## 7.7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BATTERY COLLECTION PROGRAM

**REPORT AUTHOR** Resource Recovery Officer

**MANAGER** Manager Environment and Planning

**DEPARTMENT** Environment and Planning

### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council:**

1. **Approve the collaborative submission to the Local Government Battery Collection Program for the proposed Far North Queensland Regional Battery Collection Project for $100,000.00; and**

2. **Resolve to engage Ecocycle under s235 (a) of the Local Government Regulation 2012 for the provision of supply, manage, and collect from compliant battery collection infrastructure subject to approval of funding.**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A joint application was submitted by Douglas Shire Council with Tablelands Regional Council, Cooktown Shire Council and Mareeba Shire Council to the Local Government Battery Collection Program on 18 of July 2025. The program provides up $100,000 to councils to expand battery collection points, reduce fire risks associated with battery disposal and provide education around safe battery disposal. Several recent waste truck or transfer station fires were likely to have been caused by batteries, this program will significantly improve safety outcomes by reducing the risk of fires caused by the improper disposal of problem batteries in kerbside bins, waste trucks, and council facilities by establishing dedicated, fire-safe battery collection infrastructure in accessible community locations and transfer stations.

### BACKGROUND

On 13 February 2025, the Queensland Government announced a three-point plan to address the risks of battery fires to human safety, council infrastructure and the environment. The three-point plan includes:

- Providing $2 million in grants to support councils to expand their battery collection points at convenient locations, including for problem batteries like those found in vapes and e-scooters;

- Working closely with the waste industry on practical ways to reduce fire risks to protect workers and essential waste services;

- Equipping Queenslanders with information to make informed decisions about safe battery disposal through education and awareness initiatives.

The Local Government Battery Collection Program establishes the platform for the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation to deliver on the first initiative of the three-point plan.

The Program provides grants of up to $100,000 (excluding GST) to assist councils or groups of councils deliver safe and convenient collection, separation, and/or storage locations in their region for problem batteries that currently have limited options for disposal.

## COMMENTS

The Far North Queensland Councils Douglas Shire, Cook Shire, Mareeba Shire and Tablelands Regional are collaborating to expand the availability of safe and convenient battery disposal points across the region. This initiative targets batteries not currently covered under the B-Cycle stewardship scheme, aiming to reduce fire risks and improve environmental outcomes. By installing accessible drop-off points at key community and waste facility locations, the project will support consistent infrastructure, education and messaging to build community awareness around responsible battery disposal. The program will also generate valuable data to guide future regional initiatives addressing battery-related safety and waste management challenges.

The proposed project will be managed collaboratively by the participating councils with technical support from the appointed service provider Ecocycle. Each council will allocate internal resources including waste operations staff for staff training, site preparation, bin installation, and local oversight of collection points. Communications teams will also support regional education and awareness activities. Douglas Shire Council's Resource Recovery Officer will oversee program coordination to ensure consistent delivery, while individual councils will manage on-the-ground implementation, supported by in-kind contributions of staff time, facilities, and communications.

Ecocycle is the only service provider currently operating in Far North Queensland with the capability to supply, manage, and collect from compliant battery collection infrastructure across the remote and regional areas involved in this project. They are a licensed, nationally accredited recycler with the equipment, transport network, and safety systems required to meet the project's operational and risk management needs. Due to the limited availability of providers offering consistent, compliant and regionally serviced solutions, an exception under s235(a) *Local Government Regulations 2012*, the local government resolves it is satisfied that there is only 1 supplier who is reasonably available.

## PROPOSAL

This project involves the installation of new battery collection infrastructure across key community-facing and high-use locations in the Douglas, Cook, Mareeba, and Tablelands council areas. These sites have been selected due to their accessibility, visibility, and existing community engagement. The goal is to make battery disposal more convenient, reduce unsafe disposal in general waste, and improve environmental and safety outcomes across the region.

