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Sent: Monday, 6 May 2019 9:32 PM
To: recyclinginquiry
Subject: Submission to parliamentary enquiry into waste and recycling

RE: INQUIRY INTO RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Residents in Victoria expect that when they put recyclable materials in the recycling bin they are doing the right thing. We should all know by now that this is not the case, but for whatever reason, this does not seem to have raised the anger that it should have.

There are currently two main companies that accept co-mingled recycling in Victoria, SKM and Visy. Both of these companies have, since 2001, relied on sorting non-valuable material out of the waste stream and selling into international commodity markets.

This represented an abrogation of our responsibility to manage the waste we have been generating. Waste exported in this manner was sent to developing countries and the commercial arrangement was only made possible by the discrepancy in labour costs. In addition to this, waste sent to these countries was severely contaminated and the burden of appropriately sorting this into recycled material was carried by the people on the ground in this industry. Whole industries had grown to deal with this contamination at great cost to both people and the environment.

Some believe it was the documentary 'Plastic China' which prompted the Chinese government to institute the National Sword program which severely restricted the import of waste. Regardless, they were right to do so. One country should not be the dumping ground of all western nations.

Since that time, other markets have progressively been swamped with volume and then closed off, culminating with Indonesia and India both announcing they will no longer accept contaminated waste. It is not possible for us to continue relying on developing nations to bear the cost of our failure to deal with our own waste.

Recyclers in Victoria have not responded appropriately to this crisis. SKM especially has buried their head in the sand, hoping that the commodity prices will eventually recover but causing all manner of hazards in the meantime. In Victoria at least, we are now in the situation where, all too often, waste put into recycling bins is winding up in landfill.

It is for this reason I am writing this submission. This crisis represents an opportunity for the western world to take back control of the recycling industry and the Victorian government is in a strong position to do this as the waste levy collected on each tonne of landfill has been accumulating without being properly invested in the future of the industry.

My submission is for the inquiry to adopt the following recommendations:

- Invest heavily in a Victorian recycling industry, in line with the zero waste hierarchy
- Recommend against waste to energy, treating this as a solution is planning to fail.
- Introduce a 10c refund on bottles and cans to drastically increase the quality of recycled material being generated in Victoria
- Boost demand for recycled material in state and local government procurement processes
- Ban unnecessary single-use plastics
- Establish a circular economy centre of excellence to accelerate the transition of Victoria's waste profile and economy
- Strengthen regulation, standards and enforcement for managing health, safety and environmental impacts of waste treatment, disposal and storage

- Standardise kerbside collection processes across municipalities, especially FOGO solutions which amount for a large percentage of landfill emissions.

-- Mark Kerlin



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