

Common questions and answers

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TRIAL

1) Where is the trial taking place in Burnside?

The trial area comprises the entire suburb of Erindale and parts of Kensington Gardens, Burnside, Kensington Park, Rosslyn Park and Hazelwood Park. These areas are considered to be representative of the broader Burnside community and are a mix of traditional allotments, semi detached dwellings, and units/ flats.

2) How many homes are involved?

Almost 1,800 homes will be involved in the trial, which means around 4,000 residents are participating, making it the largest food waste collection trial of its type ever undertaken in Australia.

3) Why are we doing this trial?

Approximately half of the contents of an average household rubbish bin destined for landfill are food waste or organic material. When in landfill, organic materials break down without oxygen and produce unwanted leachates that can contaminate groundwater, and create methane gas.

This trial aims to remove this material, collect and process it into nutrient rich compost that can enrich South Australian soils, reduce evaporation and conserve water. It may also help us achieve the State Government's target of 75% diversion of municipal waste from landfill by 2010.

4) What will happen if this trial is successful?

This would lead to the establishment of a commercial scale treatment facility, allowing the Burnside Bio Basket system to be expanded out to the remainder of the households in the City of Burnside, and potentially across South Australia in the future.

5) I don't have a green organics bin. What do I do?

A small number of homes in Burnside do not have a green organics bin. If this is the case, please call our hotline on 8347 5127 and a bin will be provided for the trial.

6) Will my green organic bin collection dates change during the trial?

Yes. Instead of a monthly collection, your organics bin will now be collected fortnightly. We have enclosed a calendar with your Burnside Bio Basket showing the new collection dates for your street.

7) What will happen if I put the wrong thing into the Burnside Bio Basket?

Contamination of the collected organic material will interfere with the composting process and may result in the material not being able to be used. If you are unsure about an item, please refer to the sticker on top of your bin. Continued contamination will result in the non-collection of your organics street bin.

8) Does a food organics collection program such as this operate anywhere else?

This is the first trial ever undertaken in South Australia and the largest in Australia. While this combination of compostable bag and bin is successfully used in Europe, it has not yet been implemented in Australia. While there have been other food organic collection trials undertaken in Australia, they have been much smaller and/or used different collection techniques (paper bags, different bins etc).

9) What percentage of recycling currently occurs in Burnside?

Approximately 54% of Burnside's waste is currently recycled and diverted from landfill each year.

10) I don't live in the trial area but I would like to participate. Can I have a basket and some bags?

Sorry, but the trial is only for residents within the designated trial area. We have only ordered a limited number of baskets and bags, and the trial areas are having more frequent organics pickups to cope with the expected increase in volume in their bins. We also had to specify the number of households involved in the trial to the EPA for approval, and as a result, cannot expand the trial to include other areas.

11) I live in the trial area but don't want to participate. Do I have to?

No. While we are encouraging all residents to be as environmentally friendly as possible, participation is not compulsory. If you do not want to be involved, please call out Burnside Bio Basket Hotline 8347 5127 to let us know you will not be participating and allow us to collect your basket and bags.

12) Should I be putting my green bin out for collection each fortnight even if it is not yet full?

If the bin contains any organic material it should be placed on the kerbside for collection. This is due to the fact that it will reduce the potential for odour from the residents bin and during the collection process. Also the fresher the material, the better it is for composting, as it contains more moisture.

13) Can I use the bag as a bin liner for waste instead of plastic bags?

Theoretically this type of bag could be used as a kitchen bin liner. However, the bags being used in the trial are too small to fit into a standard kitchen bin. Also, because it is a trial we only have a limited supply of the bags and we prefer the bags are only used to line the Burnside Bio Basket.

14) How much is the trial costing and who is paying for it?

The expected cost of the six-month trial is expected to be around \$170,000. Zero Waste SA is contributing approximately \$75,000, with East Waste, Burnside Council and Jeffries all making significant in-kind contributions.

15) I have already paid for an additional fortnightly collection. Do I get my money back?

Burnside residents who have paid between 30 June 2005 and 6 September for an additional collection will be eligible for a reimbursement. Simply contact the Burnside Council on 8366 4266.

16) How many truck loads/ tonnes are currently collected? How much will these increase by?

Currently we collect approximately 5 tonnes of green organics material per week from the trial area. With the increased volume from more frequent collections and added material from the Burnside Bio Basket, we expect to collect approximately 9 tonnes from the trial area per week.

17) Can the participants attend any additional information briefing sessions?

Yes. For participants in area 1, there will be two briefing sessions on Wednesday 7 September at 2.00 pm (Burnside Civic Centre) or 7.00 pm (Kensington Bowling Club). For participants in area 2, there will be two briefing sessions on Tuesday 13 September at 1.00 pm or 7.00 pm at the Burnside Civic Centre. Participants should RSVP if they want to attend any of these sessions.

18) Can non-participants attend these sessions?

No. These trials are specifically for people using the Burnside Bio Basket and to address any particular questions or concerns they may have. However, if residents are interested in finding out more about the trial, they can call the hotline on 8347 5127.

