



PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

28 August 2025

Reducing organic household waste sent to landfill

Report 1: 2025–26

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The Honourable P Weir MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

28 August 2025

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*.



Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General



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Acknowledgement

The Queensland Audit Office acknowledges the Traditional and Cultural Custodians of the lands, waters, and seas across Queensland. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

We respect First Nations people’s choices to describe their cultural identity using other terms, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particular peoples, or by using traditional place names.

Report summary

This report examines how effective the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's and 3 selected South East Queensland councils' strategies have been in reducing the amount of household organic waste sent to landfill.



What is important to know about this audit?

- Household organic waste sent to landfill can release methane, a harmful greenhouse gas.
- Reducing the amount sent to landfill requires effective strategies and a coordinated approach from state and local governments, industry, and the community.
- The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the department) is responsible for designing and overseeing Queensland's waste reduction strategies. The Queensland Government has set targets for reducing the amount of organic waste sent to landfill.

Figure A
Food and garden organic waste



The department reports that food and garden organic waste makes up about **50%** of what households throw away in their rubbish bins each week.

Source: The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.



What did we find?

The organics strategy has effective elements, but issues with data and measuring performance limit its effectiveness

- The *Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032* (organics strategy) aligns to the state's overarching *Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy* (waste strategy) introduced in 2019. It sets a clear vision for managing organic waste in Queensland, has clearly defined objectives, and is based on better practice waste management principles. The department designed the organics strategy after extensive consultation with key stakeholders.
- While the organics strategy has effective elements, there are some design issues that limit its effectiveness. The department set organic waste objectives and targets it cannot measure and therefore, it cannot determine if it is achieving those objectives. The department does not collect reliable data to identify the amount of organic waste households are sending to landfill. The department relies on measuring progress against broader household waste targets from the waste strategy, for which it does have data, but it is difficult to attribute reductions to organic waste actions.
- Additionally, the supporting action plan, *Queensland Organics Action Plan 2022–2032* (action plan), does not clearly attribute state government departments' responsibilities for actions or specify targets for all performance measures.
- We audited 3 large South East Queensland councils. All 3 have developed waste management plans that align to the organics strategy.

Queensland is not on track to achieve interim household waste targets

- Queensland is now a third of the way through its 10-year organics strategy and is not on track to achieve the interim household waste targets.
- The department has reported that the amount of household waste diverted from landfill has increased from 27 per cent in 2022–23 to 28 per cent in 2023–24. It remains well below the interim target, which aims to divert 55 per cent of household waste from landfill by 2025.

The department and the 3 councils have taken action to reduce the amount of organic waste sent to landfill

- Between 2021–22 and 2023–24, councils collectively increased the number of green lid bins for household garden organic waste across the state by 55 per cent.
- Queensland has rolled out approximately half a million green lid bins for households across the state.
- All 3 councils we audited were solely using their green lid bins to collect garden organic waste and not for food organic waste. They are recycling the garden organic waste and creating products, like mulch, and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill. They are also trialling and implementing alternative solutions to kerbside collection, like food waste education and home composting.
- The department and councils have delivered educational and other behavioural change programs but have only evaluated some programs to identify whether they have been effective in reducing food organic waste.

Barriers have delayed progress in implementing the organics strategy

- Changes in the requirements for composting have created uncertainty for industry. These changes included limits on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in compost and new odour regulations for new or expanding facilities producing compost. This is likely to have slowed investment in infrastructure, such as composting facilities.
- The department identified regulatory barriers as a risk to achieving the objectives of the organics strategy at the time of its design. However, it did not adequately assess, mitigate, or manage changes to the risk.
- The department has recently adjusted its approach to managing PFAS in compost following a review of its PFAS limits. It will no longer impose limits on PFAS when issuing new approval conditions for composters or enforce limits on existing approvals. Instead, the department will work collaboratively with the compost industry to develop guidance and undertake further monitoring to manage PFAS risks. The department will need to closely monitor PFAS risks and ensure it balances any health and environmental risks against the need to promote industry growth.

The department and the 3 councils are regularly tracking their progress but there are weaknesses in reporting

- The department tracks implementation progress of the action plan and provides quarterly summaries to its executive leadership team. Its existing reporting does not accurately reflect progress against the objectives of the organics strategy or key risks.
- In December 2024, the department reported that 24 out of 29 actions were progressing as planned. This overstates progress. We found that 9 actions reported as being on track were either behind schedule or at risk because they were related to other actions that were delayed.
- All 3 councils are monitoring and reviewing their plans and organic waste programs. This includes monitoring contamination rates in household green lid bins to measure the amount of non-organic waste. The 3 councils use this information to identify households that require further education.



What do entities need to do?

We have made 5 recommendations to the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation that focus on:

- assessing whether the objectives, goals, and targets in the organics strategy remain achievable
- providing clarity about how it intends to manage the risk of PFAS in compost
- strengthening its risk management practices
- improving access to funding for organic waste initiatives and infrastructure
- enhancing how it monitors, evaluates, and reports performance against the organics strategy.

1. Audit conclusions

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's (the department's) and councils' strategies to reduce the amount of organic household waste sent to landfill have not been effective to date. The department does not have data that captures the amount of organic waste sent to landfill and relies on household waste data and other information. With Queensland households diverting only 28 per cent of their waste from landfill in 2023–24, the department will not achieve its target of diverting 55 per cent of household waste by 2025.

The *Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032* (organics strategy) has effective elements, including clearly defined objectives and alignment with other state and national waste plans, but design issues limit its overall effectiveness. The organics strategy has objectives that the department currently cannot measure progress against. As such, the department cannot determine the effect the organics strategy is having on reducing organic waste sent to landfill.

The department and the 3 councils have acted to reduce the amount of organic waste sent to landfill. This includes increasing the number of households across Queensland that have a green waste bin for garden organic waste and delivering education programs. The department does not yet know what impact these actions have had on achieving the objectives of the organics strategy. Inadequate risk management practices, data collection limitations, and changes to composting requirements have hindered progress.

Queensland is a third of the way through its 10-year organics strategy and now is an opportune time for the department to assess progress and decide if it should adjust its approach. It needs to communicate any change in approach clearly to ensure industry and local government are aligned on the key priorities for the future. The department's existing governance committees are well placed to keep key stakeholders, such as councils and peak bodies, informed of progress against the organics strategy and seek their input.



2. Recommendations

Reviewing Queensland's organics strategy and action plan	Entity responses
<p>We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, in collaboration with councils and industry:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. assesses whether the objectives, goals, and targets in the <i>Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032</i> are achievable, and uses this information to inform its approach going forward. This should include assessing the value and priority of actions based on progress to date, known risks, and relevant performance information. 	Agree
Regulating the compost industry	
<p>We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. provides clarity about how it intends to manage the risk of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in compost. This should include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly communicating with councils, industry, and relevant stakeholders the department's approach going forward to manage PFAS risk in compost • continuing to monitor PFAS risks in organic waste. 	Agree
Strengthening risk management practices	
<p>We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. strengthens its risk management practices. This should include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regularly identifying risks to achieving the objectives of the <i>Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032</i>, assessing their likelihood and impact, and clearly stating the department's risk appetite • implementing effective mitigation controls and continuing to assess the effectiveness of controls where risks do materialise. 	Agree
Improving access to funding	
<p>We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, in collaboration with key stakeholders:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. improves access to funding for infrastructure and organic waste initiatives. This should include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing existing grant funding guidelines and processes to identify opportunities to give greater flexibility and improve timely access • finalising planning activities and decisions to support the expansion of organic waste processing activities in line with key priorities. 	Agree

Monitoring, evaluating, and reporting performance	
<p>We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, in collaboration with councils:</p> <p>5. improves how it monitors, evaluates, and reports performance against the <i>Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032</i> and the <i>Queensland Organics Action Plan 2022–2032</i>. This should include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> collecting reliable organic waste data that will enable it to measure progress against the objectives assessing whether existing targets are appropriate monitoring performance against the objectives, performance measures, and targets regularly assessing the effectiveness of actions and using this information to inform its approach regularly reporting performance information to key decision makers, including the status of actions, key issues, and performance against the strategy’s objectives and targets. 	<p>Agree</p>

Reference to comments

In accordance with s. 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, we provided a copy of this report to relevant entities. In reaching our conclusions, we considered their views and represented them to the extent we deemed relevant and warranted. Any formal responses from the entities are at [Appendix A](#).



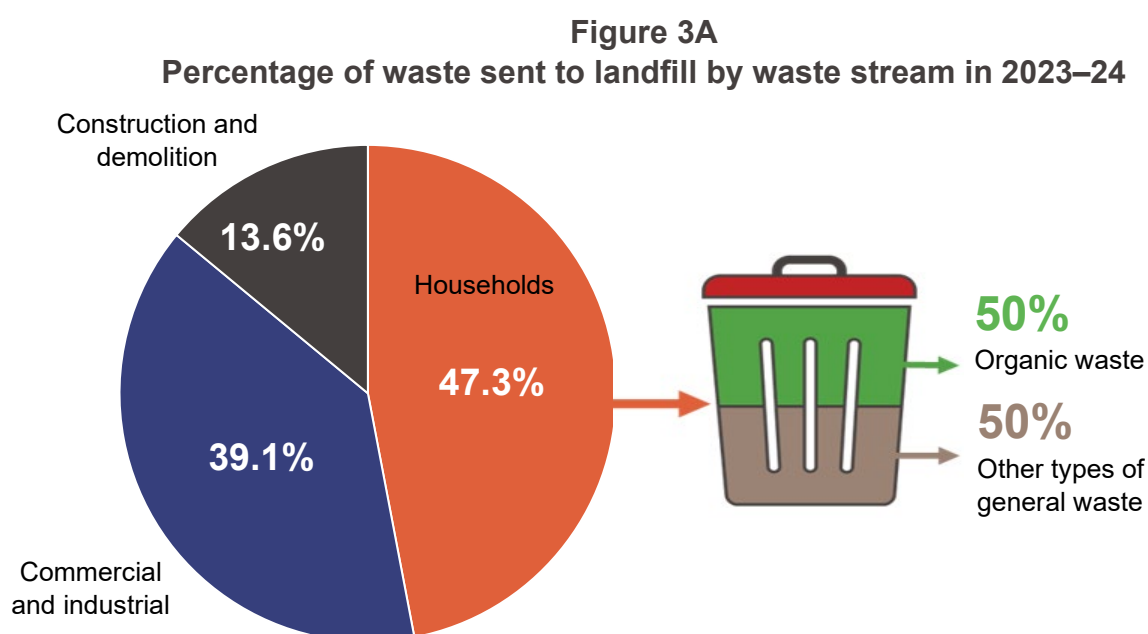
3. Organic waste in Queensland

What is organic waste?

Households contribute nearly half of the waste generated and sent to landfill in Queensland each year.

Organic waste refers to waste that comes from living organisms, such as plants or animals. There are many types, including food, garden, agricultural, and timber waste.

Figure 3A shows that organic waste makes up approximately half of the waste Queenslanders throw away in their bins each week.



Source: Queensland Audit Office, using data from the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

The impacts of organic waste

Organic waste can have environmental and human health impacts, including:

- producing odours and pollutants
- contaminating waterways
- contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

Reducing the amount of organic waste sent to landfill can minimise the impact on public health, preserve ecosystems, and promote a more sustainable economy.

There are other benefits of reducing the amount of organic waste sent to landfill, including creating valuable products, like compost, and jobs in the organics recycling industry.

What is Queensland doing to reduce the amount of organic waste sent to landfill?

Queensland's strategy for managing waste

The Queensland Government's current vision is to transition to a zero-waste society, as outlined in the state's *Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy* (waste strategy). It aims to avoid, reuse, and recycle as much waste as possible. The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the department) has consulted on a new draft Queensland Waste Strategy 2025–2030 and plans to publish the new strategy later this year.

The Queensland Government has committed \$2.1 billion between 2021 and 2031 to better manage waste and deliver the waste strategy's vision and targets.

Improving how Queensland manages organic waste is a priority for the Queensland Government.

Queensland's organics strategy and objectives

The *Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032* (organics strategy) forms part of the state's waste strategy. It sets the framework for managing organic waste in Queensland.

The department has developed a supporting action plan for the organics strategy. The *Queensland Organics Action Plan 2022–2032* (action plan) sets out the key actions for state government, councils, and industry to deliver on the objectives in the organics strategy.

The organics strategy and action plan are not prescriptive and give councils flexibility to identify and implement solutions tailored to their local area. This includes collection services for food and garden organic waste. This is different from the approach taken by New South Wales and Victoria, as summarised in Appendix C.

The *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011*

The *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011* (the Act) outlines the principles for managing waste in Queensland. It promotes a circular economy principle, where materials are continuously reused and recycled. This seeks to minimise the amount of waste created and reduce its impact on the environment and human health.

The Act promotes that state and local governments, businesses, industry, and the community share responsibility for managing waste. It also imposes a levy on waste sent to landfill.

Queensland's waste disposal levy

In July 2019, Queensland introduced a waste levy to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. The levy applies to 39 of the 77 councils in Queensland. It does not apply to councils in western remote Queensland or in First Nations local government areas, which have fewer residents and produce less waste.

Unlike other states and territories, the Queensland Government currently offsets the cost of the waste levy to households by providing annual payments to councils. These payments offset councils' waste levy liability for household waste disposed to landfill. Since 2023–24, annual payments have been decreasing and are expected to continue decreasing over the coming years, which will shift cost to those producing waste.

Roles and responsibilities

A range of stakeholders share responsibility for reducing organic household waste in South East Queensland.



Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

The department has primary responsibility for waste policy and strategy, legislation and regulation, and statewide performance monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The department has lead responsibility for implementing the organics strategy and action plan. The department is also responsible for the licensing and compliance of organics processing activities.

Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning is responsible for providing project support and funding to facilitate private sector investment in waste facilities. It aims to create viable infrastructure for the use of organic waste.

Councils

Councils are responsible for developing and implementing local waste management plans and providing waste services to local communities. This includes funding, managing, and contracting for programs, services, and infrastructure to avoid, reduce, and recycle organic waste in their areas.

Waste and recycling industry

Industry stakeholders are responsible for providing services to home owners, businesses, and local governments. They include private landfill operators, organics processors, and waste bin collection contractors.

Households

Since households are responsible for generating household waste, they play a vital role in sorting it properly and adopting sustainable practices to reduce the amount sent to landfill.

Other stakeholders

Businesses, government entities, and other industries can implement waste reduction and recycling programs and reduce their environmental impact. Other stakeholders, such as peak bodies and council advocacy bodies, work with government on key priorities, such as policy, to improve outcomes.

What did we audit?

This audit assessed how effective the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's and selected South East Queensland councils' strategies are in reducing organic household waste sent to landfill.

We audited:

- the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation
- Brisbane City Council
- Council of the City of Gold Coast
- Sunshine Coast Council.

We focused on councils in South East Queensland because they account for 70 per cent of household waste sent to landfill in Queensland. These councils have already trialled or implemented organic waste programs and services.

We engaged the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning as a stakeholder, given its role in providing project support and funding to facilitate private sector investment in waste facilities – but did not include it as an auditee given its limited role.

4. Progress in reducing organic household waste sent to landfill

In this chapter, we report on the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation’s (the department’s) and 3 selected South East Queensland councils’ progress in implementing organic household waste strategies and their effectiveness.

Is the organics strategy well designed?

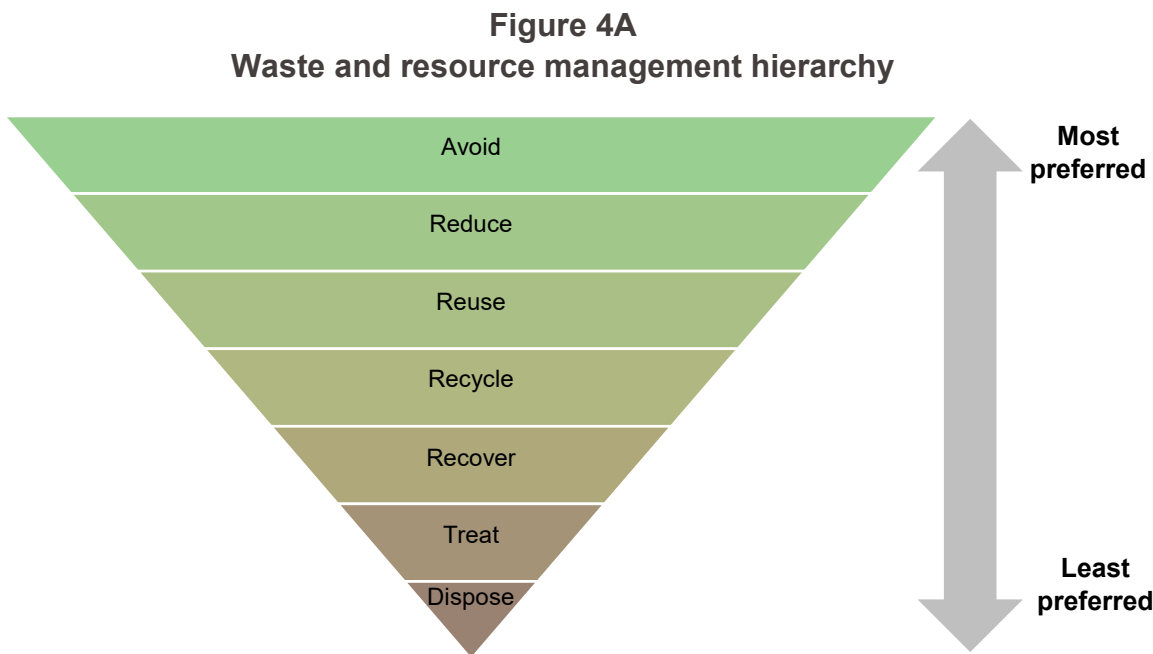
The organics strategy has strong elements, but some design issues limit its effectiveness

The 10-year *Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032* (organics strategy) has clearly defined objectives. These objectives reflect the Queensland Government’s broader priorities for reducing the amount of waste that households send to landfill.