By targeting new locations that previously lacked suitable collection points, the project aims to increase participation in safe battery disposal, reduce the risk of fires in council or waste

service assets, and divert hazardous materials from landfill. Data on battery volumes collected, service usage, and incident reduction will be tracked and shared region-wide to measure impact and support the development of stronger, evidence-based regional waste management and circular economy plans.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Local Government Battery Collection Program grant would provide Douglas Shire with $25,000 ex GST with an in-kind contribution of $47,900 from Douglas Shire Council, full costings available on pages 6 to 7 of attachment 1.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Local Government Battery Collection Program Risk Assessment was completed, full assessment available on attachment 2.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

**Economic:** This program has been developed considering several recent waste truck or transfer station fires highly likely to have been caused by batteries within the region. The program will significantly improve safety outcomes by reducing the risk of fires caused by the improper disposal of problem batteries in kerbside bins, waste trucks, and council facilities. By establishing dedicated, fire-safe battery collection infrastructure in accessible community locations and transfer stations, the project will divert hazardous batteries away from general waste streams thereby reducing the risk of economic loss from fires.

**Environmental:** By giving residents convenient, purpose-built drop-off points, the project diverts batteries from kerbside bins and landfill, preventing toxic metals and electrolytes from leaching into soil and waterways and eliminating a major ignition source in waste streams. All batteries collected are transported to Ecocycle's licensed Australian facilities, where lithium, cobalt, nickel, lead and plastics are recovered for local re-manufacture.

**Social:** This project significantly improves convenience and accessibility by providing safe, permanent drop-off points for problem batteries in well-known, easily accessible community locations across Far North Queensland. Many residents in our region live in remote or sparsely populated areas, where disposal options for hazardous materials like batteries are limited or non-existent. By installing collection infrastructure at libraries, council offices, and local waste transfer stations, sites already frequented by the community, the project integrates safe battery disposal into existing routines.
This reduces the need for long-distance travel to larger facilities, making responsible disposal more practical for residents and

supporting equitable access to safe recycling services across regional and remote communities.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Initiatives:

**Theme 1 – Liveability**

To deliver community activities to promote safe, healthy, inclusive and socially engaged communities with an environmental conscious.

***1.7 -*** *Investigate and promote environmental, green, eco-friendly and nature focused initiatives.*

**Theme 3 - Service Delivery**

We deliver Council services effectively and efficiently to meet community expectations, focusing on the wellbeing of both the community and our employees.

***3.3 -*** *Focus on safety and wellbeing - of the community and employees.*
***3.9 -*** *Preserve, protect and improve our unique environment.*

### Operational Plan 2025-2026 Actions:

Update Council's Waste Reduction Plan - Update Council's Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan to align with Queensland's Waste Strategy, reducing waste to landfill and increasing resource recovery.

Waste Education - Implementation of Council's Waste Education Plan for schools, businesses and community groups.

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances, and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Funder** | Council often partly funds services, events or community organisations through grants, donations, subsidies and in-kind support. Council will apply robust governance to ensure that such funding is fair and appropriate. |
| **Advocate** | Council makes representation on behalf of the community on important issues, funding opportunities, projects and programs. Council will use its influence to seek the best outcomes for the community. |
| **Custodian** | Council owns and manages infrastructure, facilities, reserves, resources and natural areas. In fulfilling its role as custodian, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Council will be mindful of the community, the economy, the environment, and good governance. |
| **Facilitator** | Council often brings stakeholders together on important issues, projects or for service delivery. In this role, Council can act as a mediator, connector, collaborator or initiator. |
| **Information Provider** | Council provides the community with important information on services, events, policies, rules, strategies, and any other relevant data that helps the community to stay informed. In performing this role, Council seeks to be open and transparent. |
| **Service Provider** | Council provides many services to the community from roads and waste services to libraries and recreational facilities. Services evolve over time and it is the Council's mission to ensure that these services are appropriate, delivered efficiently, and designed with the customer at the centre. |

## CONSULTATION

| | |
|---|---|
| **Internal:** | Internal consultation was undertaken with the Environment and Planning Department. |
| **External:** | External consultation was undertaken with the participating councils and representatives from the FNQROC. |

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To ensure strong community engagement, the new battery collection points will be promoted through a coordinated regional communication campaign led by Douglas Shire Council and implemented by all participating councils.

