

WEEKLY FOGO TRIAL TUESDAY EXPANSION REPORT

Adelaide Hills Council



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Document verification

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Executive summary

Adelaide Hills Council (AHC) expanded its Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) trial in November 2025 to approximately 2,800 township properties. The expansion aimed to validate operational feasibility, costs, and community acceptance at a larger scale.

Key findings show the trial has been highly successful across participation, performance, and environmental outcomes:

- Strong community support
 - The opt-out rate was just 0.6%, one of the lowest recorded among metropolitan councils, indicating widespread acceptance.
 - Only 10% of households required additional support (e.g. larger or additional landfill bins).
- Significant improvement in landfill diversion
 - Weekly FOGO delivered a 14-percentage point increase in kerbside diversion (from ~55% to ~69%)
 - Landfill tonnes reduced by 27% and FOGO increased by 48%.
- Operational considerations
 - Collection costs increased by ~11%.
 - Processing and disposal costs reduced by 7% as processing FOGO is 3-5 times cheaper than landfill.
 - Overall, a net system cost increase of only ~4.5% for the trial area.

Based on the expansion trial outcomes, the projected impacts of a council-wide rollout include:

- Estimated net annual cost increase of \$130,000–\$240,000.
- Significant environmental benefits, including 1,900 tonnes less landfill waste, 2,400 tonnes more FOGO recovered and ~1,030 tonnes CO₂-e avoided.
- AHC becoming one of the highest-performing councils in South Australia for kerbside diversion.

Conclusion and recommendation

The expanded trial demonstrates that weekly FOGO is operationally viable, strongly supported by the community, and delivers substantial environmental and landfill diversion benefits for a ~2-5% increase in net cost of the kerbside system.

We recommend that Council:

- Continue the current Tuesday township trial.
- Make a decision to expand Weekly FOGO prior to June 30, 2026, based on current information of current performance and service costs.
- Explore opportunities and commence planning to reduce kerbside cost impacts over the next 12 months and target a staged expansion from August 2027.

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1. Background

Adelaide Hills Council (AHC or Council) has been exploring opportunities to improve the performance of its kerbside services over the past three years.

In October 2023 it commenced a 12-month trial of food organics and garden organics (FOGO) in Woodside that included:

- Around 500 township and rural properties trialling weekly FOGO, fortnightly landfill and comingled recycling.
- 75 rural properties in Woodside East trialling a fortnightly three-bin system (this included introducing FOGO).

The results of the trial were presented to Council, who determined to continue the trial of weekly FOGO for the existing ~400 township residents and return rural properties to their original two bin service.

1.1. Trial expansion

In November 2025 weekly FOGO and fortnightly landfill was expanded to all ~2,800 township properties on the Tuesday collection day. This included Lobethal, Charleston, Oakbank and Balhannah and the remaining properties in Woodside.

The intent of the expansion was to gain further information and confidence in the logistics and costs of delivering weekly FOGO to AHC, considering its size and geography compared to other metropolitan East Waste councils that are also trialling weekly FOGO.

In addition to weekly FOGO for townships, the expansion of the trial included consolidating the Tuesday collection day into a rural and township zone instead of the existing 'orange' and 'grey' zones. In practice this means comingled recycling is collected for rural properties in one week and the following it is collected in townships.

Figure 1: Bin collection zones, including a consolidation on Tuesday.



1.2. Trial participation

All township properties were included in the expanded trial. Letters and welcome packs provided information about the trial and invited residents and businesses to contact Council if they required any support. This included the options to:

- 'Opt-up' and receive a 240-litre landfill bin or additional 140 litre landfill bin.
- 'Opt-out' and return to weekly landfill collections.

The Opt-out option is required as the Environment Protection (Waste to Resources) Policy 2010 requires metropolitan councils to provide residents access to a weekly landfill service.

AHC's Waste Management Coordinator and support staff engaged directly with residents and businesses to resolve any questions and concerns. This proactive engagement maintained the vast majority on weekly FOGO and fortnightly landfill instead of opting out (Table 1 and Figure 1). The Opt-out rate of 0.6% is the lowest of metropolitan councils that have introduced weekly FOGO and is an exceptional effort by AHC staff.

Table 1: Summary of Opt-out and Opt-Up properties.