The department undertook extensive consultation when designing the organics strategy. It consulted a broad range of stakeholders, including councils, industry, and peak bodies. We spoke with a range of stakeholders who said the department had consulted effectively during the design. This approach enabled it to better understand opportunities and challenges across sectors, and tailor solutions.

The organics strategy incorporates better practice waste principles

The organics strategy incorporates better practice waste principles, including the waste and resource management hierarchy. Other jurisdictions apply the hierarchy as a better practice approach for managing waste. The preferred approach in the hierarchy is to avoid generating the waste in the first instance, followed by options to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste as shown in Figure 4A.



Source: Compiled by the Queensland Audit Office from the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011.

Design issues in the organics strategy and action plan

While the organics strategy and the *Queensland Organics Action Plan 2022–2032* (action plan) have effective elements, there are design issues that limit their effectiveness. The organics strategy includes objectives that the department cannot measure progress against. As such, the department cannot determine if the organics strategy is working or whether it needs to adjust its approach. The department needs to address this gap if it is to accurately evaluate the organics strategy in late 2025.

There is also opportunity to improve the action plan supporting the organics strategy. The existing action plan does not clearly define which state government departments are responsible for specific actions. While we did not find evidence that indicated this has impeded progress, it has the potential to result in duplication and delays. In addition to this, the department only specified time frames for the performance measures of some actions, and not all.

Local and regional plans align with the organics strategy

All 3 councils we audited have developed waste management plans. Their plans, which are required under the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011*, also include the principles of the waste and resource management hierarchy. They align with the *South East Queensland Waste Management Plan* (regional plan) and the organics strategy. The regional plan aims to improve waste management across South East Queensland and ensure councils are working together in a coordinated approach.

Is the organics strategy working?

The organics strategy sets 3 objectives that the state is aiming to achieve by 2030:

1. halving the amount of food waste generated
2. diverting from landfill 80 per cent of the organic material generated
3. achieving a minimum organics recycling rate of 70 per cent.

The department captures some waste data but lacks the reliable data it requires to assess against the 3 objectives. It does not capture the total amount of organic waste generated and sent to landfill across Queensland. The department relies on general household waste data, information, and targets to assess progress against the organics strategy. The household waste targets are from the state's overarching *Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy* (waste strategy). Household waste data and targets may offer some insight into how the state is tracking against the objectives of the organics strategy. Research has indicated that organic waste makes up around half of what Australian households throw away each week.

Queensland is not on track to achieve interim household waste targets

Queensland is now a third of the way through its 10-year organics strategy and is not on track to achieve the interim targets for reducing, diverting, and recycling household waste.

Figure 4B shows progress against the household waste targets.

Figure 4B
Progress against household waste targets

Targets	2017–18 baseline data	2023–24 performance results	2025 interim targets	2030 long-term targets	Progress as reported by the department
Reduction in household waste generation per capita	540kg	7%	10%	15%	Unlikely to reach interim target
Landfill diversion rate for household waste	32.4%	28%	55%	70%	Unlikely to reach interim target
Recycling rate for household waste	31.1%	28%	50%	60%	Unlikely to reach interim target

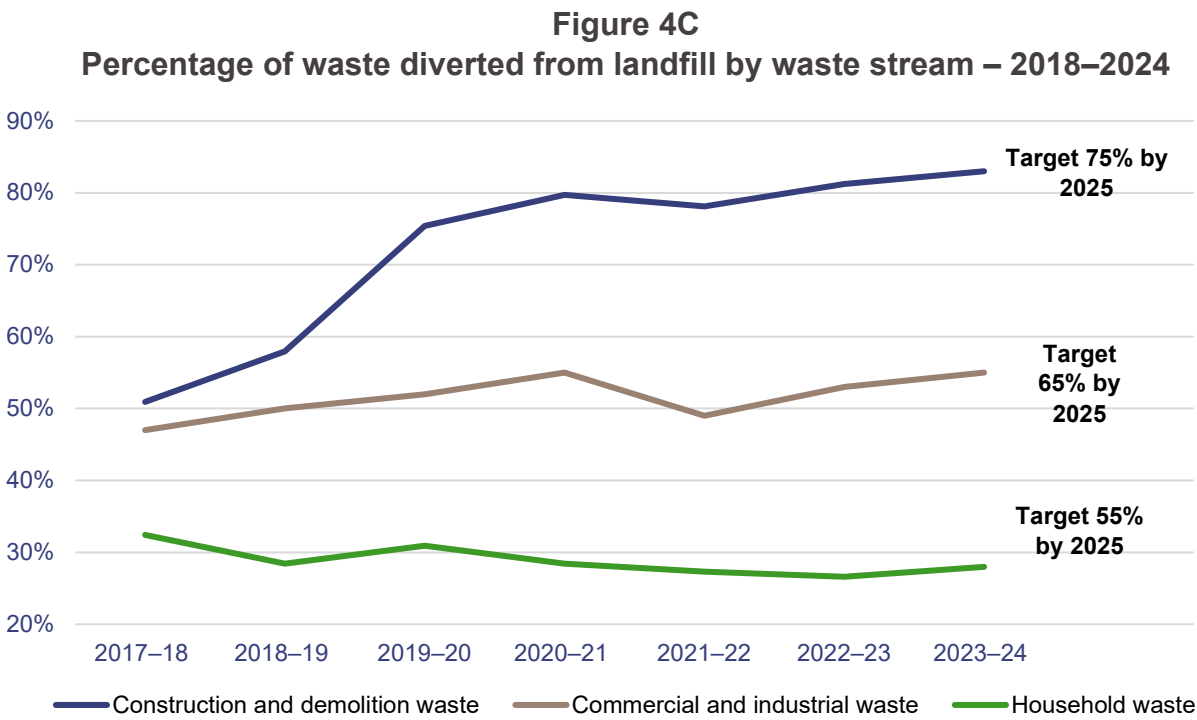
Source: Queensland Audit Office, using data published by the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation in its annual reports.

Diverting household waste from landfill

The department reports that the amount of household waste diverted from landfill has increased from 27 per cent in 2022–23 to 28 per cent in 2023–24. It remains well below the interim target, which aims to divert 55 per cent of household waste from landfill by 2025.

The department reports that other waste streams, including commercial and industrial, have increased the amount of waste diverted from landfill. The construction and demolition waste stream has achieved its interim target, and the commercial and industrial stream is progressing towards its interim target but is uncertain if it will achieve it.

Figure 4C shows the percentage of waste that Queensland diverted from landfill between 2018 and 2024 by waste stream.



Source: Queensland Audit Office, using data published by the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation in its annual reports.



Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, in collaboration with councils and industry, assesses whether the objectives, goals, and targets in the *Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032* are achievable, and uses this information to inform its approach going forward. This should include assessing the value and priority of actions based on progress to date, known risks, and relevant performance information.

Several challenges have delayed progress

A variety of challenges have affected the progress of the organics strategy, including changes in composting regulatory requirements, local councils' access to grant funding, and a lack of infrastructure.

Changes to the regulatory requirements for compost

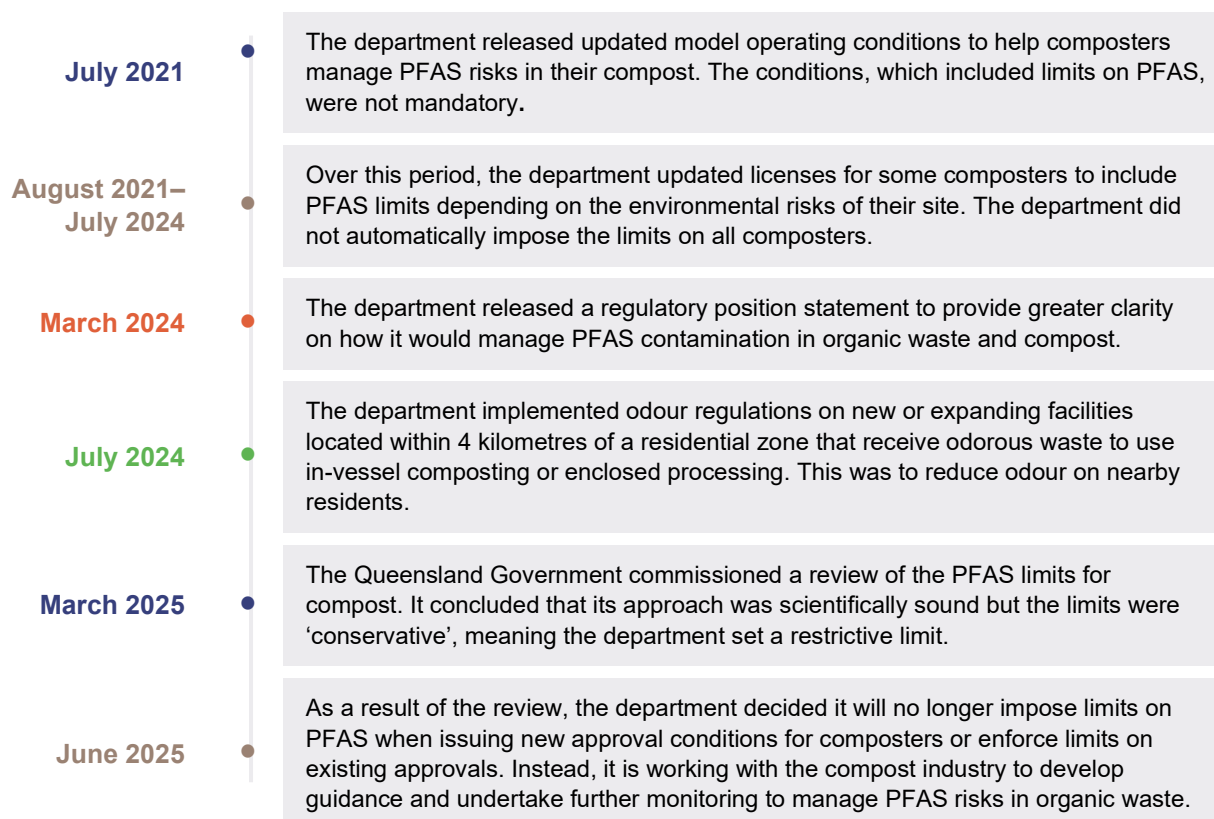
Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are synthetic substances that are often called 'forever chemicals', as they can take years to break down in the environment. PFAS can contaminate various types of waste, including organic waste used to produce compost.

To manage the human health and environmental risks associated with PFAS, the department developed PFAS limits for compost.

The department also introduced new regulatory requirements to manage odour from compost activities.

It did this at the same time it was designing and starting to implement the organics strategy and action plan. These changes are summarised in Figure 4D.

Figure 4D
Timeline of key decisions



Notes: Enclosed processing occurs in a large building or section of a building, and in-vessel composting involves processing organic waste in a closed container.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using information provided by the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

The department updated the licenses for 24 out of 97 composters between August 2021–July 2024 to reflect these regulatory changes. The changes created uncertainty across industry. Many of the stakeholders we spoke to acknowledged the need to manage PFAS risk in compost but shared a consistent view that the limits were too restrictive.

Balancing the health and environmental risks of PFAS in compost with the broader risks of failing to reduce organic waste in landfill is a challenge. The department identified policy and regulatory frameworks as a risk to achieving the objectives of the organics strategy at the time of its design. But it did not adequately assess, mitigate, or manage the risk. The department is considering how it can address the sources of PFAS in waste, like food packaging, to manage this risk going forward.

In addition to the changes in PFAS limits, the department made regulation changes for compost facilities to reduce the impacts of odour on nearby residents in July 2024. These changes provided the department with the power to impose a requirement on new or expanding composting facilities located within 4 kilometres of a residential zone that receives odorous waste to use in-vessel composting or enclosed processing. These changes are likely to have increased processing costs for councils and required more expensive infrastructure.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation provides clarity about how it intends to manage the risk of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in compost. This should include:

- clearly communicating with councils, industry, and relevant stakeholders the department's approach going forward to manage PFAS risk in compost
- continue monitoring PFAS risks in organic waste.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation strengthens its risk management practices. This should include:

- regularly identifying risks to achieving the objectives of the *Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032*, assessing their likelihood and impact, and clearly stating the department's risk appetite
- implementing effective mitigation controls and continuing to assess the effectiveness of controls where risks do materialise.

Limitations for councils accessing grant funding

In August 2023, the Queensland Government committed \$151 million to help eligible councils implement services to collect and transport household organic waste. Since August 2023, the department has granted funding to 6 councils. At the time of our audit, the department had allocated 27 per cent (\$41 million) of the \$151 million, despite being halfway through the funding application period.

Councils have experienced challenges and delays accessing grant funding. One council waited approximately 22 months and another council waited 16 months to receive grant funding after they first submitted their applications. The department reported that in some cases these delays were the result of it seeking additional evidence. Councils advised us that they would benefit from a more simplified and timely grant funding application process and more standardised contracts.

Councils can only use the grant funding to implement organic waste collection services and other related activities, like behaviour change initiatives. This restricts them to funding waste collection services and inhibits them from using it for smaller initiatives, such as encouraging home composting.

They can choose to collect garden organic waste initially and transition to food organic waste later, or they can do both. To date, councils in Queensland have chosen to roll out green lid bin services for garden organic waste only. Some have been reluctant to use their green lid bins to collect food organic waste due to various factors, including costs, lack of community support, and uncertainty stemming from changes to composting regulations.

Lack of infrastructure

The organics strategy highlights the importance of infrastructure to divert more organic waste from landfill. Infrastructure is necessary to process organic waste and convert it into valuable products, like compost. The changes to control odour led to industry reluctance to invest in new compost processing facilities, primarily due to the increased cost to build compliant facilities. This has also affected the users of recycled organic products.

In December 2022, the department funded the Council of Mayors South East Queensland to develop a roadmap and implementation plan to help identify infrastructure needs and inform funding decisions for South East Queensland. The roadmap was finalised in 2024. However, detailed project planning now needs to be finalised to inform any associated funding decisions. This includes \$54 million allocated to organics processing infrastructure, through the South East Queensland City Deal.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, in collaboration with key stakeholders, improves access to funding for infrastructure and organic waste initiatives. This should include:

- reviewing existing grant funding guidelines and processes to identify opportunities to give greater flexibility and improve timely access
- finalising planning activities and decisions to support the expansion of organic waste processing activities in line with key priorities.

What actions are the department and councils taking?

The department and the 3 councils have implemented a range of programs and services to reduce the amount of household organic waste sent to landfill. The following section highlights some of the initiatives they have taken.

Increasing green lid bin services for residents

The department reports that the number of green lid bins for households has increased across Queensland. Most residents across the state have a red lid bin for general waste and a yellow lid bin for recycled waste. Councils providing a green lid bin service collect household garden organic waste and can recycle this through mulching or composting. This reduces the amount of garden organic waste that residents send to landfill through their red lid bins.

Queensland has rolled out approximately half a million green lid bins for households across the state.

As shown in Figure 4E, the number of green lid bins across Queensland has increased by 55 per cent from 2021–22 to 2023–24. In 2023–24, approximately 20 per cent of households in Queensland had a green lid bin.

