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

Ku-ring-gai welcomes this 20 Waste Year Strategy which aims to provide a stronger and clearer direction for NSW Government on innovation and investment. From a planning perspective, waste management needs to be considered as a critical issue and as an essential service. Waste is not considered as an essential service. However, it should be an essential service with an ever increasing population, the metropolitan area of Sydney has very limited infrastructure for the management of putrescible waste and waste transfer. One of the key responsibilities of the EPA and the portfolio is to ensure that waste management facilities are developed and maintained to match population growth and meet policy goals legislated under the WARR Strategy. Presently, only two landfills can take putrescible waste, one at Lucas Heights and one at Woodlawn. Despite the WARR Strategy emphasising landfill avoidance, however the perverse effect of the high tax on landfill (i.e. more than 60% of per tonne disposal cost is returned to the NSW Government via the landfill levy) has been to increase the scarcity of landfill without alternative infrastructure to deal with putrescible waste. There has been no large-scale investment by Government or Industry in waste management facilities for several years (1), other than the Veolia AWT plant. There has been no investment under the NSW Energy from Waste policy. Slow promotion of innovation and clean technology by the State Government will have a significant long term impact on development/growth and on the overall economy. Prompt action needs to be taken to deliver waste management using a suite of available technologies. Current waste strategies have not taken a long term strategic view nor properly considered the long term planning and investment required to facilitate the development of waste infrastructure. State owned facilities were sold and only limited assistance is provided to commercial entities interested in developing facilities or creating markets.

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

The current WARR KRAs and performance metrics are in urgent need of review as they have not been changed much for 10 years and achievement for municipal waste residential waste is persistently below target. Continuing a Strategy with the similar goals, metrics and assumptions as to the waste industry's participation in a market, which is constrained by limited sites and high approval risks, is not supported by the evidence of recent years. All programs and KRAs in place over the last ten years should be evaluated to assess the goals against the results. This assessment should be stratified to focus on waste streams and geographic areas that are in greatest need of program stimulus to achieve change. As the recovery targets for municipal waste have not been met, all options for change should be considered: Change the KRAs to include broader goals such as resource recovery in all forms, including energy greenhouse gas emission reduction waste reduction for problematic geographies and settlement types (e.g. MUDs). ? Change the programs to more specifically target problem products, areas, waste streams, including prohibition of some packaging. ? Alternative programs need to be evaluated against current approaches to determine a benefit-risk ratio that is transparent and shared. It is not practicable to continue to refine the last decade of programs that have delivered marginal benefits and not in areas where they would have the most impact. For example, Metropolitan Sydney suffers most from the externalities of insufficient and inadequate waste infrastructure, and with very limited local facilities. So data analysis and goal setting need to be at levels other than all MSW and all NSW.

Question 3 - How can we best reduce waste?

All levels of government as well as Industry need to be involved. Producer responsibility/product stewardship schemes can design out waste early in the production cycle once manufacturers and

retailers are required to contribute towards the disposal costs of their products. Address waste avoidance and reduction of problem wastes in specific programs for citizens, wholesalers and producers actions by prohibitions or separate collection systems/drop-off options

Question 4 - How can we recycle better?

A whole of government approach is needed at State level to reduce planning impediments and to the sharing of risk. Government has a role in infrastructure provision in the case of Sydney, where the market acting alone cannot meet community needs and policy aspirations. Market formation, industry development and innovation incentives for the waste management industry are needed, to trigger a catch-up period in Australian waste infrastructure provision, which lags the capacity and technology available in other developed Western economies.

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

A long term strategy that supports investment could create significant improvements to NSW's waste system. A whole of government approach is needed, similar to those achieved for Premier's Priorities where agencies work together to achieve outcomes. Waste is an essential service impacting the whole community every day. It remains unnoticed because of efficient systems that have been developed to manage it.

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

The management of waste and recycling can be innovative. Waste can be used for a range of products and purposes. At the moment, waste management is limited by a lack of medium to long term vision, planning and investment. With a lack of investment in the sector, costs will increase and the impact on the environment is likely to be more significant, i.e. higher the cost, higher the rate of illegal methods of disposal.