



29 May 2019

Victorian Parliament Planning & Environment Committee  
 Inquiry into Recycling & Waste Management  
 Parliament House  
 Spring Street  
 EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002



Dear Committee

Thank you for the opportunity for Knox City Council to provide input into the Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management. Officers from Knox City Council have also contributed to the submission by Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and support the content of this report as reflective of the views of Local Government.

In addition to support for the MAV submission, Knox City Council would like to highlight some priority areas and feedback on behalf of our community, listed within each response area applicable to the Terms of Reference:

**TOR 3. Identifying short and long-term solutions to the recycling and waste management system crisis, taking into account:**

- a. *the need to avoid dangerous stockpiling and ensure recyclable waste is actually being recycle*
- b. *the cleaning and sorting capabilities and the processing capabilities in Victoria and the potential to expand the local recycling industry*
- c. *how to better enable the use of recycled materials in local manufacturing;*
- d. *the existing business model and economic challenges facing the existing industry;*
- e. *the quantifiable benefits, including job creation and greenhouse gas emissions reduction, of pursuing elements of a circular economy in Victoria;*
- f. *the existing Sustainability Fund and how it can be used to fund solutions to the waste crisis;*

Council response

**Investment of Landfill levy**

The landfill levy should be drawn upon to fund and facilitate the suggestions outlined in the MAV submission, particularly in the areas of:

- Comprehensive and widespread waste education and reduction campaigns;
- Support for new regional infrastructure such as new recycling processing and alternative waste processing facilities;
- A container deposit scheme program;
- Product stewardship type programs;
- Grants for Councils to align their bin infrastructure to Australian Standard Colours; and
- Grants for implementation of Food Waste recovery programs.

Now is the time to harness community interest and momentum and invest in these programs which are likely to attract widespread community support.

Among a suite of projects underway related to improving waste and resource recovery outcomes, Knox City Council is progressing to the Expression of interest phase for the collaborative procurement of Alternative Waste processing with participating Councils in the South East of Melbourne, and facilitated by the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG). While keeping an open mind to the project, and understanding the potential benefits, cost is likely to be a concern and a barrier for implementation.

Significant investment is required to move to a more preferable system than landfill, with any new facilities being key regional infrastructure. Similar to support provided for delivery of roads of regional importance, the Victorian government should strongly consider contributing to the funding of which will be key regional and essential infrastructure for our State.

**TOR 4. Strategies to reduce waste generation and better manage all waste such as soft plastics, compostable paper and pulp, and commercial waste, including, but not limited to:**

- a. *product stewardship;*
- b. *container deposit schemes;*
- c. *banning single-use plastics;*
- d. *government procurement policies*

Council response

**Circular economy**

Knox City Council strongly supports a move to a circular economy and looks forward to contributing to the Policy to be developed by the Victorian Government. This should be prioritised and developed as soon as practicable, to ensure implementation can commence.

This needs to be a whole of government approach, as the waste and resource recovery sector is impacted by numerous government portfolios, including regional development and resources; economic development; transport infrastructure; public transport, ports and freight; jobs, innovation and trade; roads; small business; training and skills; and, of course, energy, environment and climate change.

Sustainable procurement principles and practices need to be reviewed and implemented across all levels of government and industries to help drive this.

**More focus on reducing waste**

As part of the delivery of a circular economy, more needs to be done in the form of a broad and extensive education program that operates across Victoria, in collaboration with the Victoria Government, Councils, and other partners.

Similar to programs delivered to reduce water use initiated during the drought years, or TAC campaigns to make our roads safer, similar investment is needed for waste and resource recovery education, with a focus on reducing waste, and awareness building of waste issues.

Given the strong levels of community interest and support that is evident, now is a great time to do this.

Previous grants available to Councils which limit funding staff time are very prohibitive for Councils with limited staff resources. The scope of any grants available should be broadened to allow reallocation or recruitment of staff resources.

**TOR 6. Any other related matters.**Council response**Legislative tools**

Legislative tools should also be used to drive waste reduction and preferred recycling behaviours and practices. This could be in the form of product stewardship type programs, implementation of a container deposit scheme and plastic bag bans, and targets to reduce use of virgin materials in production where recycled material can be used.

Sustainable procurement also has an important role to play and targets could be implemented with key procurers across all levels of government.

Whilst understanding that some of these initiatives would be the role of Federal Government, more should be done to advocate and collaborate with other States to get action in these areas. Current gaps and overlaps limiting the progression on these initiatives should be worked through.

**Stronger leadership**

Councils are responsible for making decisions in the best interest of their communities. In years gone by, Councils managed their waste locally with landfills within municipal boundaries. Individual Councils making decisions for their own communities was appropriate.

Today, waste infrastructure and contracts are often regional in nature, and issues faced are often state-wide, and even international. Advancements needed as listed in this document will best occur with oversight by one independent body (such as a Waste Management Authority) with the funding and authority to make decisions and drive change.

It is the opinion of this organisation that many of the issues and gaps preventing real progress towards a better waste and resource recovery sector originates in the current lack of leadership or oversight of the Waste and Resource recovery sector as a whole. Whilst there are a lot of individual groups working in this space and making positive contributions, (such as DELWP, SV, WRRG's, Councils and not for profits groups), often there are overlaps and gaps, which results in a lack of progress.

This idea of an "Authority", already occurs in the area of roads, where local roads remain the responsibility of Councils, but Vic Roads are responsible for Arterial roads of regional significance. It is considered that a similar arrangement should be seriously entertained in regard to waste management.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission into the inquiry and look forward to receiving your findings.

Yours sincerely



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