ORDINARY MEETING 25 NOVEMBER 2026	5.9

RESOURCE RECOVERY 2040 ADVISORY GROUP

CIA | 81/1/13-03 | #7770572

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. **Endorse the establishment of the Resource Recovery 2040 (RR2040) Advisory Group;**
2. **Endorse the Terms of Reference of the Advisory Group;**
3. **Endorse the invitation to seek membership of the Advisory Group from identified stakeholders;**
4. **Endorse the appointment of [insert Councillor] as Chairperson and [insert Councillor] as Deputy Chairperson of the Advisory Group;**
5. **Endorse the extension of Council's existing Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategy to December 2028 to align with completion of the Advisory Group work program and development of a new Waste Strategy; and**
6. **Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with *the Local Government Act 2009* to finalise all matters associated with the establishment and operation of the Advisory Group.**

INTERESTED PARTIES:

The proposed membership of the Advisory Group is expected to include representation from the following sectors and stakeholder groups:

	Industry/Sector	**Stakeholder**
1	Local Government	Cairns Regional Council
2	State Government	Local Members of Parliament
3	State Government	Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDIP)
4	State Government	Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI)
5	Industry / Business	Advance Cairns
6	Industry / Technical	Representation to be determined
7	Industry / Technical	Representation to be determined
8	Industry / Technical	Representation to be determined
9	Advocacy Group	Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC)
10	Advocacy Group	Local Authority Waste Management Action Committee (LAWMAC)
11	Government Advocacy	Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)

Note: The identification of interested parties is provided on a best endeavours basis by Council Officers and may not be exhaustive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report seeks Council endorsement to establish the Resource Recovery 2040 (RR 2040) Advisory Group to guide the re-development of a long-term strategic roadmap for waste management and resource recovery across the Cairns region. The Advisory Group will provide a collaborative forum through which Council, industry, government and other stakeholders can contribute to the development of future waste and resource recovery solutions that align with both community and industry needs.

The Advisory Group will investigate and evaluate opportunities to increase recycling, reduce landfill dependency, develop circular economy initiatives, establish long-term infrastructure pathways, and identify practical and affordable solutions that deliver environmental, economic and community benefits.

To ensure sufficient time for stakeholder engagement, technical investigations and strategic planning, it is also proposed to extend the review period of the current endorsed Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategy 2018-2027 until December 2028, allowing the outcomes of the Advisory Group to directly inform the preparation of a renewed long-term Waste Strategy.

BACKGROUND:

Council is responsible for providing waste management and resource recovery services to the Cairns community and must ensure these services remain affordable, sustainable and responsive to future legislative, environmental and community expectations.

In recent years, significant changes have occurred across the waste and resource recovery sector, including increasing landfill levy costs, emerging circular economy opportunities, changing regulatory requirements, advances in processing technologies, and growing community expectations regarding recycling and reducing waste to landfill.

Council's current endorsed Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategy 2018-2027 is nearing the end of its term and has provided a strong framework for service delivery and planning to date, however, the scale and complexity of future challenges requires a broader strategic review that a delivers a modern, integrated waste and recycling system that supports a circular economy.

A Resource Recovery 2040 Plan is proposed to provide a strategic roadmap that informs the development of a renewed Waste Strategy 2028-2040. Focusing on resource recovery infrastructure, increasing recycling, reducing waste to landfill, circular economy initiatives, organics processing opportunities, regional partnerships and emerging technologies. The RR2040 Plan will also examine pathways to minimise Council exposure to future landfill levy increases and maximise economic opportunities associated with resource recovery.

The establishment of an Advisory Group is proposed as a key component of the stakeholder participation and engagement framework to guide the development of the RR2040 Plan and provide recommendations for Councils consideration.

COMMENT:

The development of the RR2040 Plan will integrate technical investigations with stakeholder collaboration to ensure Council receives balanced advice regarding future waste management and resource recovery opportunities.

The proposed Advisory Group will provide a structured forum to:

- Guide development of a RR2040 Plan that informs the renewal of the Waste Strategy 2028-2040;
- Identify and evaluate recycling and landfill diversion opportunities;
- Investigate infrastructure requirements associated with future waste management services;
- Consider opportunities associated with circular economy development and value-added resource recovery initiatives;
- Develop implementation pathways supported by measurable performance indicators and monitoring frameworks; and
- Provide recommendations to Council regarding preferred strategic directions and implementation priorities.

Consistent with Council's previous Water Efficiency Strategy Advisory Group process, the RR2040 Advisory Group model enables stakeholders to participate in shaping future strategic directions while recognising that final decisions remain with Council.

The Advisory Group will operate as an advisory body only and will have no decision-making authority. Its role will be to provide advice and recommendations to Council based on technical information, stakeholder perspectives and community values.