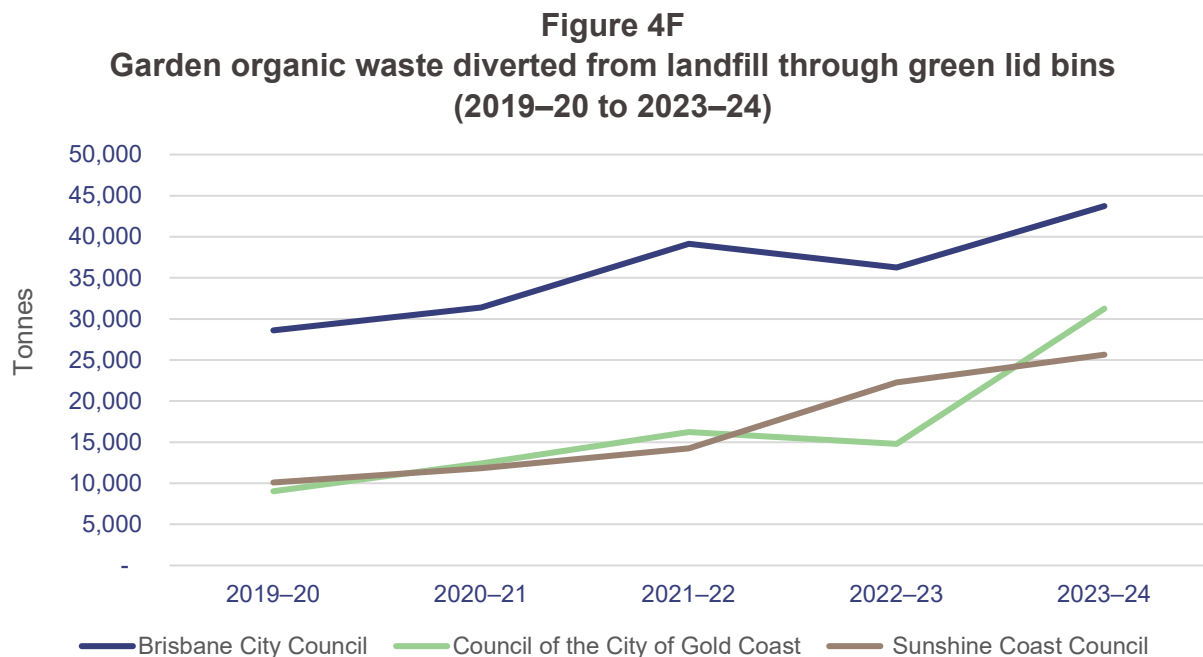
All 3 councils we audited are providing green lid bin services to households. Residents pay for the service through their rates. The Sunshine Coast Council made it mandatory for households to use a green lid bin in July 2022, and the Council of the City of Gold Coast made it mandatory in July 2023. Brisbane City Council changed its green lid bin service from opt-in to opt-out from 1 July 2025, with the ability for free-standing households to opt-out. The 3 councils have increased their green lid bins by 73 per cent, from 211,180 in 2021–22 to 366,198 in 2023–24.

Figure 4E
Number of green lid bins



Source: Queensland Audit Office, using data provided by the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

Figure 4F shows the amount of garden organic waste the 3 councils diverted from landfill through green lid bin services between 2019–20 and 2023–24.



Source: Queensland Audit Office, using data provided by the Brisbane City Council, Council of the City of Gold Coast, and Sunshine Coast Council.

Planning for the rollout of a green lid bin service

Councils considering rolling out a green lid bin service need to understand whether it is viable for their local government area. This includes understanding the ongoing costs of providing the service, such as:

- labour, fuel, and vehicle costs to collect and transport garden organic waste
- costs to process garden organic and/or food organic waste
- programs and materials to educate residents about what they can put in their green lid bins. The success of green lid bins is contingent upon residents getting this right.

They also need to consider the impact on rate payers and factor in potential cost increases, like rising landfill costs, after the go-live date. Deciding whether they will make the service mandatory or optional for residents will be necessary as it will impact on the costs of providing the service. It will also dictate the extent of the education they need to provide to residents.

Initiatives to reduce food organic waste

The Sunshine Coast Council plans to use its green lid bin service to also collect food organics. It is seeking tenders to build a new facility to process food organic waste. The changes to the regulations for compost have delayed its progress.

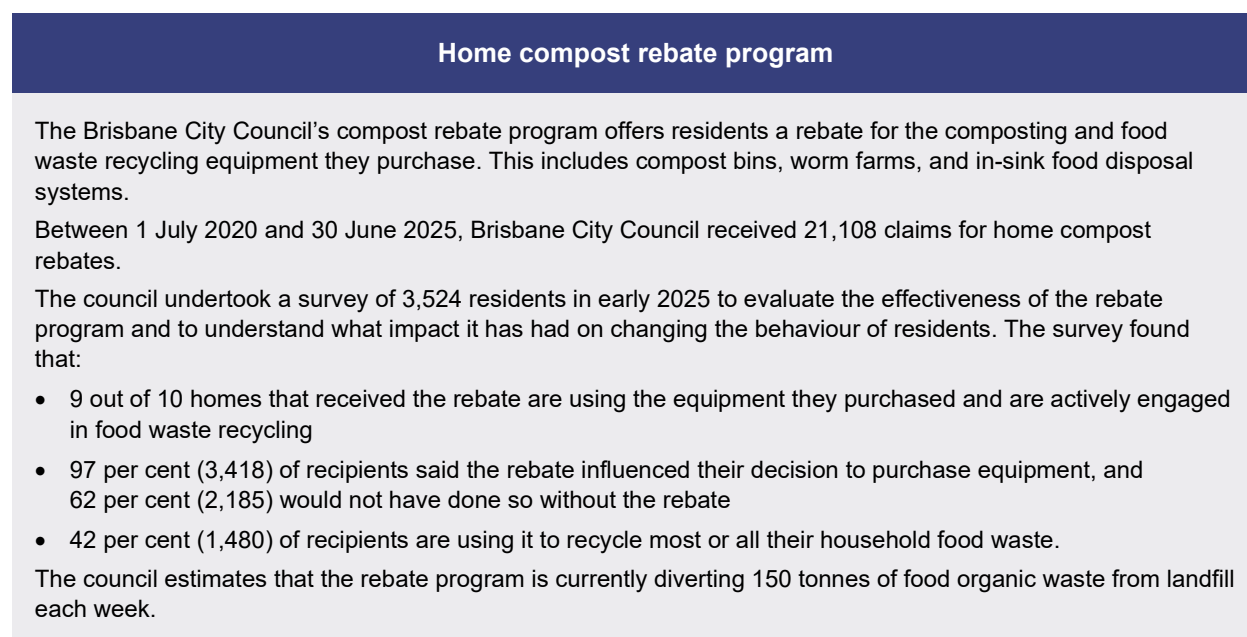
The Brisbane City Council and the Council of the City of Gold Coast are trialling, or have implemented, different initiatives to reduce food organic waste sent to landfill. They include providing:

- food organic bins for multi-unit dwellings
- community composting hubs
- home composting rebate programs.

These initiatives are relatively early in their implementation. While initial results indicate some success, it is too early to accurately assess their effectiveness.

Case study 1 (Figure 4G) highlights the early results for Brisbane City Council's home compost rebate program.

Figure 4G
Case study 1



Source: Queensland Audit Office using information provided by the Brisbane City Council.

Delivering educational and other behavioural change programs

The department and the 3 councils have designed and launched a range of education materials and programs to reduce the food and garden organic waste that households send to landfill. These focus on increasing awareness and changing behaviour to help avoid waste, improve recycling, and reduce contamination. Contamination occurs when residents put the wrong type of waste in the incorrect-coloured bin. For example, non-organic waste, such as plastic and food packaging, in their green lid bins.

Educating households about how they can reduce their food waste

The department has rolled out the 'Love Food Hate Waste' challenge, which is an evidence-based program that focuses on reducing food waste in households. It aims to achieve this through actions such as:

- using leftovers and freezing excess food more effectively
- preparing only what is needed and using a shopping list more often.

The Council of the City of Gold Coast is currently promoting the campaign on its website. The Sunshine Coast Council promoted the campaign on its website and social media, and ran a series of library workshops. The Brisbane City Council previously used the Love Food Hate Waste campaign but is now using its own food waste education material on its website.

Helping households put their waste in the correct bin

The department has developed education materials and toolkits to help councils that are expanding and rolling out new green lid bin services. This includes the 'Let's get it sorted' partnership program and campaign, which provides funding and materials to councils to help residents understand what they can and cannot put in their green bins to reduce contamination. This helps provide consistent information across the state about how to maximise recycling, reduce contamination in bins, and use the Recycle Mate app to access local recycling information.

Additionally, all 3 councils are raising awareness through other means. This includes shopping centre displays, frequently asked questions on their websites, and providing fridge magnets to residents to educate them on the correct use of the green lid bin.

Measuring the effectiveness of education programs

It can be challenging to measure the effectiveness of education programs as many factors can contribute to changes in behaviour. The department set a goal to have 50 per cent of the Queensland population aware of messages to avoid food waste by 30 June 2023. It has not assessed whether it has achieved this target or whether existing campaigns have helped to reduce the amount of food waste sent to landfill.

How are entities improving their approaches?

