

## Waste and Recycling Inquiry

The failing of the Waste and Recycling management in Victoria is astonishing to say the least. To say that the Chinese sword was not anticipated is misleading the public. It was known about well in advance. They gave quite a long warning time. Yet the, manufacturing sector, waste industry and successive governments did very little about it. This would be classed as gross incompetence on a state wide scale. To simply let our waste be exported to developing nations and let the public believe Australia was recycling it waste is a terrible cover up that has been portrayed for years. We have been supporting some extremely appalling working conditions in those countries. Conditions that no one in Australia, would ever work in. Australia should have been working on it own waste and recycling systems with in the country to produce goods and services rather than put it on a boat and turn a blind eye. The state and Fed government (s) have been negligent in their responsibility to stop this and should have been providing incentives years ago for industry here to deal with our own waste. Had that been done, industry would have adapted to manage our waste here. Not only would this have generated jobs and infrastructure with in Australia, but we would be operating at a more sustainable level now with using products made from recycled plastic content. It would have also resulted in less pollution of this material ending up in rivers and waters around Australia.

Therefore now we have this huge problem and are sending tons and tons of what we call 'waste' to landfills in order to not stock pile it. This is not a solution and governments should be ashamed of themselves for letting this happen. Now we will have this problem for several more years till a true recycling or remanufacturing industry can be created and it will cost the tax payers a lot more due to the urgency to solve this problem. The importing and manufacturing industries have to be involved to get them to partially pay the price to get the waste from their products dealt with in a responsible manner. They have had a free ride for far too long and they need to pay their part. It is the waste from their products that is causing this problem.

Plastic waste is a very difficult particular problem. It is very different to metal recycling. Industry needs to be incentivised to seek using alternate materials where possible or pay a 'plastics usage tax' fee to help manage the waste from these products. The tax should be sized to make the use of single use plastic items not economic so these items get phased out. No matter how much government and industry talk about recycling, it is not a viable option in the end. Plastic cannot be recycled more than 2-3 times before the molecule is damaged enough to lose its original desirable material properties. Only clear plastic is attractive to be recycled on any scale. Coloured plastic has very limited recycling appeal, other than to make a few park bollards and benches from it. (Only a small fraction of the total waste volume is used for this anyway).

If a plastics usage tax or some scheme were imposed to rid us of single use plastic items and make it economically viable to recover and transport the more necessary plastic waste back to a central facility, then the decision has to be made what to do with it. Some of the clear material can be recycled and industry needs to be directed/incentivised to reuse that as much as they can. Only after then could a WTE be considered as a waste elimination/energy source be considered. In

Australia it is unlikely the heat generated would be used to provide public heat as in Europe. Then only energy from a WTE that would be used is from electricity generated. This efficiency is only around [14-28%](#). Hence a WTE plant has some benefits but it should only be used once all the 'valuable resources' have been recovered first. The term 'valuable resource' is itself a tricky term. A discarded plastic bag on the side of a road, or disposable cutlery washed in on a beach would not be considered as a valuable resource. That doesn't mean we should allow them to continue to be made and used assuming they will go to a WTE plant. A WTE plant should not be used as a means to get rid of all waste and allow manufacturers to keep on producing junk plastic items knowing they will be incinerated.

Some options that will be discussed will be

WTE plants. As above only limited application to part of the plastic waste

Compostable plastics. Unless the government funds the education of the public to sort their rubbish out and put Compostable plastics aside. This will only have limited success. It also would need to then fund the separation and collection of this particular waste as well as the infrastructure to collect it and take it to a commercial composting facility, if none of this is funded at a national level, then compostable plastics are not a viable option.

Landfill-biodegradable plastics. These have the most merit for making plastic waste go away over a 5-20 year time frame. It requires no separate infrastructure nor retraining of the public. Hence no extra funding by government is needed other than to push industry to this technology. It adds a minor cost to industry which they can absorb. It is not an option for plastic waste getting into the oceans however. This is a relatively new technology. See [BioGone](#) for an example of this being used in Australia.

Reduction. This is a big factor to promote. It generates less waste, less pollution, less manufacturing emissions and benefits the environment significantly.

Above all be honest and transparent to the public about what is going on, what the issues are and the solutions the government is proposing.

Thank you

Ross Headifen Ph.D

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