	Households	Businesses	Total
<i>No. properties</i>			
Opt-Out	8	10	18
Opt-Up	255	40	295
<i>Upsize to 240L landfill</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>198</i>
<i>Additional 140L landfill</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>97</i>

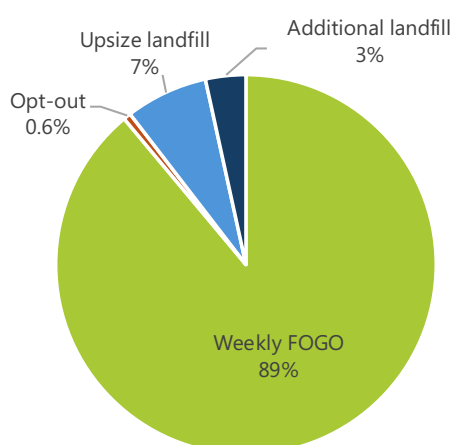


Figure 2: Proportion of residents choosing Weekly FOGO, Opt-out and Opt-Up services.

The participation results indicate strong support for weekly FOGO and highlights that this bin system suits the needs of most residents and only a small proportion require some additional support.

1.3. Why weekly FOGO?

Introducing weekly FOGO and fortnightly landfill is a proven way to deliver a step change in performance and deliver a range of direct benefits to the community, council and to the broader region. Weekly FOGO, fortnightly landfill:

- Aligns with community waste generation:
 - Only 44% of AHC landfill bins are landfill materials, the rest should be separated and placed into the FOGO bin or comingled recycling bin.
 - Residents receive an additional 100 litres of bin capacity each fortnight.
- Delivers a step change in performance:
 - More food waste is recycled.
 - ~15 percentage point increase in kerbside diversion.
- Helps manage future risk by reducing disposal/processing costs and reducing exposure to current landfill levy and future increases.
 - The cost of sending material to Council's contractor Peats Soils for composting is up to five times cheaper than sending material to landfill.
- Reduces GHG emissions by preventing FOGO material decomposing in landfill and generating methane.
- Contributes to the Adelaide Hills circular economy by turning more FOGO material into compost that local primary producers apply to their land to improve soil health and yield.
- Supports residents to manage bushfire risk and weeds on their property.

2. Trial expansion results

2.1. Waste generation and kerbside diversion

Comparing expanded trial data with the same period in November 2024 to February 2025 (and adjusting to consider seasonal impacts) reveals a significant change in waste generation behaviour (Table 2).

Table 2: Change in waste generation on the Tuesday collection day

	Landfill	Comingled	FOGO
Change in waste generation	-27%	+4.8%	+48%

Overall there is an increase in material collected through the kerbside system, but the substantial change is the reduction in landfill tonnes. This has a meaningful financial impact as landfill is up to five times more expensive for AHC to manage than FOGO.

Comparing the Tuesday trial results with the period immediately prior the expanded trial highlights (Figure 3):

- An immediate decrease in landfill tonnes and increase in FOGO tonnes.
- Kerbside diversion increases from 55% to 69%, a 14-percentage point increase in kerbside diversion.
 - This is very significant considering rural residents remain on a 2-bin system.
 - Township properties would be achieving kerbside diversion above 70%.

Note, the downward trend of FOGO material is attributed to low rainfall volumes and not resident performance.

