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Productivity Commission  
Locked Bag 2  
Collins Street East  
Melbourne VIC 8003

7 July 2006

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Inquiry into Waste Generation and Resource Efficiency**

We wish to thank you for the opportunity to lodge a written submission for consideration during the inquiry into waste generation and resource efficiency. Maunsell supports the inquiry and understands that it is to identify policies that will enable Australia to address market failures and externalities associated with the generation and disposal of waste.

This will include examination of ways in which resource utilisation can be optimised to improve economic, environmental and social outcomes, and assessment of the opportunities that exist throughout the product life cycle to prevent and/or minimise waste generation by promoting resource recovery and resource efficiency.

Maunsell is a company that provides integrated environmental and engineering consulting services to the waste management industry and is renowned for innovative and cost-effective approaches to responsible waste management. As a result of considering the draft report, Maunsell is of the view that the Productivity Commission needs to also examine and assess the planning and design elements of the waste management industry.

These elements involve a considerable number of private firms, accounting for a reasonable proportion of the total industry revenue and exerting considerable influence over the direction of the industry, but not addressed in the draft report findings and recommendations.

Maunsell notes that there are many aspects to the planning and design of advanced waste management and disposal systems including:

- Cleaner production and waste minimisation programmes
- Collection and recycling
- Resource recovery facilities
- Transfer stations
- Transport systems
- Alternative waste technology facilities
- Landfills including bioreactors
- Landfill closures, rehabilitation and site reuse
- Education and training.

Maunsell also notes that this planning and design component involves a variety of waste management services such as:

- Planning studies and strategy development, including research, system feasibility studies, economic analysis, procurement strategies, performance modeling, risk assessment and site selection
- Education and training, including development of waste minimisation and cleaner production programmes
- Project planning, approvals and consultation, which requires the preparation of economic, social and environmental impact statements
- Concept and detailed design documentation, including technology selection and durability planning, for construction and operational phases
- Construction supervision and administration, including tendering and final inspections.

In relation to the matters concerning the development of strategies and infrastructure to facilitate optimal resource efficiency and recovery, Maunsell considers that there is scope for the Australian Government to consider introducing an Australian Government Resource Efficiency and Recovery Grants programme. Such a programme would offer funding assistance to the following groups, or to private firms, if their proposed activity has a very high public benefit:

- Rural organisations
- Local government
- Schools, universities and childcare facilities
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander corporations, councils or incorporated bodies
- Sporting and outdoor recreational clubs.

Waste management is typically a low priority for many organisations, not being their primary focus, so is often under-funded and an after thought. The organisations listed above are influential among local communities, often providing leadership, so need to be encouraged to develop and adopt best practice waste minimisation and management systems.

The suggested funding programme would help local community organisations develop innovative ways to recover resources that should be reused or recycled, and provide leadership by example to the wider community. The funding would also support development of technical skills and knowledge within the waste management industry, so that the community as a whole can benefit from better and more informed decision making and from better utilisation of waste management infrastructure.

An important issue which the Commission recognises is the NIMBY syndrome associated with the development of new landfills. Whilst currently available waste management practices all tend to use some form of landfill style facility to accept whatever residual is produced, Maunsell also wish to note that the NIMBY syndrome generally tends to be associated with all types of waste management facilities proposed, not just landfills.

In our experience sometimes unjustified objections can lead to long delays in obtaining approvals, whatever the style of facility proposed, even for intermediate, relatively low risk handling facilities such as transfer stations. Whilst Maunsell agree that externalities from any facility must be minimized to the extent practicable and that new facilities being proposed should recognize this and comply with all legislative and environmental requirements, we agree with the Commissions' acknowledgement that future waste management may need to be vested in appropriately constituted regional bodies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to lodge a submission. Maunsell looks forward to the release of the final report.

Yours faithfully

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