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

Waste reduction and avoidance appears to have slipped off the radar and waste diversion seems to be the main focus of most discussions. Education should not focus solely around recycling and a state-wide campaign on reduction and avoidance of all waste should be undertaken. There is a paucity of domestic markets for recycled material, resulting in a lack of secondary processing infrastructure. Markets and processing need to be encouraged at a regional scale to alleviate transport restrictions and promote regional development opportunities. There has been limited incentives or hypothecation of the levy to seriously address recycling issues or to encourage smaller industries to invest in local solutions. Large companies dominate the current markets and bureaucratic planning and licensing processes restrict a swift or meaningful response to current problems. There is no state-wide approach or cohesive education program to address the lack of understanding in the public sphere on what and how to recycle. This is compounded by the different systems of recyclers and what is considered recyclable by each LGA. There are not enough EPR and Product Stewardship schemes, leaving government with the burden of responsibility for disposal. There is an ad-hoc approach to the planning and development of waste infrastructure across NSW. Waste data is not current or robust and rarely includes commercial waste streams.

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

Little incentive for people to make change to their existing habits - excessive consumption, limited reuse or repair and poor separation of recyclates. This is exacerbated by the lack of a well-funded and cohesive approach by governments to encourage the public through effective education and information campaigns around waste avoidance and source separation. Limited regional infrastructure for separation, secondary processing and remanufacturing of products with recycled content and little incentive for business to venture into investment in this sector. The multi tiers of government that result in a fragmented approach to dealing with waste issues, planning and regulatory responsibility. A lack of adequate funding from the levy back to waste to make any real change, and money that is returned through WLRM is often tied to specific, sometimes prescriptive, grants that limit their effectiveness. Inadequate research and data collection in both the private and public sector to allow for effective planning or change.

Question 3 - How can we best reduce waste?

Increase the focus on avoidance and improve community education and engagement. Increase Fund and promote R&D to support innovation, repair and reuse, food waste avoidance programs and circular economy initiatives. Expand schemes, Legislate or provide incentives to manufacturers, importers and distributors to reduce or improve packaging and shift costs of disposal to those responsible for creating the waste.

Question 4 - How can we recycle better?

Improve source separation and reduce contamination through engagement and simple messaging. Improve MRF separation through investment in regional infrastructure, R&D and technology. Ensure hard to recycle and composite materials and packaging are phased out through bans, incentives, and industry targets. Support public and private innovation and development of Circular economy initiatives.

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

Taking a whole of government approach to waste that allows for a clear policy direction, stewardship and planning at a Federal, State and local level. Prioritize waste and resource recovery in all planning instruments and development pathways. Data collection, analysis and reporting needs to be consistent and timely for effective strategy development and education interventions. This could be vastly improved by 1) the financial support of compositional waste auditing and reporting of the domestic and commercial streams by local governments and industry 2) the expansion of the State Governments capacity to collect, collate and deliver waste data and 3) an increase in access and collection of commercial waste data 4) the development of a common framework to be used by all in the waste industry for reporting. There is a great opportunity in the regions to embrace circular economy initiatives. There is ready access to sites, recovered materials, human resources, research facilities and low cost promotion for smaller scale innovations. Government investment in this area would provide positive environmental, economic and social impacts in regional NSW. Collaboration of Councils through VRWGs and MWG?s, and between groups, has led to an increase in sharing of resources, ideas and insights, resulting in less duplication, a more cohesive delivery of WARR strategy objectives and a strengthening of collegiate relationships. Continuing and supporting this network is an important part of improving long term state-wide approaches to waste management. Increase hypothecation of the waste levy back to LG and industry

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