

Leanda Smith B.Mus


The Secretary
Legislative Council, Environment and Planning Committee
Recycling and Waste Management Inquiry
Parliament House, Spring St
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

30 May 2019

Dear Environment and Planning committee,

Inquiry into recycling and waste management

I'm a normal member of the public, the only major difference between me and my neighbours is my family strive to live a low waste, low consumption lifestyle. Not an everyday occurrence, but it is completely within each and every Victorian's ability to modify their behaviours to work towards it, anything is better than nothing. However, without curbside recycling my family would create a lot more waste, as would all Victorians. Victoria's recycling must continue, we need to reinvent our systems so as to make use of this valuable resource. Australians can not and do not want to throw 20+ years of education around curbside recycling to the wind and see valuable resources sent to landfill. With that said it would be an utter waste and disgusting pollutant to incinerate Victoria's recyclables and this should not even be a considered option.

When I was a child we thoroughly enjoyed the cash for cans schemes here in Victoria. My husband too, enjoyed this in Tasmania as a child. He was so keen he'd go collecting cans out of the bins after the local footy matches and alike and keep them in bags behind his dad's shed until his dad could load them into the ute and cash them in for him. You know the unsung hero of this scheme? The kids. The younger generation loved it, embraced it and well... did the work! Similarly in South Australia they have the container deposit scheme which has huge impacts on their levels of water way litter alone. The technologies already exist for these systems to be automated using computerised stations. Victoria should be a leader, not a follower on this front.

The other notable thing about my family is we live in Fawkner, just down the road from Campbellfield where there has recently been several toxic smoke filled fires. The fires were plastic recycling stockpile fires. Not only is this already criminal, it's horrible for us who live nearby. This stockpiling only occurs because recycling depots are hoarding plastic waiting for a better price. What are local municipalities and the Victorian government doing about this, the actual cause for stockpiling? If we had onshore recycling facilities this stockpiling wouldn't happen, and we would have more jobs going to local people.

It is not enough for my family to remove ourselves from consuming plastics, the system needs to change far more broadly. The Sustainability fund should be used to support Victorians now and therefore into the future. We need innovative reusable packaging solutions whereby we don't consume endless amounts of plastic, cardboard, single use glass or even "compostable" items (that will only compost in an industrial composter which we don't have access to). As it stands all of the fore mentioned consumables have no where to go, we can not keep hoping to continue shipping our problem overseas, this is irresponsible and short sighted.

The sustainability fund can be used for education and rebate programs to help Australians to learn about and make the most of waste-wise decisions, reducing waste, reusing, re-purposing, repairing and correct recycling. All of these actions happen well before the last step of "recycling", thus reducing load on the waste and recycling systems. Jobs creation and waste reduction is intrinsically linked when you start supporting people to learn how to repair items and create businesses around saving what we have come to expect to "bin", just when 25-30 years ago you repaired them instead.

I have a home compost, and I take food scraps from other people, which is a great grass roots level solution to food waste. However it's not a broad nor convenient solution for most Victorians. Every single council should have curbside green bin composting. It doesn't exist in my municipality, but it does in my brother's, the technology exists, there is no excuse anymore, it should be legislated as compulsory for all councils to provide this.

In Summary;

- I am completely against sending resources to Combustion, or Thermal Waste to Energy Technologies
- Bring back cash for cans
- Bring in a container deposit scheme
- Create an onshore recycling industry, don't make our problem that of a poorer country's. Let's create jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emission
- Educate the public on waste-wise decisions, reducing waste at the consumer level
- Incentivize reusing, repairing and correct recycling
- Incentivize business creation around repairing
- Make industrial composting mandatory at the municipality level

I hope that my insights and stories illustrate how important these issues are to the everyday person. As I hold the hands of my toddler and pre-schooler, I want us to build a future for them that has clean air to breath, fresh water to drink, weather that can sustain life and agriculture into their adulthood and into the lives of their children.

Yours Sincerely,

Leanda Smith