

14 August 2020

Hutt City Council
Private Bag 31-912
Lower Hutt 5040

Re: Te para me te hangarua | Rubbish and recycling

Tēnā koe,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on this consultation document.

Regional Public Health (RPH) is the public health unit for the greater Wellington region (Wairarapa, Hutt Valley and Capital & Coast District Health Boards). Our purpose is to improve and protect the health of the population in the greater Wellington region with a focus on achieving equity.

We work with our community to make it a healthier and safer place to live. We promote good health, prevent disease, and improve the quality of life for our population.

The reason for this submission is to ensure that public health and equity are considered when assessing the proposed rubbish and recycling options. The Ministry of Health requires us to reduce potential health risks and promote good health by various means, which includes making submissions on matters of importance to the communities we serve.

We are happy to provide further advice or clarification on any of the points raised in our written submission. We request to be heard in support of our written submission. The contact point for this submission is:

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Ngā mihi

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OVERVIEW

Regional Public Health (RPH) **welcomes the review Hutt City Council (HCC) is taking of its rubbish and recycling services and is supportive of HCC's commitment to sustainability and to equity when considering the options identified.**

RPH's submission to HCC provides information on the public health implications of *Te para me te hangarua – Rubbish and recycling* as the proposed changes have a direct impact on lower-income whānau living in the Hutt Valley.

With our partners Sustainability Trust, Tu Kotahi Māori Asthma Trust and He Kainga Oranga; RPH delivers Well Homes, one of the nine Healthy Housing Initiatives under the Ministry of Health's Rheumatic Fever Prevention programme.

Well Homes aims to reduce crowding and to assist whānau in making their homes safe, healthy and dry. Child wellbeing is our top priority and Well Homes works closely with whānau who are on low incomes or are engaged with Oranga Tamariki, those who have children with respiratory conditions or who have been previously hospitalised, and with mothers who are pregnant or who have newborn babies. The Well Homes team carries out assessments with the family in their home and identifies needs which may include structural damage or safety, insulation, heating and curtains. They also provide education around ventilation and how to reduce, treat and prevent mould.

All comments and recommendations in this submission come directly from the Well Homes team members who regularly visit vulnerable whānau in their homes in Lower Hutt, particularly the suburbs of Taita, Pomare and Wainuiomata and hear and see first-hand the challenges they are facing with waste management in their homes. RPH's submission focuses on the areas listed below with regards to their impact on waste management and the options being proposed. The Well Homes team members also carried out a survey to capture whānau voices who have likely been missed through the HCC consultation process. To date, the team have 34 surveys – a summary of this feedback has been included into this submission.

1. Overcrowding
2. Sanitation
3. Equity and Sustainability
4. Green waste
5. Community Voice

OVERCROWDING

For low-income families with six or more people living at the same residence the current council rubbish bags are not affordable. These households may require three to five rubbish bags per week just to address their weekly rubbish, not including any additional unexpected waste that might be needed to be disposed of. This is the equivalent of \$8-\$13 per week, at the cheapest price for

rubbish bags. However, it is more likely these bags would be purchased from the local dairy and cost nearer to \$3.50 per bag.

Living in an overcrowded house is a reality for many whānau in the Lower Hutt.

HCC's own report on Homelessness in Lower Hutt (2018) identified overcrowding as one of the many housing issues facing whānau in the Hutt. The 2018 census data shows that 2,310 households are overcrowded in Lower Hutt¹.

For larger whānau and for those living in overcrowded situations the best option proposed would be: **Option 3: Households receive a 120-litre wheelie bin collected weekly with the option of choosing the larger bin.** This would mean be at a cost of \$2.7/week, this cost would be covered by Kainga Ora for those in social housing and by the rate payer for those living in private rentals. It is important to note that whatever choice is made, the property owner will often pass the cost onto the tenant.

SANITATION

Councils are required by the law to manage and minimise waste in their area.

For larger whānau and those living in overcrowded housing, keeping on top of waste can be constant challenge. As mentioned earlier the cost of council bag can be prohibitive when faced with using three to six bags a week. This can become a burden for whānau over time with waste building up until it is unsustainable and unhygienic. When desperate to resolve the issue whānau may use one of the following strategies:

- Request MSD through MSD.
- Dumping it in other bins which leads to rubbish overflowing into public spaces (i.e. larger rubbish bins that service flats or apartment blocks).
- Illegal dumping at sites such as by the Hutt River.
- Burning it, either in their home fires or in the backyard.
- Moving out and leaving it for the landlord to address and ultimately losing their bond or being charged at excessive rates.

