**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Proposal for a Material Recovery Facility at Summerhill Waste Management Centre**

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1. **What is being proposed at Summerhill Waste Management Centre?**

The City of Newcastle (CN) is proposing to expand its operations at the Summerhill Waste Management Centre to include a Material Recovery Facility, generally referred to as a "MRF".

The purpose of a MRF is to sort co-mingled recyclables into separate materials streams such as paper, cardboard, glass, plastics, steel and aluminium. The segregated recyclable streams are baled (except glass which is stored in large bins) and can then be sold to various recyclers for use in the manufacture of new products.

The MRF will receive recyclables from CN household recycling bins, recyclables from other Councils and some recyclables from the commercial sector such as shops and restaurants. The sorted recyclables will be free of contaminants and of high quality so recycling markets can be easily found. The MRF will be able to process up to 85,000 tonnes of recyclables per annum.

1. **What is Summerhill Waste Management Centre?**

The Summerhill Waste Management Centre consists of a landfill and resource recovery facility owned by CN. The Centre is licensed by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and is permitted to receive up to 362,000 tonnes per annum of waste for landfilling. About 23,000 tonnes of organics and 20,000 tonnes of recyclables are also received every year, but these materials are currently transported to other facilities for processing.

CN is in the process of constructing a fully enclosed Organics Processing Facility at the Summerhill Waste Management Centre. The Organics Processing Facility together with the proposed MRF will create a resource recovery hub for the Hunter Region.

1. **What is included in the design of the proposed Materials Recovery Facility?**

The facility design contains the following elements:

* A new building equipped with state-of-the-art sorting equipment to allow the highly automated segregation of co-mingled recyclables into individual material streams.
* Sorting equipment include conveyers, screens, optical sorting units (for plastics and glass), eddy current separators to sort metals from aluminium and glass breakers.
* Storage bays for baled recyclables awaiting transport to recyclers
* A new weighbridge to weigh incoming and outgoing trucks
* Staff facilities, office and an education centre
1. **Why is the proposed Materials Recovery Facility needed?**

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Until 2020, recyclables from most Hunter Councils including CN's were processed at a MRF located at Gateshead. This MRF, which was owned by a contractor, closed unexpectedly in 2020. Since the closure of the only MRF in the Hunter Region, recyclables collected from our households have been transported to a processing facility on the Central Coast which is very expensive. A MRF located at the Summerhill Waste Management Centre has the following benefits:

* It will allow processing of recyclables in Newcastle and eliminate long distance transport to other processing facilities.
* Processing recyclables locally is more cost efficient than long distance haulage.
* It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by avoiding long distance haulage.
* As the MRF will be owned by CN, the risk of unexpected closure is removed and the recycling services can be guaranteed into the future.
* It will allow greater control of the quality of the sorting process and the destination of the recyclables.
* It will create up to 28 new jobs.
* It will complement the Organics Processing Facility in the creation of a Resource Recovery Hub at SWMC that will incentivise the establishment of secondary businesses and create additional jobs.
* Recyclables from other Councils and the commercial sector can be accepted reducing the processing cost for Newcastle households through economies of scale.
* Our community has told us that they support building a local MRF
1. **What happens inside a Material Recovery Facility?**

Recycling trucks empty the household recycling bins and then deliver the content to the MRF at the Summerhill Waste Management Centre. The co-mingled recyclables are unloaded inside the enclosed facility onto conveyors. The first step is removing non-recyclable materials (contamination) which must be done by hand.

Conveyors move the co-mingled recyclables through a disk screen where paper and cardboard are separated and glass is removed from the conveyor. Eddy currents split ferrous metals and aluminium. Plastics are sorted using optical separators.

The separated and clean paper, cardboard, aluminium, steel and plastics are baled so they can be efficiently stored. Glass is stored in large bins.

The baled materials or glass bins are temporarily stored on site. When markets are available, they are then loaded onto trucks for transport to recycling facilities where they are used to manufacture new materials.

The sorting process inside a MRF is highly automated.

1. **How is this project approved?**

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We intend to submit a development application (DA) supported by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for planning approval later in 2022. Once the DA is submitted, there will be a public exhibition of the EIS to allow the community to have its say on the proposed design and operations. The proposal will be subject to approval by the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Planning Panel.

If the application is successful, construction will begin during 2023, with an expected completion date later in 2024.

