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**Question 1 - What are the key issues facing the NSW waste system?**

1. The application of the waste hierarchy towards an increasing recycling rate has stagnated. It is also evident that previous recycling data has overestimated the rate, for example on beverage containers and municipal waste.
2. The onset of the Asian rejection of exports of plastic and paper has exacerbated financial pressures on the recycle collection system and exposed the lack of wisdom in dumping down collections into 'comingled'. This has led to: - a drop in prices for some materials (eg, paper and cardboard) imperilling collection-for-recycling viability - increased costs at material separation plants affecting their competitive position with virgin materials
3. The 'crisis' in waste collection due to increasing stockpiles, diversion of recyclables to landfill and growing costs has created a large gap in which waste to energy and more landfilling could become a long term prospect. Neither is recycling or part of the circular economy and contrary to what the community expects when they (and businesses) recycle. The ongoing publicity will, over time, place recycling in a negative light and reduce community commitment to it - this will be hard to regain.
4. The failure to achieve significant gains on organics (a large fraction of which goes to landfill) recycling despite some years of 'campaigns'.
5. Increasing waste rates per capita highlighting the lack of avoidance by consumers and increased wastes (e.g. packaging) being introduced into the community.
6. Ongoing waste of resources into packaging and plastic pollution.
7. The application of microplastic infested compost to lands.

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

1. A belief that 'pilots' and voluntary action will lead to substantial solutions. These may be good for PR but fail to achieve systemic change that can be achieved via smart regulation, landfill bans and price signals.
2. Insufficient deployment of waste levy funds, a significant portion of which are locked into overall budget outcomes via consolidated revenue.
3. The view that a 20 year strategy is the way to go, when we only have the next 3-4 years to put in place on the ground, key reforms, as whatever is built and contracted will determine the next 20 years. The policy and implementation system lacks vigour and appropriate focus.
4. The possibility that the waste to energy policy will be weakened opening the way to a contracted, long term diversion of recyclables (particularly in the red and commercial bins) to one-off energy extraction with its low employment gains and production of many tonnes of toxic residue.

**Question 3 - How can we best reduce waste?**

1. Aim for systemic change and adopt policies that will achieve this. The system won't reform itself without strong intervention and financial support. At the NSW level there have really only been two key interventions - the waste levy and container deposits.
2. Push for easy to recycle materials (ie, compostable instead of plastic) and avoidance (reusables).
3. Effective and mandatory product stewardship programs for key wastes (e.g. hand held batteries, solar panels, paint) so there is a collection system to prevent them becoming waste.
4. Improve consumer knowledge of what is recyclable and reduce the complexity of mixed material products so recycling is not confusing.

**Question 4 - How can we recycle better?**

1. Procurement policies by state and local governments and businesses, for recycled content. This will create the market to underpin investment into more domestic reprocessing.
2. A packaging EPR program that ensures recyclability, recycled content and collection infrastructure.
3. Aim for high quality product, not fitting product qualities to coarse collection, contaminated systems.
4. Establish a high class taskforce to drive the program rather than just rely on established bureaucratic processes.

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

1. Use the current crisis, community desire to keep recycling and unusual concurrence of agreement amongst industry, environment NGOs along with the 'ban' announcements made by COAG to achieve BIG change.
2. Leverage the deep public and scientific concern about plastic pollution to adopt a single, short term use ban program (e.g. SA may provide a guide) and a broader reduction plan.
3. Establish a leadership position where national approaches are too slow or weak.

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