All of these solutions lead to increased cost to the whānau and increased health risks to themselves and the wider community.

Waste build up overtime can be a health risk, attracting rats and cockroaches, and potentially causing injury, especially to children. When it is dumped illegally or burned then there is increased contamination of waterways and public spaces as well as air pollution. Therefore, it is in the interest

¹ Household crowding (2018). Data from New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 2006, 2013 and 2018. Stats NZ. Accessed 2 August 2020 from: [https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/almost-1-in-9-people-live-in-a-crowded-house#:~:text=Almost%201%20in%209%20people%20\(10.8%20percent\)%20in%20New%20Zealand,Census%2C%20Stats%20NZ%20said%20today.](https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/almost-1-in-9-people-live-in-a-crowded-house#:~:text=Almost%201%20in%209%20people%20(10.8%20percent)%20in%20New%20Zealand,Census%2C%20Stats%20NZ%20said%20today.)

of the Council to consider how it can best support low-income whānau to manage waste in ways that are affordable and easy-to-follow.

For larger whānau and for those living in overcrowded situations and/or on low-incomes the best option proposed would be: ***Option 3: Households receive a 120-litre wheelie bin collected weekly with the option of choosing the larger bin.*** Weekly bin collection ensures that waste is regularly removed from the site. The provision of bins to each household and paid for through rates ensures that whānau have a means by which to manage their waste on a weekly basis with a bin already provided and the cost already covered. This would support week-to-week waste management.

RPH recommends HCC explore how it can better support low-income families with waste management and minimisation. Possible solutions could include:

- Providing biannual inorganic rubbish collection.
- Subsidising green waste collection for low-income households.
- Delivering waste management education in community (i.e. separating recycling, home composting etc.).
- Providing setup kits for onsite composting.

EQUITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

RPH applauds and supports HCC's commitment to equity and sustainability. However, sustainability and care for the environment should not further burden vulnerable families. Primarily using economic drivers to minimise waste disposal runs the risk of increased illegal dumping and other negative approaches outlined above, such as, overflowing bins, waste build up around homes and burning. All of these approaches run counter the intention of the council to be more sustainable.

In addition, having a safe, affordable and appropriate rubbish collection is likely to facilitate and improve tenants' relationships with their landlords. Our Well Homes team have experienced, in their work with communities, the difficulties that some whanau have in managing rubbish and the ways this can strain relationships with landlords and place tenancies at risk. Good waste management practices, including education to support these, may assist whānau in maintaining tenure in appropriate rental accommodation.

That is why RPH supports ***Option 3: Households receive a 120-litre wheelie bin collected weekly with the option of choosing the larger bin.*** This option shares the cost of waste disposal across all whānau in the Hutt making it accessible and affordability for our most vulnerable. It is also an affordable way through which to reduce negative and illegal waste management approaches which benefits the environment and the community.

RPH recommends that HCC explores ways through which to support these communities minimise their waste that are not simply economic-levers, including the methods outlined above under 'sanitation' as well as support for things like community gardens and composting.

GREEN WASTE

Currently, many whānau use regular waste disposal methods (i.e. wheelie bins or council rubbish bags) as a means to dispose of green waste. Reasons for this could include easy access, lack of knowledge, and lack of funds or transport to take it to the dump. Those in private rentals are often required to remove green waste like grass clippings off-site – this can be difficult and expensive to do regularly. Disposing green waste into general waste that gets taken to landfill is inefficient, problematic and contributes to unnecessary waste build up in landfills rather than being composted. The Ministry for the Environment’s 2009 report “Household sector waste to landfill in New Zealand”² shows that 50% of kerbside refuse collection is compostable (10% green waste, 40% kitchen waste). As such, RPH is disappointed to see that composting or kitchen waste disposal options have not been included in this proposal.

RPH recommends that HCC:

- **Support and encourage whānau to access the green waste bin add-on option** as a means by which to reduce weekly waste disposal and increase composting of waste that does not need to go to landfill.
- **Explore having a subsidised or support option for low-income families** to access this service freely or at reduced cost.

