

Submission Date	9/23/2019 11:50:00 AM
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Question 1 - What are the key issues facing the NSW waste system?

1. A deficiency of leadership from the NSW State Government. The NSW State Government and NSW EPA needs to take a more proactive approach in providing guidance and leadership for Local Government and Industry.
2. The focus of the NSW EPA has largely been on resource recovery, which we need, but we want to see focus at the top of the hierarchy: waste avoidance/reuse and keeping resources circular.
3. The high cost of the Waste Levy is not necessarily delivering the intention of the waste hierarchy and resource recovery outcomes.
4. Inconsistencies in kerbside collection services (including types of bins and use or non-applications of Australian Standards) across Local Government areas has led to confusion about what goes in which bin and apathy from many residents.
5. A lack of transparency regarding end markets and down-stream reprocessing of a range of recyclable waste streams has reduced public confidence toward their efforts to correctly separate out their waste.
6. Access to drop off locations for residents and businesses to dispose of items not suitable for kerbside streams (such as chemicals, bulky recyclables and non-recyclables) is restricted and scarce, particularly in dense city areas. This has contributed to increased problem wastes ending up in landfill, lost opportunities for recovery and increased illegal dumping.
7. The Community Recycling Centre program is not flexible enough to allow for different models of problem waste drop off centres.
8. The approach taken by the NSW EPA which has led to uncertainty surrounding the future of Mixed Waste Organic Outputs (MWOO) has resulted in an unclear direction for Local Government and the stockpiling or landfilling of MWOO at great costs to Local Government for processing of this waste stream.
9. Demand for recycled content in products is low, largely due to the absence of minimum recycled content requirements in manufactured products by Government and Industry.
10. At present, domestic reprocessing infrastructure, particularly for lower value waste streams is insufficient or non-existent.

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

1. Entrenched behaviours and attitudes with regards to the source separation of waste and recyclables.
2. Increasing densities in our cities, poses challenges for traditional methods of waste management alongside a scarcity of space to provide adequate services.
3. An absence of the consistent use of evidence-based thinking among various levels of Government.
4. Lack of coordinated and collaborative approach to waste management and resource recovery between Federal, State and Local governments and industry.
5. Complex and potentially anachronistic definitions of waste (eg litter,) in the POEO Act and across administrative boundaries, which should be harmonised
6. Investment in innovation and long-term solutions is low.

Question 3 - How can we best reduce waste?

1. Mandate an approach to product stewardship for packaging, recognising that we cannot achieve the structural shift nor the proposed export ban with the current voluntary co-regulatory approach, and it is now time for mandated schemes, including funding for the WARR industry.

2. Build and strengthen a functional and integrated system based on the waste hierarchy, where each cog does not compete with the other but collectively, all processes play a vital role in driving positive diversion and recovery outcomes.
3. Creating demand and markets for recycled products to drive our industry forward.
4. More accountability for contractors to report accurate recovery data and where materials end up.
5. More State Government led communications campaigns with a focus on the upper echelon of the waste hierarchy: waste avoidance/reuse.
6. Advocate for/Implement rules to ensure manufacturers design and make products that are long-lasting and more easily repairable.
7. Provide funding/infrastructure to support repair/share systems

Question 4 - How can we recycle better?

1. Provide complete transparency about the types of recyclables, where the recycling is processed, the percent of recyclables that are recycled and the benefits of recycling.
2. The state government, as a regulatory authority that oversees the recycling industry, ensures that service providers are accountable for sorting and recycling the materials they collect and issues a recycling certificate for materials recycled.
3. Identify opportunities to have consistent kerbside bin infrastructure and mandate Australian Standard colours for kerbside bins.
4. Research best practice from the point of manufacturing a product to its end of life to identify opportunities to maximise recycling, and potentially ban items that cannot be kept circular. Include examples internationally that work well and provide avenues or incentives to establish these industries in Australia.
5. Identify priorities for recycling, for example glass, and create pathways for these materials to be recycled. If road base is a good option for recycled glass, provide industry incentives and funding to support the industry operation to process the glass in a usable form for road base: Close the Loop.
6. Support domestic recycling capabilities through improved policy backed by grant funding, and incentives for innovative markets to become established in Australia. Incentivise the industry from overseas or replicate industries that are successful in other countries.
7. Increase support for the use of recycled content in the work we do at the local and state level of government, including providing procurement specifications for products (containing recycled content) or procurement contractor panels that demonstrate high achieving waste avoidance or recovery targets
8. Implement State Government led communications campaigns to promote common messages about the correct separation of recyclables and providing the transparency of where the recyclables end up so consumers can make sustainable purchasing choices.

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

1. Provide a sensible and harmonised approach that integrates not just policy and regulatory frameworks, but all levels of government and all stakeholders in the supply chain.
2. Ensure political actions are based on a deep understanding of how the WARR industry works, and what reforms will really help the WARR industry work better in the future.
3. Increase effort to build Australia's domestic reprocessing capacity. As the State with the largest population in Australia, NSW has the types of volumes of materials required to make reprocessing viable.
4. Export bans could help focus on local opportunities to reprocess and keep materials circular, however, increasing local capacity needs to be balanced with cutting off export options. There's little benefit to closing opportunities in the global circular economy if it only sends more material to local stockpiles.

5. More evidence-based research to inform decision makers, including an assessment of the key materials that can be exported into the global circular market and practical considerations around increasing local reprocessing capacity.
6. As a significant portion of the kerbside waste stream, the improved recovery of organic materials (and, in particular, food waste) represents the single biggest opportunity to improve resource recovery in New South Wales.
7. Clearer policy settings and greater support for energy from waste opportunities to assist governments and community understand how EfW can play a key role in a cohesive WARR system, and linking waste strategies, programs and evaluation indicators to the NSW Net Zero emissions target
8. New targets related to sustainable procurement by State Government Departments.
9. More transparency regarding waste data management and reporting by contractors a. Open access data between local and state level government b. Potentially provide a system for automated reporting from weighbridge data c. Proportion of waste that is recovered and the end of life and destinations of those materials.
10. Provide a greater, clearer breakdown of waste levy investments.
11. More investment in innovation and long term solutions to waste management.

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

1. Rather than reinventing the wheel, the State Government should look toward examples of successful programs, models, infrastructure, and policies implemented Internationally that have resulted in optimal waste avoidance, reuse and resource recovery outcomes: Best Practice
2. Greater consultation and collaboration with Local Government and Industry through relevant Working Groups and Forums led by the NSW EPA can help to provide more certainty and greater consistencies of approach across the State: Transparency
3. Better data management and reporting mechanisms with regular auditing to ensure a viable robust WARR system: Accountability and Responsibility.
4. Support for innovation and financial backing to test new technology and procedures: Future-proofing.