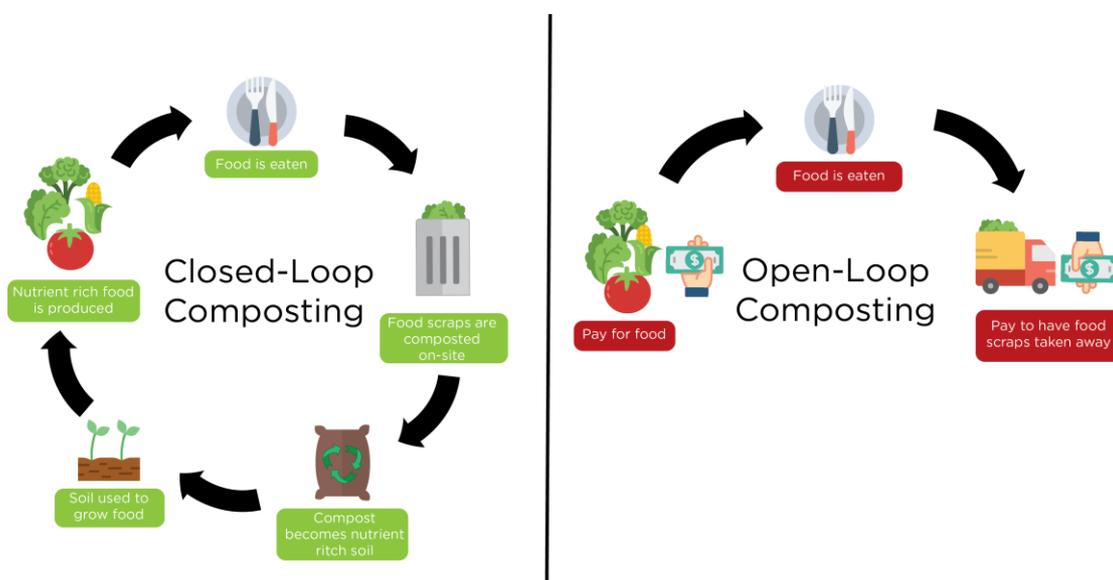


As a concerned citizen I, Catherine Lyons, believe that Victoria is currently in a Waste Management crisis, which potentially could be an opportunity for fundamental, visionary transformation. Victoria stands in a position to become a leader in systemic waste management, and lead the nation in implementing approaches that will result in positive environmental and economic outcomes.

FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT

1. CLOSED LOOP SYSTEMS

Implementing closed loop food systems at industrial, corporate, government department and household levels has capacity to see significant reductions in CO2 creation, and develop new industries/businesses improving economic outcomes.



Closed loop food composting at all levels will divert food waste from landfill to creating compost or worm waste– new products. Compost and worm waste is known throughout food gardening communities as ‘black gold’. Marketing such ‘black gold’ as a viable product to the general public will both develop new economic markets (a circular economy) and improve soil throughout Australia. Improved soil leads to healthier plants – which in turn improves carbon sequestration.

At an industrial level we see models already in place at the MCG and other major food retailers. Closed Loop <https://closedloop.com.au/> has already developed products and services that can be rolled out immediately at industrial level. Middle to small sized installations could be handled by Worm Lovers: <https://www.wormlovers.com.au/>

Such closed loop approaches are needed in every school, fire station, hospital, police station, major event venue, every café and/or restaurant, home, local government venue, public event or public place in Victoria.

FOOD CONSUMPTION REDUCTION CAMPAIGN

Lack of planning prior to purchase by households is embedded in our consumerist society. A Victorian government campaign to educate the general public in the preciousness of food as a resource, and education in how to plan for meals may lead to a reduction in food waste getting into the rubbish in the first place.

Many food relief agencies are reporting that more Victorians are turning up for assistance than agencies can manage. As a concerned citizen, I established a community-marketing platform (Tiny Trowel <http://mylittletrowel.blogspot.com/>) to encourage home gardeners to donate excess food produce to food relief providers – such as the Salvation Army at 69 Bourke Street Melbourne. There is plenty of food grown in and around Melbourne, yet excess easily ends up in the waste as the concept of knowing your neighbours as friends is now out of fashion.

With assistance, the Victorian Government could run a campaign to encourage all with excess to share with local food relief providers. Such a campaign reduces home waste, and assists with food relief in communities.

2. HARD RUBBISH

Furniture and household waste product on nature strips around Melbourne when hard rubbish collection is due creates a significant landfill problem. The furniture found in rubbish in the Eastern suburbs is often good quality and usable – yet it is crushed. In other parts of our State, there are people facing such financial crisis that they have no furniture at all. People who have run away from domestic violence, once housed, often have no financial means to purchase furniture. I believe the statistics tell us that 1 in 3 marriages break down due to domestic violence. Many others lose jobs, or face medical crisis which strip them of all financial resources. Usable furniture and household items left out for hard rubbish needs to be redirected toward those in need. Were the Victorian government or private business established to be the first to run through a suburb when hard rubbish is out, collect that which is usable and then gift to asylum seekers or others in need, then the benefits are all round. Reduced landfill and a financial boost.

3. REDUCED CREATION

Companies and business need incentives to stop producing waste in the first place. Bananas come with a skin, they don't need plastic around them. All food products need a review on the way they are packaged. Plastic straws are no longer needed; people can use a keep cup. Media campaigns making reusable non plastic packaging trendy.

Canada is a leader in waste management. Sulo makes it easy: <http://www.sulo.com.au/products/office-recycling/waste-watcher/>

Worm farm systems for septic tanks: <https://www.wormfarm.com.au/>

I commend the Victorian government for the inquiry into recycling and waste management. The opportunities for WIN/WIN outcomes are endless. It will take a cooperative effort from business, government, communities and households – yet it can be done.

Catherine Lyons