1. **How will the Material Recovery Facility minimise environmental impact?**

The proposed MRF will form a critical part of CN’s plan to create a Resource Recovery hub which focuses on diverting waste from landfill and contributing to a circular economy. This MRF will increase the capacity for recycling in Newcastle and the broader Hunter region. The MRF will be able to process and recover up to 2 million tonnes of recyclables over 25 years which can be used to make new products.

The MRF will be powered from the solar farm located at the Summerhill Waste Management Centre and solar panels on the roof of the MRF. In addition, the MRF will further reduce greenhouse gas emissions by avoiding lengthy haulage of recyclables to a MRF on the Central Coast.

1. **Will** **there be odour generated from the Material Recovery Facility?**

The recyclables to be sorted and processed in the MRF are general household recyclables which have a low potential for odour. The entire sorting process is conducted indoors and all sorted recyclables are stored inside to avoid any odour being released.

1. **Will there be noise generated from the Material Recovery Facility?**

The MRF will be designed to minimise noise impacts during operation, taking into consideration equipment and plant, vehicle movements and access. The entire sorting process is conducted indoors to minimise noise impacts. In addition, the MRF will be build in a natural gully at the site that will help attenuate noise.

1. **Will there be impacts while the Material Recovery Facility is being built?**

Construction can have impacts such as noise, vibrations and dust. However, all construction activities will be restricted to between 7.00 am and 6.00 pm on weekdays and 8.00 am to 1.00 pm on Saturdays.

1. **Will there be impact on vegetation?**

Building the MRF will require some clearing. However, CN will need to comply with the Biodiversity Conservation Act which requires all biodiversity impacts must be offset. Accredited biodiversity assessors will assess the impacts and advise CN on how they can be offset. CN is currently investigating the possibility of creating a Biodiversity Stewardship Site at the Summerhill Waste Management for the purpose of offsetting biodiversity impacts.

1. **Will I be able to see the Material Recovery Facility from a distance?**

The MRF will be of similar height to other buildings at the Summerhill Waste Management Centre and given it will be located in a gully it is unlikely to be visible from nearby residences.

1. **Will the design include sustainable features ?**

The design will include sustainable features such as capturing and reusing roof water, installing solar panels on the roof of the MRF and recycled materials will be used where possible. The design will also be aesthetically pleasing, attractive and interesting. This will be achieved through the selection of construction materials, use of colour, shape or patterns and/or the inclusion of plants.

1. **Can I drop of large recyclables directly at the Material Recovery Facility?**

Yes. Larger recyclables such as cardboard can be dropped off at Summerhill Waste Management Centre now.

1. **Can the Material Recovery Facility accept additional materials**

The main purpose of the MRF is to sort household recyclables. However, it can also accept soft plastics under the Curby Program. The MRF will not be able to process other materials such as clothes, leather or carpet. However, should markets for those materials develop, Council will assess whether a collection program can be implemented.

1. **What is the cost of the facility?**

The business case completed for the project shows that there is strong financial benefit to CN and its community.

1. **Who will own the Material Recovery Facility and how many jobs will be created?**

The MRF will be owned by CN, however it may be operated by a contractor. It is expected that up to twenty-eight fulltime jobs will be created when the MRF is operational at its capacity.

1. **Will my rates increase to pay for the construction of the Material Recovery Facility?**

There is currently no proposal to increase rates.

1. **When will building work take place?**

Construction is expected to commence later in 2023

1. **How long will it take to build the Material Recovery Facility?**

Construction is expected to take up to 16 months. It is anticipated that the MRF can be commissioned late in 2024 and will be fully operational by early 2025.

1. **Will there be** **more trucks on the roads?**

While the MRF will have capacity to process recyclables from other Councils and also from the commercial sector, it is anticipated that for the first few years only recyclables from CN households will sorted in the MRF. During this time, truck activity along Minmi Road is expected to remain largely the same or even reduce as the daily haulage of recyclables to the Central Coast will no longer be required.

1. **How will this positively impact the community?**

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Recycling is a key component of waste reduction and leads to many benefits. Recycling reduces the impact that manufactured items have on the environment by diverting materials away from landfill and reducing litter.

The MRF will process all household recyclables including glass, plastics, aluminium, paper, cardboard and steel generated by homes, workplaces, development sites and public spaces. These materials can then be used as a resource to manufacture new products, avoiding the need to mine resources. This helps to improve air and water quality, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and reduces energy consumption.

City of Newcastle is committed to meeting future infrastructure and service needs in line with the NSW Government’s Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041.