ABOUT THE BAGS AND BASKETS

1) I am new to the area and do not have a Burnside Bio Basket. Where do I get one?

During the six-month trial, we expect some people will move in and out of the area. When people move, we hope the previous residents will leave behind the Burnside Bio Basket and bags. If this is not the case, please call our hotline on 8347 5127 and if we have stocks available, we will deliver them to you.

2) What happens if I run out of Bio-film bags?

You have been supplied with a roll of 100 bags, which should be enough to last for the duration of the trial. However, if you do run low, please call our hotline on 8347 5127 and they will arrange delivery of additional bags for you. Plastic bags should never be used in your Burnside Bio Basket.

3) What are the bags made of?

The bags are constructed of biodegradable material based on cornstarch, vegetable oil and compostable polyester. When commercially composted with other organic materials, they completely break down in approximately 30 days.

4) Where are the bags and baskets made?

Both the bags and baskets used in this trial are imported from Norway, which is where this technology was invented. However, if this trial becomes a permanent measure, it is hoped they can be produced in South Australia.

5) Can the bags be used for other purposes?

Cornstarch bags are made in a variety of different sizes for different purposes. However, for the purpose of this trial they are specifically for use in the Burnside Bio Basket.

6) Why do I have to use a bag? Can I just put food waste in the green bin?

The cornstarch bag is used because it 'breathes' and keeps food scraps fresher than if they were to be placed directly into your green organics bin. Placing food scraps into the bio bag also reduces the possibility of flies and vermin.

7) Can I use the compostable bags in my home compost bin?

Theoretically yes. However, it is strongly advised that organic material be EMPTIED from the bag when placed in backyard compost. Successful decomposition of the bags relies on a number of factors such as a large volume of compost, regular aeration and heat creation, which may not be effectively achieved in a home compost system. If these conditions are not present, it will result in a much slower decomposition rate of the bags.

RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING QUESTIONS

1) What do you mean by garbage?

Our definition of garbage, is any item or material that you wish to dispose of that is non-organic or cannot go into the recycling section of your split bin. We have listed some common examples of non-collectable items in the brochure and on your Burnside Bio Basket and green organics bin stickers.

2) What can and what can't we put in the Burnside Bio Basket?

All food scraps and peels; meat scraps and bones; teabags and coffee grounds; egg shells; dairy products; hair; shredded paper and tissues; and paper towel can go into the Bio Basket.

The following items should NOT be placed in the Bio Basket – plastic bags/any plastics; cans/metal; glass/ceramics; sharps; nappies; cigarette butts or ash; large amounts of soil; animal waste/kitty litter; vacuum dust and clothes dryer fluff; textile materials or personal hygiene products.

3) What about seafood scraps and fallen fruit from my fruit trees?

All meat scraps and bones, as well as any seafood scraps can be placed into your Burnside Bio Basket. Fallen fruit from your fruit trees should be placed directly into your green organics bin.

4) How often should I empty my basket?

Your Bio Basket should be emptied every 2 to 3 days or as you feel necessary.

5) How does this composting process differ to what has been done in the past?

The composting process carried out for the trial purposes is based upon the existing Jeffries primary processing and open windrow techniques, but is kept separate from other composting activities at Jeffries. The trial material is more intensively operated, examined and managed for the trial purposes. The activities also have specific approval from the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA).

The long-term aim is to build a fully enclosed system treatment facility that will rapidly pasteurise (heat destruct), stabilise and homogenise the material. This will occur for a 7-10 day period before being placed into the open for further composting and screening.

6) Where does this material go and what does it turn into?

All food and green organics collected during the trial will be sent to Jeffries for processing into compost and mulch. The compost and mulch manufactured at Jeffries is certified to the Australian Standards AS4454 Composts, Soil Conditioners and Mulches.

The compost will then sold to the public, landscaping supply yards, landscapers and agricultural growers for soil improvement, surface mulching, increased plant performance, water retention and aesthetical improvement.

7) Can I use other compostable/biodegradable bags?

No. The biobags that have been supplied to the participating residents have specifically been chosen as they conform to the relevant compostable liner guidelines. Other bags that claim to be degradable or compostable may not be suitable or may not meet the required guidelines.

8) What happens if the green organics bin begins to smell during summer?

It is unlikely that the addition of material from the Burnside Bio Basket will cause any additional odour in the green organics bin during the summer months. Fortnightly collections will also help reduce any chance of offensive odours being emitted from your bin. However, you may like to wash your bin in between collections or as you feel necessary.

9) Will the food waste attract flies and vermin?

Because food waste does not go off quickly using this system it is very unlikely that it will attract any flies or vermin.

10) How will contamination be managed?

If contamination is evident before collection, the bin will not be collected and information will be left with the resident with details of the nature of contamination. A visual inspection will take place for subsequent loads. In the event that the green organics bin is contaminated again, a final notice will be placed, with subsequent loads being refused if they are contaminated.