

13 July 2023

Local Government Board
GPO Box 123
Hobart Tasmania 7001

Delivered by email: submissions.LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au

To the Board

Response to ‘The Future of Local Government Review – Stage 2 Interim Report’

Copping Refuse Disposal Site Joint Authority (CRDSJA), which trades as Southern Waste Solutions (SWS), is a Southern Tasmanian waste management authority established in 2001 under Section 30 of the *Local Government Act 1993 (the Act)*. It is jointly owned by Clarence City, Sorell, Tasman and Kingborough Councils (Participating Councils). SWS operates the Copping Landfill and the Lutana Waste Transfer Station and provides waste management services for a network of metropolitan and regional transfer stations, including local government facilities, servicing approximately 50 per cent of the Tasmanian population.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the ‘The Future of Local Government Review – Stage 2 Interim Report’ and to contribute to your final Stage 3 recommendations. In particular, we would like to take the opportunity to provide you with detail of how we are providing best practice waste management services to local governments across the east and south of Tasmania through a collaborative shared service model.

Current Local Government Customers

It is important to recognise that while SWS is owned by four participating councils, it handles waste volumes from 10 of Tasmania’s 29 municipalities.

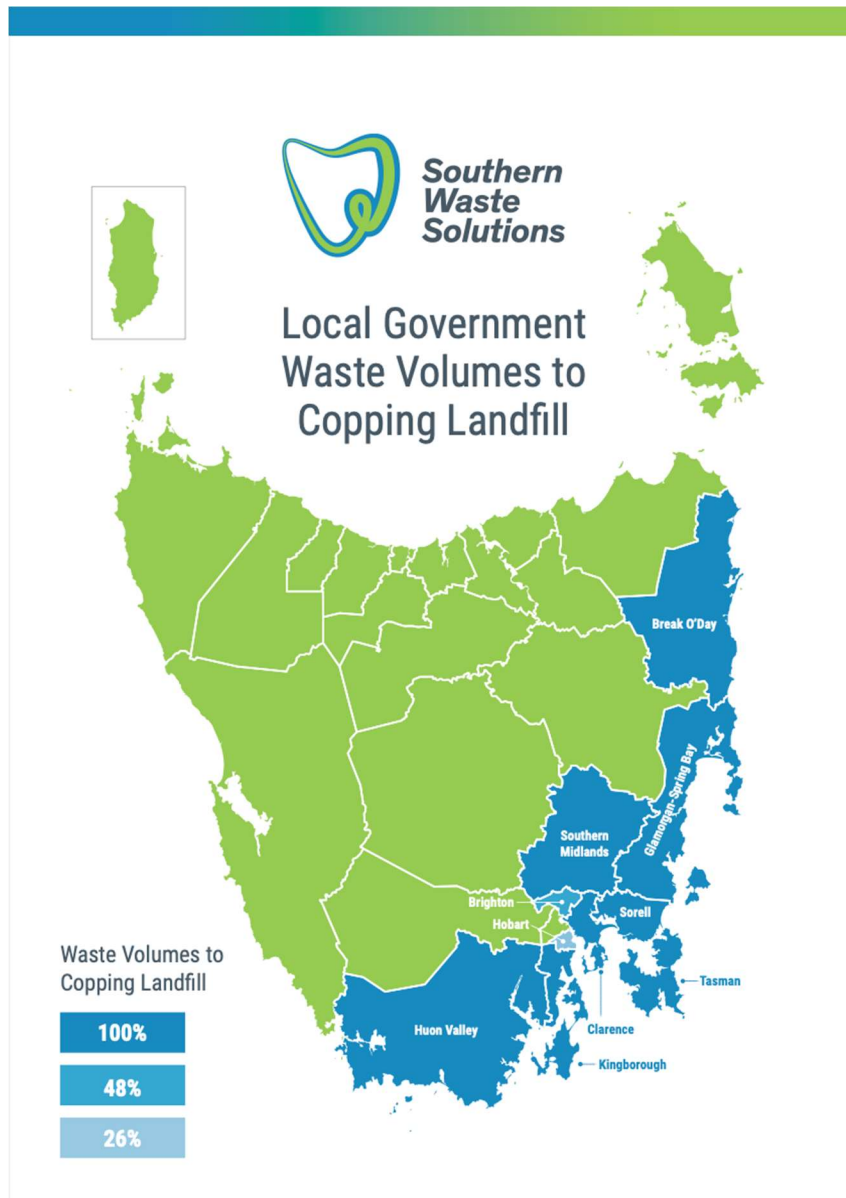
With the strategic direction and agreement of CRDSJA, SWS offers reduced waste disposal rates to all local government customers. This has been done to minimise costs to ratepayers and allow councils to continue investing in best-practice waste management solutions in their communities.