Council is seeking membership for the Advisory Group from identified stakeholders, including representatives from industry, and government. These stakeholders are directly engaged in waste management and/or represent a broad range of interests, which will provide Council with diverse perspectives on the affordability, acceptability, and practicality of proposed measures. Engaging these representatives will ensure the strategy reflects a wide range of concerns, enhancing its overall effectiveness and community support.

The Terms of Reference (ToR), provided in the attachments, outline the structure, roles, and responsibilities of the Advisory Group, ensuring clarity on the group's function and scope of authority. This ensures a clear governance framework for the group’s operation, enhancing transparency and accountability throughout the process.

Given the breadth of investigations proposed completion of the advisory process is expected to extend through to around March 2028. Aligning the review and renewal of the current Waste Strategy with this timeframe will avoid duplication of effort, ensure strategic continuity and allow the next strategy to be informed by the Advisory Group's findings and recommendations.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (Recommended):

That Council:

1. Endorse the establishment of the Resource Recovery 2040 (RR2040) Advisory Group;

2. Endorse the Terms of Reference of the Advisory Group;

3. Endorse the invitation to seek membership of the Advisory Group from identified stakeholders;

4. Endorse the appointment of [insert Councillor] as Chairperson and [insert Councillor] as Deputy Chairperson of the Advisory Group.

5. Endorse the extension of Council's existing Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategy to December 2028 to align with completion of the Advisory Group work program and development of a new Waste Strategy.

6. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the Local Government Act 2009 to finalise all matters associated with the establishment and operation of the Advisory Group.

Option 2:

Proceed with development of the Resource Recovery 2040 Plan through an internal Council process without an Advisory Group.

Whilst this approach may reduce short-term costs and project duration, it would limit stakeholder participation, reduce transparency, potentially diminish community support and restrict access to industry expertise.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

The proposed approach supports effective risk management by embedding a multi-tiered governance structure that ensures oversight, accountability, and informed decision-making throughout the development of the RR2040 Plan.

The Advisory Group will advise the Project Working Group (PWG), then through Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to Council. This structure enables coordinated management across engineering, engagement, and executive streams, allowing for early identification and mitigation of risks.

The participatory Advisory Group model also serves to proactively manage reputational, community, and implementation risks by ensuring the strategy reflects diverse perspectives and is relevant, reasonable, and broadly supported. This helps mitigate the risk of reduced public acceptance, delayed uptake, or ineffective behavioural outcomes.

In alignment with corporate risk categories, this approach addresses:

- Reputation – by demonstrating Council's commitment to transparency and community input;
- Governance and accountability – through clear roles and escalation pathways;
- Planning, managing, and maintaining infrastructure – by ensuring the strategy is aligned with long-term planning objectives;
- Financial management – by improving the likelihood of securing external funding through demonstrated stakeholder support; and
- Environmental and climate risks – by targeting increased recycling and reducing waste to landfill as a climate resilience measure.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

The development of the RR2040 Plan is aligned with the Operational Budget, with $250,000 allocated for the 2026/27 financial year and an additional $250,000 proposed in the draft 2027/28 financial year, bringing the total proposed budget to $500,000 subject to the budget adoption process. These funds will be used to support the establishment of the Advisory Group and development of associated resources, reports, plans and strategies.

The final cost estimates for the full project, incorporating both engagement and technical components, will be refined based on detailed input from the Advisory Group and the technical assessments as well as outcomes from any investigation work. These costs will be subject to review and adjustment as the project progresses.

Community and Cultural Heritage:

The RR2040 Plan will be developed to ensure its relevance and effectiveness by considering the needs and values of the broader community, including minority and Indigenous groups.

Natural Environment:

The proposed development process will focus on increasing recycling, reducing waste to landfill and supporting circular economy outcomes. These initiatives have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve natural resources, improve recovery of valuable materials and reduce environmental impacts associated with waste disposal.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

The proposal aligns with the following areas of the Corporate Plan 2025-2030:

- Focus 1 – Robust Economy – Supporting a diversified and growing economy
- Focus 2 – Natural Assets – Maximising resource recovery through innovative solutions, partnerships and efficient waste management
- Focus 3 – Design for Liveability – Deliver future focused planning that supports our tropical lifestyle
- Focus 5 – Focused Council – Informed decision making that is collaborative, transparent and accountable

The proposal aligns with the following areas of the Operational Plan 2026-2027:

- Commence Resource Recovery (RR2040) strategy development for long-term resource recovery initiatives, including stakeholder engagement and investigation of future waste and resource recovery opportunities

Statutory:

The development of the RR2040 Plan aligns with Council's obligations under the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011,* which requires local governments to prepare, adopt and implement a plan for managing waste.

