

From: Aaron Parsons <web@greens.org.au>
Sent: Thursday, 18 April 2019 12:35 PM
To: recyclinginquiry
Subject: Save the Victorian Recycling Industry

RE: INQUIRY INTO RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Victorian Recycling Industry was already struggling along when China was paying their highest prices for waste.

Recycling is not a self sufficient process. While cheap virgin materials flood the manufacturing industry and there is no government mandate to use recycled materials to replace virgin materials wherever possible, manufacturing will always choose the easiest and cheapest option available to them.

Government needs to MANDATE the use of recycled material in place of virgin material wherever it is possible. This could be as simple as crushed recycled glass replacing virgin sand in construction, recycled ldppe and hdppe plastic instead of virgin plastic in all non food related plastic manufacturing, a minimum requirement of recycled paper for all new paper and cardboard manufacturing, it could even go as far as restaurants required to have food (organic) waste recycling bins as part of their permit and compliance process with the organic waste being recycled rather than land filled.

Introducing 10c refund systems for bottles and can will absolutely increase the uptake and turn in of these items, and offset the cost by the original package manufacturers chipping in to cover the cost, however the incentive simply results in more recycled product becoming available, and the 10c refund cost is passed on to consumers upon purchase of the product, then handed back to the savvy consumers that return the packaging for the refund. So the outcome is, every consumer pays for savvy consumers to collect and return the packaging for refund and the recyclers are burdened with extra product and extra paperwork and accounting but the demand for the recycled material still doesn't increase.

Supply and demand is the only way to increase the actual need for the material, and with demand comes increased value. By the government mandating the use of recycled material wherever possible, the demand increases, the price increases and the benefit to the recycler increases. The government needs to mandate this to stop the throw away mentality of our precious resources and make manufacturing responsible for their wasteful methods and putting profit over moral and environmental responsibilities.

Waste collectors are suffering the most in all of this. Their costs are increasing each year, fuel, maintenance, wages, registration, compliance, tip fees, epa fees, the list goes on, yet customers expect the price to stay the same or drop due to tough economic times. All while the value of the collected waste drops dramatically each year. It is an impossible scenario which will result in the industry collapsing.

Waste collectors should be provided with financial relief urgently and immediately to save the industry short term.

Mandated use of recycled materials in manufacturing would save the industry long term. It would also help the environment and create a renewed recycling industry in Australia, not just the waste collection, baling and export industry that we currently have, and the massive reliance on Asian countries to do the work for us, charging us freight both ways for the privilege. This would also create a massive number of no skill/low skill employment opportunities, possibly even employment for the physically challenged.

Australia NEEDS it's own PROPER recycling industry, not just waste collection, baling and exporting.

If the government set up a dedicated department with resources and funds available to assist existing recycling industry companies to plan and grow, this would expedite the solution. Many companies don't know what assistance is currently available or how to access it. They require assistance and guidance to access the funding, and there needs to be more of it.

Another LARGE issue for waste collectors, is the lack of skilled drivers, or drivers wanting to work in the industry. There is a flood of unskilled migrant workers that get their truck license and will work in the industry, but language barriers and local knowledge leads to errors and issues. We need more experienced local drivers to be attracted to the industry and unfortunately only remuneration incentivizes this. With the current state of the industry, waste collectors can't afford to pay more.

Recent Vicroads crack downs on trucks has lead to overzealous and blanket action by officers putting vehicles off the road when only minor issues are discovered, and even removing vehicle tester licenses for not being thorough enough based on Vicroads high standards. Yes, road safety is important, however the waste collection industry cannot afford to buy brand new trucks every 3 years, and Vicroads are simply putting all older trucks off the road indiscriminately. For the industry to survive, Vicroads needs to be told to back off and work with the industry. Provide repair notices, not demands for full roadworthy certificates. Testers are scared and overboard now in fear of losing their licenses which means a couple of simple oil leaks that would cost a few hundred dollars to repair turns into full roadworthy checks that then cost \$20,000 to obtain, even though the repairs really weren't required, its just the tester is fearful and over cautious. Repairs can often exceed the value of the vehicle, effectively allowing Vicroads the power to write the vehicle off for a few simple oil leaks.

-- Aaron Parsons



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