

From: Janet Russell <web@greens.org.au>
Sent: Saturday, 4 May 2019 8:09 PM
To: recyclinginquiry
Subject: With a Climate Change Emergency we Must Act on Recycling

RE: INQUIRY INTO RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

"The one thing we all have to do is simply not to waste.

Don't waste plastic.

Don't waste food.

Don't waste power.

Live within our means" David Attenborough 2019 <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2785482701675913>

No matter how inconvenient and how challenging to our habits and outlook, we know that 'living within our means' in 2019 means doing what the IPCC says must be done to reduce emissions. We know that every quarter degree of increase in temperature makes climate change more expensive to address, and means more damage to the planet.

We also know no matter how inconvenient and how challenging to our habits we also have to address the question of waste. We must especially address plastic because of its impact on our environment both as larger items being a direct hazard to sea life, and as microplastics entering the food stream of both animals and people.

Governments can help or hinder this, and much as I admire the Andrews Government for their work, especially in regard to public transport, they have been dragging the chain on waste and recycling.

Container Deposit Scheme

Why don't we have a container deposit scheme yet when we know it is the best way to boost recycling rates? We've been waiting for years for Victoria to get its act together.

Composting of Food and Other Green Waste Why don't we see much more composting of food waste by our councils, and bins for food waste in shopping centres etc.? We know compost enriches the soil and helps to store carbon – and there is so much soil in our urban areas from council to commercial, from rental to resident, which could be receiving regular compost to build microlife and store carbon. Not to mention rural soils used for crop farming as happens in Germany and other EU countries.

At the moment, most food waste in Victoria is going to landfill, where at best, it is being tapped for methane. But that is not a lasting solution, because we know the IPCC report says we need to be at net zero emissions by 2050.

The incineration of waste is also problematic. If we are going to incinerate waste we have to offset the emissions it creates because we must achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Composting waste domestically or commercially turns an environmental negative (landfill or incineration) to net zero or even a positive in terms of carbon storage. With electric transport powered by a green grid (we are already converting trucks to electric here in Melbourne) composting of food and other green waste is the best practice.

Leading by Example – Modelling Good Behaviour and Modelling Questioning Current Practices

We need to see our politicians stepping up to the mark: reusing bags, avoiding plastic, bringing their own straws and cutlery, and shopping at op shops...it sounds small but people are much happier to do things differently when they are confident others are as well, and they won't look odd. It would be a great example if some members of Parliament asked Craig Reucassel, of the ABC's War on Waste, to help them become better at wasting less and televise their progress.

We need our politicians to be asking supermarkets to lift their game on plastic wrapping. There is so much that could be wrapped in paper (that used to be wrapped in paper). I understand that supermarkets put some vegetables in plastic to help preserve their freshness, but it is not the only solution. They could for example put bunches of unwrapped herbs inside a larger clear box rather than wrap every bunch.

We must question plastic in every way that it is currently used. There will be some instances where it will be difficult to replace, but many where that shift is easier. That includes clothing: another choice that our politicians can literally model.

Food Choices and Food Waste

We need our politicians to be engage with and talk about the Lancet Planetary Diet <https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/>, . Following its principals even imperfectly (I'll admit I struggle with the meat, eggs and dairy guidelines) is not only going to cut our food and packaging waste, it will also help us to use our farmland better and improve our health. 'The diet is a "win-win", according to the scientists, as it would save at least 11 million people a year from deaths caused by unhealthy food, while preventing the collapse of the natural world that humanity depends upon. With 10 billion people expected to live on Earth by 2050, a continuation of today's unsustainable diets would inevitably mean even greater health problems and severe global warming.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/16/new-plant-focused-diet-would-transform-planets-future-say-scientists> The Lancet Planetary Diet deserves a lot more publicity and discussion than it has received to date.

Cigarette Butts, Hairnets, Pens, Crayons and More Cigarette Butts contain plastic and are probably the most littered item in the world, including in Australia. But they can be recycled.

We know that many more items made of plastic than we currently recycle are capable of being recycled. A quick visit to the Terracycle website shows this <https://www.terracycle.com/en-AU/> It is also very expensive to use Terracycle in Australia because they have no local operations, and most of the cost is related to postage. With government backing at the State, or maybe Federal level, it is worth at least investigating whether a local Terracycle plant would be feasible.

Commonwealth rather than State?

Some parts of the recycling challenge, eg, labelling, are probably best deal with at the Commonwealth level, because consistency is necessary, but the States can push for change, and lead where there are local opportunities.

Conclusion

We must cut back on waste because of the direct effect that pollution has on the environment, and because waste contributes to climate change.

Not meeting the IPCC 2018 emissions targets is like playing chicken in a freight train because, as stated by NASA: "Even if we stopped emitting greenhouse gases today, global warming would continue to happen for at least several more decades, if not centuries. That's because it takes a while for the planet (for example, the oceans) to respond, and because carbon dioxide – the predominant heat-trapping gas – lingers in the atmosphere for hundreds of years. There is a time lag between what we do and when we feel it.

In the absence of major action to reduce emissions, global temperature is on track to rise by an average of 6 °C (10.8 °F), according to the latest estimates. Some scientists argue a "global disaster" is already unfolding at the poles of the planet; the Arctic, for example, may be ice-free at the end of the summer melt season within just a few years. Yet other experts are concerned about Earth passing one or more "tipping points" – abrupt, perhaps irreversible changes that tip our climate into a new state." <https://climate.nasa.gov/faq/16/is-it-too-late-to-prevent-climate-change/>

We must treat climate change with the seriousness and urgency it requires, and that includes our treatment of waste and recycling.

-- Janet Russell

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