Policy:

Not applicable

CONSULTATION:

Initial discussions have been undertaken with internal stakeholders regarding the proposed governance framework and scope of the Resource Recovery 2040 Plan. Formal stakeholder engagement will commence following Council endorsement of the Advisory Group and Terms of Reference.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Resource Recovery 2040 Advisory Group – Terms of Reference (#7663301)



Toni Veronese
Associate Director Service Delivery



Mark Wuth
Director Cairns Infrastructure & Assets

Terms of Reference (DRAFT)

Resource Recovery 2040 Advisory Group

1. Mission Statement

To guide the development of a Resource Recovery 2040 (RR2040) Plan that provides a strategic roadmap for Cairns that sets out short, medium and long term actions that are affordable, practical, compliant with relevant legislation, effective and acceptable for serving customers in the Cairns Region local government area.

2. Scope

2.1 Inclusions

The Group will:

a) Collaboratively generate waste and recycling options, actions and initiatives that are relevant to the Cairns region, palatable to customers, and reflective of the needs of the community.

b) Develop a prioritised listing of waste and recycling options, actions and initiatives that considers outcomes from Council's technical expert's evaluation of expected benefits (e.g., increased recycling, less waste to landfill) and disbenefits (e.g., economic and financial costs).

c) Guide the development of a RR2040 Plan that informs the renewal of the Waste Strategy 2028-2040, including a broad implementation plan that is realistically achievable for Council and the community. The implementation plan will include a:

- Grouping of prioritised options, actions and initiatives into programs or packages to enable efficient and effective implementation.
- Monitoring framework for tracking and reporting.

2.2 Exclusions

a) Decision-making:
- The Group will provide advice and recommendations to Council.
- As such, the Group has no decision-making authority and must respect and abide by any subsequent decision of Council.

b) Pricing models:
- While it is important that the Group has regard to the role of pricing structures and pricing in influencing usage, it is not the role of the Group to decide on pricing models.
- Council reserves the right to decide on any changes pricing models.

c) Levels of Service:
- The Group is not required to review or consider adjustments to Council's Levels of Service framework and performance targets.
- The existing framework and targets may be used to evaluate the financial and economic benefit resulting from implementing the plan.

3. Objectives

The Group will guide the development of a RR2040 Plan that:

a) Is suitable to the Cairns situation, palatable to customers, and reflects the needs of the community.

b) Clearly demonstrates the value proposition for investing ratepayer and other public funds into its implementation.

c) Recommends the short to medium term actions required by Council and longer-term options of benefit to the Cairns Region.

In developing the RR2040 Plan, the Group shall address the following aspects:

- Outcomes of past waste and recycling actions and initiatives implemented by Cairns Regional Council under previous and current campaigns and programs.
- Comparison of waste and recycling performance indicators for Cairns with the Qld Government Targets and other Qld Local Govts in a statistically robust and relevant manner.
- Develop, consider and prioritise potential waste and recycling options, actions and initiatives that may include:
    - Infrastructure Plan: Assessment of regional infrastructure gaps, land use zoning constraints, precinct planning, viability of large scale facilities and capital expenditure priorities for transfer stations, material recovery facilities and energy recovery facilities.
    - Organics Business Case: Review and guide the economic and financial modelling, feedstock and end market analysis, technology selection, collection system selection, and procurement pathways to assess the viability of an organics collection and infrastructure roll-out.
- Serve as the primary advisory body shaping the development of Council's renewed long-term Waste Strategy 2028-2040.
- Develop an implementation plan for the RR2040 Plan involving set targets for increasing recycling and reducing waste to landfill that is realistically achievable for Council and the community:
    - This implementation plan will include grouping of prioritised options, actions and initiatives into programs or packages to enable efficient and effective implementation.
    - It will also include a monitoring framework of measurable performance metrics to ensure the RR2040 Plan enables the renewed Waste Strategy to meet or exceeds State and Federal targets.
- Demonstrate the value proposition to Council for investing ratepayer and other public funds into implementation of the preferred strategy.

4. Deliverables

The Group will:

a) Guide the development of a report detailing recommendations for the Resource Recovery 2040 Plan.
b) Guide the development of a recommended Resource Recovery Infrastructure Plan with identified candidate sites for the establishment of a resource recovery facilities in the Cairns Region.
c) Guide the development of an Organics detailed business case with recommended investment options
d) Contribute to compiling documentation of industry and customer research, and any community consultation activities.
e) Participate in communication activities associated with the awareness, education, engagement and communication phases of the project.

5. Program

This Group will form in March 2027 and will deliver the report to Council by March 2028. To achieve its objectives, the Group will meet at four (4), to six (6) week intervals throughout this period.

