

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Who 'owns' the food scraps collection service?**

Auckland Council is responsible for the service and EcoMatters is partnering with them at a community level, as it officially rolls out in West Auckland between April and August of 2023.

## **When does the service start?**

The service will roll out initially in West Auckland in March/April, then continue on around the Auckland region throughout the year.

## **How does it basically work?**

All residential properties will receive a kitchen caddy and 23 litre bin. Food scraps go directly from the kitchen or plate into the caddy. This is stored somewhere in your kitchen and when it's full, it gets emptied into the food scraps bin which is stored outside with your other bins. On bin day, the food scraps bin will go out on the kerbside with your other bins and a truck will take it away.

## **How can I keep our food scraps caddy and bin clean?**

While using a caddy liner is not compulsory, you can use an Auckland Council pink bin liner, or simply create a makeshift liner out of newspaper or a paper bag. Always check to see if your caddy needs rinsing once you've emptied it.

Your kerbside bin is *not* lined so make sure you regularly rinse it out with a hose pipe, or some hot water and detergent if needed.

## **Where can I find more information on the service overall ?**

There are two places to get more information. You can visit council's site at [aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/foodscraps](https://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/foodscraps) or you can also visit <https://www.ecomatters.org.nz/zero-waste/food-scraps-collection/>

## **Has central government got something to do with the roll out of the service?**

Government's involvement is regulatory, in that all councils around the country must show what they're doing to reduce food going to landfill. In particular, Proposal 2 of the Ministry for the Environment's Transforming Recycling Consultation Document outlines the government's intention that all urban populations should have kerbside food scraps collections. The options that have been considered have been outlined in a Regulatory Impact Statement which can be found at this link.

<https://environment.govt.nz/publications/interim-regulatory-impact-statement-improving-household-and-business-recycling/>

## **Can I hear about how a food scraps collection service has worked for people before?**

Yes, you can hear from a range of people who have already tried Auckland Council's *trial* food scraps collection in Papakura. Since 2018, these Aucklanders have diverted over 500 trucks worth of food scraps from landfill!

Check out <https://youtu.be/RpCqVNV7rCw> and there you can watch more short [clips](#) on how these Aucklanders have found the service.

### **Is sending scraps to landfill really that harmful to the environment?**

Yes it is. The methane that Auckland's food scraps create in landfill is equivalent to more than 125,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. This is a harmful greenhouse gas and a major contributor to climate change.

### **I've seen this referred to as 'rukenga kai'; what does that mean?**

In te reo Māori, rukenga kai means 'food that is cast onward'. This is a truly suitable expression for food scraps that go on to create more food or have another use. By the way, there is no such thing as 'food waste' in Māori culture, because all food matter is a resource. This ethic is what the food scraps collection embraces.

### **How is the food scraps service going to reduce what we put in landfill?**

Kiwis produce more waste per head of population than almost any other developed nation, so it's no surprise that our food scraps make up almost half the weight of the average Auckland kerbside rubbish bin. The food scraps collection will tackle this by stopping 110kg - 145kg of food per person, per year, from going to landfill. Reducing landfill is all part of Auckland's 2040 Zero Waste goal.

### **Can't I just put all my food scraps down the kitchen sink waste disposal unit?**

When food scraps are only put into waste disposal units, they end up in a wastewater treatment plant and gets mixed with other solids in our raw sewage. This puts extra strain on water pipes and infrastructure - this needs to change. Even though our waste water system can turn some of the solid materials it processes into fertiliser, there is still plenty of it that is sent to landfill. Additionally, not all waste water treatment plants can capture and make use of methane gas and therefore wastes the potential energy that food scraps offer when treated in an anaerobic plant.

### **I thought composting was the best way to reduce food waste going into landfill. Why has that changed?**

Composting is still the ideal way to reduce waste, and even better when done alongside the food scraps collection service. People will be able to put shells, bones, fruit and vegetables that can't be composted, leftovers into their caddies and bins - not everyone knows that only select food scraps can go into compost bins.

Information provided by council shows that *most* Aucklanders are not able to compost for a variety of reasons. The food scraps service provides all of us with a new way to make a big difference, no matter what our circumstances are.

You can also find out more about composting right here at the [Compost Collective](#).

### **Are there any instructions on how to put the bins out?**

Yes, in your rukenga kai starter kit, there will be instructions how to arrange food scraps bins on the kerbside with the other bins. This will ensure that the people collecting our waste each week have space to do their job efficiently, that pavements are not dominated by bins waiting for collection once a week.

### **What is the white disc on the base of the kerbside bin for?**

This white disc covers an RFID (radio frequency ID) chip which is placed under the bin so that the collection truck can 'read' which bin it is picking up and emptying. The chip simply contains a serial number which has a corresponding street address. Having a readable bin chip is a really helpful resource for managing this new food collection service, because it means council can accurately check that bins are being emptied as planned.

## **I can't find my brochure that came with the bin. Where can I find out what can and can't go into the bins?**

Lost your brochure? No problem, you can collect a paper copy from your local library. From the end of March you'll also be able to download one from EcoMatters.

