

A RESPONSE TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSIONS' DRAFT REPORT ON WASTE MANAGEMENT

Dear Commissioner Weickhardt

firstly I will introduce myself - Jenifer Crawford a Councillor (elected Nov. 2005) with Glamorgan/Spring Bay Council (GSBC) which is situated on the east coast of Tasmania. I mention that I am a Councillor because it was my concern over the situation regarding Waste Management in our municipality that motivated me to stand for Local Government.

Glamorgan/Spring Bay Council is a long (150km) narrow coastal municipality which services 6 main towns with 4 Waste Transfer Stations being required. The rate base is slightly over 5000 & last financial year the running cost of our municipal Waste Management system was well over \$800 000 from an overall Council budget of just over \$7 million. There is no landfill facility within in our municipality. The view I present in this paper is a personal view. Due to time constraints, this paper has not been presented to, and therefore has not been endorsed by the GSB Council.

DRAFT FINDINGS 2.1 & 2.2

I think that these findings are irrelevant to a degree.

We already know - too much waste is unnecessarily going to landfill.

The Commonwealth Government should put in place common definitions & **a range** of affordable data collection methodologies that suit a range of situations from small rural municipalities to large urban municipalities to CBD's & industrial areas. This would allow 'like' to be compared with 'like' which is surely what is relevant.

I agree International comparisons may not be all that useful, however Australia should certainly look at solutions that are being used in other countries to reduce landfill, for example the discouragement of non-essential packaging & incentives for 'real' biodegradable packaging (e.g paper, cellulose based 'plastics' etc.) to be used wherever possible.

DRAFT FINDINGS 4.1, 4.2 & 4.3

Given that I think Local Government are best suited to knowing the needs of their communities regarding Waste Management and are best able to monitor the local situation, both short and long term, it would be excellent if the Commonwealth Government would assist in the

locating and setting-up of appropriate 'neighborhood' landfill sites. The initial set-up is so costly, small municipalities find it is impossible to set-up new landfill sites that meet the necessary environmental regulations.

Free expert advice and site specifications and plans would be helpful to small municipalities to help with locating and preparing landfill sites. A 20 year interest free loan to get a site up and running would also be another way to make rural municipal landfill sites a possibility.

At present our Council is transporting some of its waste over 200km to the closest landfill site as well as having to staff 4 Waste Transfer Stations. Our Council certainly does not have the funds to pursue other long term options that would be both economically and environmentally preferable.

DRAFT FINDINGS 8.1

I find it hard to get my head around to the Commission's thinking on this one. This is not because Coles Bay, the first declared plastic shopping bag free town, is within my municipality. This project was a community and business based project that had no input from Council. Coles Bay residents that reside on the edge of a National Park could see 'first eye' the impact plastic shopping bags were having on the local environment, (especially the aquatic wildlife) and decided to do something about it.

It was interesting to note the comment you made during the Perth Public Hearings about the huge reaction you got from the 11/2 pages on plastic shopping bags in your Draft Report. Alternatives to bin liners? Educate. Just put your rubbish directly into the wheelie bins. For dirty or smelly waste wrap it in news print. Plenty of business opportunities for someone to respond to this problem.

I believe unless individuals are made to directly pay the full cost of packaging including recycling or landfill costs there will be no significant change in this area.

I think there is definitely a place for education on the social, economic and environment impacts of littering but I also think there is a place for regulations as well. People that live removed from the natural environment, often do not realise what impact their actions have on the environment, even when informed it is quite often not 'real' to them which makes it unlikely that they will act on non-regulated suggestions.

Incentives and/or disincentives could be used. Paper bags could be

used. Plastic shopping bags are so last century, so unnecessary - & are not available in many progressive countries - get rid of them!

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.3

EXCELLENT! if sufficient funding is allocated to do this.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 9.1

I agree.

DRAFT FINDING 9.2

I think deposit refund schemes can work successfully if the deposit is high enough (and indexed). In Tasmania there is an organic business that sells among other things yoghurt & milk in re-usable, returnable glass jars and bottles. These products are widely distributed and attract a deposit on the containers - one type of container attracts a deposit of 40c and another 20c. The system seems to work well and must be cost neutral, at worst, for the business to continue to use this packaging method.