Promotion will included digital communication across council websites, e-newsletters, and social media platforms, featuring location details, opening hours, and safety information. On-site signage at each collection point to clearly identify the bins and provide clear educational messaging to encourage better disposal habits. Media releases and articles in local newspapers and radio to raise broader awareness across the region. Engagement with schools, community groups, and workplaces to encourage long-term behaviour change and promote responsible battery disposal.

The program's consistent regional messaging will help build recognition and trust, driving sustained community participation.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Local Government Battery Collection Program Grant [**7.7.1** - 8 pages]
2. Local Government Battery Collection Grant Risk Report [**7.7.2** - 1 page]

# Local Government Battery Collection Grant

**Project Short Title**

Far North Queensland Regional Battery Collection Program

**Grant Total**

$100,000 ex gst

**Partnerships Between Far North Queensland Councils**

Cook Shire Council

Mareeba Shire Council

Douglas Shire Council

Tableland Regional Council

**Short Project Summary**

The Far North Queensland Councils, Douglas, Cook, Mareeba and Tablelands are collaborating to expand the availability of safe and convenient battery disposal points across the region. This initiative targets batteries not currently covered under the B-Cycle stewardship scheme, aiming to reduce fire risks and improve environmental outcomes. By installing accessible drop-off points at key community and waste facility locations, the project will support consistent infrastructure, education and messaging to build community awareness around responsible battery disposal. The Program will also generate valuable data to guide future regional initiatives addressing battery-related safety and waste management challenges.

**Project timeframes**

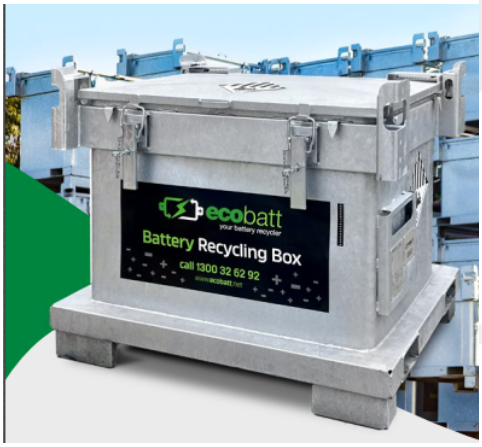
1/10/2025 to 30/09/2026

**New Council Collection Points**

- **Mareeba Shire Council**
  - Mareeba waste transfer station, 38 Vaughan St, Mareeba QLD 4880, Bulk Battery Safety Bin
- **Tablelands Regional Council**
  - Atherton waste transfer station, 310 Herberton Rd, Atherton QLD 4883, Bulk Battery Safety Bin
- **Douglas Shire Council**

- Port Douglas Community Hall, 13-29 Mowbray St, Port Douglas QLD 4877, 62L smart safety battery drum
- Douglas Shire Council Administration Building, 64-66 Front St, Mossman, QLD 4873, 62L smart safety battery drum
- Mossman Library, 14 Mill Street, Mossman QLD 4873, 62L smart safety battery drum
- Cow Bay waste transfer station Lot 88 Quandong Road, Cow Bay QLD 4873, 62L smart safety battery drum
- Daintree waste transfer station, Lot 364 Mossman Daintree Road, Daintree QLD, 4873, 62L smart safety battery drum

- **Cook Shire Council**
  - Cooktown Waste Transfer Station, MacMillan Street, Cooktown QLD 4895, 62L smart safety battery drum
  - Ayton Waste Transfer Station, 2703 Rossville Bloomfield Road, Bloomfield QLD 4895, 62L smart safety battery drum
  - Lakeland Waste Transfer Station, Honey Dam Rd, Lakeland QLD 4871, 62L smart safety battery drum
  - Laura Waste Transfer Station, Lot 200 Peninsular Developmental Road, Laura QLD 4892, 62L smart safety battery drum
  - Cooktown Administration Building, 10 Furneaux Street Cooktown, Qld 4895, 62L smart safety battery drum





**How the proposed NEW collection points will operate, including the transportation, storage, public access and disposal methods for problem batteries.**

The Far North Queensland Regional Battery Collection Program will establish new collection infrastructure across Douglas, Cook, Mareeba and Tablelands Councils, using a mix of Smart Safety Battery Drums and Bulk Battery Safety Bins suited to the volume and nature of each location. All collection sites are public-facing and council-managed, ensuring safe, convenient community access.