6. Operational Guidelines

- Group members will be required to act impartially and represent the interest of the broader community above their personal interests. Whilst they have a role in providing specific sector or interest group opinions, Council must on balance, strive to meet the needs and aspirations of the whole community.
- Should any conflict of interest arise it is the obligation of the Group member to declare that conflict and act accordingly or as directed by the Chair.
- For the Group to function effectively, members are required to demonstrate due diligence by their preparation for, attendance at, and participation in Group meetings.
- All parties shall ensure they act in good faith and apply principles of reasonableness and fairness with regard to the presentation of issues and/or concerns, solutions, and suggestions within the Group forum.
- Cooperation, collaboration and respect between members are to be the foundations for the conduct within the Group.
- The Group will work towards a consensus decision-making style. Requirements for a quorum will be confirmed at the first meeting.
- The Chair shall determine the agenda in conjunction with Council's Project Working Group. Council's Project Working Group will compile and circulate the agenda to the members prior to each meeting and attend to all meeting arrangements.

7. Meeting Procedures

The following meeting procedures will guide the meetings:

a) All meetings must have an agenda forwarded prior to the scheduled meeting.
b) The meetings will be chaired by the appointed Chair.
c) Minutes will be kept and circulated for endorsement by the Group at the next meeting. Minutes are to include the recording and ongoing review of Action Items (including Action, Person Responsible, and Target Completion Date).
d) Meetings will be held in person during Council business hours at Council Chambers, 119-145 Spence Street, Cairns.
e) Meetings are open to all Councillors to attend. However, voting rights will be reserved for Group members.
f) Meetings are not to be open to the general public, with the exception of any invited guests.
g) Capacity to invite guests is to be discussed with the Chair.
h) Meetings are to be conducted in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct.
i) Meetings are expected to last approximately 3 hours each. In addition to this time commitment, members of the Group will need to be prepared to read material prior to meetings.If a Group member is unable to attend a meeting and cannot send a proxy, at least 48 hours of notice would be required before the meeting time.

8. Communication

Effective communication and reporting channels are imperative to the Group making resolutions. The following forms of communications will be used: minutes, discussion papers, and email.

a) Discussion Papers
   - Pre-reading material will be disseminated approximately five (5) days prior to Advisory Group meetings.
b) Minutes
   - Comprehensive minutes will be kept at all meetings and will be distributed prior to the next meeting.
   - These minutes will be circulated with any relevant discussion papers for the next meeting.
c) Email
   - To reduce paper wastage and improve delivery times, email will be used, where possible, in the distribution of minutes and discussion papers.
   - All Group correspondence will be forwarded electronically in PDF.
   - Any member not having access to email will be forwarded hard copies of information by post.
d) Stakeholder Communication
   - Group members are expected to communicate relevant information to their respective stakeholders and provide feedback to the Group where appropriate.

The following guidelines apply to matters of communication and management of information:

a) All dealings will be in accordance with the requirements of the *Information Privacy Act 2000* and the *Right to Information Act 2000*.
b) The views of Group members will be treated with respect and will not be discussed with external parties.
c) The Group's considered views or recommendations will be communicated through the Chair to Council's Project Working Group.
d) All communication with media will be undertaken by Council, unless otherwise agreed to by Council.
e) Group members must refrain from making any public comment or issuing any information, in any form, concerning the Group or the matters of interest to the Group, without the authority of Council.
f) No member of the Group may speak or act on behalf of the Group, except for the Chair.
g) No member of the Group may speak or act on behalf of Council.
h) Group members must, at all times, act in the best interests of Council.
i) Approved formal communication from the Group to the community, such as social media posts, written correspondence, newsletters, and questionnaires, must be endorsed by Council prior to issue.
j) Communication to the community on topics of discussion can be undertaken by individual members on behalf of themselves at any time. Group members should ensure that they differentiate between the views of the Group and individual views.
k) Group members must undertake to communicate the Group majority views and not pursue personal interests to the disadvantage of the Group.

9. Remuneration

No remuneration will be provided to members, but any reasonable costs advised and approved by Council in advance may be reimbursed upon provision of appropriate receipts.

10. Administrative Support

Administrative and logistical support will be provided by Council.

11. Termination

It is envisaged that the Group will continue until delivery of its report to Council by March 2028. Notwithstanding the proposed term of the Group, Council reserves the right to conclude the Group at its discretion, subject to consultation with the members.

Membership of individual members may be terminated by consensus of the Group due to conduct contrary to these Terms of Reference and the general spirit of the endeavour.

Should a member's circumstances change regarding their role in the stakeholder group being represented, the Group shall determine by consensus whether their membership is upheld or annulled.