



Yarra Ranges Council

Community Textiles Project

Project Description	The Community Textiles Collection Project will see Yarra Ranges hold two trial events, to gauge interest from the community and give them the ability to dispose of textile products that are otherwise destined for landfill. The textile products that are collected will be given another lease of life by going through various sorting and recycling processes and becoming products such as pigment and building material. The purpose of this project is to provide an opportunity to trial textile collections in the Yarra Ranges Council area, to assess feasibility of ongoing collections, contributing to the shift towards a circular economy.
Project Duration	1 st January – 30 th June 2024
Council Project Contact	Lauren Poulton – Policy and Project Officer Zara Curran – Community Textile Project Officer

Project Report

Introduction

The Community Textiles Collection Project saw Yarra Ranges Council undertake two textile recycling drop off events.

These aimed to reduce textile waste being sent to landfill and provide residents with the ability to recycle otherwise hard to materials.

This report outlines the delivery of the project including key findings, challenges, and community feedback. It will also detail recommendations surrounding the feasibility of continued textile collections and other avenues to assist the transition to a circular economy. This includes the feasibility of continuing ongoing collection events, permanent collection services and increased education opportunities. Currently there is no plan for Council to continue these collection events at the conclusion of this trial.

Summary of Textile Recycling Events

Objectives

The following objectives were set for this project and how they were achieved are outlined below:

- Decrease the volume of waste going to landfill

- Increase the volume of material reused, repaired, repurposed or recycled
- Increase circular economy activity, stimulating local employment and economic growth.

Textile Recycling Drop Off Days

These events offered Yarra Ranges residents the opportunity to recycle textiles, footwear and other accessories that were no longer fit for purpose. Council engaged the services of Textile Recyclers Australia to recycle the collected materials. These materials were to be turned into resources including rewoven fabrics and mattress and carpet underlays. The events aimed to reduce the textile waste that was entering landfill through red waste bins and diverting it to be recycled.

Items that were able to be collected included clothing, linen, footwear, and some accessories.

Material	Anticipated collected weight	Actual weights collected
Textiles	12.00	7.072
Shoes	0.40	Included in textile quantities
Glasses (eyewear)	0.01	None collected

Residents were able to book via an online form to attend. The events took place on the following dates and locations:

Yarra Ranges Operations Centre, Lilydale – 27th of April 2024

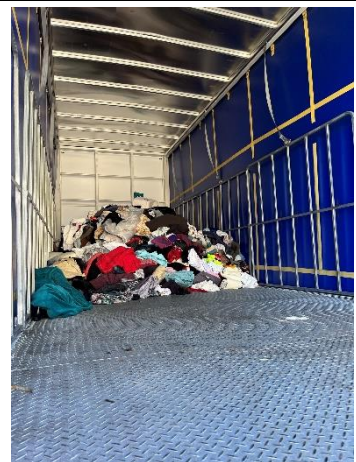
Wandin East Recreation Reserve, Wandin East – 18th of May 2024

These Drop Off days were advertised to the community through a variety of methods. This included social media, print newspapers, Yarra Ranges Council website and at community events in Belgrave and Kalorama.

The Textile Recycling Drop Off Days were organised after benchmarking with Bendigo City Council, City of Maroondah, City of Casey and Cardinia Shire Council who had all run similar textile recycling drop off events.

