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79 Constitution Avenue  
Canberra ACT 2612  
Tel: (02) 6245 1300  
Fax: (02) 6257 7635  
[www.hia.com.au](http://www.hia.com.au)

Waste Policy Taskforce  
Department of Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts  
GPO Box 787  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

## **A National Waste Policy: Managing Waste to 2020**

HIA welcomes the opportunity to provide comments in respect to the discussion paper “*A National Waste Policy: Managing Waste to 2020*” prepared by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

HIA is Australia’s largest building industry association, representing all sectors of the residential construction industry, including builders, trade contractors, building professionals and building products and materials. HIA members are directly affected by the application of waste management strategies by State and local governments across Australia.

HIA recognises that reducing waste to landfill is a priority activity for all tiers of government in Australia. The challenge for the building and construction industry is to achieve a sensible balance between the need to construct and renovate homes at an affordable cost and in an efficient manner and whilst minimising the impact on the environment.

Australian’s awareness of environmental issues has increased significantly in the last decade. Waste is recognised as creating a significant visual, environmental and health and safety issue for the housing industry both on-site and post construction. But it is critical to recognise that no single waste management approach guarantees significant waste reduction and cost savings in the housing industry. The National Policy needs to offer a range of approaches to construction and demolition waste, which lead to practical solutions being delivered on the ground by State and local governments, and that have minimal regulatory and cost implications on the daily operations of the building industry.

HIA believes that further work is required to consider the life-cycle of construction products which can effectively reduce the materials required in construction and the waste (off-cuts, packaging, etc) which builders are then required to dispose of appropriately. The Policy should address the need for Government’s to support the building materials and products sector in leading the way in new innovations and technologies for product recycling and reuse.

A future National Waste Policy needs to recognise the role of the building industry and the achievements that have already been delivered in the management of waste. The Discussion Paper notes 'construction and demolition' waste in 2006-2007, represented "15.6 million tonnes, of which 8.5 million tonnes (54.5 per cent) were recycled and 7.1 million tonnes (45.5 per cent) were disposed of to land fill."<sup>1</sup>

This shows that the building industry is already achieving a significant level of recycling and HIA believes that this sector should be recognised for its valuable contribution to date towards the management of waste in Australia as part of the future Policy.

HIA does not believe that the Discussion Paper adequately addresses the drivers, regulatory burden and upfront costs that are currently placed on the building sector to manage waste at a local level.

The Paper only notes local governments' role as a waste collection agent, and has not commented on the increasing level of development and building controls that are being applied during the approval process for building work. HIA has seen a significant expansion of this role by local governments in the last decade. However, HIA does not believe that the measures being implemented are necessarily the most practical and cost effective option to deliver the policy outcomes being sought.

For example, in NSW the majority of local councils have introduced a mandatory requirement for all new buildings to complete a 'Waste Management Plan' at the time of gaining development (in concept) approval. These Plans generally have three components. They require a builder to predict the types and amounts of waste that are likely to be generated from the building work, to then identify how waste will be managed and sorted 'on-site' and then disclose how or where that waste will be disposed of.

The application of these Plans by local government has been varied over time. There is little evidence of councils questioning the actual amounts of waste predicted to be created and there is only limited evidence of councils seeking receipts or dockets to prove that waste has been disposed of as elected. However, HIA members experience is that the only aspect that is 'policed' by local government is the on-site management aspect, as they have the ability to issue 'on the spot' penalty infringement notices.

The introduction of the plans should be seen as having an educative role. The construction industry has now developed simple and repeatable methods for on-site management of waste in recognition of the increasing costs associated with landfill disposal. The building sector has endeavoured to self-manage the recycling of waste and materials and now accept the principles of 'on-site' management and recycling as part of their overall business operations.

There are also many examples of industry leadership in this area, with specific building material manufacturers offering builders with a collection service (e.g. bricks, tiles and plasterboard) if the builder separates these materials.

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<sup>1</sup> Page 30, A National Waste Policy: Managing waste to 2020, DEWHA, 2009

HIA has proactively supported the building industry through the establishment of the HIA GreenSmart program. HIA GreenSmart provides an opportunity for the building industry to better understand the benefits of environmentally responsible housing design and construction, including the aspect of waste management. The program has been operating since 1999 and includes industry training, recognition of excellence in resource management through the HIA GreenSmart awards scheme, and a number of display homes and villages across Australia which incorporate waste management practices during construction.

The a future National Waste Policy should provide clear guidance for State and local governments and the building industry as to their obligations to improve waste management in the construction and demolition sector. As previously stated, these obligations need to be considered in light of their potential to have regulatory and cost impacts on the building industry and therefore on housing affordability.

A copy of HIA's national policy position on Waste Management is set out in Attachment A.

Should you require any additional information in support of HIA's response, please do not hesitate to contact me on [k.tomkins@hia.com.au](mailto:k.tomkins@hia.com.au) or 02 6245 1300.

Yours sincerely

HOUSING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION LIMITED

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kristin Tomkins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kristin Tomkins  
Executive Director, Building Policy

**HIA Policy Position on Waste Management**

- HIA encourages recycling opportunities and reuse of material in the housing industry.
- HIA recognises the limitation of regional operations away from major centres or where the volume of waste does not permit the economic recycling of waste. Support from Government is required to encourage opportunities in this area.
- In an effort to reduce the amount of waste to landfill, HIA will continue to work with state and local governments and waste management bodies to pursue opportunities for minimizing waste created through housing industry activity.
- Further in all new residential development and renovations HIA supports:
  - plans to avoid or minimise waste on housing construction sites,
  - improvements to avoid generating waste such as accurate estimating and ordering of materials,
  - minimisation of waste during building operations,
  - the reuse or recycling of waste where practical, and
  - efficient and appropriate disposal of unavoidable and excessive waste.
- Industry and Governments should promote voluntary and self regulatory methods to produce a higher level of activity and outcomes beyond what is achievable with a minimum regulatory standard.
- Governments could also:
  - facilitate accurate collation and recording of data at landfill and recovery facilities,
  - Introduce incentives to companies prepared to conduct life cycle analysis of a material to assist with the creation of better waste data sets,
  - Encourage recycling and reuse of materials on site,
  - Establish a national materials inventory as a way of identifying the greatest areas of gain in relation to waste management.