

have
your say

Draft Waste Services Policy Engagement Report

June 2026 | Version 1.0



PORT MACQUARIE
HASTINGS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Draft Waste Services Policy outlines the responsibilities of Council and residents in regard to waste management, collection and services in our Local Government Area (LGA).

This updated policy covers service provisions and service levels, an explanation of waste related fees and charges, waste management at events, and requirements for new services and new developments. It also outlines Council's formally adopted position on waste management.

Community engagement was necessary to ensure the community was aware of the proposed changes and afforded the opportunity to provide feedback. The draft policy and specific changes were listed in a Draft Waste Services Policy 2026 Changes document on the Have Your Say page.

The public exhibition was open from 7 May to 3 June and resulted in three submissions, 91 page visits and 47 document downloads.

Key themes related to:

- Requests for greater clarity regarding waste service entitlements, including eligibility for weekly 240-litre red bin collections and access to recyclable green waste bags
- Concerns about the management of waste vouchers, including opposition to voucher expiry dates and support for refunds or rollover credits for unused vouchers
- Desire for a more flexible and adaptable policy framework that can accommodate site-specific circumstances
- Concerns that prescriptive waste collection requirements may unnecessarily constrain development potential, particularly for medium and higher-density housing
- Preference for an outcomes-based approach to waste management that focuses on achieving policy objectives rather than strict compliance with prescribed standards
- Interest in ensuring waste collection arrangements are practical, efficient and minimise impacts such as excessive bin presentation on kerbsides
- Emphasis on balancing effective waste management outcomes with broader planning and development objectives.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The role of community engagement was to ensure the community was aware of draft policy and what it means to them. Predominantly via Council's Have Your Say online portal for a period of 28 days, from 7 May to 3 June 2026.

As well as being invited to make a submission and/or upload supporting documents, HYS survey respondents could read the draft policy and a document outlining the specific changes being proposed.

Spectrum of participation

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council undertakes engagement using the industry standard IAP2 Spectrum of Participation which is designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines Council's promise and the community's role in the decision-making process.

Following the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) matrix, the level of engagement ranged from inform to consult. This means we sought to:

- Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the draft policy
- Obtain feedback on analysis, alternative and/or decisions.

Our commitment from this process was to:

- Keep the community informed.
- Listen and acknowledge concerns and aspirations.
- Let the community know how their input has influenced decisions made in finalising the design.

ENGAGEMENT BREAKDOWN

Timeline

DATE	ACTION/MILESTON
7 May 2026	Public exhibition opened/Have Your Say page published
7 May 2026	Email notification of new engagement opportunity sent to 207 recipients
26 May 2026	Article in Have Your Say e-newsletter, sent to 5,191 subscribers
3 June 2026	Public exhibition closed/Have Your Say page closed
16 July 2026	July Ordinary Council meeting to consider adoption of policy
Late July 2026	Close the loop with submitters

Summary of Have Your Say engagement

Have Your Say (HYS) is Council's primary online engagement tool. For this engagement project, community members were able to access vital information and submit feedback.

Total number of submissions	3
Total number of page visits	91
Total document downloads	47

RESULTS SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Submissions focused on both the practical application of the proposed Waste Management Policy and the need for greater flexibility in its implementation. One resident sought clarification regarding eligibility for weekly 240-litre red bin collections under the proposed policy and requested further information about access to recyclable green waste bags.

Questions were also raised about the operation of waste vouchers, with concerns that vouchers funded through rates should not expire. One submission suggested that unused vouchers should either be refundable or carried forward as a credit into future financial years, similar to protections that apply to prepaid gift cards.

Another submission highlighted concerns that the policy may be overly prescriptive in its application to development proposals, particularly medium and higher-density residential developments.

The submitter noted that site-specific circumstances may mean strict compliance with policy requirements does not always deliver the best waste management outcome and could limit development potential anticipated under existing planning controls.

In particular, concerns were raised regarding requirements for developments containing more than six units to be serviced by private onsite collection arrangements. The submission suggested that alternative approaches, such as shared bin collection systems or modified collection arrangements, may in some cases achieve equal or better outcomes while reducing the number of bins presented on kerbsides.

Results summary/conclusion *continued* >

Overall, submissions identified a need for clearer information on service eligibility and policy provisions, as well as greater flexibility through delegated authority to consider alternative waste management solutions where they can demonstrably achieve the policy's objectives.

Key themes included fairness for ratepayers, practical service delivery, and the importance of an outcomes-based approach that accommodates varying site conditions and development contexts.

NEXT STEPS

The Draft Waste Services Policy will be tabled at the July 2026 Ordinary Council meeting for adoption.

Information on Council meeting dates, agendas and public forum speaking opportunities can be found at: <https://www.pmhc.nsw.gov.au/Your-Council/Council-meetings>

DISCLAIMERS

Feedback collected across all engagement activities is presented in summary form - key themes have been identified across all submissions and de-identified, and verbatim feedback is appended.

About verbatim feedback

De-identified, verbatim feedback is appended in some instances. Feedback that is not appended is summarised in this report, with verbatim responses shared with the project team and tabled with the Council Report for this project.

Community members can request to view verbatim submissions, any requests will be considered by our Governance team prior to release.

Data analysis and generative AI

Key themes throughout this report have been identified using generative artificial intelligence (AI). For the purposes of this report, generative AI refers to a system that can create content based on the data that we provide.

Prior to using AI our team would create a code frame (a list of themes) to tag feedback. This manual process is an effective method on smaller, single focused engagement projects (such as local playgrounds). It is not effective for use on engagement projects of this scale.

Benefits of using AI

Using AI to analyse large amounts of free text feedback in community engagement reporting offers significant benefits, including:

- Efficiency and speed: AI can process and analyse vast amounts of text data much faster than manual methods.
- Scalability: AI tools can handle large datasets without a loss in performance, making it feasible to analyse feedback from extensive community engagement activities like the Draft OP2024-25.
- Consistency and objectivity: AI provides consistent analysis, reducing the biases that can occur with human interpretation and ensuring uniformity in data evaluation.

Considerations in the use of AI

Perception of bias: AI models only work on the data that is inputted, and this may be perceived as under-representing marginalised groups or minority views.

Relying solely on AI for community engagement may overlook the importance of human interaction, empathy, and relationship-building in fostering trust and understanding within the community.

Attempts to address this are made through additional instructions. Further analysis of the AI-generated data provided is also undertaken to combat potential bias.

Human-centred engagement

AI is a tool that can assist the engagement reporting process. We are committed to human-centred engagement throughout our community across a range of engagement methods.

All themes generated using AI have been reviewed and interrogated to ensure that the sentiment represents the feedback received.

Privacy

No identifying information was included when using AI to analyse feedback.

Council staff work to a Code of Conduct and in accordance with our legislative requirements. This includes the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW), the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) and the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW). Further details are outlined in Council's Privacy Statement and Privacy Management Plan Policy.

These are available on Council's website, along with the Legislative Compliance Policy.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: HYS Verbatim responses

Identifier	Description
#12552	I live in Wauchope and have been a ratepayer at the same residential (House) address since 1983. I have 2 questions: (i) Am I correct in assuming that if the draft policy is passed, I will be eligible to put out a 240-litre red bin each week at no additional charge? Please clarify the information provided on page 23, Appendix 1. (ii) From where does a ratepayer get recyclable green waste bags?
#12522	Waste vouchers should not have an expiry date as they have been paid by the rate payer. A refund on unused vouchers should be available, or a credit be carried on the following financial period. This is similar to shopping prepaid gift cards which do not have expiry dates by law.
#12420	There needs to be some flexibility and delegation introduced for a nominated manager or director to allow for variations to the provisions outlined in the policy that still achieve the policy objectives, especially relating to developments. Each site is different and achieving strict compliance with the policy may not always result in the best outcome for the site and ultimate occupants and will sterilise significant development potential envisaged in the adopted planning controls, especially for sites targeting higher density. As an example, at the moment the policy requires any development comprising more than 6 units to be serviced by a private onsite collection arrangement with the collection truck to enter and exit in a forward direction. A proposed private shared bin collection arrangement or alternate collection day from the kerb for a 10-unit complex could result in less bins on the kerbside than a 6-unit development with individual bins collected by the kerbside service. Introducing some flexibility and delegated authority for variations into the policy would enable consideration of various options that would achieve a better or similar outcome envisaged by the policy objectives.

Appendix C: Communications example

The image below is from the Have Your Say e-newsletter, which was sent to 5,191 subscribers on 26 May 2026.

Policy updates



Draft Waste Services Policy 2026

Council is seeking feedback on the [Draft Waste Services Policy 2026](#), which outlines the responsibilities of Council and residents in relation to waste management, collection and services across our region.

The updated policy covers waste service levels, waste-related fees and charges, waste management at events, and requirements for new services and developments.

Submissions close 5pm, 3 June 2026.

Have Your Say



Draft Providing Funding & Support to the Community Policy

Council has a long-standing approach to supporting community organisations through a combination of grants, donations, subsidies, in-kind support and rate-based assistance.

[This policy](#) has been reviewed to incorporate a more consistent and transparent approach, strengthening our ability to support community organisations.

Submissions close 5pm, 22 June 2026.

Have Your Say

Port Macquarie Hastings Council

BIRPAI COUNTRY

pmhc.nsw.gov.au

Email council@pmhc.nsw.gov.au

PO Box 84 Port Macquarie NSW 2444

    Tel **02 6581 8111**

Socials [@pmhcouncil](#)