*Program Service Provider*

Ecocycle have been selected as the service provider for the Far North Queensland Regional Battery Collection Program. Ecocycle is a leading Australian recycler specialising in waste management and recycling services. With extensive experience in battery recycling, they collect, transport and process batteries of all chemistries. Ecocycle is committed to supporting councils and communities in creating safer,

more sustainable disposal options, and reducing fire risks associated with battery waste through their expertise in:

- Project planning and design
- Safe collection and storage infrastructure
- Best-practice material recovery and compliance
- Community education tools and support

*Collection and Storage Infrastructure*

Councils within the program will use a mix of the following collection options:

- 62L Smart Safety Battery Drum, designed for community drop-off points such as libraries, council offices, and small transfer stations.
- Bulk Battery Safety Bin, suited to high-volume sites such as large transfer stations and community recycling centres.

The UN rated Smart Safety Battery Drums hold up to 100KG and are fitted with smart sensor technology that offer significant safety advantages:

- Real-time actionable intelligence combined with world-class hardware.
- Early heat detection and temperature monitoring with an automatic notification system.
- Advanced laser sensor to monitor battery volumes within the collection bin.
- A cloud-hosted service available 24/7, eliminating the need for external service scheduling.
- Innovative reporting and data visualisation tools for improved administration services.

The Smart Safety Battery Drums are proven to contain lithium-ion battery thermal runaways within the drum, ensuring safety even under adverse conditions which can be experienced in Far North Queensland. The single hole lids provide a singular secure entry point for larger format embedded batteries.

The UN rated Bulk Battery Safety Bins hold up to 1200KG and are hot dipped galvanized containers designed to be anti-sparking and non-incendiary, to meet the demands of transporting hazardous batteries.

*Transportation*

Ecocycle operate a fleet of collection trucks for regional collections across Far North Queensland. Owned and operated by Ecocycle, all vehicles are driven by DG-trained drivers and are easily recognisable with their bright green colour and Ecobatt branding. Equipped with GPS tracking, built-in smoke detectors, FirePro Aerosol systems, and handheld fire extinguishers designed specifically for lithium batteries, these vehicles prioritise safety and efficiency at every stage of the collection process.

*Public Access*

All collection points forming part of the Far North Queensland Regional Battery Collection Program are existing well known council managed community facing locations to maximise community accessibility. The address and opening hours of all locations are detailed on the relevant council's website.

*Disposal Methods*

All material is collected and processed in Ecocycle's licensed, onshore recycling facilities in compliance with AS/NZS 5377, ISO 14001, R2 V3 and B-cycle accreditation.

**How the proposed NEW collection points will be promoted to ensure community awareness and uptake.**

To ensure strong community awareness and uptake, the new battery collection points will be promoted through a coordinated regional communication campaign led by the participating councils. Promotion will include:

- Digital communication across council websites, e-newsletters, and social media platforms, featuring location details, opening hours, and safety information.
- On-site signage at each collection point to clearly identify the bins and provide clear educational messaging to encourage better disposal habits. The Smart Safety Battery Drum will be co-branded to build trust with residents.
- Provision of consistent battery drop-off infrastructure across all collection points.
- Media releases and articles in local newspapers and radio to raise broader awareness across the region.
- Community education materials (Don't Bin Batteries Program, Ecocycle) including posters, fact sheets and visuals tailored for council offices, libraries, and waste facilities.
- Engagement with schools, community groups, and workplaces to encourage long-term behaviour change and promote responsible battery disposal.

The program's consistent regional messaging will help build recognition and trust, driving sustained community participation. The program will build on the Office of Circular Economy's (Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation) ***Don't Bin Batteries*** amplification pack to ensure consistent community messaging.

**Discuss your project activities, including why the project will focus on the new locations, what you are trying to achieve, and the outcomes expected.**

This project involves the installation of new battery collection infrastructure across key community-facing and high-use locations in the Douglas, Cook, Mareeba, and Tablelands council areas. These sites have been selected due to their accessibility, visibility, and existing community engagement. The goal is to make battery disposal more convenient, reduce unsafe disposal in general waste, and improve environmental and safety outcomes across the region.

