

Sheriden Tate


May 30,2019

Committee Secretary
recyclinginquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

RE: Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

Dear Committee Secretary

My name is Sheriden Tate and I am a resident of Coolaroo in the municipality of Hume, I have been a resident of Coolaroo for 19 years and are a member of Broadmeadows Progress Association a local community action group.

I wish to make the following submission in regard to the Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

Illegal waste, stockpilers inappropriately managed recyclers and fires at these facilities have significantly impacted our municipality. I am extremely concerned about the impact this is having on the health and well being of my family, myself other residents, our environment and waterways and the ongoing threat from these facilities.

I am of the view the Victorian government has a duty of care to the people of Victoria, yet existing recycling and waste management laws and guidelines are failing to protect us. There is clearly a need for new mechanisms to effectively manage waste across our State to prevent ongoing environmental damage, negative health impacts and disasters in the future. The Victorian government needs to establish, fund and maintain a coherent, efficient and environmentally responsible approach to waste management. To enable this to happen I consider the following should be enacted:

Increase funding to and the powers of local councils.

Currently I am of the understanding that Councils power of entry is poor and requires notice; they have no power to order activity to cease. Councils require increased powers to act, the ability to enter sites without notice and the ability to stop illegal practice. Currently I consider there is insufficient staff to respond to and address complaints and issues relating to illegal dumping and stockpiling or ensure sufficient ongoing monitoring. For example there are only 4 council officers/inspectors who cover our municipality. Which is totally inadequate given the size of Hume (504 square kilometres)

Councils require more funding and resources to enable employment and training of additional staff including designated officers to close any gaps between council and EPA.

Significantly increase funding to and powers of the EPA

Additional funds and resources are also needed for the EPA to increase their capabilities. I put forward the following as examples that EPA does not have sufficient powers, funds, resources and staff to ensure their ability to act in a timely and effective manner, effectively hampering their capacity to address hazards and putting the community and environment at risk.

A recent news article <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-04-29/workers-expose-shocking-conditions-inside-melbourne-factory/11048346?fbclid=IwAR19Dir45C3fBRzfs3yQIW4ihGTfjNHEMgi7Ue4mIVhGAlc0b1w166f02v8> claimed EPA regularly gave notice to premises as to when they would be coming to inspect. I consider that to be problematic as forewarning allows companies the ability to hide inappropriate practices.

The proliferation of illegal stockpilers demonstrate the problems of not having systems in place that track waste from their source.

Whether chemicals, medical, construction waste, tyres etc there is an obvious need for a system that follows and tracks waste to ensure it is collected, processed and disposed of correctly.

The length of time EPA takes to act.

In regard to the recent fire at Bradbury Industrials their licence was for the storage of 150000 litres yet EPA did not act to suspend their licence until they had reached 400000 litres, when the fire occurred Bradbury's had 300,000 litres on site double what their licence allowed.

In the case of the Stawell tyre stockpile in August 2015 EPA issued 3 pollution abatement notices (PANs) that the owners chose to ignore for the next 2 years, resulting in the EPA taking charge of the site in August 2017 by which time the tyre dump had been sold to a Panama internet marketing company. The cost of the clean up and removal of the tyres from the site was then borne by the taxpayer.

The length of time it takes for EPA to take matters to court, as the following examples show it often takes 2 - 4 years.

<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/compliance-and-enforcement/epa-sanctions/prosecutions/search-prosecutions/prosecution-folder/bradbury-industrial-services-pty-ltd>

<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/compliance-and-enforcement/epa-sanctions/prosecutions/search-prosecutions/prosecution-folder/cma-recycling-pty-ltd>

There is a clear need for new and stricter legislation, better enforcing of existing legislation and increased powers to EPA, councils and other relevant agencies. To do this the Victorian Government must increase investment, funding and resourcing. One avenue for this is via the Victorian Municipal and Industrial Landfill Levy (MILL) - Sustainability Fund; this revenue stream should be the basis of adequately funding local government, EPA and other relevant agencies.

In regard to stockpiling there is a need for improved waste management and reuse of recyclables.

Many in our community are very concerned that in light of several episodes of closures of SKM and similar recycling facilities that recyclables are just going to landfill, one of the problems appears to be the contamination of recyclable materials that prevents them being reused. Sending what are useable commodities to landfill is a waste of precious resources and makes no economic sense.

