



northern  
beaches  
council

# MEMOS

**ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING**

**TUESDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2023**

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**Memo**

**Ordinary Council Meeting**

**Environment & Sustainability**

**28 February 2023**

**To:** Councillors  
**From:** Acting Director, Environment & Sustainability  
**Date:** 23 March 2023  
**Subject:** Memo – Item No 18.5 – Response to Notice of Motion No. 38/2022 - Soft Plastics Recycling  
**Record Number:** 2023/194193  
**Attachments:** 1 **Soft Plastics Recycling - Report to Council Meeting held 28 February 2023 - with redactions**

I refer to Council Resolution 035/23, from the Ordinary Council Meeting held 28 February 2023, which resolved, in part, that Council prepare a redacted copy of the Soft Plastics Recycling report that removes the commercially sensitive information for the public to view.

Please find attached the redacted Council Report.



**Andrew Ward-Harvey**  
**Acting Director, Environment & Sustainability**

<b>ITEM 18.5</b>	<b>RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF MOTION NO 38/2022 - SOFT PLASTICS RECYCLING</b>
<b>REPORTING MANAGER</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE MANAGER WASTE MANAGEMENT &amp; CLEANSING</b>
<b>TRIM FILE REF</b>	<b>2022/610199</b>
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	<b>NIL</b>

**Confidential Item**

*That, in accordance with the requirements of Section 10A(2) of the Local Government Act 1993 and Council's Code of Meeting Practice this matter, Response to Notice of Motion No 38/2022 - Soft Plastics Recycling, is recommended to be considered in closed session on the basis that it involves the receipt and discussion of:*

- (c) *information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business*

*This report discusses/provides advice concerning options for soft plastics recycling. On balance, the public interest in preserving the confidentiality of the information about the matter outweighs the public interest in maintaining openness and transparency in Council decision-making because the disclosure of this information would confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.*

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**SUMMARY**

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**PURPOSE**

To report on recommended options available to Council to facilitate soft plastics recycling on the Northern Beaches.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council staff have conducted an extensive investigation of collection, recycling and markets for post-consumer soft plastics in the 2 two years to see if there is a viable 'whole of supply chain' recycling solution in the market. The recent collapse of the REDcycle collection program has highlighted the significant challenges facing the viability of recycling and markets for recovered soft plastics in Australia.

There are a number of soft plastics collection schemes in place or under development, and some pilot recycling technologies. However, there are currently no viable large scale recycling solutions available in Australia to process the large volumes of soft plastic waste generated (industry estimates about 400,000 tonnes of soft plastic are consumed per year in Australia), and limited demand for recovered materials containing recycled soft plastic. On current available evidence, there is no guarantee that there will ever be sufficient capacity or demand to process such large volumes of soft plastic in Australia.

This is for a variety of reasons, including the difficulty and cost in recycling post-consumer soft plastics and the limited range of quality products that can currently be created from recycled soft plastics. In addition, these products are often not cost-competitive with products made from virgin plastics or other plastics which are easier to recycle.

In a recent survey conducted by Northern Beaches Council in December 2022, just after the collapse of REDcycle, 58% of residents surveyed stated that they are concerned that items are not being recycled, and that this is an obstacle to them recycling.

It is crucial that if Council is to offer a soft plastic collection option for the community, it manages expectations and does not undermine confidence in recycling. Council needs oversight to ensure



## CONFIDENTIAL REPORT TO ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

ITEM NO. 18.5 - 28 FEBRUARY 2023

the materials collected are genuinely being recycled and turned into products which will be used back in the productive economy.

As a result, Council proposes a 2-stage approach to facilitate soft plastic recycling for the LGA:

1. **Stage 1: March-June 2023:** A small scale trial where Council arranges for a number of drop off days for post-consumer soft plastics at designated locations in the LGA for keen recyclers. Council would arrange processing [REDACTED], with sufficient oversight to ensure materials are recycled. Council could undertake to buy back a proportion of recycled products created from Northern Beaches soft plastics.  
[REDACTED]
2. **Stage 2: Post July 2023:** Council officers will review the market situation for soft plastics and the success of Stage 1, including if REDcycle or a similar collection program has recommenced with viable and sustainable end markets. Should Council officers identify that there are viable end markets for materials collected, Council will consider seeking further external funding for a longer term and broader scale collection model.

Council staff also propose to continue to promote measures within the community and advocate to the State and Commonwealth Governments to minimize the use of unnecessary single use soft plastic packaging.

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**RECOMMENDATION OF ACTING DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

That Council:

1. Enter into negotiations [REDACTED] to establish a small scale soft plastic collection and reprocessing trial for Northern Beaches residents, including buy back of suitable recycled soft plastic products by Council.
2. Subject to reaching acceptable commercial terms with a recycler referred to at 1 above and the recycler demonstrating transparent markets for the recycled products, execute an agreement as soon as possible for the small scale soft plastic trial referred to at 1 to continue to 30 June 2023.
3. Continue to monitor the market for recovered soft plastics to assess whether there are future viable opportunities for Council to scale up collections and recycling and seek external funding should viable opportunities arise.
4. Provide a briefing to Council by August 2023 on the results of the soft plastics trial and future soft plastic recycling opportunities.
5. Write to the NSW Minister for Environment and Heritage and Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water requesting action on phasing out the use of unnecessary single use soft plastics to the fullest extent possible.
6. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.