The Commonwealth Government should put into place regulations/legislation to make sure that the containers of food that is regularly consumed, e.g margarine, yoghurt, ice cream etc. are manufactured from 'good' recyclable materials.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 10.2

A mandatory product stewardship scheme should be introduced as soon as possible.

This EPR system should include packaging, white goods, digital & electronic equipment etc. The added cost would in effect be worn indirectly by the consumer. There are three main advantages to this system. Firstly people are less likely to illegally dump obsolete appliances etc. if they can leave them at a Transfer Station for free. Secondly if manufacturers are responsible for their product to the grave there is an incentive for the producer to research and become more innovative with their packaging. The use of components that are recoverable/recyclable in appliances could be encouraged by the use of incentive schemes. Thirdly, it means that rural Councils are not putting good recyclable metals etc. to landfill because of the cost of transporting them to the closest pick-up location. It also means that municipalities that have a large number of holiday house/shack owners, as ours does are not having to pay for the disposal of second-hand goods that invariably find their way, and 'die' in these areas.

The DrumMuster program seems to be a good example of an EPR scheme that works successfully. The GSBC Council is in the process of

having two DrumMuster Stations installed at present, which would not be affordable to us if this scheme did not exist.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 12.1

Although I agree with this recommendation in effect if this happens it is inevitable that the State Government will use this opportunity to introduce a waste levy. I am opposed to a waste levy system as it seems to be more about revenue raising than Waste Management - at least it appears so in the states that already have it in place.

The Commonwealth Government should set conditions on fees and contracts and the State Government should monitor the process while Local Government implements and manages, if the 12.1 recommendation is implemented.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 12.2

This is an interesting proposal. I am a board member of The Southern Waste Strategy Authority (SWSA) which is made up of members from 12 southern (?) Tasmanian Councils.

Whereas the SWSA has, and continues to educate, research, collect & disperse data, lobby and chase funding on Waste Management issues, and does an excellent job in these areas, its focus is on urban Waste Management because the Councils it represents are mainly urban Councils. This means that even though our Council is supportive of the work the SWSA does, it is rarely relevant to our situation. It concerns me that the same problems could arise if formal constituted regional bodies were set up and it is probable that the cost to our Council to belong to a constituted regional body would not be cost effective.

I find it interesting that the Commission did not visit Tasmania to conduct interviews face to face, although I am grateful the opportunity was there for Tasmanians to do phone interviews. Tasmania has many unique problems concerning Waste Management issues, particularly regarding transport of recyclable materials. If the Commission is fair dinkum about its brief these problems need to be explored and addressed at a national level.

There are only two reasons I could think of of why the Productivity Commission did not visit Tasmania. One, Tasmania is not that important and will just need to fit in with the rest of Australia or two, the extra problems eg transport of recyclables to the mainland, lack of critical mass/problems of economy of scale etc, are too difficult to deal with. Although these problems are not unique to Tasmania they

are issues that effect and impact on the state as a whole.

" Our fundamental focus was not necessarily on the community, but was on government policy makers, but clearly government policy makers need to be doing things in the interest of the community, so...." (Weickhardt July 17th Perth)

is that in interest of the business community or the interest of the majority of community members? Waste Management IS a HUGE and profitable business. The Commission should focus community views as large businesses, large urban Councils etc. have the money, power, experts, jargon, time and access to government policy makers at all times to make their views known. Communities need to be not only listened to but heard by this Commission.

In conclusion I would like to reiterate that Local Government is best suited to manage the everyday handling of the waste generated by their municipalities. Local Council can best manage and monitor situations and respond to them both quickly and efficiently when problems occur.

The Commonwealth Government is best able to regulate, legislate and supply appropriate funding for Waste Management regulations/incentives to be implemented throughout Australia, both in urban and rural areas.

CHEERS

JENIFER CRAWFORD