

The NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2003

1. What is the Strategy?

The NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2003 provides a framework for reducing waste and making better use of our resources. It is a first for Australia.

The Strategy is about products and materials that are commonly called "waste" by the community and which are often disposed of to landfill.

The Strategy sets out "where we are now" and "where we want to be in the future" and the challenges we face to get there. It establishes targets and an action agenda which are both realistic and visionary and which reflect Australian and international best practices and performance.

Support for the Strategy has come from industry, community groups, environment groups, individuals and state and local governments, all of whom have expressed a commitment to working together to achieve its goals.

The actions and targets in the Strategy have been endorsed by the NSW Government.

Success through partnership is the cornerstone of the Strategy which also builds on the existing efforts and successes that many in the community have worked hard to achieve.

We can achieve much more and the Strategy provides guidance to all sectors about where the greatest gains can be made. It helps to identify priorities for action and opportunities for collaboration. It will also enable policy and priority setting and delivery of a more coordinated approach across government and industry at all levels.

2. How was the Strategy developed?

Resource NSW is a state government agency created under the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001. Its role is to develop a statewide framework and to support implementation of programs to avoid waste and recover resources throughout NSW.

Resource NSW released a draft Strategy for feedback in September 2002. It held feedback sessions and received over 75 submissions. These provided valuable feedback, which has helped refine a number of areas in the Strategy.

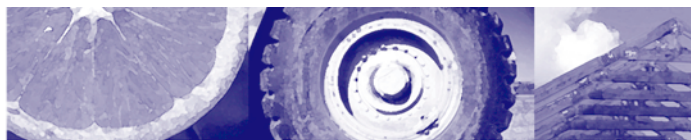
The Strategy is, however, a living document and it is recognised that a great deal of work remains to be done during 2003 to develop specific actions, roles and responsibilities and implementation plans. This process will involve close consultation with the following groups who will be working together in partnership to achieve the outcomes and targets identified in the Strategy:

- State government agencies, particularly Resource NSW, the Environment Protection Authority and Planning NSW
- Local councils
- Business, including retail and manufacture
- Waste & recycling industry
- Householders
- Consumers
- Industry associations
- Non-government organisations
- Education providers
- Community and environmental groups.

3. What progress have we made in reducing waste so far?

Good progress is being made on reducing waste but there is still plenty of room for improvement.

Looking across all waste streams, for every dollar's worth of economic activity in NSW, today we produce 25% less waste than 10 years ago. When we look at municipal waste only, the reduction is over 40%. Progress has been slower in both the commercial and industrial waste and construction and demolition waste sectors. In NSW, more than two thirds of households (68%) are within a council area that has a kerbside recycling service. Three out of every four households recycle.



The environmental management of waste has also been substantially improved with new waste regulations and waste assessment guidelines, guidelines for improved landfill management, a better tracking system for hazardous and industrial wastes and tougher anti-littering and dumping laws.

Other important initiatives include:

- Groups of councils in regional NSW are working cooperatively to deliver cost-effective rural collection contracts for specific services, including garden organics, black iron recovery and household/farm hazardous waste.
- Cleaner production programs are assisting industry to reduce their waste and their operating costs.
- All State Government agencies are implementing waste reduction and purchasing more recycled content products.
- More community education, increased support for councils and increased enforcement is helping to tackle litter and illegal dumping; and
- Waste reduction grants of almost \$6 million have enabled schools, industry, local councils, community groups and individuals to tackle particular waste problems.

4. The Strategy in brief

(i) Operating principles

The Strategy is designed to help us see waste in the context of the life cycle of goods and materials. The life cycle includes extraction, manufacturing, distribution, consumption and recovery for reprocessing or disposal. At every step along this chain, we must take action to avoid and prevent waste.

The Strategy reflects the current regulatory and legislative context within NSW and the recent inquiries and reports which have contributed to our understanding of the challenges we face. In addition, it acknowledges our national and international obligations and the potential for new national approaches, particularly product stewardship and Extended Producer Responsibility approaches given the increasing national operational focus of business.

The Strategy is also based on these important principles which must guide our actions.

- Sustainability
- Economic benefits for NSW
- No "one-fit" solutions
- Guided by outcomes
- Partnership based approaches
- Local solutions
- Whole of lifecycle information
- Improvement of existing systems
- Community involvement in decision making
- An integrated approach

(ii) Framework and targets

Over 6 million tonnes of waste was disposed of to landfill in NSW in 2000 and even though we have reduced waste and increased our recycling in many areas, we continue to face an enormous challenge. This challenge is reflected worldwide where increased economic activity is almost always mirrored by increased waste generation.

The Strategy identifies four key areas where we must achieve outcomes.

These are:

- Avoiding and preventing waste.
- Increased use of renewable and recovered materials.
- Reducing toxicity in products and materials.
- Reducing litter and illegal dumping.

Broad targets are proposed for each outcome area. These are shown in the following table. They are global targets which no single sector or group can deliver on their own. They rely on each individual, organisation, region or sector identifying the specific contribution which they can make to help achieve them.

The prevention of waste target aims to hold waste generation level for the next five years. This means that in five years time, we are aiming to be generating no more waste than we were in 2000, even taking into account a projected population growth of around 1% per year and economic growth of around 2.5% per year.

This target will be challenging in itself but it will also provide us with the time we need to prepare and activate a detailed Waste Prevention Strategy that will aim to reduce future generation rates instead of simply holding them steady. Resource NSW will develop this Strategy in close consultation with councils, industry and the community during 2003.



