

Waste Inquiry Submission

When in 1995 New South Wales Government made the Waste Hierarchy a guiding principle for Waste Management, re-use was asserted as a top priority.

Since then recycling activities have increased disproportionately while very little progress has been made in the re-use field.

When meeting Municipal Waste Managers reasons for this become apparent.

- Private re-use ventures are often ineffective, unaccountable, messy and unsafe. To contractually control a re-use/salvage venture appears a daunting task.
- To take re-use on as a Council activity, lack of expertise and know how, as well as the labour intensity of the activity, are critical factors.
- Some waste managers are not aware of the benefits re-use and comprehensive sorting can yield.

During a thirteen year partnership with Bellingen Shire Council **Ecohouse** has demonstrated that an ethical business, managing a comprehensive and fully integrated resource recovery operation at the local waste centre can:

- Reduce municipal waste going to landfill by 20 percent through re-use, value adding, comprehensive sorting and salvage operations.
- Create substantial employment (equivalent of eleven fulltime positions in a Shire of 12,500).
- Greatly enhance waste awareness and participation rates in the community.
- Be accountable, efficient and safe
- Finance most of this through re-use shop sales and sales of salvaged materials.

Ecohouse has taken re-use and waste minimisation to a new standard through comprehensive sorting, intensive value adding, great customer service and an attractive re-use shop. This was achieved with very little financial assistance by Council and without subsidies.

The **Ecohouse** partners believe that this new standard can be used as a benchmark for the establishment of re-use and comprehensive sorting operations countrywide. We are presently working on a plan for the new Coffs Coast Waste Centre that will see all waste sorted under supervision. In combination with Alternative Waste Management and an MRF we expect to not only reduce waste going to landfill by 90% but also realize the highest resource value of the materials recovered. As the Bellingen Shire/**Ecohouse** facility is a model for maximising benefits from waste in a small shire, so will Coffs Coast Waste Centre be a model for a no-waste strategy, implemented for a region that consists of three Shires with a population of soon 100,000.

When applying criteria mentioned in Your "Issues Paper" the strength of our "new standard of re-use" and comprehensive sorting becomes even more impressive. Triple Bottom Line, costs and benefit analysis, resource efficiency, education...

Re-use is like alchemy, we turn waste into wealth. To achieve this we don't use up scarce resources but one resource that is plentiful and too often wasted: human labour. Only seeing is believing- please visit our website: www.ecohouse@ecohouse.com.au. And don't hesitate to call the Ecohouse partners Michaela Levy on 0411 315 233 or Thomas Luck on 0413 269 120, we would be happy to assist you in any way.

We thank you very much for your consideration and wish you much success with the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely, Thomas Luck, director of Ecohouse P/L