

Wednesday 30th of November, 2005

The Productivity Commission,  
Waste Generation and Resource Efficiency  
Locked Bag 2  
Collins Street East  
Melbourne Victoria 8003

## **SUBMISSION INTO WASTE GENERATION**

The Chair,

Solo Resource Recovery appreciates the opportunity to offer comment into the enquiry into Waste and Resource Efficiency.

### **Background**

Solo Resource Recovery is a proud Australian company with a long and distinguished history of service to the community and waste industry. We provide and facilitate economic and technically advanced waste collection and processing systems throughout Australia. From our company history, which began in 1932 as a humble horse and cart service, we have continually developed technology, safety, and efficiency to create superior methods of waste minimisation, recovery, handling and disposal.

We have had extensive experience in practical waste minimisation systems and would like to offer comment on the following points in the scope of the enquiry:

**1. The economic, environmental and social benefits and costs of optimal approaches for resource recovery and efficiency and waste management, taking into account different waste streams and waste related activities.**

C. Solo agrees that resource recovery is one stream of an effective integrated approach in the minimisation of landfill, and the associated negative impacts. It should be noted that the most effective recycling practices draw a large initial capital outlay to achieve a community accepted facility. The added investment required to compensate for road upgrades, undercover facilities capable of housing large working machinery, land development, dust and visual environmental laws, and local government building and development standards, have a negating factor when comparing cost versus viability.

There are overwhelming environmental and social benefits to "best practice" waste management, however incentives should be made available so the long term viability of these projects can be undertaken. The economic benefits for business and the general community would flow on following the initial investment however; the domestic market for recycled goods needs to be stimulated to allow for a faster return on investment.

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**2. Institutional, regulatory and other factors which impede optimal resource efficiency and recovery, and optimal approaches to waste management, including barriers to the development of markets for recovered resources.**

- C. The major factor when considering and offering the highest efficiencies to waste management is the popularity and cost to the "end" user. Regional councils are responsible for the awarding and implementation of contracts in relation to waste removal, cartage and disposal. As previously mentioned, the initial cost of setting up high standard recycling centres is excessive, and can be seen as an additional burden on the ratepayer. The popularity and ongoing success of local government is dependent on popularity and cost.

Standardising the tendering process for local governments would increase the necessity for the adoption of best practices. The inclusion of professional services and measurable standards would greatly improve the overall success and acceptance of critical issues in waste management. The awarding of contracts based predominately on price should be stopped to allow legitimate operators the opportunity to increase the standards of these communities.

Increased kerbside collections would provide effective "source separated" material collection that would affect both the quality and cost of recycling. The ability to collect paper, glass, plastics, and putrescible garbage into alternative treatment and/or disposal technologies would increase the market and viability for large scale recycling.

**3. The adequacy of current data on material flows, and relevant economic activity, and how data might be more efficiently collected and used to progress optimal approaches for waste management and resource efficiency and recovery.**

- C. The generation of data is improving all the time. Details are usually available locally, however comparative performance of "kilograms per head produced / versus kilogram per head recycled" in each council region should be used to identify areas that are not achieving acceptable standards.

**4. The impact of international trade and trade agreements on the level and disposal of waste in Australia.**

- C. The quality and cost of our recycling will help generate more exports within the region however; the vast majority of recycled product would be used domestically. It is important that all waste management companies be members of "The Australian Greenhouse Office - Challenge program" to be active in the provision of emission and waste minimisation. This activity will vastly impact on Australia's ability to compete in the Asia/Pacific region. The reduction of greenhouse emissions and the overall increase in recycling will align us favourably to the "Kyoto Protocol".

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**5. Strategies that could be adopted by government and industry to encourage optimal resource efficiency and recovery.**

- C.
- (1) The formulation of standard benchmarks for local authority provisions and the application of it.
  - (2) A point system to include waste minimisation strategies (rather than cheapest cost) when local authorities are awarding contracts.
  - (3) Strategies of alternate green waste usage. The market for mulches and ground cover are saturated in most areas. Research into regional soil conditioning, stock feeds, or agriculture needs to be undertaken.
  - (4) Increased community awareness programs and education, including a more (adult) intellectual understanding of recycling. Please note there is a large section of the community who still believe all waste goes to landfill.
  - (5) Government funding, incentives, or partnering for business to undertake long term, sustainable capital investments into recycling.
  - (6) Alternative uses for water recycling that would reduce processing costs, and the strain on local sewerage treatment plants. EPA guidelines could be lowered to include reselling to drought affected areas for vegetation regrowth, parks and gardens, etc.
  - (7) The Australian waste industry has become predominately controlled by foreign multinational conglomerates. By channelling profits overseas and undermining domestic market forces, the long established privately owned Australian operators are being disadvantaged. We would recommend measures that could be adopted to reverse this trend.

The company takes a pro active approach in being a good corporate citizen, and would like to be involved in any formulation strategies that improve Australia's environmental record. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards

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