Outcome area	Target
Preventing and avoiding waste	To hold level the total waste generated for the next 5 years
Increasing recovery and use of secondary resources	By 2014, to: Increase recovery and utilisation of materials from municipal sector from the current 26% to 66% Increase recovery and utilisation of materials from the commercial & industrial sector from the current 28% to 63% Increase recovery and utilisation of materials from the construction & demolition sector from the current 65% to 76%.
Reducing toxic substances in products and materials	By 2014 or earlier: To phase out priority substances in identified products as a first choice or if not possible to achieve maximum recovery for re-use and; where identified products containing these priority substances require disposal as a last resort, the permitted "leachability" of the substances will be reduced to the levels that are permitted for inert waste.
Reducing litter and illegal dumping	Reduce total volume and tonnages of litter reported annually. Reduce the total tonnages of illegally dumped material reported by regulatory agencies and RID squads annually.

Table 1: Broad targets for each outcome area

The resource recovery targets adopted in this Strategy are the Aggressive Resource Recovery targets proposed by Tony Wright in the Independent Public Assessment – Landfill Capacity and Demand. We will aim to achieve these targets over the next 12 years.¹ This means we need to increase our recovery levels according to the table below:

Stream	Current resource recovery	Aggressive scenario recovery (by 2014)
Municipal	26%	66%
Commercial	28%	63%
Construction	65%	76%

Table 2. Resource recovery targets

The reduction of potentially toxic substances target is important as small amounts can cause serious and ongoing environmental damage. Specifically,

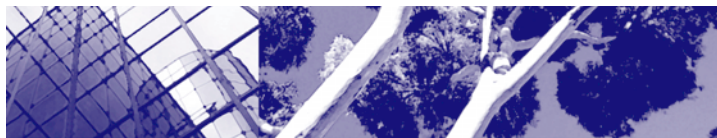
we are aiming to phase out priority substances in identified products as a first choice. If this is not possible, we need to achieve maximum recovery for re-use, and where identified products containing these priority substances require disposal as a last resort, the permitted "leachability" of the substances will be reduced to the levels that are permitted² for inert waste.

Initially, we will be focussing on a small number of priority substances, particularly those which, if mixed in with other wastes, potentially block or limit the recovery and recycling of the whole stream. These will be established through robust research managed by a cross sectoral steering group.

Less litter and illegal dumping does not have a quantitative target since an accurate picture of the amounts of litter and illegal dumping is not yet available. The EPA will shortly be releasing a methodology for measuring and reporting on the amount of litter we create. This will be used to benchmark our current performance and establish targets. We also need to do further work on measuring illegal dumping and measuring the effectiveness of the various strategies to tackle litter and illegal dumping.

¹ Wright 2000. Scheme 7 estimates 6-year intervals to move from our current situation to the improved scenario and then a further 6 years from improved to the aggressive scenario.

² As published by the EPA



(iii) Priority actions

Material and sector specific sub targets and action plans

Resource NSW will be working with key participants including industry sectors and associations, councils, government agencies and community groups to develop action plans and sub targets during 2003. These will help to provide momentum and will provide shorter-term milestones for us to work to achieve as we head towards the big picture targets by 2014.

The sub targets will also provide a focus for those working in particular sectors eg retailers, manufacturers, government agencies or producing or generating particular products or materials eg office paper, food wastes, asphalt.

The Strategy already identifies many actions which can be taken by people in every part of the materials flow system and identifies sectors, products and materials where there are substantial opportunities for action to reduce waste and recover resources. These will be used as the basis for discussion with each group.

Achieving change in each part of the system will not always be able to be achieved solely by the key players in that area. Cooperation and partnerships will be needed across industry, state and local government and the community.

Whole of system actions

The Strategy identifies some specific actions which will impact on waste avoidance and resource recovery across the whole system and influence each of the four outcome areas. They will need support and input from every part of the system and will be coordinated by Resource NSW. Key groups will also be involved on an ongoing basis in implementation and delivery.

These actions are:

- Develop a Strategy Implementation Plan that details programs, budgets, milestones and responsibilities under each outcome area in the Strategy in collaboration with key participants.
- Develop a Waste Prevention Strategy over the next 12 months as a companion document to this Strategy. It will identify a methodology for measuring amounts of waste prevented, specific targets for key sectors and materials, where appropriate, and detailed actions needed to achieve these.

- Establish whole of supply chain monitoring and reporting.
- Initiate whole of system product stewardship initiatives to prevent waste, recover resources, phase out identified toxic substances and reduce litter and illegal dumping.
- Establish a cross-sectoral group to oversee research to establish the most potentially harmful contaminants in commercial and industrial, building and demolition and household hazardous waste. Use this research to identify priority substances.
- Establish a NSW Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Alliance
- Establish a coordinated, statewide education strategy to support waste avoidance and resource recovery which involves and integrates the efforts of education providers from formal education institutions with programs run through councils, other state government organisations, individual companies, industry associations, ethnic and other community organisations. This strategy will be consistent with the NSW Environmental Education Plan 2002–05, recently endorsed by the Government.

5. Monitoring and reporting progress

The Strategy will be reviewed every two years. This will be coordinated by Resource NSW. An annual progress report will also be released.

6. Copies of the Strategy

The NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy is available in hard copy, on CD Rom or electronically.

You may:

- download it from the Resource NSW website: www.resource.nsw.gov.au
- request a copy (either printed or on CD) by phoning Resource NSW on 02 8837 6000.
- request via email to: strategy@resource.nsw.gov.au.

Copies of the summary are also available including copies in eight community languages.