

Discussion Paper for Community Waste Meeting with HSC

Time: 4th of August 5.30pm to 7.30pm

Venue: Berowra Community Centre – Balcony Room

Address: The Gully Road, Berowra

Berowra Waters Proposed Domestic Waste Levy – Questions for Community Consultation

The purpose of this paper is to encourage an informed and constructive discussion about the proposed domestic waste levy for Berowra Waters, at the meeting. Residents of course may have their own questions. This summary is just recommendations based on the Local Government Act of 1993, that gives council the right to cover waste collection costs – and then form a discussion strategy that is aligned with the legislation there using to justify the new levy.

The Key Question

The Local Government Act 1993 has enabled councils to impose domestic waste management charges for many years. If that legislative power has existed since 1993, residents may reasonably ask:

“What has changed that now requires a separate levy for Berowra Waters, and how has the proposed charge been calculated?”

Why the imposition more than 30 years after the legislation, why now and how **exactly** is it calculated.

Service Design Before Cost Recovery

The term Service Design is an important term for dealing with council and a term used by councilors in deferring the levy at the previous council vote.

Good public administration generally follows a simple process:

1. Define the service required.
2. Design the most efficient way to deliver that service.
3. Calculate the actual cost of the optimised service.
4. Determine how that cost should be funded.

The important question is not simply “What does the service currently cost?”

It is:

“Has Council demonstrated that the proposed levy is based on the cost of delivering the service as efficiently as reasonably possible?”

Questions for Consideration

- Has Council undertaken a formal service design review before determining the proposed levy?
- As of Tuesday the 28th of July bins included:
- **West side:** four large red dumpster style red bins and large yellow dumpster, overflowing with commercial recycling
- **East side:** five large red dumpster bins and four yellow
Totalling : 9 large red bins and 5 yellow bins.
- For the removal of waste and recycling for 150 households, 3 times a week stated seems excessive. Can council provide evidence of the how this likely service over-delivery has been built into the proposed levy?
- Is there an opportunity to reduce the frequency of this specific service now or in the future?
- Were alternative collection methods or delivery models evaluated to reduce real costs?
- Can Council demonstrate that all reasonable efficiency opportunities were considered before determining the final amount?
- What specific circumstances have changed to justify introducing the levy now?

Why This Matters

Berowra Waters is a unique community with unique logistical challenges. Those challenges justify a different approach to waste collection. **However, they do not remove the requirement for council to demonstrate that the service has been designed efficiently, that costs are transparent, and that the proposed levy represents fair value for residents.**

As a community, just saying we use or petrol to deliver our rubbish centrally does not mitigate council's right to levy fees on actual costs – no matter how late.

A Constructive Consultation

Community consultation works best when decisions are supported by clear evidence and open discussion. Residents are encouraged to ask respectful evidence-based questions, and insist in participating in the consultation process.

Next Steps After Consultation

The HSC executive team is presenting back to council in October 2026. A couple of important points. Council has the right to back date the levy back to July 2026. Our point could reasonably be that putting up 2 signs and two cages does not constitute tailored service design or the levy costing transparency that is required under the 1993 Act.