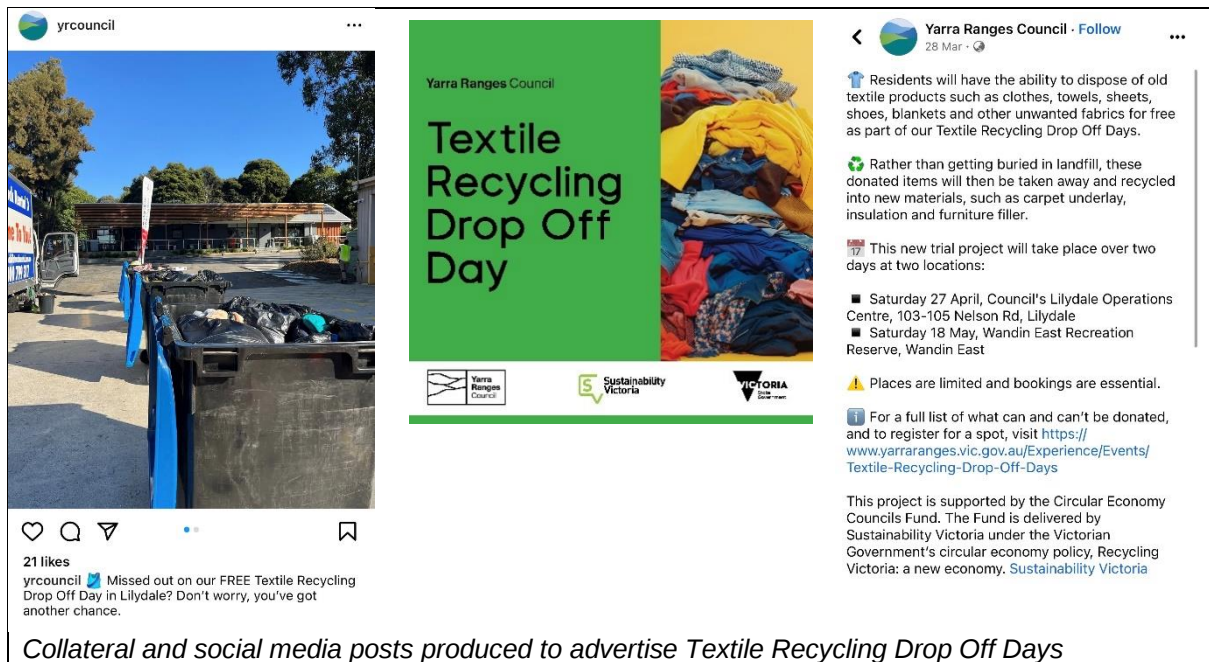


Images from Lilydale collection event



Images from Wandin East collection event





Collateral and social media posts produced to advertise Textile Recycling Drop Off Days

Challenges

Challenge	Action taken/solutions
Project timeline of 6 months and Council's internal procurement supplier process timelines resulted in tight turnarounds and limitations for advertising and holding the events	Decisions were made for locations, number of events, centralisation of events considering the short timeframe and limited staff availability to undertake the project
The difficulty in predicting the quantities being collected at events	- Establishing a 40kg limit to prevent commercial quantities being dropped off. - Utilising a booking system to be able to predict the volume that would be collected.
Determining locations that were suited to all residents and ensured safety for participants and staff.	- Offering the drop off days in two separate locations. - Reviewing the ability to have the drop off days rotate locations depending on the year. - Considered de-centralising the collections, was not feasible for this project's timeframe
Residents booking in but not showing up to the timeslot.	- A small portion of 'no-shows' was expected as with any public event. - Was supplemented by residents attending who had not made bookings.
Managing contamination of the items collected	Providing residents with a detailed list of accepted and unacceptable items

	- Having the contractor on site to determine unusual items would be accepted. - Contractor accepted more/different items compared to initial quote, no rejections occurred
Ensuring advertising was reaching all areas and members of the community	- Advertising in a variety of places including social media, print media and at community events
Limited processor or recycling operation options within Australia and end market for recycled materials	- Contractor chosen partially for their Australian component of materials processing
Increasing the involvement of community groups in the project	- Possibility to work with op shops or animal shelters to provide them textiles that are still in good condition.

Project Outcomes and Impact

Attendance and Volume Collected:

Location	Participant Bookings	Actual Participants	YRC Staff	Total volume collected	Volume per participant
Lilydale Event	223	206	6	3,566.4kg	17.3kg
Wandin East Event	220	186	4	3,505.8kg	18.6kg
Total:	443	392		7,072.2kg	

Diversion from landfill:

The trial collections saw an overall 7,072.2kg diverted from entering landfill. In 2023 the amount of waste in Yarra Ranges kerbside rubbish bins was 30,507 tonnes, a 2023 composition audit shows 3.9% of this was textiles, a potential 1,189 tonnes that could be diverted from landfill if generation of the waste is avoided or a suitable reuse/recycling alternative was available.

In diverting textile waste away from landfill this helps Yarra Ranges work towards achieving 90% reduction of waste to landfill by 2030 as per Council's *Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan*.

Providing an opportunity for disposal of hard to recycle items:

Anecdotally residents expressed that this program gave them the ability to dispose of textiles and clothing they were unsure what to do with. Residents shared that some of the items collected they had held on to for a significant amount of time due to not knowing where to dispose of the materials and wishing not to dispose of them in the kerbside rubbish bin.

Feedback

Resident Quotes:

"This was fantastic, so well organised and great opportunity to get rid of stuff that wasn't good enough for the op shop. I got rid of holey and stained clothes and sheets that had worn through."

"I applaud the Council for realising the need in reducing the amount of textiles going into landfill"

"The event was really well organised and run".

"Thanks for providing this service to keep reusable items out of landfill"

"Very well organised and easy!"

"I would like to be able to drop off textiles at transfer stations"

"I spent quite a while chatting to the staff, learning what happens to the clothing and they were lovely, knowledgeable, professional. It was VERY promising to see this service, and to be able to participate in what should be more regular/more available."

"A great initiative, but I would prefer if there was more transparency about what was going to happen to the items. There needs to be easy drop off for items that can be reused as well as the opportunity to dispose of unusable textiles."

