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**From:** Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management <ske14832@bigpond.net.au>  
**Sent:** Sunday, 5 May 2019 10:07 PM  
**To:** recyclinginquiry  
**Subject:** New Submission to Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

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## **SUBMISSION CONTENT:**

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Submission – State Government Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

My name is Sarina Kelly and I am the curator of the Zero Waste Swan Hill Facebook Page which I created roughly ten months ago. I started this page due my increasing concern regarding the waste crisis in Australia and in the world generally, and it's impact on our environment, waterways and oceans.

I'm very pleased that the State government is holding this inquiry, and that I, as well as others, have the opportunity to put forward my thoughts.

1. In response to the first point in the Terms of Reference, my humble opinion is: absolutely yes – “it is the responsibility of the Victorian government to establish and maintain a coherent, efficient and environmentally responsible approach to solid waste management across the state, including assistance to local councils”.

There are many individuals out there who are very informed, concerned and doing the best that they can to minimise their waste but the system is skewed against them, making it difficult to do the right thing.

Governments need to pass legislation to force manufacturers to use more recycled content in their products or even better, 100% compostable/biodegradable content. There needs to be bans on single use plastic of all types and of unnecessary overpackaging of products. And targets for all this to happen should be sooner rather than later.

2. If the China National Sword Policy had been anticipated and responded to properly, then we wouldn't have had the recent situation earlier this year, of dozens of Victorian Councils having to send their recyclables to landfill. We also wouldn't have had dangerous stockpiling of recyclables which are a fire risk. If it had been anticipated properly, then for years leading up to this point, we would have had more government funding and investment in recycling plants so we could increase recycling capacity right here in Australia. Therefore, no I don't think the China National Sword Policy was anticipated and responded to properly. Sending our rubbish/recycling to other countries will never be a sustainable or morally appropriate solution.

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 recycled

If we can invest in more new waste hubs to deal with waste locally, then hopefully the incidence of dangerous stockpiling would be reduced. I also believe if locals could see the whole process of how materials can be reused/repurposed/redesigned/repaired/recycled they would become more invested in the process and thereby make more conscious, informed decisions on their buying, consumption and waste disposal habits. This would restore faith in the waste industry which is generally lacking at the moment. Many people believe that separating recyclables from landfill rubbish is a waste of time and effort because the likelihood of them being recycled is low.

b) the cleaning and sorting capabilities and the processing capabilities in Victoria and the potential to expand the local recycling industry

There needs to be more grassroots community education of the importance of cleaning/separating recyclables at the source, and more awareness of the cost of contamination caused by dirty recyclables. A container deposit scheme could also play a role in improving the percentage of clean recyclables collected, because if there is a value attached to a clean recyclable container, then people are more likely to go to the effort of making sure it is clean and not dumped at roadsides as litter.

c) how to better enable the use of recycled materials in local manufacturing;

On a case by case basis, make available to individuals, groups and business -funding to set up local waste hubs, where the materials can be sourced locally, the materials reused/repurposed/redesigned/repaired/recycled locally; products resulting from these processes to be marketed and sold locally and/or elsewhere, dependant on demand and supply. A good example of how this can be done in relation to plastics, is through organisations such as Precious Plastic which supply blueprints for how their machines can be built – there is however, a cost barrier for many people who may have the skills to make this happen.

d) the existing business model and economic challenges facing the existing industry;

We need to change from a linear economy to a circular economy ideology. Waste needs to be seen as a resource which can be used, and re-used and recycled many times over. It should not be seen as something we throw away carelessly, many of the earth's resources are finite or not easy to replace in the short term, therefore we should place more value and care on how we use them. Obviously, there would be a transition time, since most of our industries operate on the linear model. Perhaps government incentives to business would speed up the process of changing to a circular model.

e) the quantifiable benefits, including job creation and greenhouse gas emissions reduction, of pursuing elements of a circular economy in Victoria;

It goes without saying that there would be many opportunities for job creation if Victoria pursued the elements of a circular economy – whether it be through government procurement or increased business opportunities. Of course, if less virgin resources are being extracted to manufacture products, then this has to have a beneficial reduction effect on greenhouse gas emissions.

f) the existing Sustainability Fund and how it can be used to fund solutions to the waste crisis;

Community Education – Some of the Sustainability Fund should be used to develop and deliver education campaigns focused on informing waste-wise decisions, reducing waste, reusing, re-purposing, repairing and correct recycling.

