



7 May 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

I refer to the request to provide a submission into the parliamentary inquiry on the above, and am pleased to provide the following submission on behalf of Warrnambool City Council.

In formulating the submission, Council has not specifically addressed each question individually, rather has outlined the key aspects of recycling and waste management of greatest concern to Council and this region of Southwest Victoria.

Council wishes to reinforce that the Victorian Government has a responsibility to show leadership in waste management to ensure Victoria has a strong and sustainable waste and resource recovery system.

As Local Government operates within a statewide system, it is entirely appropriate that the State Government promotes a supportive and collaborative approach rather than claiming that waste is a "Local Government issue". Clearly Local Government plays a role in waste management, however it does not have the legislative ability and or sometimes the financial capacity to bring about the meaningful and sustainable change in the waste industry, particularly in recycling which is evident today.

Local Government provides a sound and reliable kerbside collection service which must be supported by a strong processing and reprocessing market.

Many of the challenges currently facing Councils are resulting in an uncoordinated approach by individual Councils. Councils are being urged by their communities to take proactive steps to solve waste issues and Warrnambool City Council is fully committed to solving the immediate and longer term issues we face. However the risk in this approach is that Victoria could face 79 individual Council's differing approaches and solutions to waste issues which are in reality state-wide or national issues.

The Victorian State Government collects landfill levies which should be expended on projects that assist waste management solutions which are beyond the funding capacity of most local Councils.

Failure to adequately invest more landfill levy income into the waste and resource recovery sector has contributed to the recent and ongoing problems in the recycling sector. Council considers more of the levy could and should be used to improve resource recovery in Victoria and particularly in the regional areas. This investment should include community waste education programs, investment in sorting and processing capacity and market development.

Local Councils do not have the ability to establish state-wide initiatives such as container deposit legislation, increased legislation around packaging reduction, improved product labelling and development of state and national markets for recycling and recycled products.

During the SKM shutdowns and the China ban it was highlighted how susceptible our reliance is on too few recycling processors. The State Government must recognise the need to establish more processing facilities and domestic markets particularly **in regional** areas.

In Warrnambool along with many other regional centres, it is uneconomic and wasteful to transport large volumes of recyclables long distances to Melbourne. Council requests that the State Government recognises the opportunity to assist in the development of local/regional processing centres to enable recyclables to be collected, sorted locally for distribution to recycling processors.

The “tyranny of distance” factor must be considered in planning and development of waste management systems and recycling. Not only does this impact on fuel costs which are passed onto communities through waste management charges, it is inefficient and environmentally detrimental.

For example it makes no sense for glass collected in Warrnambool through the kerbside collection, then to be bulk hauled to Melbourne, crushed and purchased for reuse in road manufacturing, and transported back to Warrnambool for reuse. Particularly when the equipment and capacity exists locally.

It is much more effective and environmentally responsible to sort, and distribute clean product at localised regional locations.

Council urges the State Government to consider the end market when considering recycling. Where there are identifiable markets for recycling feedstock such as paper and cardboard, selected plastics, together with aluminium, glass and steel.

Increased separation at source is widely recognised and fully supported by Council as a way forward to increase the value and extent of recycling and to reduce contaminated recyclables being sent to landfill.

The Victorian Government has a critical role to play in providing funding and support for increased at source separation together with state-wide waste education.

Council also recognises that recycling processors in Victoria are reluctant to operate transparently. The community and to a large extent local Councils have very little information as to what happens to the material once it has been collected and sent for recycling processing. Local processors can offer more transparency and certainty of information of the end use of products.

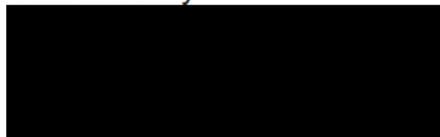
Council urges the State Government to advocate to the Federal Government to introduce mandatory participation and binding obligations across the consumer packaging chain, ban the production and importation of hard-to-recycle materials and for standardised package labelling and certify use of recycled content.

Council is partnering with Deakin University and neighbouring Councils to explore the potential opportunities that waste to energy technologies present but also strongly support the waste hierarchy as the guiding principle for how waste should be managed.

The Victorian Government is yet to release its policy position on waste to energy and Council urges the State to release a State policy that clearly articulates where and how waste to energy might fit in the circular economy.

Once again Council hopes that this feedback is noted and acted upon as a matter of some urgency.

Yours sincerely



GLENN REDDICK
Manager City Amenity