By targeting new locations that previously lacked suitable collection points, the project aims to increase participation in safe battery disposal, reduce the risk of fires in council or waste service assets, and divert hazardous materials from landfill. Data on battery volumes collected, service usage, and incident reduction will be tracked and shared region-wide to measure impact and support the development of stronger, evidence-based regional waste management and circular economy plans.

**Key Program Milestones**

| Milestone | Task | Responsible agent | Intended start date | Expected completion date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Project initiation | Finalise agreements with Ecocycle, brief internal Council representatives on Program | Participating Councils | October 2025 | October 2025 |
| Staff training and risk management briefing | Train relevant council staff on bin safety, handling, and incident response | Participating Councils | November 2025 | December 2025 |
| Infrastructure delivery | Delivery of battery bins to each council | Ecocycle | December 2025 | December 2025 |
| Bin installation and site preparation | Install bins and associated signage at identified council facilities and transfer stations | Participating Councils | December 2025 | January 2026 |
| Public awareness campaign launch | Promote new collection points via signage, media, digital comms | Participating Councils' Communications Teams | January 2026 | Ongoing |
| Collection and monitoring | Commence battery collection and begin recording volume and issue/incident data | Ecocycle / Councils | January 2026 | Ongoing |
| Mid-project review | Review data, bin usage and engagement outcomes to date | Participating Councils / Ecocycle | June 2026 | July 2026 |
| Final reporting and evaluation | Compile usage data, report outcomes, and provide recommendations | Douglas Shire Council / Ecocycle | September 2026 | September 2026 |

**Key Program Personnel**

| Name | Position | Role |
|---|---|---|
| Emma Egel | Resource Recovery Officer Douglas Shire Council | Responsible Grant Person, Participating Councils Coordinator |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kristina Davidson | Waste Management Coordinator, Cook Shire Council | Program Implementation Officer for Cook Shire Council region |
| Liam Bradford | Water & Waste Technical Officer, Mareeba Shire Council | Program Implementation Officer for Mareeba Shire Council |
| Gary Wedel | Team Leader - Waste Operations, Tablelands Regional Council | Program Implementation Officer for Tablelands Regional Council |

**Project Costs**

| **Item description** | **Item quote (preferred cost) ex GST** |
|---|---|
| Cook Shire Council | 5 x 62L smart safety battery drum and associated collections $25,000 |
| Mareeba Shire Council | 1 x Bulk Battery Safety Bin and associated collections $25,000 |
| Douglas Shire Council | 5 x 62L smart safety battery drum and associated collections $25,000 |
| Tableland Regional Council | 1 x Bulk Battery Safety Bin and associated collections $25,000 |

**In-kind Contributions**

| **Item** | **Amount** | **Contribution Type** | **Comment** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Design of educational materials and program needs | $2500 | In-kind | Douglas Shire Council, 25 hours @ $100 |
| Printing of signage and materials as needed | $2000 | In-kind | All participating councils, in house printing as needed $500 per council |
| Use of existing PPE as needed | $3600 | In-kind | All participating councils, basic PPE kit of $150 per person, 2 x persons per bin (12 bins in total) |
| Program Coordination, administration and reporting | $10,400 | In-kind | Douglas Shire Council, 2 hours per week for 52 weeks @ $100 |
| Waste team support for safety, technical and logistical management | $12,800 | In-kind | All participating councils, 40 hours @ $80 per council |
| Communications officers running the awareness campaign | $12,800 | In-kind | All participating councils, 40 hours @ $80 per council |
| Use of council facilities (e.g. libraries, transfer | $60,000 | In-kind | All participating councils, estimated 12- |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| stations, admin buildings) to host bins. | | | month location usage $5000 per site |
| **TOTAL** | **$104,100** | | |

