

Circular Economy Organics Councils Fund

Impact Summaries

*The City of Greater Geelong work together to grow
compost use.*



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Background

Sustainability Victoria (SV) delivered funding to enhance the market for recycled organics under the Circular Economy Markets Acceleration Program. Impact Summaries outline the great work achieved by recipients of this funding. SV expects these summaries will generate discussion, stimulate ideas, inspire action, and ultimately contribute to a more profitable and sustainable organics sector.

The City of Greater Geelong own and operate a commercial scale composting facility where they compost kerbside garden organics collected in their municipality. The composting facility team wanted their product to be utilised in the Geelong municipality from whence it came, to complete the organics circular economy.

Working with the Community Experience team at the Geelong West Community Garden, the council Botanical Gardens team, and the council Capital Projects team at the iconic Rippleside Park. The SV grant provided an opportunity for a collaborative approach to projects that fostered a circular economy aligned with a net zero strategy. Importantly, it was envisaged that the success of this project would lead to the development of a council wide organics reuse strategy and an update to the Geelong City landscape guidelines, which did not include any provision for kerbside organic reuse, key activities included:

- Liaising with internal departments to breakdown preconceptions and raise awareness to encourage the uptake of council processed compost in day-to-day business activities.
- Blending raised bed mix, trialling the mix, refining and delivering to Geelong West Community Garden.
- Production and delivery of fifty tonnes of compost to the iconic Rippleside park inclusive play space development.
- Delivery of premium council processed compost to a bagging plant and distribution of the 20L bagged product to council's various Parks and Gardens teams.



Renewal of the iconic Rippleside Park with recycled organics compost.

Project drivers

Standard business practice at council made no provision for utilising compost derived from kerbside recycled organics. The intent of the project was to enable and promote recycled organics use across the council teams, demonstrating its use and fostering the development of a council wide organics reuse strategy and an update to the council landscape guidelines which did not include any guidelines for kerbside organic reuse. In summary, the project intended to:

- support the local economy
- progress the inclusion of organics as strategic objectives in council documents
- support the council Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy
- support the council Climate Change Response Plan
- support the council Environment Strategy
- grow council interest and commitment in using recycled products.

Procuring organics

The composting facility is council owned and operated so procurement was internal and straight forward. The facility created mature 8mm compost from garden organic waste (GO) collected through kerbside collections in the Geelong municipality. The compost was then delivered to council projects in bulk or bagged, dependant on the size of the project.

Outcomes

The project delivered the following outcomes:

- Improved council technical knowledge on compost and soil – over sixty council staff and contractors attended a presentation by soil scientist Declan McDonald on compost and soils.
- Improved council commitment - altered council tender documents and contractor processes to include the application of recycled organic compost.
- Circular economy growth - a significant increase in use of recycled organics across different council settings.
- Community uptake - Geelong West community garden now uses Geelong council compost, facilitated by development of a high-quality raised bed mix.
- Community engagement - Geelong Botanical Gardens now use Geelong council compost and a subsequent prolific vegetable harvest was donated to support the Geelong Food Relief Centre.
- Compost is easier to use - bagged compost provides a convenient option for council crews to transport smaller quantities whilst bag design promotes the use of compost.

Team and contractor's thoughts

The contractors and council staff were impressed with the compost and the consistent plant response whenever it was used.

"The City of Greater Geelong compost team always have product, and I am getting a clear benefit from plants that are in the compost amended soil over the last 6 months. We are planning to continue to use the 8mm and 20mm products throughout our projects moving forward".

Director of BC Gardens, Contractor for the City of Greater Geelong.

Advice to other councils

- Find a champion - for City of Greater Geelong it was a horticulturalist within the Geelong Botanical gardens team.
- Have a close working relationship with the compost provider and schedule regular site tours for the various council teams.
- If you are a council owned facility, consider branding your compost. Over time with positive engagement, branding will become valuable to build product confidence.
- Collaboration, creativity, and persistence and celebrate the small wins.

Future plans

The project has ignited a genuine desire to change the status quo when it comes to using compost in different applications from landscaping to maintenance works.

The bagged compost has opened other potential markets that we are now exploring. This has meant an increased workflow for a local Geelong bagging plant and the possibility for the creation of a number of full-time positions.

Further information

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