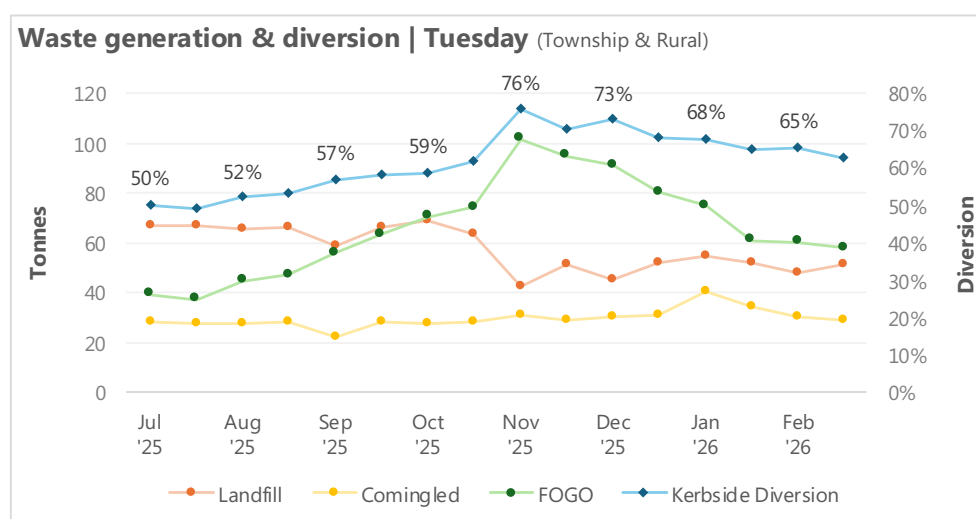


Figure 3: Tonnes collected and kerbside diversion for the Tuesday expanded trial day. (Note the data includes township and rural data)

Comparing the Tuesday with all other collection days further highlights the scale of the success of weekly FOGO, fortnightly landfill (Figure 4). Over the same period as above the four days that have weekly landfill have no change in performance.

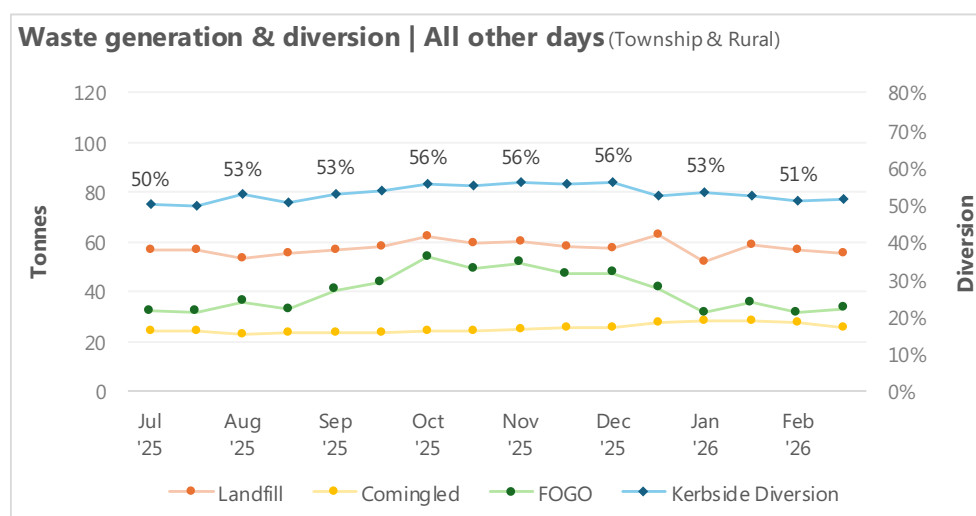


Figure 4: Tonnes collected and kerbside diversion for all non-trial days.

2.2. Collection logistics and costs

A key purpose of the expansion was to allow East Waste to confirm collection logistics and costs across the full collection day.

The results indicate an ~11% increase in collection hours and therefore costs (as East Waste charges based on truck hours) to deliver weekly FOGO, fortnightly landfill (Table 3).¹

Table 3: Change in collection hours for Tuesday

	Landfill	Comingled	FOGO	Total
	<i>Hours</i>			
July – October 2025	72	44	37	152
November '25 – February '26	64	52	54	170
Hours difference	-8	9	17	17
% difference in hours	-11%	20%	46%	11%

Factors that may influence this should be noted:

- Changes to the collection schedule and routes may initially impact efficiency and these may be refined by East Waste over time.
- The Christmas and New Year period can lead to high generation of waste and recycling which can reduce collection efficiency.
- These figures are based on collection data provided by East Waste and our best efforts to accurately interpret and represent this data.

2.3. Processing and disposal costs

The change in processing and disposal costs helps identify the net cost of the expanded trial. Comparing the same four-month periods between the two financial years indicates a saving of 7% (Table 4).

This leads to an overall impact of a 4.5% increase in costs for the kerbside system on the Tuesday.