SWS’ unique relationship with its local government customers has been built on reliability, trust and its understanding of the issues faced by local government.

This tailored approach has resulted in the steady growth of our customer base. In 2001 SWS serviced just three local government areas (City of Clarence, Sorell Council and Tasman Council). Since then we have expanded our membership to include Kingborough and our customer base has grown to include Break O’Day Council, Brighton Council, Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, Huon Valley Council, the City of Hobart and Southern Midlands Council.

An estimated 500,000 tonnes of waste is landfilled in Tasmania annually, with local government municipal solid waste (MSW) making up 31 per cent of that volume. Through our current local government customer base, SWS disposes of 45 per cent of all MSW generated by local governments in Tasmania.

Image 1 – Local Government Waste Volumes to Copping



Participating Councils

The culture and demonstrated actions of both Participating Councils and SWS are geared towards operating the Copping landfill waste facility for the strategic benefit of the entire local government sector.

As outlined earlier in this submission, all councils, regardless of their ownership status, have access to lower rates than our commercial customers.

SWS does not return a dividend to Participating Councils currently. Instead, profits are being reinvested to improve the sustainability and diversity of our operations, ultimately allowing us to better service all our customers.

The CRDSJA welcomes the opportunity for further collaboration and tailored solutions across all councils, which can be achieved without the need for mandates or intervention. .

Long Term Waste Management Options

SWS continues to proactively engage with councils to provide support that meets their individual needs. We understand that each community has different goals and transition timelines, and are well positioned to provide services to each as it winds out of its current facilities and waste arrangements.

SWS is currently in discussions with Glenorchy City Council and the City of Hobart about how Copping landfill can meet their long-term waste disposal needs beyond the closure of their respective landfill facilities at Jackson Street and McRobies Gully.

We are also in early discussions with Derwent Valley Council about the imminent closure of its facility at Peppermint Hill and how it can affordably access disposal services at Copping.

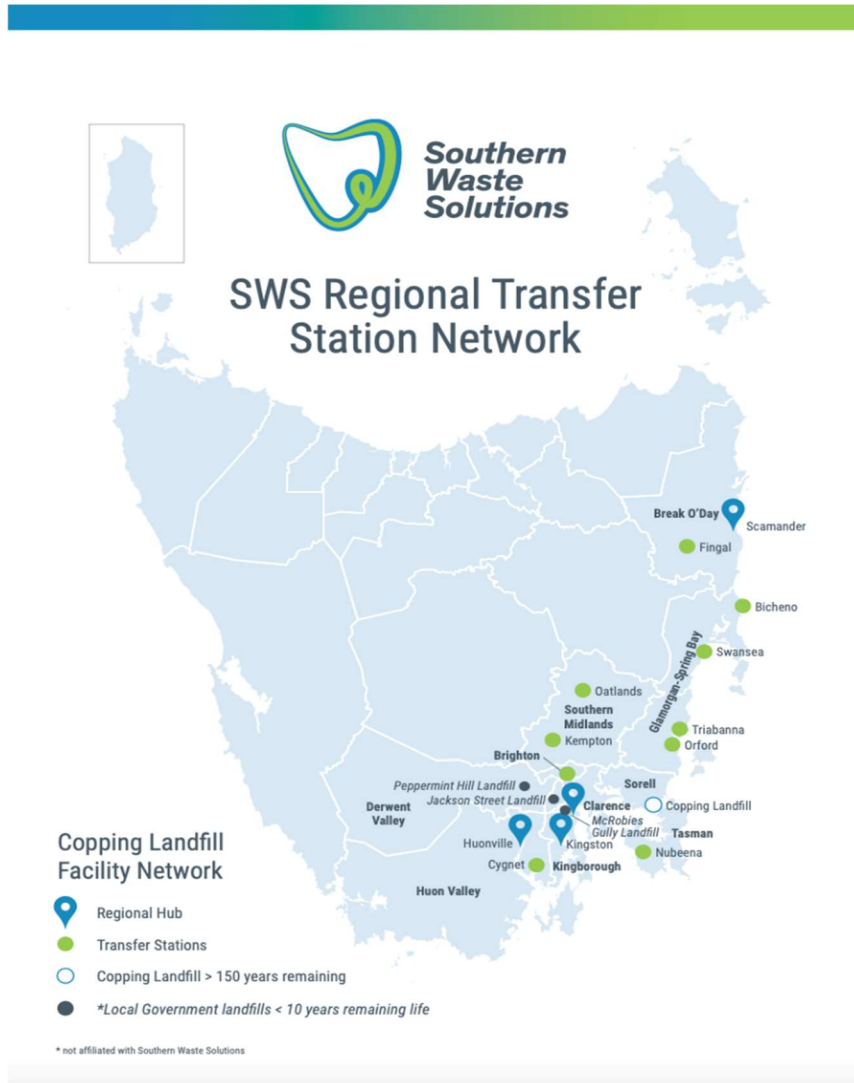
Our strategy is to expand our customer base through demonstrable best practice processes and by delivering efficient and affordable services to our customers.

