

Bin Tagging FAQs

What is the bin audit education program about?

The Southern Metropolitan Regional Council (SMRC) is implementing a bin audit and education program on behalf of the Town, as part of the rollout of the new 3-bin FOGO system. The program is aimed at educating residents about how to use the new system and providing them with individual feedback to improve their efforts at home.

Recycling is a shared responsibility, and by everyone working together to ensure they put the right thing in the right bin we can help create a high quality, clean compost, less landfill and reduced processing costs.

The bin audit and education program is modelled on a South Australian program and has also been successfully carried out in a number of WA councils. The process of bin auditing is about educating households through direct contact with the residents, without intending to invade the privacy of those properties.

Community Waste Education Officers will make a visual inspection of the bin's contents on collection day, before placing a tag on the handle of the bin which provides feedback about how well residents are using the bins or what can be improved. This feedback can also help to clarify any misconceptions or confusion residents may have about the new bin system, and offers positive reinforcement to households sorting their waste correctly.

What do you look for when you inspect the bins?

Community Waste Education Officers will check each bin presented for collection for contamination (wrong items in the bin), such as recyclables in the General Waste bin, or contamination in the FOGO and Recycling bins.

After each inspection Officers will place a 'happy' or 'sad' tag on the handle of the bin.

Officers will not be 'rummaging' through the bins, rather they will be aiming to gain a general overview of how the household is sorting their waste.

Bins are only inspected to the point of determining the kind of items in the bin and Officers will not be looking at any resident's personal information.

If you are concerned about placing personal information in your kerbside bins at any time we recommend shredding or tearing up sensitive documents before placing them into the appropriate bin.

What kind of feedback will I receive?

The tags are designed with happy and sad faces to indicate whether the bins are being used correctly or incorrectly, and will be in line with the bin lid colours – green for the FOGO bin, yellow for the Recycling bin and red for the General Waste bin.

For example, if the FOGO bin is inspected and is free of contamination, you will receive a green tag with a happy face thanking you for doing the right thing.

If items are placed into the wrong bin a sad face tag will be attached to your bin with details of which items were placed into the wrong bin and how to put the right thing in the right bin.

What information is recorded, and how is it used?

For each inspection Officers record details of any contamination present in each bin and the level of contamination. After data is collected from each round of auditing it will be analysed as a whole and results reported on a community rather than individual scale.

Information about what is being placed in each bin is important for us to understand the key issues that need to be focused on when educating the community.

What happens if households keep putting the wrong things in the bin? Will they be fined?

The program will focus on education rather than enforcement, and similar programs in other Local Government areas have shown most residents are interested in doing the right thing when it comes to separating their waste if they are given the correct information.

In a small number of cases where residents' bins show repeated high contamination following several visits, the bin will not be collected. A tag informing the resident that the bin was not able to be collected will be attached to the bin, listing the contaminants and requesting they be removed. The bin will also be taped shut to let waste truck drivers know not to empty it.

The program is largely focused on education; however, the Town may have to further follow up any serious ongoing issues.

How are the areas selected for the program?

Areas chosen for audits will be both targeted and chosen at random, to ensure feedback to households is fair and consistent.