Table 4: Change in disposal/processing costs

	Landfill	Comingled	FOGO	Total
	<i>Processing/disposal cost</i>			
FY 2024/25 Nov – Feb	\$72,900	\$33,500	\$17,200	\$123,600
FY 2025/26 Nov – Feb	\$52,900	\$35,100	\$27,000	\$115,000
Cost difference	-\$20,000	\$1,600	\$9,800	-\$8,600
Difference total cost				-7%

¹ This increase in collection costs does differ from the analysis following the initial trial that estimated an increase in collection costs of 7%.

3. Implications for a council-wide township rollout

The expanded FOGO trial has provided further insights to support the decision on next steps. It has:

- Provided further operational data on the logistics and financial costs of delivering weekly FOGO across townships on a full collection day.
- Highlighted resident acceptance and engagement with the service and an exceptional increase in kerbside diversion.
- Given direct indications of the proportion of residents that may need additional support (larger or additional bins) and their reasons for this.

Applying the results of the expanded trial to the remaining collection days can provide an indication of what AHC can expect if it proceeds with providing a weekly FOGO and fortnightly landfill service to all townships.

3.1. Kerbside performance, environmental and state benefits

The broad rollout of weekly FOGO will support AHC make a step-change in waste generation and kerbside performance (Table 5). A 14-percentage point increase in kerbside diversion is a very large improvement considering that rural households (1/3 of total) remain on a 2-bin system.

Table 5: Estimated impact on waste generation with a broader rollout of weekly FOGO

	Landfill	Comingled	FOGO	Total	Diversion
<i>Tonnes</i>					
FY 2024/25 tonnes	7,400	3,400	4,900	15,700	53%
New est. annual total	5,500	3,600	7,300	16,400	66%
Difference	-1,900	200	2,400	700	14%

A broader rollout delivers additional environmental and state benefits (Table 6).

Table 6: Estimated environmental and state benefits of a broader rollout of weekly FOGO.

	2,400 tonnes of additional FOGO material collected each year
	1,900 tonnes less is placed in the landfill bin each year and Council reduces its waste levy payments by \$230,000.
	\$800,000 contribution to gross state product via increases in compost produced and utilised to improve agricultural quality and yield.
	~1,030 tonnes of CO ₂ -equivalent saved, equal to removing 240 cars from the road or planting 1,530 trees.

3.2. Operational costs

The estimated impact for extending weekly FOGO to all townships is a net increase in the kerbside system costs of between \$130,000 and \$240,000 a year (Table 7).

Factors that may influence this include:

- There are seasonal impacts on waste generation and disposal/processing costs.
- Differences in logistics of collection days may impact costs.
- Costs do not include any form of cost recovery for opt-up and opt-out (see below).
- These figures are based on collection data provided by East Waste and our best efforts to accurately interpret and represent this data.

Table 7: Estimated operational costs for a broader rollout of weekly FOGO.

	Current	Est. future costs	Difference
Collection costs	\$3,296,000	\$3,670,000	+ \$374,000
Disposal/processing costs	\$1,909,000	\$1,720,000	- \$189,000
Total	\$5,205,000	\$5,390,000	+ \$185,000 (+3.6%)
Contingency +/- 30%			Lower - \$130,000 (+2.5%) Upper - \$240,000 (+4.6%)

Mitigating costs | Options for increased kerbside services

AHC could consider an annual service charge for higher levels of services than the standard weekly FOGO, fortnightly landfill offer:

- Opting up to receive an additional landfill bin or upsize to a 240L bin.
- Opting out to a weekly landfill collection

It will be vital that Council introduce the provision of fee exemptions for residents that meet a clear set of service criteria.

The approach of a service charge, when combined with the discretion of council to provide fee exemptions may be acceptable within the community considering:

- the wide level of acceptance of weekly FOGO (low opt-outs and opt-ups)
- the geographic and logistics implications of delivering kerbside bin services.

There may be sensitivity to a service charge at a Council and State Government level that must be managed. Further details of this option need to be explored by Council (e.g. indicative service costs, administration costs and impacts and overall budgetary impact) and the process of introducing this needs to be established within the Waste Policy update and clearly communicated with the State Government and the community.

Waste Levy liability

A benefit of weekly FOGO is the large reduction in landfill tonnes and therefore Council's exposure to the SA waste levy, which is paid to the State Government for every tonne of material sent to landfill.

The levy is adjusted on 1 July each year and typically increases in line with the Consumer Price Index. However this is not guaranteed; in July 2019 the levy increased by \$10 per tonne and then again in January 2020 by \$40 per tonne.

Council can view weekly FOGO as a risk mitigation strategy against future levy increases. Figure 5 provides an indication of this by modelling a 3% increase in the levy each year and the FY 24/25 and projected landfill tonnes under weekly FOGO.

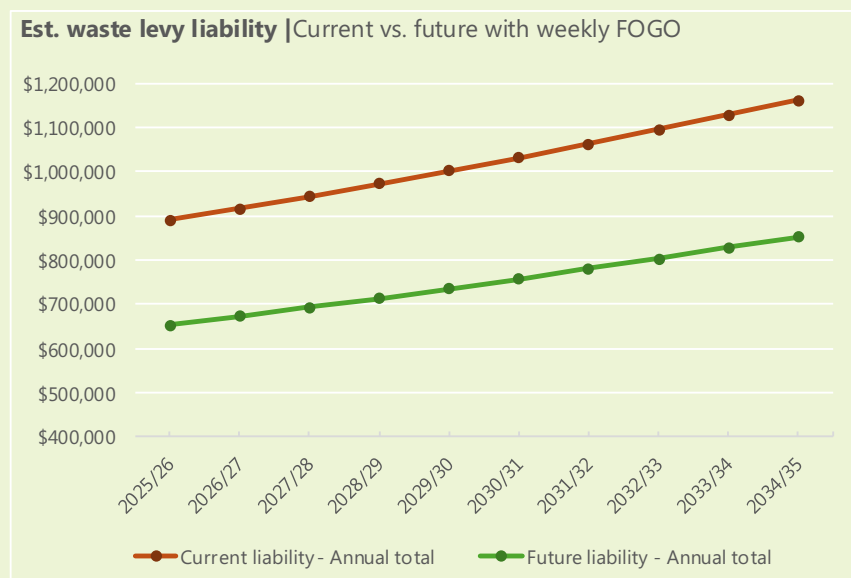


Figure 5: Estimated impact of the waste levy on AHC over ten years.

3.3. Timing of a broader rollout

East Waste have indicated that they need a minimum of 12 months between a formal Council resolution to proceed with a broader weekly FOGO rollout and commencing the new schedule. This provides the notification required for budget processes, acquiring collection vehicles and balancing service delivery amongst the eight member councils.

Considering this its current commitments, the earliest East Waste could begin deliver a broader rollout for AHC is August 2027.

4. Considerations and recommendations of a broader rollout

The expanded weekly FOGO trial has helped to provide further information on logistics and costs of collection and been successful from a community and environmental perspective:

- The incredibly low opt-out rate (0.6%) indicates that the community has adapted, and only a small proportion (10%) need additional support.
- AHC can become one of the highest performing councils in SA and achieve what business as usual services and education cannot.

The main consideration for AHC is whether a broader rollout to all townships and the associated budget impacts can be supported. Based on our experience of AHC's weekly FOGO trials (and other trials and transitions across SA) we suggest Council consider the below pathway:

1. Continue weekly FOGO for Tuesday townships.

- This provides continuity and allows further insights into collection logistics/costs and performance across a longer period.
- Allows time for a resident survey to gain further feedback.
- The current budget provided by East Waste (subject to review in June 2026), will mean an estimated cost of \$64,000 to continue for FY 2026/27 (Table 8).

Table 8: Est. additional costs to maintain weekly FOGO in Tuesday townships in FY 2026/27

	FY 2026/27 Estimate
Additional collection costs	+ \$92,000
Disposal/processing savings	- \$28,000
Total	\$64,000

2. Make a decision to expand weekly FOGO to other collection days based on current information of performance and service costs.

- A formal Council decision prior to June 30 will allow AHC to secure an East Waste commitment to an expansion date early in FY27/28.

3. Explore opportunities and commence planning to reduce the impact of kerbside costs.

- Complete further analysis on ways to reduce net cost of expanding weekly FOGO, which could include:
 - the impact of service charges for opt-up and opt-out services.
 - exploring adjustments to other waste management services and their impact on the broader waste management budget (e.g. free green organics drop-off days, hard waste).
- Commence Waste Policy update.
- Commence weekly FOGO expansion planning and schedule with East Waste.



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