The department needs to improve its reporting

The department is tracking progress against the action plan but it is not assessing performance and reporting this information effectively. It regularly monitors the overall status of actions and reports this information to its executive leadership team through a dashboard each quarter. But it does not report progress against the objectives and targets of the organics strategy and action plan or adequately brief up about key risks and delays. The department developed performance measures for all 29 actions in the action plan, but did not track performance against the metrics. In some cases, this is due to a lack of reliable data.

At the time we undertook the audit, the department reported that the action plan was 83 per cent on track, stating that 24 out of the 29 actions were progressing as planned. This overstates its progress. In addition to the 5 actions experiencing delays, we found that another 2 actions reported as on track were in fact behind schedule.

Additionally, the department's reporting did not highlight that 7 actions were at risk of not meeting time frames due to delays with one of the interconnected actions.

The department engages with key stakeholder groups responsible for implementing the organics action plan but does not provide them with performance information. Without this information, stakeholders cannot understand progress against the objectives of the organics strategy and focus their effort on the areas that matter most.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, in collaboration with councils, improves how it monitors, evaluates, and reports performance against the *Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032* and the *Queensland Organics Action Plan 2022–2032*. This should include:

- collecting reliable organic waste data that will enable it to measure progress against the objectives
- assessing whether existing targets are appropriate
- monitoring performance against the objectives, performance measures, and targets
- regularly assessing the effectiveness of actions and using this information to inform its approach
- regularly reporting performance information to key decision makers, including the status of actions, key issues, and performance against the strategy's objectives and targets.

The department plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the organics strategy

The department plans to evaluate, review, and update the organics strategy and action plan in late 2025. It has identified opportunities for improvement leading into the review, including reducing the number of actions and steps, realigning funding to priorities, and resolving barriers to implementation. As part of this review, the department will consider the new draft Queensland Waste Strategy 2025–2030, which it plans to publish in late 2025.

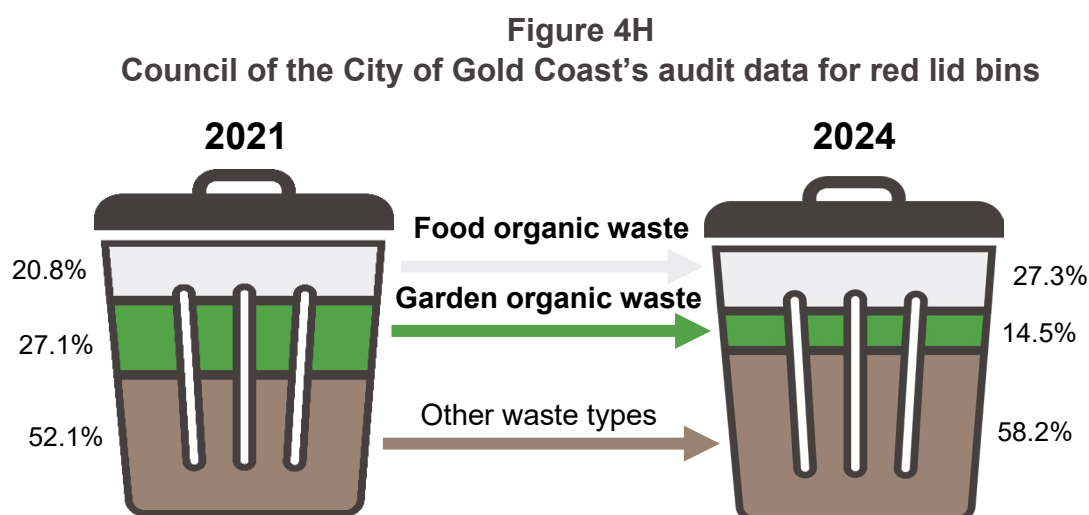
Councils are using data to improve how they manage organic waste

All 3 councils are analysing data, including contamination rates, volumes of garden waste, and service costs, to improve how they manage organic waste. They collect data through various means, including driver observations at the point of collecting waste and weighing contamination removed after collection. They also undertake bin audits.

All 3 councils we audited have undertaken bin audits to examine the contents of household bins. This helps them to understand trends in the amount of organic waste sent to landfill through red lid bins and assess the effectiveness of behavioural change initiatives.

The bin audit data for the 3 councils showed a reduction in the amount of garden organic waste sent to landfill in red lid bins between 2020 and 2024. This data is summarised in Appendix D. We could not compare bin audit data across the 3 councils due to differences in the approach, timing, and how often councils undertake the audits.

Figure 4H shows the results of the Council of the City of Gold Coast's 2021 bin audit and its most recent bin audit in 2024.



Source: Queensland Audit Office, using bin audit reports from the Council of the City of Gold Coast.

It shows that the amount of garden organic waste in households' red lid bins has reduced from 27.1 per cent in 2021 to 14.5 per cent in 2024. The Council of the City of Gold Coast made it optional for households to have a green lid bin in 2013 and mandatory in July 2023.

The department is working to establish a standard that councils can adopt when undertaking bin audits. Regular and consistent bin audit data will help the department and councils to assess how effective initiatives have been in reducing contamination and organic waste sent to landfill in Queensland.

All 3 councils are using the bin audit data and other data sources to improve how they manage organic waste. This includes:

- educating households in how to treat their waste and reduce contamination
- identifying if they require extra labour and machinery to remove contamination from garden waste
- assessing whether the number of contracts with existing operators is adequate to process the volumes of garden organic waste.

Appendices

A.	Entity responses	20
B.	How we prepared this report	29
C.	Interjurisdictional comparison	33
D.	Audit results for general waste bin composition	34



A. Entity responses

In accordance with Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to:

- Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation
- Brisbane City Council
- Council of the City of Gold Coast
- Sunshine Coast Council.

We also provided a copy of the report to the following entities and gave them the option of providing a response:

- Premier and Minister for Veterans
- Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation
- Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers.

This appendix contains the responses we received.

The heads of these entities are responsible for the accuracy, fairness, and balance of their comments.

Comments received from Director-General, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation



Responses to recommendations



Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation

Reducing organic household waste sent to landfill

Response to recommendations provided by Ms Patricia O'Callaghan, Director-General, Department of Environment, Tourism Science and Innovation on 21 August 2025.

Recommendation	Agree/Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
1. We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation in collaboration with local councils and industry assess whether the objectives, goals and targets in the organics strategy are achievable, and use this information to inform its approach going forward. This should include assessing the value and priority of actions based on progress to date, known risks and relevant performance information.	Agree	Q2 2025-26	A new Queensland Waste Strategy – <i>Less landfill, More recycling</i> , is being developed by the Queensland Government. Consultation on a draft Strategy occurred in May and June 2025. In developing the final Queensland Waste Strategy, the department will consider opportunities to review and incorporate organics targets in order to measure progress going forward. Actions specific to reducing organic waste will be developed and will take into account the targets set, learnings to date and feedback from stakeholders.
2. We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation provide clarity about how it intends to manage the risk of PFAS in compost. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clearly communicating with local councils, industry and relevant stakeholders the departments approach going forward to manage per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) risk in compost continue monitoring PFAS risks in organic waste 	Agree	Q3 2025-26	The department has communicated with industry and councils that it will not be imposing PFAS limits on licences, but instead will work collaboratively with the compost industry to develop guidance to manage PFAS risks in compost. A monitoring program is also being developed to assist in the identification of potential upstream sources of PFAS contamination in feedstocks.
3. We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation strengthen its risk management practices. This should include:	Agree	Q3 2025-26	The department will continue to report quarterly on risks associated with delivery of strategies and action plans and ensure key risks are escalated into the department's enterprise risk management system. This will include reporting on implementation of the final Queensland Waste Strategy, once released.