This indicates a need to improve how waste is collected to avoid contamination and to facilitate better waste product for recycling.

Victoria needs a Container Deposit Scheme; South Australia has demonstrated Cash for Containers scheme work with their scheme working effectively for many years. Such a scheme in Victoria would assist in creating a cleaner recycling stream compared to comingled kerbside collection as well as discourage littering.

Other options could include making it mandatory to recycle.

Introduction of schemes for improved separation of recyclable materials to prevent contamination including separate collection days for PET, glass plastics, paper from general household waste, increased collection of recyclables but halve the number of

scheduled collections of residential waste. Halving the number of waste collection would encourage people to separate their rubbish more efficiently.,
Laws to ensure clear labeling of all plastics to show what recycling it category it comes under.

Phasing out of single use plastic takeaway items (coffee cups/lids, straws, cups and containers and cutlery by 2020 and a total ban on all plastic shopping bags.

On a commercial and industrial level the provision of incentives for source separation of commercial and industrial and construction and demolition waste could also facilitate better recycling practices. As well as incentives to use locally recycled products as opposed to buying new and overseas products such as glass bottles.

Investment is education to encourage more efficient and well-informed recycling practices and improve communities understanding of the effects of plastics pollution and their responsibility for the waste they create

As a deterrent the introduction of enforceable legal obligations for all households, businesses and industries to recycle and recycle correctly with fines and/or other measures for failure to comply. In addition significant punitive measures for those who act in the illegal waste sector and those companies and operators who fail to comply with legislation and enforcement of a polluter pays principle in relation to the clean-up of contaminated facilities and sites.

Significant investments in technologies that can enable reuse and ensure a circular economy. Many waste products being dumped or going to landfill are valuable resources that should be being used. There is growing technology in this area, government needs to invest and support innovative ideas and businesses. Another area where the Victorian Municipal and Industrial Landfill Levy (MILL) - Sustainability Fund could be utilised.

As the articles on the following links show there are many examples of countries that have put in place effective recycling practices it is disappointing that Australia lags in this space. Victoria should to look to these countries as a bench mark for introducing like practices to significantly reduced our amounts of waste.

Ljubljana https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/may/23/zero-recycling-to-zero-waste-how-ljubljana-rethought-its-rubbish?CMP=share_btn_fb&fbclid=IwAR3c2Y9uHL LYdR- t6a4Z4QgHQrchiZu-56onjNuix rWe3pIK4MNEIByM

Germany <https://www.howtogermany.com/pages/recycling.html>

Japan <https://jpninfo.com/9826>

Many of those residents who have been impacted on by recycling and waste facilities both licenced and illegal live in very close proximity to these sites. In my case I live one block from SKM and have been repeatedly impacted on by fires at SKM and other recyclers in the area. This is highly stressful, as I don't know the long-term effects of exposure to chemicals and particles from these fires to both my family members and myself. I am a keen gardener and always had a vegetable garden, after the SKM fire in 2017 I kept having issues with my plants I now no longer grow vegetables as I'm concerned the soil may contain contaminates that effect them.

There is a need to review planning schemes to ensure adequate safe buffer zones between these facilities and residential areas and significant environmental areas and waterways.

To ensure safe buffer zones in areas where there are established waste and recycling facilities I believe these facilities need to be relocated to ensure safety of residents.

I feel this is not just a State issue; a national approach is needed to facilitate a coherent approach across Australia with a national framework.

Currently inconsistent landfill levy across Australia encourage transporting of waste across state boundaries. Victoria must work with all States and territories to bring about a consistent approach in regards to land fill levy to prevent interstate movement of waste. Victoria also needs to work with all States and Territories to lobby for a federal umbrella body to unite EPA's across Australia with increased enforcement capabilities. Such a body would enable sharing of information, identifying and monitoring of perpetrators especially illegal operators and organised criminals who have enter the waste industry and provide for coordinative responses.

In closing I would like to say I understand the challenges that are being faced by government in this space but wish to reiterate the duty of government at all levels to ensure they act in a manner that minimises the risk of harm to both human health and the environment and work to reduce hazards to both. Urgent action and stewardship must be demonstrated.

Yours sincerely,

Sheriden Tate

.