



MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT IN NSW

INQUIRY OVERVIEW

Australia's per capita municipal waste production is one of the largest in the world. In addition, although the average Australian householder is putting more in their recycling bins than a decade ago, Australia still has an unsustainable level of consumption.¹

There are different roles for government depending on the type of waste. Generally the Federal Government's role is largely one of coordination of State and Territory initiatives and regulation of the export and import of waste. The primary responsibility for management of domestic waste, also known as municipal or household waste, lies with local government.

Most NSW local councils contract out their waste collection, recycling and disposal services. Some councils own their own waste processing facilities. However most contracts include collection and waste processing by private operators. Waste management is a substantial budget item for councils – the question asked in this inquiry is whether the current municipal waste contracts and arrangements are value for money and environmentally sound.

The Inquiry will pay particular attention to examining the success of current and alternative municipal waste management practices in:

- The effectiveness and appropriateness of current municipal waste management.
- Impediments and incentives to best practice municipal waste management
- Best practice methods, including cost effectiveness, of planning and providing municipal waste management services.
- The development of new technology and industries associated with waste management.
- Minimising harm to the environment in the provision of waste management services.

Effective waste management is vital to the State's long-term sustainability. It is of growing concern to governments at all levels and, increasingly, the community. The Committee is seeking comments about these issues as reflected in the inquiry terms of reference.

The Commonwealth's Productivity Commission is currently undertaking a Waste Generation and Resource Efficiency Inquiry looking at fundamental issues such as the costs and benefits of waste operations and the basis of government involvement. Some areas canvassed will be producer responsibility, performance indicators and target setting, education campaigns, energy recovery and recycling, pricing and levies and landfill policies. The Standing Committee on Public Work's inquiry will compliment the Productivity Commission's Inquiry by targeting municipal waste issues and management in New South Wales.

¹ Recycling on the rise but too much still going to waste, Sydney Morning Herald, 8/11/05.