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10 April 2006

Delwyn Lanning
Inquiry into Waste Generation and Resource Efficiency: Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2
Collins St
EAST MELBOURNE VICTORIA 8003

Dear Delwyn,

CQLGA PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION RESPONSE

The Central Queensland Local Government Association (CQLGA) is the peak body for waste management activities in Central Queensland, with twelve member councils under the Regional Waste Management Strategy. The area of the CQLGA's members covers approximately 145,000 square kilometers and approximately 192,000 persons.

The region includes a diversity of industries, from coal mining to cattle farming, grain, cotton, grape, orange and other crop production. Geographically the region extends from the coastal shires of Livingstone, Fitzroy, Calliope, Miriam Vale and the city of Gladstone to over 300 kilometers inland and the shires of Peak Downs, Duaringa and Emerald.

Owing to the co-operative nature of the Regional Waste Management Strategy, the member council's have had the opportunity to address many of the problems facing themselves with the support of other Local Governments. The following issues however are applicable to both the broad area of waste management and the local issues faced by member council's.

WHOLE OF INDUSTRY IMPACT ISSUES

Impediment: "Lack of consistently recorded data"

Across Australia there has been no discernable effort to match data collection and publication information, despite the development of the Australian Waste Database. This model is put forward as a preferred format for waste audit data, but is not a set standard. Data collected in different states is not necessarily compatible with that of the other states. State reports are published with reference to broad Australia wide figures but little information on the process used to obtain those figures.

Solution:

An Australia-wide, recognised waste auditing system and database of results kept by relevant body (bodies). An annual report published that is national but also broken down state-by-state.

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Impediment: "Lack of public knowledge/appreciation of waste issues"

Litter studies consistently show that the public do not see themselves as litterbugs, despite the evidence of their behaviour being plain to see. Additionally the latest Wasteful Australia report highlights the enormous quantities of food and other materials wasted each year in this country. Few individuals outside of those directly involved in the waste industry are familiar with the environmental issues of waste disposal, or the actual cost of waste disposal. There is a perception that the public takes their responsibility no further than placing items in the rubbish bin.

Solution:

Nationwide consistent approach education package addressing waste management and using basic information ie: waste hierarchy. Also addressing the issue that the community believes that waste is not their problem once they have put the bin out for collection.

Impediment: "Distance versus Quantities"

Emerald is a large population of 8,000 people with a distance of 300 kms to bring recyclables to Rockhampton for processing. Quantities recovered from Emerald are likely to be small in comparison to larger coastal Council's. The costs associated with transport make recycling uneconomic for the shire. This does not include the transport costs of delivering the recyclables to market. Projections run on the Transport logistics tool provided by the EPA and LGAQ show that collection from these distant areas is not viable financially and will not be supported under the Best Practise model.

Solution:

Development of Local markets and industries to use recyclable products produced in the area (where it's not economically feasible to recycle products (Triple Bottom Line)).

Impediment: "Lack of definitive standards for products containing recyclable materials"

There are many items used in our day-to-day lives that could utilise recycled materials eg: glass in cement, rubber for refuse derived fuel or recycled rubber products, crushed cement in roadbase. In general these reuses are not supported due to industry misconceptions of cost and product strength and aesthetics'. Additionally the guidelines for production of materials containing recycled content are not readily obtainable despite some research having been carried out.

Solution:

These myths need to be addressed at a national level by:

- Development of (AS) standards for products or products that can be made and used locally that can contain local reuse materials.
- Publication of guidelines that identify all options and standards for the products.

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Government is an extremely large purchaser of goods and services and therefore if they were to have in their policy to purchase these items the market would be stimulated.

Solution:

Government (Local, State and Federal) need to develop a policy of buying goods in line with environmental concerns and train their employee's on the use of this policy.

DOMESTIC BASED ISSUES

Impediment: "Lack of private competition in the waste disposal industry in the region"

In some regional areas there are a limited number of service providers that will bid on waste contracts. This problem is compounded when large companies withdraw from the market as in the example of Cleanaway. Appropriate measures were not in place to ensure continuation of the same level of service in Emerald resulting in problems that had to be addressed by Emerald Shire Council.

Solution:

Encouragement of existing firms into the region or encouragement of local firms to commence services in the region possibly by tax concessions or regional allowances.

Impediment: "Lack of local markets for Recycling and Green waste"

See comments in overall section in regard to market development.

Solution:

Where it's not economically feasible (TBL) to recycle the product there needs to be the development of local markets to take the product where the community wants to have a recycling program. Where there is no recycling the community should receive assistance in waste avoidance and waste treatment processes, particularly home based solutions to recycling green organic waste.

Impediment: "Food waste"

There should be definitive research undertaken on the break-even point for waste-to-energy projects.

Solution:

Wide spread information sharing of this research will assist in evaluating the possible technologies that are applicable to the regional areas.

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Impediment: "C&I waste collection"

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Little encouragement of C&I recycling (apart from the NPC), lack of local markets for C & I recycled products.

Solution:

Education and incentive program for C&I businesses to recycle. Publicise alternative reuse and market development.

Impediment: "C&I waste minimisation"

The C&I industries are not minimising waste probably due to the perception that it is too difficult or too costly.

Solution:

Promote programs like ecoBiz and success stories to alter the public perception. Focus of the promotion through the industry groups.

Impediment: "Building Construction waste"

The C&D industries are not minimising waste probably due to the perception that it is too difficult or too costly. Homebuilders require a different approach to the spec builders. Amount of room available on site may contribute to space problems.

Solution:

Individual programs tailored to both large and small companies. Promotion through local industry groups for small builders. Flexibility of Local Governments laws/building codes in allowing use of off site land for recycling schemes.

Impediment: "Local government own practices"

Sometimes there is a lack of professionalism and lack of prioritisation of available resources.

Solution:

Development of best practice models for local government and encouragement of adoption.

Impediment: "Public place and community event recycling"

Non-standardisation of signage for events and lack of ease in finding companies that provide infrastructure.

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Standardisation of signage and development of a register companies providing infrastructure and assistance for public events.

Impediment: "Litter strategy"

There is no Australia-wide litter strategy.

Solution:

Develop and promote a National litter strategy based on audit data and process review.

Impediment: "Education"

Not sufficient emphasis on waste education/ management and sustainability in school age persons.

Solution:

Development and implementation of a sustainability program in schools curriculum.

Impediment: "Legislation/Policy"

No national guidelines and direction ie: EU, Germany.

Solution:

Development of national guidelines with a clear indication of the future direction for waste management in Australia. Set SMART goals.

Yours sincerely

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**Coordinator Technical Services
CQLGA**

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