



When the Landfill Runs Out: Managing enterprise risk through a major waste facility transformation

Maitland Resource Recovery Facility

maitland
CITY COUNCIL

The Project in one minute

The Maitland Resource Recovery Facility is Council's primary waste facility.

It currently supports:

- Local waste disposal
- Resource recovery
- Customer drop off services
- Waste operations for a growing city

Stage 3 transitions the site from landfill to transfer, recovery and bulk haul.



The catalyst

Council had been planning around landfill exhaustion in **2031**.

In mid-2025, updated landfill volumetric advice revised that forecast to **2028**.

That changed the project.

Not the scope.

The risk profile.

From important to time-critical

The revised landfill life compressed the delivery window.

Council had to reassess:

- Delivery model
- Resourcing
- Governance
- Procurement strategy
- Legal and probity support
- Executive prioritisation
- Structured post tender negotiation pathway

The response was to change the controls around the project.



What Stage 3 must deliver

Stage 3 must enable the site to:

- Receive waste locally
- Separate recoverable materials
- Prepare residual waste for transport
- Load bulk haul vehicles
- Connect waste and recyclables to external destinations
- Continue operating after landfill exhaustion

This is not just infrastructure.

It is the replacement operating model.





The risk event

The risk event is not:

“The project is delayed.”

The risk event is:

“Council cannot maintain waste services when landfill capacity is exhausted.”

Potential consequences:

- Emergency haulage
- Higher costs
- Reduced control
- Customer disruption
- Reputational pressure

Business case as risk posture

The business case was not just an investment decision.

It was a risk decision.

Strategic choice	Risk posture
Do less	Lower capital, higher dependency
Build minimum transfer capability	Lower flexibility
Invest in integrated transfer and recovery	Higher control and resilience

The business case determined how much future risk Council was prepared to carry.



Whole of program critical path risk

The critical path is broader than construction

The highest risk is not one catastrophic event. It is misalignment across connected workstreams.

Workstream	Critical dependency	Risk if late
Approvals	Modification and conditions	Construction cannot commence
Commercial	Clarification, negotiation and award	Weak contract baseline accepted
Design / plant	Detailed design and plant integration	Commissioning interface risk
Construction	Live site staging	Service disruption or safety risk
Offtake / transport	Destinations and haulage model	Waste has no where to go
Operations	Workforce, SOP's and systems	Facility not operable
Transport	How does it get there?	

Infrastructure on time is not enough.

The operating model has to be ready with it.



Safety, insurance and front-end assurance

Key risk disciplines were brought forward to settle the front end.

Key controls included:

- Safety in Design at concept stage
- Live SiD register into detailed design
- Independent cost estimate
- Insurance review of concept design
- Technical investigations
- Approval pathway alignment
- PPR and scope uplift

The cheapest time to manage risk is before the market prices hit and operations inherit it.





Procurement as risk management

Stage 3 is a coordinated procurement program.

Procurement is not just how Council buys the project.

It is how Council decides:

- what risk sits with Council;
- what risk sits with the contractor;
- what the market is actually willing to price;
- what assumptions need to be closed before award; and
- whether the contract baseline is strong enough to administer.

The goal is not maximum risk transfer.

The goal is clear, intelligent risk ownership.



When not awarding became the risk control

The D&C tender process confirmed market capability.

But it also exposed unresolved risk in:

- price and affordability;
- scope inclusions and exclusions;
- Schedule of Rates assumptions;
- contract departures;
- value management options;
- design and operational assumptions; and
- final value for money.

Council's risk control was not to force an award to protect the program.

Council resolved to decline the tenders in their current form and move into a structured negotiation process.

Sometimes the strongest risk control is deciding that the project is not yet award ready.



Principal-side control matters

Major projects do not de-risk themselves after contract award.

Council still needs to actively manage:

- Scope clarity
- Design reviews
- Approval interfaces
- Contractor submissions
- Commissioning evidence
- Decision escalation
- Commercial and contract close out before award

A contract transfers delivery responsibility.

It does not remove the Principal's accountability for the outcome.



Operational readiness is the finish line

Practical completion is not enough.

The site is only ready when:

- Approvals and lienses are in place
- Contracts and transport arrangement are live
- Plant and systems are commissioned
- Staff are trained and SOPs approved
- Waste can move to confirmed locations
- Customers experience continuity

The project finishes when the operating model works.





What other councils can take from this

1. Define the real risk event
2. Settle the front end
3. Treat new information as a trigger
4. Resource the client side properly
5. Treat procurement as risk management
6. Make operational readiness part of the critical path

A register is not the risk management.

The decisions are.



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