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From: Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management [REDACTED]
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Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

Mr Tim Landells
[REDACTED]

Environmental Consultant
B-Alternative Pty Ltd
[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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File1: [5cd4e1fb14634-Parliamentary Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management.pdf](#)

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Whether the China National Sword policy was anticipated and responded to properly

When China first made the announcement mid 2017, we saw plastic exports to China decrease and on the other end, increase dramatically to South East Asia. This is arguably the most appropriate thing to do as an instant response, as trying to process the regular amount of recyclable plastics Australian's use would prove near impossible if we were to deal with it on-shore. However, most recent updates suggest that Australia is still looking at export options to combat the recycling crisis. This would be considered a poor response if this is still the case. We need to not fear investment in long term solutions - Australian citizens, I believe, would prove more resilient to change than one would think.

Suggestions would be to decrease the volume of recyclables exported overseas, as it is widely known that they do not get handled and processed by any standard that the Australian Government would be pleased with. To make this happen, reducing single use plastic manufacturing would prove more efficient and effective than trying to create more uses for recycled plastic. This is because:

- A) The recycled material loses a lot of the wonderful properties' virgin plastic contains e.g. longevity and rigidity. Therefore, it's best to make things that are reusable and will last, if made from plastic.
- B) There will be a reduction in GHG's released into the atmosphere

There is the obvious challenge of getting companies whose business relies on selling products in single use plastic, to get them to reduce their single use plastic production - this would decrease business short term without any solid solution within the company. A potential method to help companies make this transition is to offer tax cuts when they produce more aluminium or glass products, to substitute their single use plastic products. An incentive I believe would be a more effective approach as opposed to a disincentive such as a plastic tax. The incentive would have to produce as good results as what a plastic tax would generate however i.e. reduce the amount of plastic production an equal/greater amount.

Alternatively, a plastic tax I believe would still work - The money received by the government from this tax could be used to support education in schools surrounding single use plastics, as one example. This money could also be spent on better wash infrastructure in larger shopping complexes. E.g. Chadstone shopping centre - All is required is better commercial washing infrastructure, and all those eating in could eat in reusable crockery. This would reduce companies waste management bills dramatically and decrease the high amount of waste sent to landfill.

Strategies to reduce waste generation and better manage all waste such as soft plastics, compostable paper and pulp, and commercial waste, including, but not limited to:

- a. product stewardship;
- b. container deposit schemes;
- c. banning single-use plastics;
- d. government procurement policies

As it has now been widely documented that household food waste is a significant contributor to landfills, there is the obvious need for a wider and more accessible composting system. Many councils have adopted the curb-side food organics collection within the existing green waste collection. This has proven successful, allowing a large amount of food waste to be diverted away from landfill, and turned back into a valued and useful resource. There is of course the huge added benefit of stopping large amounts of methane which would be released into the atmosphere if this food waste ended up in landfill.

Making it compulsory for councils to introduce the curb-side food organics collection system would be a huge positive step towards reducing GHG's and embracing the circular economy. To assist this process, the government would be encouraged to help fund composting facilities so they can have the capacity to process the increase in organics delivery. Funds towards environmental organisations to provide educational programs surrounding the change in curb-side systems would prove effective in reducing organics contamination.

Banning single use plastics

As an environmental organisation who has worked with many cafes and restaurants surrounding elimination of single use plastics, we have seen how achievable reducing single use plastic distribution can be. We have consulted with restaurants and got them to implement a 'single use plastic packaging tax' whereby if people chose to receive their meal in a take away container, they have to pay an extra \$2. If they BYO container however, they receive \$2 off their meal. If they eat in, the price stands as normal. This incentive has been extremely well received by customers, as the discount they get outweighs the 'hassle' of remembering their container. A push for councils and governments to encourage restaurants, cafes and fast food outlets to implement this incentive is highly recommended.

Anything else

Education

Education in schools surrounding single use plastics needs to become compulsory. This can easily be implemented within geography classes. There is a plethora of resources available for schools. One in particular, the Canopy of Care by Polperro Dolphin Swim - There are resources that link perfectly into the geography curriculum, and many schools are already involved with this program.

Recycling stickers/better signage on products.

There seems to be a big lack of understanding of what can actually be recycled. People see the arrowed triangle and instantly think a product can be recycled whereas this is not the case. There needs to be an Australian Certified Recycling sticker which is clear enough to allow customers to decide on their purchase. This will encourage companies to make their products 100% recyclable.

