

Going Green in Maribyrnong

Green waste collection is an optional fortnightly collection service for residents in the City of Maribyrnong in Melbourne’s inner west. Council wanted to understand if there were cultural dimensions to the take-up of the service with a view to targeting particular communities with culturally-relevant communications to promote the service.

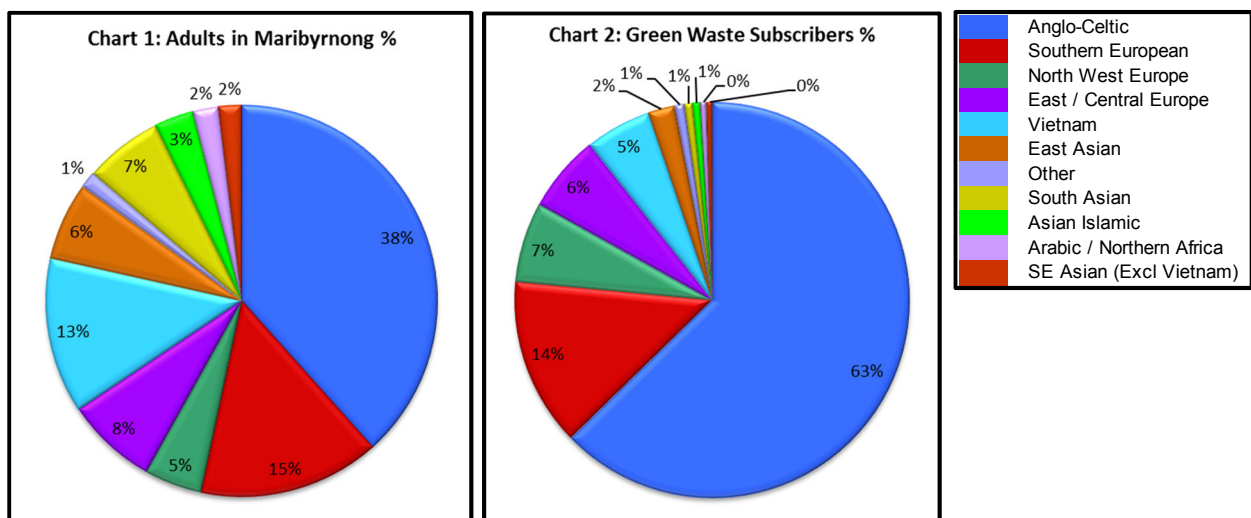
The approach was to ‘tag’ current subscribers by using the Origins name recognition software, and then to compare the profile with the profile of the Maribyrnong community, also profiled using Origins. We validated the Origins profile of Maribyrnong residents with results from the ancestry question on the census. Considering they are measuring cultural background in different ways, there was a surprisingly good alignment between the two and certainly enough to justify the use of Origins.

Maribyrnong is one the most culturally diverse local government areas in Australia and, when compared with Australia as a whole, has a significantly lower proportion of people with an Anglo-Celtic background. At more than 12 percent, Maribyrnong also has one the highest concentrations of people with a Vietnamese background.

We found that current green waste subscribers are significantly weighted towards people of an Anglo-Celtic background. Almost 63% of subscribers are of an Anglo-Celtic background although they only make up 38% of the Maribyrnong population.

By comparing the relative percentages, we find that a person with an Anglo-Celtic name is 15.6 times as likely to be a green waste subscriber as a person with a South Asian (mainly Indian and Sri Lankan) background, and almost five times as likely as a residents originating from East Asia (mainly China and Korea).

Combining people with Anglo-Celtic background with those originating in North West Europe shows that they are 5.2 times as likely to be green waste subscribers as people from non-European CALD backgrounds.



Insight gained from this work will facilitate greater efficiency in Maribyrnong's communication strategy, thereby minimising costs through better targeted communications.

The pay-off from increasing the take-up of subscribers is substantial. The potential cost savings and environmental benefits of minimising the amount of waste going to landfill are significant.

Tipping costs of around \$3.7m in the current year. Coupled with the burden of the Environmental Protection Authority landfill levy \$53.24 per tonne (an increase from \$9 per tonne since 2008), this provides every incentive for Maribyrnong to improve the management of green and recyclable waste.

Furthermore, organic waste in landfills is a substantial contributor to greenhouse emissions. This is because anaerobic conditions below ground produce methane which creates 21 times the emissions per tonne compared with carbon dioxide. Reducing the amount of organic waste significantly cuts emissions contributing to the CO₂ reduction goals of Council.