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regularly identifying risks to achieving the objectives of the organics strategy, assessing their likelihood and impact and clearly stating the departments risk appetite implementing effective mitigation controls and continuing to assess the effectiveness of controls where risks do materialise 			
<p>4. We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, in collaboration with the key stakeholders improves access to funding for infrastructure and organic waste initiatives. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviewing existing grant funding guidelines and processes to identify opportunities to give greater flexibility and improve timely access finalising planning activities and decisions to support the expansion of organic waste processing activities in line with key priorities. 	Agree	Q4 2025-26	<p>As part of developing and implementing the final Queensland Waste Strategy, the department will review its approach to investment and funding, including existing programs and guidelines.</p> <p>For example, the GROW FOGO program guidelines will be further reviewed to consider opportunities to fund other initiatives (e.g. home composting etc).</p> <p>The department will also look to streamline requirements and improve timeliness of contracting across a number of its programs, including GROW FOGO.</p> <p>The department will also continue to work with DSDIP, the Australian Government and SEQ councils to roll out City Deal funding to increase organics processing capacity in SEQ.</p>
<p>5. We recommend that the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, in collaboration with local councils, improves how it monitors, evaluates and reports performance against the organics strategy and action plan. This should include:</p>	Agree	Q3 2025-26	<p>Consultation on a draft new Queensland Waste Strategy – <i>Less landfill, More recycling</i> occurred in May and June 2025.</p> <p>In developing the final Queensland Waste Strategy, the department will consider opportunities to review and incorporate organics targets in order to measure progress going forward.</p> <p>As part of implementation of the <i>final</i> Queensland Waste Strategy, the department will implement changes to its approach to performance and delivery monitoring, evaluation and reporting, which will include improved reporting on organic waste.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Time frame for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">collecting reliable organic waste data that will enable it to measure progress against the objectivesassessing whether existing targets are appropriatemonitoring performance against the objectives, performance measures and targetsregularly assessing the effectiveness of actions and using this information to inform its approachregularly reporting performance information to key decision makers, including the status of actions, key issues, and performance against the strategy's objectives and targets.			

Comments received from Acting Director-General, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers

**DELIVERING
FOR QUEENSLAND**



Department of
**Local Government,
Water and Volunteers**

Our ref: CTS 18041/25
DGBN25/460

25 AUG 2025

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office

Email: qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Vagg *Rachel*

Thank you for your email of 4 August 2025 providing a copy of your draft report to Parliament - *Reducing organic household waste sent to landfill* (the draft report) for the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWW) to review.

I note that the area of focus included in the draft report examined how effective the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) and the three selected South East Queensland councils - Brisbane City Council, Sunshine Coast Regional Council and the Gold Coast City Council strategies have been in reducing the amount of household organic waste sent to landfill.

I was pleased to note your comments that each of the three councils have developed waste management plans aligning with the South East Queensland Waste Management Plan and the Queensland Organics Strategy 2022-2032 and that the councils have also implemented a range of programs and services to reduce the amount of household organic waste sent to landfill eg. increasing green lid bin services for residents and delivering educational and other behavioural change programs.

Additionally, I acknowledge the five recommendations provided to DETSI in the draft report which I understand currently do not directly impact DLGWW.

Thank you again for giving DLGWW the opportunity to review the draft report.

If you require any further information, please contact

[redacted] who will be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely


Joshua Hannan
Acting Director-General

1 William Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
GPO Box 2247 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
Website www.dlgww.qld.gov.au
ABN 51 242 471 577

Comments received from Chief Executive Officer, Brisbane City Council



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Brisbane City Council ABN 72 002 765 795

Office of the Chief Executive
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T 07 3403 8888
www.brisbane.qld.gov.au

20 August 2025

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Vagg

Thank you for your email of 5 August 2025 seeking a formal response to the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) proposed report, *Reducing organic household waste sent to landfill* (the Report).

Council is committed to reducing the amount of organic waste sent to landfill and welcomes the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of our recent waste reduction initiatives.

I can confirm Council has reviewed the Report and is supportive of its recommendations. I would like to thank the QAO for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Report prior to its completion.

Should you require any further information, please contact [REDACTED]

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process.

Yours sincerely

Kerrie Freeman
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Ref: CO09372-2025

Brisbane City Council acknowledges this Country and its Traditional Custodians.
We pay our respects to the Elders, those who have passed into the dreaming;
those here today; those of tomorrow.



Comments received from Chief Executive Officer, Council of the City of Gold Coast

Date: 18 August 2025
Contact: [REDACTED]
Location: [REDACTED]
Telephone: [REDACTED]
Our reference: A113843847

CITY OF
GOLDCOAST.

Ms Rachel Vagg
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
53 Albert Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms Vagg

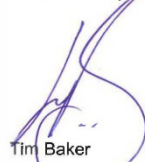
PROPOSED REPORT – REDUCING ORGANIC HOUSEHOLD WASTE SENT TO LANDFILL

The City of Gold Coast Council (the City) thanks the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) for supplying the *Reducing Organic Household Waste sent to Landfill* proposed report and the opportunity to provide feedback.

The City appreciates the opportunity to participate in the audit and provide input into the development of the report. We recognise the efforts of QAO in preparing a comprehensive document which highlights the range of challenges and opportunities facing Local Governments in capturing and diverting organics from landfill efficiently and cost effectively.

The City supports the report and welcomes the recommendations that have been included, particularly those related to clarity of regulatory direction and improving access to funding for infrastructure and organic waste initiatives. We believe the implementation of the audit recommendations will contribute significantly to continued improvement of reducing the amount of organic waste sent to landfill.

Yours faithfully



Tim Baker
Chief Executive Officer
Council of the City of Gold Coast

Council of the City of Gold Coast
PO Box 5042 GCMC QLD 9726 Australia
ABN 64 858543460

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Customer Services Centres
Find the closest centre or online service
at cityofgoldcoast.com.au/contactus

City Panel – Have your say
Register at gchaveyoursay.com.au

Comments received from Manager Waste & Resources Management, Sunshine Coast Council



Contact Officer:
Email:
Phone No:

[Redacted contact information]

21 August 2025

Attn:
Rachel Bagg
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
53 Albert Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
By email to: gao@gao.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Bagg

Re: Reducing Organic Household Waste Sent to Landfill Audit

I am writing in relation to your correspondence to the Sunshine Coast Council Chief Executive Officer, John Baker, dated 4 August 2025, regarding the reducing organic household waste sent to landfill proposed report. As this is an operational matter which sits under my responsibility in Council, the CEO has asked me to provide a response.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the audit process and provide comment on the proposed report. Sunshine Coast Council supports the findings and recommendations outlined in the proposed report, noting that our suggestions for consideration itemised in our previous submission to the draft report have been addressed in the proposed report.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate and contribute to this important matter.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Hogg".

John Hogg
MANAGER WASTE & RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
SUNSHINE COAST COUNCIL

T 07 5475 7272 E mail@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
Locked Bag 72 Sunshine Coast Mail Centre Qld 4560
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Caloundra	77 Bulcock Street Caloundra Qld 4551
Maroochydore	Sunshine Coast City Hall
	54 First Avenue Maroochydore Qld 4558
Nambour	Cnr Currie and Bury Streets Nambour Qld 4560

B. How we prepared this report

Queensland Audit Office reports to parliament

The Queensland Audit Office (QAO) is Queensland's independent auditor of public sector entities and local governments.

QAO's independent public reporting is an important part of our mandate. It brings transparency and accountability to public sector performance and forms a vital part of the overall integrity of the system of government.

QAO provides valued assurance, insights and advice, and recommendations for improvement via the reports it tables in the Legislative Assembly, as mandated by the *Auditor-General Act 2009*. These reports may be on the results of our financial audits, on the results of our performance audits, or on our insights. Our insights reports may provide key facts or a topic overview, the insights we have gleaned from across our audit work, the outcomes of an investigation we conducted following a request for audit, or an update on the status of Auditor-General recommendations.

We share our planned reports to parliament in our 3-year forward work plan, which we update annually: www.qao.qld.gov.au/audit-program.

A fact sheet on how we prepare, consult on, and table our reports to parliament is available on our website: www.qao.qld.gov.au/reports-resources/fact-sheets.

Performance audits

Through our performance audit program, we evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of public service delivery. We select the topics for these audits via a robust process that reflects strategic risks entities are facing. We develop or identify suitable criteria for each audit and evaluate the audited entities' performance against it. We report to parliament on the outcome.

Our performance audit reports help parliament hold entities to account for the use of public resources. In our reports, we provide recommendations or insights for improvement, and may include actions, advice, or better practice examples for entities to consider.

About this report

QAO prepares its reports on performance audits under the *Auditor-General Act 2009*:

- section 37A, which outlines that the Auditor-General may conduct a performance audit of all or any particular activities of a public sector entity.

This report communicates the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from our performance audit on reducing organic waste sent to landfill. Our audit was a reasonable assurance engagement, conducted under the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards* and the Australian Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements. We complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements related to assurance engagements. The conclusions in our report provide reasonable assurance about the audited entities' performance against the identified criteria. Our objectives and criteria are set out below.



Audit objective and criteria

The objective of the audit is to assess how effective the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's and selected South East Queensland councils' strategies are in reducing organic household waste sent to landfill.

The audit addressed the objective through the following sub-objectives and criteria:

Sub-objective 1: To assess the effectiveness of the department in designing, implementing, and overseeing the *Queensland Organics Strategy 2022–2032* (organics strategy) and the *Queensland Organics Action Plan 2022–2032* (action plan).