## **Here's a comprehensive reminder list of do's and don'ts:**

### **Items you can put in your food scraps bin**

- Fruit and vegetable scraps, including peelings, cores, stalks and skin.
- Bread, pasta and rice.
- Dairy products.
- Meat bones and scraps, including fat trimmings.
- Fish bones and scraps, including shellfish shells.
- Egg shells.
- Coffee grounds.
- Indoor cut flowers.

### **Items you cannot put in your food scraps bin**

- Garden waste like weeds, lawn clippings or hedge trimmings.
- Plastic bags.
- Disposable food containers (including compostable items).
- Cigarette butts.
- Soil or rocks.
- Cloth and clothing.
- Food wrapping, including cling film, waxed paper or aluminium foil.
- Nappies and sanitary products.
- Pet waste.
- Liquids or chemicals.
- Any non-compostable bin liners.
- Paper or tissues
- Tea bags

## **Where do the food scraps go once they get collected from the kerbside?**

Trucks will pick up the scraps and transport them to a consolidation point in Auckland. From there, they will be transported by earth moving trucks to an Anaerobic Digestion Plant in Reporoa, in the Waikato.

## **Isn't putting more trucks on the road between Auckland and the Waikato adding more carbon emissions to the atmosphere?**

There will be additional trucks on the road to pick up the food scraps at the kerbside and heading to the consolidation facility, but the trucks taking the scraps to Reporoa are already returning to the region empty. Therefore, council is utilising space in an otherwise empty vehicle, thus avoiding extra emissions. The savings on emissions that putting food scraps into landfill and the benefits of this service far outweigh the emissions created.

## **How will the food scraps collection service reduce greenhouse gases and emissions?**

We expect to divert around 40,000 tonnes of food scraps per year from landfill and reduce Auckland's carbon emissions by an estimated 125,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. That's the equivalent of taking 75,000 cars off the road.

### **What happens to the scraps at the plant?**

Scraps go into the anaerobic digester and the processing of them creates three things: methane gas; heat; fertiliser.

Firstly, the methane is captured and converted into biogas that will be used by Turners and Growers, located nearby. They'll use it to replace the natural gas they currently use for glass house vegetable production.

Secondly, the heat produced contributes to keeping the glasshouses warm.

Thirdly, a liquid biofertiliser is produced and used to grow pasture and crops. This fertiliser is in fact a liquid residue called digestate that can be applied to land as a nutrient and sustainable fertiliser. Digestate is far more efficient and environmentally friendly than chemical fertilizers, plus it reduces the amount of nitrogen runoff from the land when applied.

### **Why did council choose Reporoa for the plant?**

Its position means it is accessible to process food scraps from other councils and commercial businesses. Ecogas will process up to 75,000 tonnes of organic material each year, including food scraps from Auckland Council, other councils and commercial businesses.

### **Will the consolidation facilities based in Auckland cause any odour issues?**

Food scraps will be consolidated in a closed building in Papakura. This building is fitted with a purpose engineered odour filtration system to ensure that odour from within the building does not discharge into the atmosphere above resource consent limits. The facility will undergo regular monitoring to make sure this is adhered to.

### **This is great for the environment, but are there any benefits for me?**

Yes. While the climate benefits are huge, there's also a personal benefit in being more aware of your food waste. Separating your food scraps helps raise awareness of how much food is being wasted each year, which can lead to better meal planning and actually save you money straight away. You'll also find you need to put your general waste bins out less frequently

Can you imagine throwing away three shopping trolleys of edible food every year? Well, that's what most Auckland households are doing, at a cost of around \$650 a year each. Playing your part in the food scraps collection will save you hundreds of dollars every year.

### **I'm concerned I won't feel like doing this each week...**

Don't worry. The method of putting your scraps in a bin in the home and then emptying them into the outside bin and taking it to the kerbside is a behaviour people already do for recycling and rubbish. It should quickly feel quite familiar.

The day-to-day benefit is that your rubbish will be reduced, so you might not need to put your rubbish bin out as often. A lot of Auckland schools have worm bins or other composting processes, so many children are already aware of the benefits of recycling food scraps and will get behind taking part with you.

**Do I pay for the service?**

The service is one of many that come out of homeowner's rates, just like the other waste management services do. For more information on this visit the Auckland Council website:

[aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/foodscraps](https://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/foodscraps) and if needed, get in touch with one of their representatives.

**Can ratepayers opt out of the service?**

No. Just as Auckland Council's kerbside recycling bin service is compulsory, there is no 'opt out' for the food scraps service. This is because everyone benefits from the positive effect the new service has on the environment.

**I'm renting, what happens in my case?**

Unless you are in one of the areas or categories listed below, you should be part of the service, paid for by your landlord, in exactly the same way your other bin services are.

**Are there any Aucklanders who won't be getting the food scraps service?**

As at February 2023, apartments in the city won't receive the food scraps collection service, nor will residents on Waiheke Island or those living in some rural locations. In some cases, multi-unit dwellings may not receive the service in 2023. This is because of logistical challenges that will be worked through over the course of the year. Businesses, institutions and schools are not covered by this service - they have their own waste minimisation regulations to follow.