



The Secretary
Legislative Council, Environment and Planning Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

28 May 2019

RE: Submission to the Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

I write to outline my views in relation to matters before this inquiry.

Even before the collapse of the overseas market for Australian waste intended for recycling, it was patently obvious that a State-wide, indeed a national approach, to waste reduction and recycling was needed. At last this inquiry offers the opportunity for Victoria to vastly improve on the status quo. **Our state needs a comprehensive, efficient and environmentally sustainable approach to the reduction and management of our waste.**

Our community needs to be able to **trust that our recyclables are genuinely recycled**; communities near storage facilities need to be free from the risk of fires or spills that pose hazards to humans and wildlife; local industry deserves support to develop innovative solutions that can use the end products of waste to make new things that will have a local market and create local jobs with a range of skills; the waste levy should be used for its intended purpose and not be diverted into other aspects of the State budget.

Priority One: Coordinated measures to reduce waste – my most sincere hope

- First, **food waste is the number one form of waste**, so large-scale providers need to abandon practices such as disposing of fruit and vegetables that only conform to narrow specifications. Dumping perfectly edible food is an appalling waste of land, water and transport resources, driving up greenhouse gas emissions for no purpose.
- Second, a **state-wide Container Deposit Scheme** would mean clean sources of materials for industry to better utilise. In our volunteer community clean-ups, drink bottles and cans comprise 20 – 30% by volume of the items we pick up. The Spring Clean the City event in September 2018, hosted by Beach Patrol Australia/Love Our Street and Boomerang Alliance, verified this: drink containers were one-third of the volume of litter we collected from the CBD in a city that is cleaned by council every day!
- Third, we need a state-wide approach to **eliminating all forms of single-use plastics**: all carry bags (not only supermarket bags), produce bags, straws, drink cups, take-away and supermarket food containers and trays, cling wrap, cotton buds, balloons in outdoor spaces, plastic confetti/tickertape and flower petals often used in celebrations. Again, public education is needed alongside support for industry to

develop and promote alternatives to each of these. Governments at all levels can lead the way; procurement policies can support alternative products. Community events need to be regulated to ensure single-use plastics are replaced by sustainable alternatives. Think Melbourne Marathon, Moomba, football games, fairs and festivals, weddings/commemorations (educate celebrants)

- Fourth, products containing **microbeads must be banned** – cosmetics and industrial products. These have the potential to escape filtering and enter the environment, most likely entering water supplies in regional areas and fish that may end up being consumed by people.

Priority Two: Consistent State-wide recycling – eliminate confusion

Across municipalities, there is variation in the items that can be recycled. This creates confusion for residents who may move home or who work/shop/enjoy recreation in different places, increasing the risk of contamination of recycling streams. A **state-wide agreement and recycling code**, coupled with vigorous **public education** campaigns would assist in streamlining recycling.


All businesses or organisations, public and private should be **required to use recycling services** as part of their waste management practices. Incentives need to be provided for those who minimise their waste sustainably.

Priority Zero: Waste to energy – don't go there!

It would be of **concern if this inquiry favoured Waste to Energy** as a solution over other measures to reduce the impact of our consumption. This would mean that otherwise valuable resources go up in smoke, literally creating more greenhouse gases at a time when we urgently need to reduce them. No government should subsidise such a retrograde step.

I would be happy to answer any questions the inquiry may have.

Sincerely yours


Jill Sokol
Founder: Love Our Street