Criteria

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1.1 | The department has effectively designed the organics strategy and action plan and implemented selected programs to support the government's objectives. |
| 1.2 | The department is effectively overseeing the implementation of the organics strategy and action plan. |

Sub-objective 2: To assess the effectiveness of selected South East Queensland councils in designing and implementing organics plans and programs.

Criteria

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | Councils have effectively designed plans and programs that reduce organic household waste, in accordance with state strategies and targets. |
| 2.2 | Councils effectively implement actions from state and local organics plans. |
| 2.3 | Councils monitor, review, and update organics waste plans and programs. |

Entities we audited

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation is responsible for designing and overseeing the implementation of key waste reduction and recycling strategies. Local governments are responsible for waste services in their areas.

Our audit included the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation and the following 3 councils in South East Queensland:

- Brisbane City Council
- Council of the City of Gold Coast
- Sunshine Coast Council.

We considered several factors when selecting these councils. This included their population and volume of waste generated, number and variety of organic waste programs and initiatives, waste facilities, and how current their waste plans were. We note that the selected councils are not representative of all councils in Queensland.

Scope exclusions

We did not audit:

- commercial and industrial waste or construction and demolition waste given the diversion rates for these waste streams are progressing better against targets than household waste
- private operator and industrial body performance since these are not public sector or controlled entities
- regulatory and compliance activities as we have previously audited the supervision, monitoring, and enforcement of environmental conditions for resource and waste management activities.

Audit method and approach

We used multiple audit methods to understand this complex topic. Wherever possible, we sought stakeholder observations and experiences to provide valuable context to our audit findings. We present these throughout the report.

Field visits and interviews

We conducted interviews with stakeholders from across the waste and recycling sector. This included, but was not limited to:

- meetings with the:
 - Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation
 - 3 selected councils
 - Department of State Development, Infrastructure and planning
 - Council of Mayors South East Queensland
 - Waste and Recycling Industry of Queensland
 - Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia
 - Australian Organics Recycling Association
 - Local Government Association of Queensland
 - selected private operators in the waste recycling business
- site visits to selected landfill and resource recovery centres of the 3 selected councils.

Document review

We obtained and reviewed relevant documents from the entities involved in the audit. This included legislation, strategic plans including waste plans and strategies, annual plans, guidelines, correspondence, performance reports, independent waste audit reports, governance committee meeting packs, reviews, and evaluations. We also considered research from other jurisdictions.

Data analysis

Figures included in this report are based on data provided by the 3 selected councils and the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation. We analysed the following data:

- the number of green bins
- bin composition data (what was in the bins)
- amounts of garden organic waste recovered from landfill.



We undertook walkthroughs to identify councils' and the department's processes for capturing, validating, and reporting waste data. Based on these walkthroughs, we noted the following limitations that could impact the accuracy of the reported figures:

- Queensland annual recycling and waste report data is self-reported by councils and private operators, meaning there could be differences in the definitions and methods used to measure waste amounts.
- The department applies assumptions to the calculation of diversion rates due to challenges in tracking diverted waste back to the source.
- Bin audit results can vary between audits and councils due to differences in the sampling approach, waste categories, and timing of audits.

It should be noted that the annual amounts of garden waste diverted from landfill are subject to seasonality; however, this does not impact the accuracy of the reported figures.

Subject matter expert

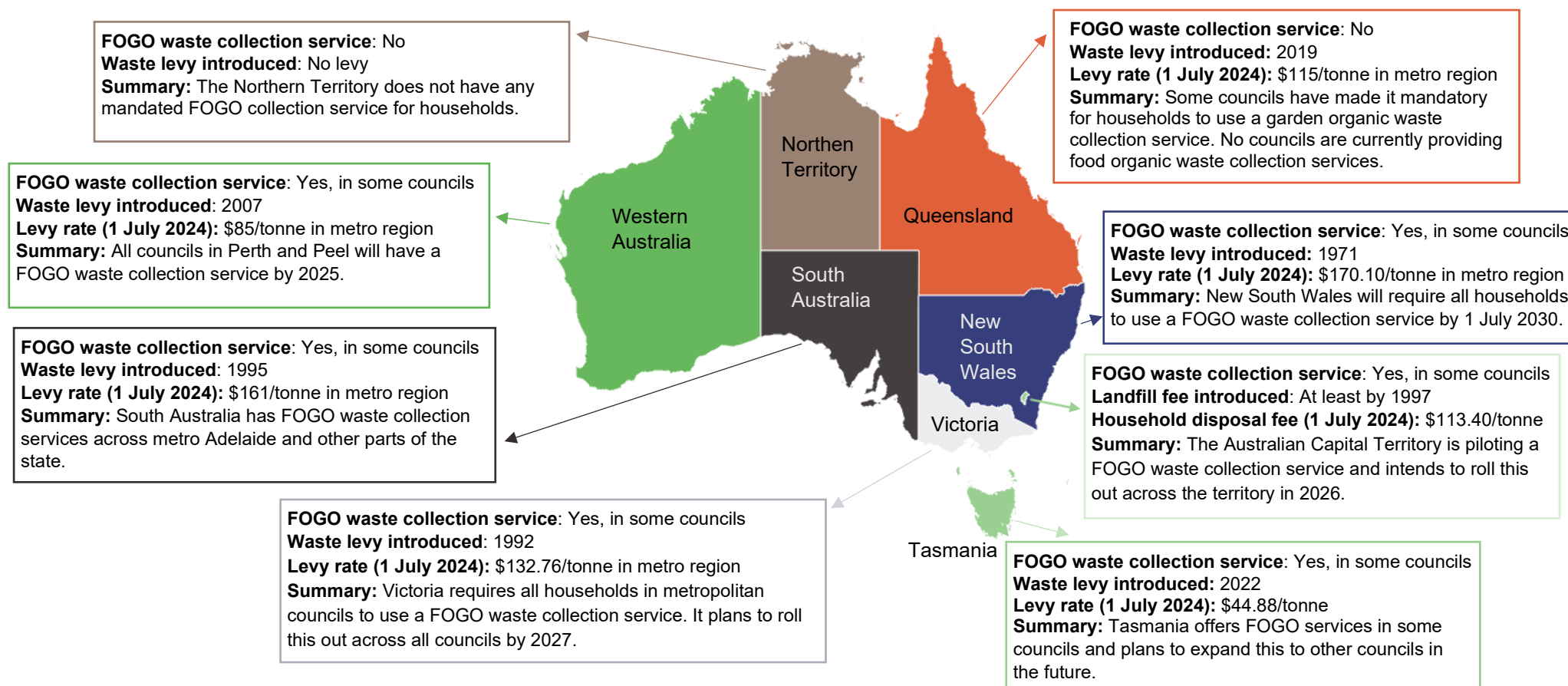
We engaged a subject matter expert to provide insights about the organic waste and recycling environment, including key issues and risks. This expert offered advice and validated facts and concepts related to specific aspects of the audit. We discussed the engagement of the subject matter expert with the relevant entities. The expert did not have any conflicts of interest with the work that we engaged them to undertake.



C. Interjurisdictional comparison

Figure C1

An overview of how Australian jurisdictions manage food organic and garden organic (FOGO) waste



Source: Queensland Audit Office using publicly available information.

D. Audit results for general waste bin composition

Bin audits involve examining and sorting the contents of bins to understand and categorise the types of materials being discarded. This table summarises audit data for the general waste (red lid) bin for the 3 selected councils. It is difficult to compare results across councils due to differences in the approach, timing, and frequency of the waste audits.

Figure D1
General waste (red lid) bin audit data for 3 councils between 2020 and 2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023		2024			
Brisbane City Council									
Food organic waste	24.0%	29.3%	26.0%	22.7%		25.9%			
Garden organic waste	29.0%	23.1%	18.0%	26.1%		22.6%			
Other waste types	47.0%	47.6%	56.0%	51.2%		51.5%			
Sunshine Coast Council									
Food organic waste	34.2%	31.3%	No audit	32.3%		No audit			
Garden organic waste	14.8%	7.6%		5.0%					
Other waste types	51.0%	61.1%		62.7%					
Council of the City of Gold Coast				January	April	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Food organic waste	No audit	20.8%	22.0%	23.0%	19.1%	19.9%	21.4%	25.2%	27.3%
Garden organic waste		27.1%	13.2%	21.0%	16.3%	18.6%	15.7%	8.4%	14.5%
Other waste types		52.1%	64.8%	56.0%	64.6%	61.5%	62.9%	66.4%	58.2%

Source: Compiled by Queensland Audit Office, using bin audit reports from Brisbane City Council, Sunshine Coast Council and Council of the City of Gold Coast.



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