

WASTE COLLECTOR PERMIT FEE IMPLEMENTATION

NOVEMBER 2025



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection the Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wadawurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin have to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We are committed to our reconciliation journey, because at its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, for the benefit of all Victorians.

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Executive summary

The City of Melbourne engaged with waste operators, businesses, residents and visitors to inform the implementation of the new Waste Collector Permit Fee for commercial waste vehicles operating in the central city.

Across all engagement activities, there was strong agreement that waste operations in the CBD need improvement to reduce congestion, noise and visual clutter. However, there was significant opposition to the proposed fee and concern about its potential impacts on small businesses, operational flexibility and recycling outcomes.

Stakeholders called for greater transparency, clearer communication and closer collaboration between Council and the waste sector. Participants supported education programs, digital tools and accreditation systems as fairer and more effective approaches to improving compliance and amenity.

Key insights include:

1. Financial impact – widespread concern that the cost will be passed to small businesses and customers.
2. Implementation clarity – requests for detailed guidance on enforcement, fee use and permit transferability.
3. Operational efficiency – interest in shared bins, route coordination and digital management systems.
4. Fairness and collaboration – preference for co-design with industry and consistent treatment across vehicle types.
5. Amenity outcomes – residents prioritised clean laneways and frequent collection; operators emphasised practical limits to servicing hours.

Overall, participants supported the goal of a cleaner, safer and more efficient CBD, but sought a more transparent, flexible and cooperative approach to implementation.

Project purpose

The City of Melbourne sought feedback on the implementation of the new Waste Collector Permit Fee, which introduces an annual \$5,500 per-truck charge for commercial waste operators servicing the central city. The consultation aimed to ensure the new system supports efficient waste operations, improves city amenity, and balances the needs of businesses, residents and the waste industry.

The engagement focused on how the fee should be implemented rather than whether it should proceed, and explored opportunities to improve efficiency, equity and transparency within the permit system.

Engagement approach

Engagement was conducted between 15 August and 12 September 2025 and included:

1. Online survey via Participate Melbourne (45 participants)
2. Two stakeholder workshops facilitated by an external facilitator
3. Seven written submissions from waste companies and the Victorian Waste Management Association (VWMA) (inclusive of submissions from the Budget 2025-26 consultation)
4. Targeted promotion and direct outreach to waste operators, CBD businesses and resident groups
5. Promotional activities included Participate Melbourne and City of Melbourne website updates, direct emails to over 2,000 permit holders, and distribution of postcards via Business Concierge.

Participants

Feedback was received from a broad cross-section of stakeholders:

1. Waste industry representatives including major and small operators, and industry bodies such as VWMA
2. Businesses operating in the CBD, including hospitality, retail and service providers
3. Residents living in the CBD and surrounding areas

4. Visitors and community members with an interest in central city amenity

Participation was self-selecting and reflected those most affected or interested in waste collection practices within the central city.

Key themes

Feedback across engagement activities highlighted broad agreement that improvements are needed to address current amenity and operational issues in the CBD. However, there was opposition to the proposed permit fee and concerns about its potential impacts.

The main themes were:

Financial impact – concern that fees will be passed to businesses and consumers, disproportionately affecting small operators and local traders.

Transparency and communication – requests for clarity about how the fee was calculated, how enforcement will occur, and how funds will be used.

Operational efficiency – support for shared bins, route coordination, and digital tracking to reduce duplication, congestion and noise.

Collaboration and fairness – calls for greater engagement between Council and the waste sector, and a level playing field across industries using heavy vehicles in the CBD.

Amenity management – mixed views on balancing noise, congestion and cleanliness, with residents prioritising frequent waste collection to prevent litter and odour, and operators emphasising practical limits to service times.

What we heard

Waste industry

1. The fee was widely regarded as excessive and inequitable, particularly for smaller companies.
2. Stakeholders questioned the link between the fee and amenity outcomes, noting that fewer trucks may result in overflowing waste and illegal dumping.
3. Operators called for transferable permits, grace periods for vehicle breakdowns, and digital systems to reduce administrative burden.
4. Strong support was expressed for an accreditation or prequalification system to recognise compliant operators and address rogue behaviour.
5. Many requested co-design of education or enforcement programs with industry, rather than punitive fees.

Businesses

1. Businesses supported the goal of a cleaner city but raised concerns about costs being passed down from collectors.
2. There was interest in shared bin services or aligned collections to reduce truck numbers.
3. Participants called for improved recycling and organics infrastructure, noting challenges with space and accessibility in laneways.
4. Several raised the need for more collection parking zones to ease congestion and speed up services.

Residents

1. Resident feedback focused on noise, odour and laneway clutter, with late-night truck movements a key complaint.
2. Some supported stricter permit conditions, including controls on reverse beepers and incentives for electric or quieter vehicles.

3. Others feared the fee might reduce collection frequency, worsening overflowing bins and odour issues.
4. Many called for stronger monitoring and enforcement of waste contractor behaviour.

Visitors

1. Visitors reported noticing safety risks, congestion and clutter caused by waste trucks and bins in public areas.
2. Many supported incentives for recycling and the use of electric vehicles.
3. Some questioned whether Council's investment in waste services should already cover these issues, given rates revenue.

Submissions

Seven formal submissions were received from industry, including VWMA, which echoed the key concerns and recommended:

1. A graduated or cooperative approach to reform, including joint education programs
2. Review of the fee structure and rationale, including consideration of a per-business rather than per-truck model
3. Stronger enforcement of rogue operators rather than blanket fees
4. Clarification on how the fee aligns with state policy requiring four-stream recycling, which will increase truck movements.

Workshop insights

At two facilitated stakeholder meetings, participants explored alternative approaches, including:

1. Zone-based collection models to reduce duplication
2. Fee reductions or credits for low-impact or accredited operators
3. Amenity fines for poor practices, reinstating a previous enforcement approach
4. Education programs for businesses to consolidate waste services and separate materials properly
5. Stakeholders expressed willingness to collaborate on solutions that improve efficiency and amenity outcomes, provided the approach is transparent and equitable.

Overall insights

Across all engagement activities, participants shared a strong desire for a smarter, collaborative system that addresses CBD waste challenges without penalising responsible operators or small businesses.

Key insights for implementation include:

1. Build trust and transparency through clear communication and co-design with industry
2. Focus on education, technology and accreditation to drive behaviour change
3. Ensure enforcement targets rogue operators, not compliant businesses
4. Balance fee recovery with practicality, equity and service outcomes.

Next steps

Feedback gathered through this consultation will inform the Waste Collector Permit Fee Implementation Plan, including how the fee structure, permit conditions and supporting initiatives are refined.

Further engagement with industry representatives, residents and businesses may occur as part of detailed design to ensure the system achieves its goals of reducing waste impacts, improving city amenity, and supporting a sustainable, fair and efficient waste collection network.

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