"This was awesome, I know that donating to opp shops and other charities often just leads to most donations ending up in landfill."

"Thank you for offering this service. I have had old clothes in our wardrobe for many years that I didn't want to throw out due to my fear of it ending up in landfill! Thank you!"

Future Options and Considerations

These options consider the feasibility of the ongoing textile recycling drop-off program for Yarra Ranges Council residents and possible alternatives.

Drop off events: Community interest and feedback for the event was positive. If Council continued to run events, they can provide a quick and easy way for resident to dispose of textiles. The running of the events can largely remain the same and occur at a similar time each year – aligned with or after the hard waste collection period - to create continuity. If Council decides to run future events the location of events can rotate to ensure effective coverage of the community e.g. hills, valley and urban areas.

Ongoing permanent collection service: An alternative to drop-off events may be ongoing permanent drop-off locations to provide the opportunity for residents to dispose of unwanted textiles year around. However, challenges of providing an ongoing permanent service would include a lack of suitable council owned properties with suitable public access, difficulties in monitoring contamination and the inability to predict weights collected and therefore costs.

Increased education opportunities:

This trial program allowed for a brief education opportunity around textile recycling options within the Yarra Ranges. These predominately focussed on textiles that were at the end of the use phase and were unable to be reused or repaired. The program educated residents

on the options that existed outside of placing textiles in their rubbish bins such as the current existing locations to drop-off unwanted textiles.

The majority of participants already had a mindset of responsible disposal of their materials, an understanding of environmental sustainability and waste issues.

Other education opportunities that could be considered to *avoid* textile waste and to keep textiles within the *use* phase for longer could include:

- repair and sewing workshops,
- clothing swaps,
- clothing libraries.

These education opportunities may prevent textiles from entering landfill and encourage overall waste reduction and align with Council's waste reduction goals and Sustainability Victoria's *Strategic Plan 2024-2027* by achieving increased circularity through reuse, repair and refurbish rather than recycling and recovering materials.

Cost implications:

Overall cost per resident was \$95 (approx.) per resident that attended. This includes costs such as textile process, transport, venue hire, staffing and advertising costs that are incurred with the program. This cost however is somewhat difficult to predict for future initiatives due to the unknown volume of what will be collected at a drop off event.

The 2023 comprehensive kerbside bin composition audit showed textile waste in the kerbside rubbish bins (landfill) made up 3.04% by mass of all items in the stream.

Larger percentages of individual item types include organic compostable materials (39%), children's nappies (10.1%), plastic film (6.1%) and disposable paper products (5.9%).

As part of Council's waste management services and waste reduction initiatives, priorities and feasibility should be considered when targeting potential solutions for specific item and material types away from landfill.

End location of textiles:

There is currently a lack of clarity around the end market of products produced from recycled textiles, while materials from these two drop-off events is likely to end up in furniture filling and insulation products, these are industries that already take textile production by-products and aren't necessarily seeking new inputs, there appears to be little commercial demand for recycled textiles.

Further research into possible solutions based in Australia may need to be explored to ensure that collected items are being successfully diverted from landfill and provide further transparency for residents. Textiles collected for recycling are often sent offshore with there being limited options for processing locally. To align with the *Recycling and Waste Act 2020* preference would be for Council to ensure materials collected remain in Australia.

It would be detrimental to implement an ongoing textile collection service without confidence in an end market, for it to end in a similar way to the plastic bag (RedCycle) initiative. The Yarra Ranges community's trust in Council's waste services is taken very seriously with detailed waste collection contracts and validation processes in place to best manage the

risks of possible inappropriate waste disposal e.g. kerbside recycling bin contents are recycled, not sent to landfill.

An increase in confidence in the capabilities of the textile recycling industry would need to be demonstrated to give Yarra Ranges Council confidence for an ongoing service option.

Conclusion

This trial to collect end-of-life textile materials from community members has been viewed as a success by the community and has been undertaken in an efficient and informative manner. However, based on the concerns of confidence in the end markets along with the cost of the service calculated per person there are concerns that this is not a cost-effective model. At the conclusion of this trial Council has currently no future plans to run these textile recycling collection events.

Outcomes from the trial are being reported to Sustainability Victoria and to Council, learnings from the trial will be considered in other future waste management initiatives.

Future Actions:

Other options that will be considered by Council in future measures to reduce textile waste include:

- Education on textile waste avoidance, reduce, repair and reuse.
- Promoting community initiatives including donating to op shops, animal shelters, women's shelters,
- Continue to monitor future confidence in the capabilities of the Australian textile recycling industry.
- Support residents to utilise resources including online platforms including Buy Nothing groups, Facebook Marketplace, Depop Australia and eBay.