Local Government Logistics Network

SWS takes a leading role in the provision of cost-effective and efficient logistics support for local government customers. By pooling service requirements across the network of bulk-up facilities that feed into Copping landfill, we are able to procure logistics support at market-leading rates.

The economies of scale of this interconnected network allow us to deliver a cost-effective, environmentally beneficial logistics solution.

To support our logistics model we utilise custom-made, large-volume, waste trailers that allow us to maximise transportation efficiency through larger volume loads and reduced vehicle movements. This delivers cost savings on transport and environmental benefits through a reduction in carbon emissions.



Our Stewardship of Copping Landfill for the Community

SWS understands its responsibility to ensure equitable and long-term access to best-practice waste disposal, not only for our Participating Councils, but for our large local government customer base.

We work closely with EPA Tasmania to meet our permit obligations and are proactive in our engagement with the regulator to manage current and capacity, and any emerging issues.

With the imminent closure of the three remaining local government-owned landfills in the southern region (Jackson Street < 13 years, McRobie’s Gully < 7 years, Peppermint Hill < 3 years), Copping landfill will remain the only commercially and environmentally sustainable Category B landfill to service the needs of the communities in the east and south of Tasmania. With over 175 years of remaining life, Copping Landfill is operated as a best-practice, nation-leading, premium facility.

In addition to our Category B landfill, SWS operates Tasmania’s only hazardous waste Category C Cell. SWS identified the need for this facility in Tasmania; took the initiative to plan and develop it; and underwrote its construction. The facility is now acknowledged as leading best practice in Australia.

This is a primary example of SWS leveraging its strengths to address the evolving environmental issues in Tasmania. Similarly, it leverages innovation and new technologies to sustainably and safely manage waste in landfill. SWS takes its responsibility to proactively invest in the environmental and financial viability of our operations extremely seriously.

We are committed to sound stewardship of our facilities to ensure our local government customers can access to cost-effective, environmentally sound options for waste disposal for generations to come.

Future Focussed Solutions

SWS is fully supportive of the *Waste and Resource Recovery Act 2022* (the Act) and the ongoing transition to a circular economy. As part of our ongoing commitment to providing additional benefits to our local government customers, we are investing in a bespoke organics facility to support the recovery of food organics and garden organics (FOGO).

SWS is currently in the process of procuring a state-of-the-art covered organics processing facility that will process organic waste into compost and other soil regeneration products. We plan to leverage our existing waste disposal network to support the recovery of FOGO, including in local government areas that are not catered for in current and planned organics processing projects.

Our decision to step into this gap has been spearheaded by our Participating Councils and guided by our ethos and commitment to provide our customers with best-practice municipal waste solutions.

We strongly believe this significant endeavour will allow all our local government customers to participate equitably in the pursuit of the circular economy and SWS' long-term goal of reducing waste going into landfill.

To support new customers and future waste recovery initiatives that may emerge in Tasmania, SWS is revising its master plan for both Lutana and Copping sites. Our aim is to ensure these strategically-important sites are optimised to provide long life solutions for Tasmania.

We actively recover metals and intend to explore opportunities to recover construction materials. Our revised master plan for Lutana will accommodate a dedicated resource recovery processing line.

Conclusion

In summary, while SWS plays a crucial role in handling commercial waste volumes, we are, first and foremost, a council-owned business that exists to deliver benefits to all customer councils and the communities they represent. SWS will continue to strive to deliver best practice waste management facilities and services regardless of future local government boundaries, noting that we already support a majority of councils in Southern and Eastern Tasmania

We are open to conversations about meeting the needs and aspirations of communities. We will continue to support our existing Participating Councils and provide waste services to other local councils and commercial customers through any transition period.

Yours sincerely



Dr Christine Mucha
Chair Southern Waste Solutions