

STOP WASTING OUR MONEY

COLIN JAMES



Adam Faulkner, head of Northern Adelaide Waste Management Authority, at their material recycling facility at Edinburgh North.

How you can help save \$20m a year by recycling properly

POOR bin behaviour by South Australian households is creating \$20m each year in extra waste management costs, according to industry experts.

Incorrect use of general rubbish, recycling and green waste bins continues to present widespread problems, and councils across the state are embarking on public education campaigns.

Contamination remains the biggest issue with yellow bins, while too much food waste is being put into red or blue bins which should be going into green bins.

East Waste chief executive Rob Gregory said Adelaide households annually sent enough food waste to landfill to cover Adelaide Oval to a depth of 5m.

Mr Gregory said a recent audit by East Waste – its biggest ever – had shown three quarters of food put into red or blue bins – instead of green bins – was edible.

“Keeping food waste out of the landfill bin and putting it into the green organics bin presents one of the biggest environmental and economic opportunities we have,” he said.

Various official programs are being carried out in a bid to reduce the weight of red and blue bins going to landfill by diverting food waste and other organic material to green bins. The State Government is seeking public input on a strategy to encourage more households to put their food waste into green bins, which are taken to privately-operated plants to produce compost.

Reducing the weight of rubbish transported to landfills – which charge gate fees – has become paramount as local government struggles with rising costs for waste management.

Councils are paying almost \$200 for each tonne of rubbish taken to landfill following dramatic increases in the Solid Waste Levy introduced late last year by the State Government.

It is calculated the levy increase – from \$100 to \$143 a tonne – already has cost councils an extra \$30m, while poor kerbside behaviour is adding another \$20m each year.

Mr Gregory said East Waste – a consortium operated by seven councils – had estimated Adelaide councils could save \$13.5m a year if food and organic material such as hair, bones, tissues and paper towel went into green bins, instead of red and blue bins, which go to landfill.

“Another \$2.5m could be saved if all recyclables went into the yellow bin rather than the landfill bin, which gives a total saving of around \$16m just if we recycled properly,” he said.

And \$4m could be saved if households stopped putting contaminated material into yellow bins, taking the total potential savings to \$20m.

“We need to reduce contamination within the yellow bin in order to maximise the next use of the resources ... in that waste stream,” he said.

Providing uncontaminated recycling material was crucial to the success of the so-called “circular economy”, which creates products made from recycled glass, plastic, paper, cardboard and metal.

Mr Gregory said there needed to be more South Australian participants in the state’s “circular economy” to ensure there was a market for material put into yellow bins.

“Ideally, we want this circularity occurring wholly within South Australia where we are managing and processing our own waste resources and deriving the economic benefits and jobs that come with this,” he said.