

Submission No 6 for the INQUIRY INTO RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT.

I was present during the inquiry and have the following questions that I would have liked to ask and statements I would like to make on each of the interviews.

Witness – Sustainability Victoria (SV)

- This group is the most important advisory group that are available to Government. They give direction that forms policy and regulations. They are a big group of 150 people. The two witnesses that appeared were well on top of all the facts and figures that they produce in the organization. Having said that they appear to lack in some areas. One of these is public consultation. When I question one of them outside the Inquiry room he told me they don't consult face to face with the public and this is best conducted via their web site or via your local Council. My experience is that generally a topic needs to be discussed back and forward with the people who can review make change or show why not. Local Council have shown me they are not too interested. I think SV need to make available discussion groups that can discuss and process ideas from the public.
- As a resident in Banyule area for 40 years I was around when the 2 bin system (waste and yellow lid recycle) was introduced. Instructions were handed out then on what could go into the recycle bin. Since then there has been not one campaign to help residents sort out what's recyclable. It is no wonder the public is confused. I just can't work out why SV fail to see that the most important problem with domestic waste can be solved by education and guidance. I personally didn't even know they existed. Their findings and reports don't appear to have ever effected how I recycle or organise what is waste.
- Why have SV not run any trial domestic waste and recycling programs such as split bin systems ,glass only crates, clean cardboard crates etc. They should get a few local Councils involved and a few hundred residents to trial a system that can keep recycle items separate at the source so that we have 100% clean products. If we can achieve that then what we stock is a sellable item. This may appear to be wishful thinking but our end goal should head this way. If you don't mix it up at home then all the plastics , cardboard etc are contamination free. The public would get on board with this if they could see the end result.
- SV need to work with the EPA and Councils to find out the exact volume type of chemical waste produced by industry and where they dispose of it. This will require information about what exactly happens in every factory and this may be a big task but a central data base is required and everyone who has information contribute. Discussions would need to be held as the most effective way to collect this information. The data base would allow authorities to track methods of transportation, avoid concentrations in one area and help with sorting out disposal plans.

- Have SV or anyone else done any investigation into what happens to processed chemical waste. Is it used here or sold off. This wasn't brought up at the enquiry by anyone. Is all chemical waste processed and do we have enough processing plans available to avoid stock piling. Does anyone know what happens to chemicals that are collected by illegal operators. Do they process it or just dump it somewhere.
- I spoke to one of the witnesses from SV outside the inquiry about his claim that they are recommending that E waste be banned from landfill sites by later this year. I asked him after they have stock piled this enormous part of our waste how do you plan to recycle it. He was very unconvincing with his answer to that. In the past some E waste has been disassembled by sheltered workshop arrangements. He also added that overseas there was technology that had some sort of bath arrangement that via chemicals some separation was possible. My understanding of the bath idea is something I may not have quite right as he was running out of time. My point here is that are we going to end up with large stockpiles of this waste while we sort out a method of recycling it. These days items such as computers ,printers etc are so intricate they are very time consuming to breakdown. Sheltered workshops carry out similar work for company over runs or call back products but systems can only be put in place where large runs of identical items are concerned. My suggestion is that buy mechanical destruction you could probably achieve about 50% material recovery. In the past when these items have been shipped off over seas and pulled apart by cheap labour or simply burnt to extract metals. We have all see the environmental impact of letting this occur. If we are going to stop these item going to land fill immediate investigations need to be under taken before this gets out of hand.
- It was reviled by SV that the triangle on the bottom of a plastic container is not directly linked to how it can be recycled. The triangle identifies the type of plastic. I think what needs to happen here is a clearly identify label on all plastic and other with an easy to read code that people can use to sort with. Eg. A round dot sticker the size of a 20 cent piece with number 1 in it could be high grade plastic ( ie plastic drink bottles) and 2 could be low grade plastic (ie bottle lids ). 3 could be landfill plastic or waste to energy type. This system could extend to paper and cardboard products. Eg. Top quality card board could be 4 with paper and magazines say 5. Low grade cardboard like milk and waxed cardboard could be 6 and go to the waste to energy. For products that are too small or low volume a detail pictorial chart with may be 100 items could be provided. These type of systems all help at the primary source to keep waste separate and just not mix it up in the first place.
- Clothing is an area which I think needs to be looked at by SV. Their answer to a question raised appeared to be fairly vaige. To simply place it in charity bins or to assume that there is always someone who will reuse clothing is naive. I would suggest that at least 50 % of donated cloths go to land fill as we buy a lot more than could ever be used here and abroad. Some ends up in workshops as rags that then go to land fill. The other issue is that all clothes that are reused for charity need to be washed and that involves soaps etc which is a

further environmental issue. I don't have an answer other than waste to energy or put the price of cloths up so we don't buy as many.

- One way of making recycled raw materials worth more is to limit the supply of the new natural raw product. In most cases it is cheaper to use new plastic pellets than use the recycled product. If we didn't grow as many trees paper mills would value the recycled product more. This is tackling the problem from the other direction and its simplistic that we as consumers would probably not want to take a back ward step in our standard of living but it would help if this be kept in mind when setting direction. An award system for manufactures who use recycled product may help.
- I visited a cafe the other morning and noticed some eco friendly items ,straws spoons etc, they were making available instead of plastic. I told them this was good and asked why were they doing it as it was a more expensive option to them . I wasn't paying more for the coffee. They said they were concerned about the environment. OK what could be a positive step here is for SV to identify these type of eco friendly places and offer reward system or accreditation they can display or advertise their concern about our environment.
- My observations are that most of the waste that ends up in our waterways and parklands comes from items that have blows away or been dropped. If you drive along the ring road between Plenty Rd and Sydney Rd the nature strip is doing every thing but displaying nature. The amount of rubbish rivals a third world country. All of this rubbish which is mostly lightweight, because that is how it got there, stays there until a windy day blows it into one of the 2 creeks the freeway crosses over (Merri Creek ,Darebin Creek). Then the next big downpour of rain pushes it along eventually to the Yarra then the bay. The obvious answer is to get the unemployed or like to pick it up. That has problems as there are obvious safety issues with having the public in those areas. What SV need to do is organise the pick up of a truck load of this rubbish and analyse exactly where every item has come from. Eg. Has it blown off a dump bin , blown out a open ute or just been a litter bug. This can be fixed by stricter penalties and a concerted campaign with regard to covering and the type of covers used when transporting products. Maybe accredited covers or approved methods. Can we improve our reporting a litter bug system. It has been a long time since I have seen adds on TV about that.

I think the main comment that I would like to make to SV is that the general public don't even know they exist and none of what they do appears to filter down to the practices of the common house hold. I'm not sure how the 150 strong organization is funded but if our government is involved in that then they need to be more noticeable and accessible. Not just a body who produces lots of statistical date and reports. If they are funded by the private sector then maybe they work more for them.

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