

Work to prevent and avoid waste is now underway with the release of a discussion paper (*'Producing and consuming efficiently to conserve our resources'*) to promote debate on ways for industry, governments and individuals to increase resource efficiency and avoid waste.

Reducing toxicity in products & materials is being tackled in a number of ways, most notably in partnership with local councils through a program for the collection and proper disposal of household chemicals, and through the work of the Expert Reference Group which was formed to advise and monitor sectors identified in the EPR Priority Statement including priority harmful substances.

Finally, a number of programs are targeting litter and illegal dumping. The Department launched a new *Don't be a tosser* campaign, targeting littering in public places and small-scale illegal dumping activities, as well as littering from vehicles, with accompanying grants to Councils for litter prevention programs, clean up projects and enforcement activities. Some groups of Councils have even established Regional Illegal Dumping to tackle illegal dumping in their areas.

A comprehensive review of programs and achievements to date, and an assessment of potential areas for future action is being finalised and will inform the work of a cross sectoral Litter and Illegal Dumping Alliance.

As well as outlining programs and initiatives to date and providing current performance data, the Report also looks to future priorities.

It confirms the need for ongoing education and awareness programs, as well as data collection and analysis to enable robust reporting and a good basis for future program planning.

The Report identifies that action is particularly required to address the large amounts of paper, cardboard and wood which are still being disposed of. There are also many businesses which still do not have regular recycling collections, suggesting a significant opportunity to increase recovery rates.

And over the next 12 months serious effort will be required to increase product recovery and improve lifecycle product management by those sectors identified in the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Priority Statement released by the NSW Government in March 2004.



## Monitoring progress in Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery in NSW

New South Wales has made good progress in avoiding waste and improving resource recovery in the past 12 months, thanks to a range of government, industry and community programs.

These programs and an analysis of current performance data are the focus of a report by the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) (the Department) which tracks the progress in meeting outcomes and targets identified in the NSW Government's Waste Avoidance & Resource Recovery Strategy 2003 (the Strategy).

Key data on current performance indicates:

- a 7% reduction in the total amount of waste disposed in the Sydney region (SMA) since 2000 (baseline used in the Strategy) with the single largest factor in the reduction being lower volumes of commercial and industrial waste;
- 92% of NSW households now have access to kerbside recycling, and household recycling performance has improved through increased paper recovery, with each person in Sydney now setting aside 92kg (62 kg of paper; 22 kg of glass containers; 4.5 kg of plastic containers; 1.5 kg of steel cans; and less than 1 kg of aluminum cans<sup>1</sup>) for recycling (excluding garden organics), compared with 84kg in 2000 ... and just 30kg in 1991;
- Overall organics recovery is estimated to have increased from 40% of total generated in 1998 to 50% in 2002-03;
- Sydney remains the equal cleanest city in Australia (alongside Brisbane) with lower than average levels of littering behaviour, combined with higher than average rates of people 'doing the right thing' and using the bin, according to the findings of the Beverage Industry Environment Council (BIEC)'s Littering Behaviour Studies (LBS). And Sydney is the only capital city to record an improvement in terms of less littering and more bin use for the past two years, showing sustained improvements that exceed the national average; and
- according to the Publishers National Environment Bureau (PNEB), the newspaper recycling rate in NSW is 77%, which already exceeds their 2005 national recovery target of 74% and puts NSW ahead of the current world's best recovery rate of 73.5%.

<sup>1</sup> 2002-03 NEPM data



*The Strategy identified four outcome areas as follows:*

- *preventing and avoiding waste;*
- *increased use of renewable and recovered materials;*
- *reducing toxicity in products and materials; and*
- *reducing litter and illegal dumping.*

*In working towards the waste avoidance and resource recovery targets in each of these Strategy outcome areas the Department has worked in partnership with Local Government, state government agencies, schools, business and a number of commercial sectors.*

A key focus has been on the establishment of better data to provide a sound basis for program and policy planning, research projects, and a range of programs and initiatives that are delivering measurable results.

Some programs and initiatives are delivering across *all* outcome areas, including the WRAPP, the Local Government Action Plan, the Sustainable Schools program, the activities of Regional Waste Groups, and the state-wide Waste Education Strategy:

- government agencies have made good progress in implementing waste reduction and purchasing plans (WRAPP) over the past two years, including a substantial increase in the purchase of recycled content copy paper, which has doubled to 36%;
- a draft Action Plan providing commitments and targets that Local Government could adopt to contribute to meeting the targets and goals identified in the NSW Strategy has been prepared in consultation with Local Government, and is expected to be finalised later this year;

- a partnership between the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) and the Department of Education and Training is providing support for 220 schools state-wide in the development and implementation of School Environmental Management Plans;
- voluntary regional waste groups have been established across NSW, to design and deliver regional and local waste management and resource recovery plans, with the support of the Department; and
- work is being finalised on a coordinated, state-wide Waste Education Strategy to establish what good practice waste education looks like, from planning and implementation to evaluation, as well as to provide guidance and resources for improving current practice.

*Other programs and initiatives have been designed to contribute to results in specific outcome areas.*

*Much work has been done to increase the use of renewable and recovered materials through infrastructure improvements, market development initiatives and education initiatives.*

Key improvements to infrastructure which are increasing recycling rates and the recovery of materials include:

- the establishment of a Wood Waste Recovery Network, which is diverting more than 40,000 tonnes of wood from landfill each year;
- the trial of a computer recycling pilot which collected 57 tonnes of computer equipment (more than 6000 items) over a 4-month period in Western Sydney;

- the establishment of new commercial recycling services in the Illawarra which are delivering increased volumes of cardboard, glass and mixed recycle materials;
- the development of good practice performance measures for kerbside recycling systems and a comparative assessment of current systems, to provide valuable evaluation and management support for Councils;
- partnership programs with key waste infrastructure operators Waste Service NSW, SITA Environmental Solutions and Collex, which are set to recover an additional 20,000 tpa of cardboard, metal and wood;
- partnership programs between the Department and major property owners and managers have committed to diverting an additional 20% of total waste from landfill across 18 major commercial sites; and
- more than \$2 million in Research and Development Grants to companies and research institutions for projects aimed at increasing resource recovery, developing and testing best practice models, and addressing market development issues impacting the greater uptake of recovered and recycled resources.



*Complementing these programs, work is also being done to build markets for recycled materials.*

The Department has been working on a range of programs to grow markets for recycled organic materials, including research into their potential benefits in the viticulture industry as well as the potential of recycled organics products to help reduce the effect of salinity in agricultural lands.

Another major initiative is the establishment of a Local Government Buy Recycled Alliance - a partnership between the Department and the Local Government Association and & Shires Association of NSW.

A number of education initiatives have been developed to promote improved recycling rates, including:

- the development of draft guidelines for managers of public places, to promote a standardised approach to public place recycling, including a consistency of recycling bin colour, signage, shape and location;
- work on the Materials Selection and Waste and Recyclables categories of the NSW Government's Building Sustainability Index, or BASIX residential rating tool to promote sustainable residential development;
- the development of a decision-making tool and tailored training program, to equip Local Government to assess proposals for Alternative Waste Treatment technologies; and
- the establishment of a bilingual education team across seven languages which is promoting sustainable living practices in non-English speaking communities.