

**From:** Steve Balmforth <web@greens.org.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 23 April 2019 12:04 PM  
**To:** recyclinginquiry  
**Subject:** waste and recycling issues

RE: INQUIRY INTO RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Toxic waste fires- 'cowboy' operators should be shut down and penalties increased significantly The EPA and Local Councils are aware of the illegal operators and more resources should be made available to shut these places down' Chain of responsibility should be enforced – that is those who provide material to an illegal operator should be named and shamed as they are usually providing product at a cheaper cost than reputable processors This illegal servicing undercuts the viability of reputable processors Local Councils should be held more accountable as to fully understanding just where their recyclables are being processed and where they eventually end up Local Councils have 'escaped a bullet' with recent fires as no accountability has been laid on them, the operator although didn't do the right thing, however the Councils who provide the product for recycling should have taken more ownership of the total recycling chain, and perhaps some level of responsibility for allowing the stockpile and subsequent fire Cost of these fires should be carried by those who are implicated- not the taxpayers – the cost of the recent SKM and toxic waste fires should be carried by the perpetrators SKM to be fined \$16,000 for the recent breach of licence and the fire is a joke- its small change for SKM All Councils should be made to ensure regular reviews of the end use of their products are carried out -as its been shown that once the contract has been signed , most Councils then just sit back with a focus on reviewing the contract as to the level of service the contractor is undertaking and not on the way the product is stored and processed, they should have a duty of care level of responsibility on the total recycling service

- Plastic perceived recycling issues
- The media report on 60 Minutes showed a one sided view of what's happening with plastic recycling and the ACOR media release is a great response with some good statistics
- Those who are reusing plastic are to be congratulated and there a number of successful operations that need more support There are a number of projects underway to collect and process plastic in Australia as the export market will certainly reduce as more Asian countries tighten and in time stop all recyclables being accepted The Asian countries have shown what they want , and that is a clean product that they can use directly into their manufacturing operation An example of what is likely to happen in Australia is that the US model that is now working effectively, could work here but major political acknowledgement , guidance and support funding must be made quickly to ensure that control of the process stays in the hands of locals In the USA- the Chinese mainly, have been purchasing plastic recycling processing plants, spending significant capital with upgrades to make a product that is acceptable for the domestic market and to their own Chinese production plants in China The plastic end product is usually in the form of clean high grade pellets Similar activities are being conducted for paper grade products

General Comments

- Contamination is a major issues a education is needed – its been discussed at length however residents are confused due to the number of differing collection systems and what can and cannot be placed in the yellow bin
- There is always a market, both domestically and to export for clean recyclables, paper grades and plastics, however they must be clean/and uncontaminated
- For cardboard , newsprint and magazines that are uncontaminated, the local and export market will always take – but pricing is dependant on the export market however prices of late have been at an all time high with prices in the range of \$200 to >\$300t
- Paper that is uncontaminated can be used locally and for newsprint and magazine grades there is a long standing outlet at the Norske Skog Paper Mill at Albury who are trying to increase supply for their recycling process.
- Visy is the other local users for cardboard mainly and like Norske Skog offer long term stable contracts for supply.

- There are no National standards as the Federal Govt always throw back to the States – a strong Federal set of standards or guidance would go a long way to help
- A National purchasing policy for product made with recycled content would make a significant difference for the need to try to export or worst case scenario to landfill
- There are far too many Agencies that represent the Waste Industry, and all have usually the same aims, however as they represent specific member interests, they don't speak with a united voice
- Grant procedures and application processes are different in every State , so a Business entity that has National presence may have to provide varying grant application for the same support in every State
- To date the Federal Govt have undertaken far too many talkfests, and nothing apart from words have been the outcome
- Should a political party support the much needed ACTION not Words with clear Federal support in respect to the Environment and specifically the waste and recycling issues we all face – there would be support and subsequent votes of support
- Many Govt Agencies looking after waste and recycling are too top heavy with “bureaucrats ‘who focus more of procedures and satisfying a Minister rather than getting out and listening to what the Industry needs are
- Many Lobbying groups have good access to these bureaucrat’s and influence accordingly to the benefit of those who are doing the lobbying. Not a lot of cross checking is done and they don’t seem to have anything to do or respect for independent advisors who have no vested interest.
- Having a few ex Industry , independent, hands on with experience, advisors, employees, secondments, or part time to work within the empowered agencies could help break down some of the bureaucratic barriers and assist with relevant and quicker responses to the current waste and recycling issues
- Local Councils need to be more involved with assessing waste and recycling tenders and contracts, not just focus on price – they should be intimately involved and understand the product flow including what is the end use, pricing, processing method, and for the waste handler to provide a contingency plan should the unforeseen happen eg Fires, etc
- Major focus should be on closed loop , -i.e. product collected in Australia to be recycled in Australia where possible.
- As much local reprocessing must be supported as the Asian bans on Australian waste will only get worse as the bans spread within the past export outlets
- The Landfill Levy that is collected in each State is used in different ways in each State have massive cash reserves held- or at least have a book value- and this should be standardised and distributed as a matter of urgency to support waste and recycling activities
- ACOR – the National Council of Recylers have provided a 10 point plan that covers what needs to be done, Fed and State Govts are aware of the plan , but its still in the “talkfest stage ” This needs to be tabled again with a firm hand a used as a model as to what needs to be done on a NATIONAL basis

-- Steve Balmforth

I'm happy for my submission and details to be made public.