

7.11. FREE MULCH FEE WAIVERS

REPORT AUTHOR Technical Officer Resource Management

MANAGER Manager Environment and Planning

DEPARTMENT Environment and Planning

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolves to waive adopted fees and charges for mulch sales on an as required basis and delegates the Authority for waiving these fees and charges to the Chief Executive Officer or delegate in an ongoing capacity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fee waivers associated with free mulch periods at the Killaloe and Newell Transfer Stations have historically been approved by the Manager Environment and Planning on an as required basis. These fee waivers have been facilitated via a clause contained within Council's adopted fees and charges. This clause currently delegates the Authority for waiving any Resource Management fee or charge to the Manager Environment and Planning.

The wording contained within this fee waiver clause is broad in nature and could potentially be applied in a manner that does not reflect the intent of Council. To clearly articulate Council's intent with respect to free mulch periods, it is recommended that a new fee waiver process be developed and supported under a Council Resolution.

BACKGROUND

When the Killaloe landfill was active most of the mulch produced from the processing of our green waste stockpiles was utilised for onsite operational purposes (e.g.- daily landfill cover and garden maintenance at our transfer stations).

Since the closure of the Killaloe landfill onsite operational use for mulch has seen a significant reduction. In addition, a significant reduction in Commercial mulch sales occurred after the opening of a private mulching facility in the Douglas Shire. Commercial and domestic mulch sales are now predominantly limited to a small group of regular customers and the income generated is negligible.

Opportunities for additional onsite use and use within the broader scope of Council are limited but the Resource Management team will continually explore options in this space.

Mulch stockpile volumes must be managed to ensure compliance with the Environmental Licence conditions associated with Douglas Shire Council's Transfer Stations. Free mulch periods are a means of assisting with stockpile management, achieving landfill diversion targets for organic materials and serve as a community engagement and waste education opportunity.

COMMENTS

In the absence of free mulch periods, green waste stockpiles from our Transfer Stations would need to be transported to the Springmount Landfill for burial. This would have a direct impact

on Council's resource recovery targets and would see an increase in the cost of managing this waste stream.

PROPOSAL

It is recommended that Council resolves to waive the adopted fees and charges for domestic and commercial mulch sales during specified free mulch periods and delegates Authority for waiving of these fees to the Chief Executive Officer or delegate.

The Manager Environment and Planning will consult with Council's Resource Management team to determine the timing and frequency of free mulch periods and whether to offer the mulch to domestic customers only or to include both domestic and commercial customers.

Recommendations from the Resource Management team to conduct free mulch periods will be based on stockpile volumes and the operational requirements for Council at any given time.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Carting our green waste stockpiles to the Springmount landfill and subsequent disposal would see an increase in the cost for overall management of this waste stream. Free mulch periods for the Douglas Shire Community will assist in diversion of this waste from landfill and keeping the costs associated with the management of this waste stream to a minimum.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Nil

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic:	Reduction in overall cost for the management of green waste
Environmental:	Diversion of organic waste from landfill
Social:	Community benefit

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.

1.1 - Deliver community initiatives that support healthy, inclusive and socially engaged communities.

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.

3.6 - Deliver Council services to meet community expectations.

Operational Plan 2025-2026 Actions:

1.7.3 - Encourage the diversion of organic waste from landfill. Continue to investigate solutions and long-term opportunities for diversion.

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.
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CONSULTATION

Internal:	Resource Management Team and ELT
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External:	Nil
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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

Nil