

Submission Date	9/20/2019 7:57:00 PM
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Question 1 - What are the key issues facing the NSW waste system?

Is there a NSW waste system? Waste management is left to councils and commercial enterprises. If that's the system, there is nothing systematic about it and needs to change to ensure there is consistent management of material that is currently classified as waste. There needs to be state level regulation, control and support of this important issue for two major reasons:

- a. While some councils do a great job of managing waste?(e.g. Kimbriki <http://www.kimbriki.com.au/>), many councils don't have the resources or inclination to do anything.
- b. It's much more than just managing the current contents of domestic and industrial bins; there are major cultural shifts, education and regulation that need to happen uniformly across the State (and Nation for that matter).

Question 2 - What are the main barriers to improving the NSW waste system?

- a. The cultural attitude towards materialistic consumption.
- b. Capitalist marketing of products underpinned by the concept of the necessity of infinite growth
- c. A throw-away society that bears no direct consequences or responsibility for its waste.
- d. Lack of a serious public education system to tackle waste (e.g. the Don't be a Tosser programme is about littering not consumption and waste).
- e. No industry-wide legislation (as is the growing case in some European countries) where manufacturers bear a lifecycle responsibility for everything they manufacture. That is, everything they make and sell they must be prepared to take back at the end of its life-cycle and recycle.

Question 3 - How can we best reduce waste?

- a. Stop treating/calling it waste (i.e. something that is a useless by-product of an organism or manufacture)
- b. Re-educate the population to a more minimalist existence that consumes far less and sees frugality and minimum consumption as a virtue. This includes living the mantra of REDUCE (1st), REUSE, recycle? (in that order).
- c. Radically change manufacturing, advertising and consumption practices that make, sell and use plastic wrap or packaging.
- d. An all industry and government approach to eliminating unnecessary packaging, printing and manufacturing of single or limited use products.
- e. Stricter definition, regulation and enforcement on claims that products are biodegradable and flushable.
- f. Ban the term disposable from all advertising - or any other term that gives the consumer an impression that it's OK to use an item and toss it out.
- g. Pursue polluters as if they were drug smugglers (that is, with serious zeal) and impose heavy fines that hurt polluting industries and individuals.
- h. Start by banning plastic bottled drinks altogether:
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/14/coca-cola-packaging-pollution-on-uk-beaches-surfers-against-sewage-study> , and subsequently require all single use containers to be manufactured from biodegradable material and apply a tax on only recyclable containers (as recycling is costly and energy demanding).

Question 4 - How can we recycle better?

- a. Require manufacturers of consumer items that cannot be placed in a recycling bin, such as electrical and electronic devices, furniture, motor vehicles, to accept their return for separation and recycling.
- b. Other smaller items that can be binned domestically, when they are no longer useable they must be separated at source for recycling. This also entails ensuring that manufacturing processes reduce to an absolute minimum a mixture of materials that cannot be easily separated at source. Separation at source is one of the keys to effective and efficient recycling.
- c. More local governments provide recycling deposit centres for items not readily thrown in bins or need to be returned to the manufacturer (e.g. batteries, mattresses, electronics, chemicals and oils). These centres are then also central recovery points for manufacturers who are required to accept items for recycling
- d. Set up more accessible reuse and recycling centres such as Kimbriki that provide education as well as recycled resources.
- e. Encourage and provide financial start-up assistance for large recycling plants.
- f. Ban all plastic bags and disposable nappies - these are the greatest encumbrance to material separation machines and are totally avoidable.

Question 5 - What are the main opportunities for improving the NSW waste system?

- a. Work as much on the input (ie, the consumption side), as well as the output side.
- b. As part of achieving 5a above, promoting a steady state economy: <https://steadystate.org/>.
- c. Collaborate and learn from other States and work towards a national set of standards. Not doing so encourages the current practice of wholesale interstate dumping and makes enforcing state bans on certain wasteful practices and products difficult by failing to provide a level playing field for industry.)
- d. Read and take notice of the huge body of research done on this subject and don't try and reinvent the wheel.
- e. Localise the reduce, reuse and recycle effort. People need to be forced to deal with their waste locally. The past practice of out of sight out of mind discourages participation, while local community projects get better participation.

Question 6 - Any other information that you would like to contribute to the waste strategy initiative?

- a. Waste control requires serious and radical overhaul nationally (and globally). The endemic appearance of microplastics in the World's environment, increased pollution of land and sea, and climate change demand this. Also, we cannot continue to expend the natural resources, including water and energy, to service the ever-increasing demands of consumption and waste management. The answer is not more tips or smarter trucks, or just even bigger recycling centres, but:
 - i. culture change through education and regulation
 - ii. ii. swiftly and seriously penalising polluters and those who breach waste management laws and regulations, and
 - iii. iii. supporting local initiatives that change the consumption and throw-away culture.
- b. The management of human waste also needs to be urgently addressed in the context of the present and likely future droughts and water shortages. The State Government needs to address urgently the reuse of all outflows from sewerage treatment plants and switching to non-water based effluent disposal.
- c. Further to 6b, water waste in general needs to be tackled for the same reasons. We need to get serious about water conservation, not just with seasonal water restrictions when it's already too late. The State needs to encourage water domestic collection, frugal use of water at all times and get inventive about reuse of water.