

Auckland Council – Draft WMMP 2024 submission

Our view

The Glass Packaging Forum advocates for best practice collection methodology which maximises the quality and quantity of glass available for recycling. As an industry organisation whose members are committed to circular outcomes for their packaging, we urge Auckland Council, as part of its Draft Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2024 to say haere rā to comingled, kerbside glass collection and embrace proven best practice for recovering glass of the highest quality and value.

Aiming for circular resource use at the highest value

We note on page 10 of your draft WMMP that you aspire to be zero waste by 2040 by working towards a circular economy and using resources for their best and highest value for as long as possible.

Data from Auckland Council kerbside collections and end-market use, reported in the Glass Packaging Forum's annual accreditation report 2022-23, clearly shows that Auckland Council's continued reliance on comingled collection is leading to exorbitant loss of recyclable material due to contamination.

Comingled collection represents the persistence of a 20th Century collection methodology focused on waste management, rather than circular management and moving up the waste hierarchy.

Comingled collection not only increases the cost of recovering glass due to slower sorting and processing, it also means a higher proportion of glass is lost through contamination. Recovered glass is of lower quality, with a corresponding lower value to end markets than glass sourced from single material streams.

We also note that in your 2023 submission to the Ministry for the Environment, as part of their Transforming Recycling consultation, you advocated for reducing contamination through comingling, to ensure higher return and compaction rates of glass within collection.

Auckland can shift the dial on glass recovery and recycling in Aotearoa New Zealand

A city the size of Auckland, where about one third of Kiwis live, moving to a separate, colour-sorted-at-kerbside glass system would be a major win for glass recycling, and Aotearoa New Zealand's entire circular economy. Our members are eager for the GPF to support the council to make this transition in any way it can, working alongside you and your collection partners and communities.

While your draft WMMP advocates for a national container return scheme, a CRS doesn't account for the growing tonnage of glass in food product packaging, rather than beverage. A CRS would essentially create a two-tier system, where one shape of glass packaging has more value to the consumer than another, undoubtedly leading to confusion for your ratepayers when sorting their waste streams. This risks increasing the amount of glass needlessly ending up in landfill.

In addition, the creation of a CRS is not on the government's agenda at the moment. Our members see this as an opportunity to develop an extended producer responsibility model for all glass

packaging. This is reliant on councils doing their part to ensure the quality, volume and value of collected glass can be optimised for recycling. We will work alongside councils on delivery of this and would love Auckland Council to be part of that conversation.

We are passionate about working with our council partners, and our communities, to create more and greater diversion opportunities for glass. This means also leveraging our existing collection infrastructure – which includes your kerbside collection service.

Benefits of a separate glass stream

Collecting glass separately from other recyclables and sorting it by colour yields the best quality for recycling. That means:

- A higher percentage of recycled glass can be used in making new glass
- A decreased need for virgin materials, and the carbon emissions from their processing and transport, and
- Reduced carbon emissions as the glass furnace can run at a lower temperature with recycled material
- This collection method also greatly reduces the chance of other recyclables becoming contaminated by broken glass.

While we admire your strong advocacy and drive to minimise waste within the Auckland region, ultimately a container return scheme would divert less tonnage of glass than a separate kerbside collection in New Zealand's biggest city. There is a simple solution to minimising Auckland's glass waste and we urge you to consider implementing it.

While separate glass collection represents a financial cost in the short-term, we need to consider the environmental costs for our mokopuna, our communities, in the long-term.

Support for voluntary product stewardship

We note your support for voluntary product stewardship schemes, where regulated ones do not exist, which support best practice and where producers and consumers contribute to the cost of recovery and recycling. (Advocating for implementation of a container return scheme and other mandatory product stewardship actions 7.3). This is the GPF's purpose, and on behalf of our members we are keen to engage with Auckland Council on how our voluntary scheme can support your switch to best practice and fairly share in the costs.

Maintaining the status quo will not suffice. We can all play a part in tackling Auckland's waste challenges, so we warmly welcome an open, robust conversation with Auckland Council on this matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Salmon", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dominic Salmon
Scheme Manager
Glass Packaging Forum