**Contribution Break Down by Council**

| Council | Total In-kind Value | Notes/Approve |
|---|---|---|
| Mareeba | $12,200<br>- $500 printing<br>- $300 use of existing PPE<br>- $3200 waste team time<br>- $3200 comms team time<br>- $5000 site usage | |
| Cook | $33,400<br>- $500 printing<br>- $1500 use of existing PPE<br>- $3200 waste team time<br>- $3200 comms team time<br>- $25000 site usage | |
| Tablelands | $12,200<br>- $500 printing<br>- $300 use of existing PPE<br>- $3200 waste team time<br>- $3200 comms team time<br>- $5000 site usage | |
| Douglas | $47,900<br>- $2500 design work<br>- $500 printing<br>- $1500 use of existing PPE<br>- $3200 waste team time<br>- $3200 comms team time<br>- $12000 program mgt<br>- $25000 site usage | |

**Why only one quote is being provided?**

Ecocycle is the only service provider currently operating in Far North Queensland with the capability to supply, manage, and collect from compliant battery collection infrastructure across the remote and regional areas involved in this project. They are a licensed, nationally accredited recycler with the equipment, transport network, and safety systems required to meet the project's operational and risk management needs. Due to the limited availability of providers offering consistent, compliant and regionally serviced solutions, only one quote has been obtained for this grant application.

**Continuity of service beyond the life of the funding arrangement.**

*During the project (Oct 2025 – Sept 2026)*

Continuity of service will be maintained through a formal service agreement with Ecocycle, which includes the lease, monitoring, and scheduled collection of battery bins across all participating council areas. The smart safety bins are equipped with real-time fill level and temperature sensors, enabling efficient servicing and early incident detection. Council waste teams will be trained in routine inspection and basic incident response to ensure safe and uninterrupted operation at all sites. Regular Program Working Group meetings will monitor project progress and address any delivery risks promptly.

*Beyond the funding period*

Although the bins remain the property of Ecocycle under a lease model, the infrastructure and systems established during the project can remain in place if ongoing service arrangements are financially viable. Councils are committed to exploring options to continue and potentially expand the program, subject to future cost modelling and available resources.

Data collected during the project on battery volumes, safety outcomes, service usage, and public engagement will be used to:

- Assess the cost-effectiveness of continued leasing and servicing.
- Support applications for additional grant funding or B-cycle rebates.
- Inform regional procurement planning for long-term shared service delivery.

This approach ensures the potential for continuity and scalability while allowing councils to make informed, value-for-money decisions about the future of battery collection services in Far North Queensland.

| | | Current Risk | | | | | | Residual Risk | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Describe the risk. Consdier cause, event and effect.* | *Select Risk type from drop down list.* | *Select risk consequence from the drop down list.* | *How likely is the risk to occur? Refer to tab 2. Risk Standards.* | *Refer to Tab 2. Risk Standards for risk rating response suggestions. Red - Extreme Risk Orange - High RIsk Yellow - Medium Risk Green - Loww Risk* | *How will the risk be responded to? Select from drop down menu* | *Outline the actions to be taken to reduce the likelihood of the risk or treat it.* | *Current status of the Risk: open or closed.* | *What is the consequence of risk occurrence? Refer to tab. 2 Risk Standards.* | *How likely is the risk to occur?* | *Residual Risk Rating Red - Extreme Risk Orange - High RIsk Yellow - Medium Risk Green - Loww Risk* | *Person or organisation who is responsible for risk treatement.* |
| **Risk Description** | **Risk Category** | **Risk Consequence** | **Risk Likelihood** | **Risk Rating** | **Risk Response Category** | **Risk Response** | **Status** | **Risk Consequence** | **Risk Likelihood** | **Risk Rating** | **Risk Owner** |
| Batteries disposed of in kerbside bins or landfill loads can ignite, causing fires in trucks or waste facilities. | Safety Risk | Severe | Likely | 24 | Reduction | Installation of accessible battery collection points and education to reduce batteries in general waste. | Open | Major | Unlikely | 10 | Participating Councils |
| Improperly discarded batteries may leak hazardous substances, contaminating soil and water at landfills or illegal dumpsites. | Environmental Risk | Major | Possible | 16 | Reduction | Improved access to proper disposal infrastructure and public education. | Open | Moderate | Unlikely | 6 | Participating Councils |
| Community not utilising battery bins as unaware of their location or purpose, limiting collection effectiveness. | Benefit Risk | Moderate | Likely | 20 | Reduction | Consistent regional messaging and education campaigns to build awareness and correct usage. | Open | Minor | Unlikely | 4 | Participating Councils |