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**From:** Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 May 2019 10:18 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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Waste and recycling management in Victoria (and in fact in Australia), is not is state that will if the current situation continues, not maximise the reduction of resources and landfill diversion, while increasing adverse environmental and economic costs as well as cause significant social issues. These points have been well documented.

It is not much to be gained from focussing on the why we are at this stage and who or who not has to take some responsibility.

What is crystal clear, is that waste management for the first time is centre stage on the community's list of concerns and unless some drastic and innovative actions are swiftly implemented, the end result will be a complete failure of recycling with nearly zero opportunity to recommence it.

Back in the 1980's Victoria introduced the worlds first Policy on waste minimisation. The challenge is to do this again – introduce the best system for managing wastes that encompasses all sectors (and by this I mean commercial and residential), and focusses on implementation of the triple bottom line principles.

The waste management hierarchy advocates avoidance/reduction as the primary actions. Yet despite this, messages to the community are focussed on recycling. The result is that we feel good about placing material into our recycling bin when we in fact could have avoided using the resource and creating the disposed of product in the first instance.

Back in the 70's and 80's there was a level of confusion as to what one could place into the household recycling bin (originally a sack and then a crate and not the wheelie bin). Different councils accepted different materials – so as residents shifted or went on holidays they were confused as to what could or could not be placed into the recycling bin – so either they put it all in the waste bin, or contaminated the recycling stream. Sadly, this is what happens today in terms of residents not knowing what to do.

Recently several councils have discussed implementing a fourth household bin. This in itself is not a huge issue. However, one was going to use it for paper/cardboard and another for plastic and metals, with another

saying it was for glass. All were areas with high levels of holiday accommodation so it would be expected that confusion would continue to reign and contamination types/levels remain the issue.

The following are what I believe are the minimum actions that need to be addressed in this committee's report and then implemented. Some have in fact been looked at in the past, but need revisiting (there is no particular order of relevance/importance). I have avoided technical requirements as others more qualified will hopefully submit their recommendations for these.

- ♣ Focus on avoidance and reduction in all decision making and education activities/programs.
- ♣ Don't focus just on plastic packaging. It is composite packaging and over packaging that are the bigger issues.
- ♣ Provide incentives and/or disincentives for businesses to purchase recycle as raw materials. Taxes/levies or grants are just some tools.
- ♣ In sustainability reports (government and private sector), require reporting on the percentage of recycled materials purchased – measured against all purchases.
- ♣ Provide the necessary infrastructure to enable the recycling industry and facilities. In many instances this is upgrading, but also may require new facilities.
- ♣ Reduce mixed messages. At the supermarket there are messages that encourage the placing of soft plastic into the provided bins – however, when we get home we assume that these plastics can go into the domestic recycling stream (and they cannot). This is just one reason contamination levels are high. Can coffee cups be recycled – and if not how does the consumer know and make the right decision.
- ♣ Education. Essentially I would say there has been zero real education undertaken. Looking at successful behaviour change programs (Life Be In It, Seatbelt wearing, anti-smoking, Slip Slop Slap, HIV awareness etc), what was the cause of success? Multiple messages addressing different demographics and importantly sustained over many years – not the “once per year” message on recycling we currently get.
- ♣ Get all stakeholders around the table. Don't just try to solve the issue with speaking to a few irregularly. When I worked at EPA, we had what was titled the “Advisory Committee on Hospital Waste Disposal). Membership was from multiple government agencies, private sector and experts. It worked. Issues were identified and sustainable solutions developed for minimal cost. And because it was seen as an expert body, all stakeholders accepted its recommendations.
- ♣ Don't just focus on residential for recycling and commercial for avoidance – do both for both.
- ♣ Tracking systems are great for identifying those who are part of the system and essentially trying to do the right thing. Any tracking system has to be focussed also on identifying those not adhering to the regulations and community expectations.
- ♣ Introduce container deposit schemes. They work. The community wants them. It is what I refer to as a gateway issue – resolve it and then the community is more inclined to accept other recommendations/actions.
- ♣ Spend the money that is available.

Thank you for both conducting this enquiry and allowing me the opportunity to make a submission. I would only be too happy to elaborate on the points I have raised.

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File1:

File2:

File3: