



Our Reference: DME: 47602

LGA Submission to Consultation Paper – A National Waste Policy: Managing Waste to 2020

May 2009

Introduction

The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGASA) is recognised as the peak representative body for Local Government in this State and is the Voice of Local Government in South Australia.

The following submission is based on Councils' comments received by the LGASA during a consultation process conducted during April 2009. In principle the LGASA supports the development of a National Waste Policy to assist in identifying best practice in waste management and resource recovery and to ensure Australia has the right mix of incentives and regulation to achieve environmental, economic and social reform in waste management.

A National Waste Policy has the ability to provide significant environmental, social and economic benefits to the Australian community and could enable the development of a framework of guiding principles and strategies that can deliver emission reductions, reduce energy and water use as well as supporting long term economic growth.

Background

Waste management activity in South Australia is guided by the South Australian Waste Management Strategy 2005-10, targets within the South Australian Strategic Plan and regulatory measures such as the Solid Waste Levy. South Australia is primarily focused on reducing waste to landfill through source separation (such as the three bin system for domestic households) with sustainable industries involved in composting organics and recovering recyclates. This is supported by our long standing Container Deposit Legislation (CDL), which has performed extremely well. The CDL model in South Australia has been so successful that a similar model should be investigated as part of a national approach.

In November 2007 the LGASA released a report entitled "*Future Direction for Waste Management in the Local Government Sector in South Australia*", see attachment 1. This report outlined a series of objectives for waste management in South Australia as well as making 27 recommendations focusing on community education and awareness, contract development and management, data collection, shared services and regional subsidiary arrangements, regional waste management reforms and a review of the solid waste levy. In addition the report recommended the development of a business case for food waste diversion and the handling/disposal of difficult waste streams such as white goods, gas bottles, tyres, mercury lamps and E-waste (TVs, mobile phones, computers),.

The report also suggested that waste management is a significant activity for Local Government in South Australia representing approximately 10% of the operational costs for Local Government, at over \$100 million per annum. Local Government in South Australia has also made a very successful transition from the role as a collector and disposer of rubbish from a public health perspective, to a role of providing leadership to the community and industry in pursuing important State environmental objectives and targets.

A National Waste Policy

Following consultation with Councils in South Australia the LGASA has identified 7 areas for consideration in the development of a National Waste Policy, including:

1. the development of national principles for waste management around the adoption of consistent classifications for waste;
2. the adoption of the waste hierarchy (avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle) to guide waste management policy and investment;
3. the development of a common framework for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to enable high volume / low toxic and problematic waste, such as tyres, e-waste, and mercury (from fluorescent lights) to be handled consistently and in convenient “one-stop shops”;
4. a coordinated approach to the collection and destruction/disposal of hazardous waste;
5. the development of markets which support local reuse before export, as well as government procurement programs for recycled products;
6. the development of national funding programs to assist with landfill closures and resource recovery infrastructure (particularly for rural/regional Australia); and
7. the development of a national policy that is both flexible and complementary to other federal initiatives such as the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).

The development of a National Waste Policy must facilitate the introduction of an EPR framework. EPR recognises that manufacturers, retailers, government’s and consumers share a responsibility to manage the impacts of products throughout their lifecycle, including their ultimate disposal. While it may be seen as the role of the National Packaging Covenant, a National Waste Policy may also provide a mechanism to further enhance environmental outcomes from reform in packaging manufacturing, use, recovery and recycling.

Conclusion

The development of a National Waste Policy should support and progress individual state targets, policies and strategies, breaking down existing barriers and creating opportunities. Local Government must be supported in the application of all strategies and these policies must be able to work with and adapt to emerging issues. While a clear impetus for a national approach comes from the need to create consistency in regulation, it is clearly important for business and trade that a key driver is improved waste management.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission on the consultation paper ‘*A National Policy: Managing Waste to 2020*. It represents an important step forward in the effective and efficient waste management across Australia and the LGASA looks forward to working collaboratively with the Australian Government on the delivery of its objectives.