COMMUNITY VOICE

RPH is concerned that whānau most effected by the changes to the waste management and collection process in Lower Hutt have not been heard. The HCC process for collecting community feedback does not seek out and prioritise these voices.

In response to this concern, RPH’s Well Homes team members carried out a rapid survey of people working in kōhanga reo centres in Lower Hutt and Lower Hutt community members with a focus on Taita, Pomare, Naenae, and Wainuiomata. See the Appendix A for an overview of the surveys collected.

Of the 34 surveys completed, 85% of respondents were female, ages ranged from 20 to 61 with a media age of 41. 59% of respondents lived in Naenae, Taita, Pomare and Wainuiomata, with household sizes ranging from 2 to 9 with median family size of 5. Currently, 65% of whanau surveyed used private bins rather than council bags with a several using work or parents as a means through which to dispose their rubbish.

The key challenges facing whānau:

- size of the bins were insufficient for their household waste
- the cost of bins and bags were prohibitive for some whānau
- the frequency and timing of rubbish collection, weekly collection was preferred

² Household sector waste to landfill in New Zealand. 2009. Ministry for the Environment. Accessed 6 August 2020 from <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/Waste/Household%20Waste%20Data%20report%202009.pdf>

- whānau struggled to understand and follow the recycling guidelines and would appreciate education and support around recycling to reduce the amount of waste going into their general waste bins.

For all comments given see Appendix A.

Overwhelmingly (91%) preferred Option 3: *Households receive a 120-litre wheelie bin collected weekly with the option of choosing the larger bin.*

FINAL COMMENTS

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this consultation. RPH would welcome the opportunity to talk directly to Councillors about concerns outlined in this submission.

APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY VOICE SURVEY

Table A: Response Data Summary

<i>Gender</i>		<i>Age</i>		<i>Suburb</i>		<i>Household no.</i>		<i>Rubbish disposal</i>		<i>Preferred option</i>	
Female	29	Median age	41	Naenae	5	1	0	Council bags	9	Option 1	0
Male	5			Taita	5	2	8	Private bin	2	Option 2	1
				Wainuiomata	6	3	3	Other	3	Option 3	31
				Stokes Valley	3	4	4			Option 4	2
				Mangaraki	1	5	7				
				Petone	2	6	6				
				Lower Hutt	3	7	2				
				Woburn	1	8	2				
				Pomare	4	9	2				
				Avalon	1						
				Moera	1						
				Waiwhetu	2						

Table B: Key challenges facing whānau with waste management

- Cost of bin -- not currently included in rates payment
- Trying to reduce our use of plastic etc. but packaging is excessive
- Rubbish truck comes too early, don't want to put it out the night before because of dogs
- Still needing to buy plastic bags
- In biodegradable bags
- Not picking at the right time
- Knowing what will be accepted for recycling
- Education to the community about recycling
- Prefer for council to provide a weekly (1st) (2nd), fortnightly rubbish collection
- I'm ok I just work with what is
- Recycling
- Al's Litter Bin, recycling bins
- Nowhere to store the rubbish before putting it into the bin
- Fortnightly, preferably weekly. The recycling bins too small
- Expense each week and not enough room in the bin for the weekly rubbish
- Bin is not accommodating, have to refill bin when emptied. Private cost is increasing annually. Won't be able to afford as I'm on the benefit. Lost my job through covid
- It stinks because my granddad waits until he gets his benefit and buys the bags. Waits until it gets collected
- The size of the bins are too small. We usually full the local bins up in a day or two
- Having enough room to hold rubbish in bin until pick up day
- I have 3 children and can't afford the rubbish bin
- Paying for the bin each week and not enough room in the bin for all the rubbish

- No throwing out too much rubbish
- Price of bags, amount collected weekly. Rodents, smell, ants
- Amount collected, price bags, rodents, ants, dogs, smell, not being collected often enough
- We need a bigger one
- Bin not big enough
- Recycling -- we are still learning. No more space in the bin
- Too much rubbish, not enough space in the bin (weekly is better than fortnightly)
- The bin is too small for our household rubbish, we are good @ recycling but will be doing this better. Also my husband puts the garden clippings in it. So option 3 is best for my family. Good to have the option to get the garden one. Cheaper
- Persuading my kids to recycle to them everything is rubbish