

Waste system to clean up city lanes

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Food waste normally left to rot in bins will be turned into soil conditioner under a new council scheme. *Photo: Justin McManus*

FOUL-smelling, rat-infested laneways could be a thing of the past under a new initiative by the City of Melbourne that will see food waste normally left to rot in bins turned into a soil conditioner to feed the city's parks and gardens.

Melbourne Town Hall has been trialling the recycling system, which reduces food waste by up to 90 per cent, since August last year. In that time it has converted 3000 kilograms of leftover food from functions held at the venue into a scent-free, dirt-like biomass that can be used to enrich soil.

In November, the unit was used at the President's Cup where the end product from tonnes of food scraps was later used on fairways at Royal Melbourne Golf Club.

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The City of Melbourne is looking to introduce a second system to be used by food vendors in the cafe precinct of Degraives Street.

If successful, the council will look to install more units in other popular food strips including Chinatown and Lygon Street. The plan is to use the byproduct on the city's parks and gardens.

The supplier of the unit, Eco Guardian, said that during peak periods, the Degraeves Street system could process up to a tonne of food waste a day.

Melbourne City Council Greens councillor Cathy Oke said the scheme would help clean up the city and significantly reduce the amount of food waste going into landfill.

"This is not just about making the streets cleaner, but about reducing the waste stream in the first place, and if we can then use this on our parks and gardens then we will really close the loop and have a totally holistic approach."

The scheme is part of the council's longer-term plan to rid the city of putrid rubbish. In July 2010, it introduced waste laws to help clean up the CBD.

The laws order businesses to remove bins from public spaces and store them inside their own premises or face \$1000 fines.

More than 1300 bins have been removed from the city's streets and laneways since the laws were introduced.

About 400 businesses, which have demonstrated that there are no other storage options, have been given permits to store bins in public, but must comply with strict standards of cleanliness.

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/environment/waste-system-to-clean-up-city-lanes-20120226-1two5.html#ixzz1nekGUrN7>