Use the Sustainability Fund to support businesses to revolutionise reusable packaging eg. refillable bottles – milks (dairy and plant-based), soft drink etc. (30 years ago this was how it was done – it's coming back, but there is a cost to establish the infrastructure)

Use the Sustainability fund to support repair initiatives including training programs for skill development and subsidising repairs to reduce landfill.

Support councils, hospitality, schools and community groups to compost and better manage food waste or to set up large scale composting systems.

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;

Government legislation is needed to ensure that manufacturers of products take more responsibility for what happens to their product when it reaches then end of it's useful life. Corporations make a profit from selling their products and there needs to be more care taken to ensure that their products don't just become the consumer's problem to dispose of responsibly or more often than not just end up in landfill.

## b) container deposit schemes;

Victoria is the last mainland state to not have a container deposit scheme. These schemes have been hugely successful in the other states – they have seen an increase in recycling rates of clean sorted materials which is higher in value. They have also been an important source of fundraising for individuals and community organisations. Litter has also reduced in these states. The Victorian state government needs to implement a container deposit scheme as soon as possible and stop wasting time.

## c) banning single-use plastics;

This is a no brainer. Ban as many single use plastics as humanly possible. Plastics are designed to last for a long time, scientists say that it can take hundreds of years to degrade and even then it doesn't biodegrade back into nature. In the process of it's slow degradation, it collects and releases toxins, chokes/tangles/maims/kills all manner of wildlife/birdlife/marine life and is gradually making its way back up the food chain and into our food. Single use plastic is a scourge on the planet and we need to drastically reduce its use.

## d) government procurement policies

The direction of government and councils to its purchasing departments to procure materials that contain a percentage of recycled content or those that are made from sustainable, renewable sources, is a very important initiative. This will help to get these industries and businesses going, as these types of materials are generally more expensive, due to being produced on a smaller scale. If businesses/industries can get a leg up initially from the government/councils then this could lead them to expand over time so that they can achieve economies of scale, and in turn be more able to compete with business/industries that use cheaper virgin sources.

## 5. Relevant reviews, inquiries and reports into the waste and recycling industry in other Australian jurisdictions and internationally;

I refer to the Municipal Association of Victoria's "Rescue Our Recycling" campaign which outlines a proposed action plan for all three levels of government. I believe this is a very good, comprehensive outline which should be taken seriously into account in the State government's waste inquiry.

[https://www.mav.asn.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/22314/MAV-Action-Plan-Rescue-Our-Recycling.pdf](https://www.mav.asn.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/22314/MAV-Action-Plan-Rescue-Our-Recycling.pdf)

## 6. Any other related matters.

I worry about governments and councils looking into waste to energy options for dealing with our waste. There has to be a better way. Incinerating our rubbish and recyclables is unacceptable, would be a source of toxic air pollution and a waste of valuable resources.

To quote Environmental Justice Australia: "Combustion of toxic materials such as plastic releases toxic pollutants, including mercury, lead and dioxins that can be more hazardous than the material that has been incinerated. Of particular concern are dioxins. These highly toxic pollutants are known as 'persistent organic pollutants' because they resist breaking down and accumulate in animals and the environment. In parts of Europe waste incineration is the leading cause of dioxin production. Dioxins are also present in post-combustion ash waste which needs to be dumped somewhere." <https://www.envirojustice.org.au/our-work/community/air-pollution/resources/waste-to-energy/>

Waste to energy plants cost billions of dollars to build and require huge amounts of waste to keep them ticking over for them to be cost effective. The government should be investing more funds into renewables such as solar, wind and hydro rather than on waste to energy feasibility studies/subsidies/capital contributions.

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File1:

File2:

File3: