Chairman's Recommendation: That the information be received.