

Telephone Inquiries

0249800162

Please Quote File No:

PSC2006-0332

The Committee Manager
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir or Madam:

Re: Submission To The Standing Committee On Public Works Inquiry Into Municipal Waste Management In NSW

Thank you for the invitation to offer the view of Port Stephens Council on the issue of municipal waste management. The views expressed in this submission are the views of Mr Steven Bernasconi, Waste Management Coordinator for Port Stephens Council.

Effectiveness and appropriateness of current municipal waste management

Effective municipal waste management is the combination of:

1. Convenient source separation at the household,
2. Collection of waste using the least number of vehicles as possible,
3. Processing of waste using proven technologies that offer known and tested resource recovery rates
4. Reducing the environmental risk of material that is landfilled by rendering the material inert.

Currently in Port Stephens Council effective municipal waste management means:

1. Two bin system for waste (240 litres weekly) and recycling (240 litres fortnightly)
2. Single pass truck system for the two bins
3. Processing of waste using the Bedminster Composting Technology (over thirty years of technology development)
4. Processing of source separated recycling using a private materials recovery facility located within the Hunter Region.
5. Landfilling of residual waste that has been rendered inert after processing by the Bedminster Composting Technology.

Since the introduction of a two bin waste and recycling service in July 2005 that replaced a single divided bin for both waste and recycling, customer complaints against the waste service have dropped by about half (from eight to four complaints per 10,000 services) and resource recovery rates have risen from 62% to 70%.

In addition to the kerbside collection services listed above, Port Stephens Council has also introduced additional drop off services for medical waste and car batteries. These services are deemed essential to ensure that potential safety and health risks to employees are managed as

best as possible and to improve the chemical and biological quality of waste before the Bedminster Composting Technology receives it.

If the Committee is to address the issue of 'appropriateness' of municipal waste management it may wish to consider the following definition:

'Appropriateness of municipal waste management is a measure of how a solution to a local municipal waste issue is supported by the local community, reduces waste to landfill through maximum resource recovery and reduces the negative impacts that waste management may have on local ecosystems.' Port Stephens Council 2006.

Impediments and incentives to best practice municipal waste management

Best practice municipal waste management is defined by Port Stephens Council as waste management that meets the needs of the people and environment of the area.

Impediments to achieving this include:

1. Lack of knowledge of waste composition in terms of chemical and physical properties
2. Perceived costliness of alternative waste technologies compared to landfilling
3. Fear of long term contracts for AWT's
4. Changes to the exemptions to Waste Levy will impede AWT and source separation on licensed landfills. Cash flows will be negatively affected by the time lag between the receipt of materials and their transfer off site for recycling and reuse.
5. Since 1990 the changes to bin configurations, recycling and AWT have confused the masses. The next ten years requires some standardisation of bin systems and some standardised reporting of resource recovery rates.

Incentives to best practice municipal waste management might include:

1. Increases to the waste levy encouraging greater use of AWT as a viable alternative to landfilling
2. Linking waste levy performance payments with actual resource recovery rates

By adopting alternative waste technologies early on in the waste minimisation revolution, Port Stephens Council showed that AWT's were viable alternatives to landfilling putrescible waste in coastal regions.

The introduction of the Bedminster Composting System in 1999 combined with the two bin system from July 2005 has meant that Port Stephens Council has reached a resource recovery rate for municipal waste (collected in bins) of 70%. If best practice is measured by achieving state resource recovery targets, Port Stephens Council is an example of best practice.

Development of new technology and industries associated with waste management

Port Stephens Council was the first local government authority to introduce an alternative waste technology as its main method of waste processing. The Bedminster composting facility at Raymond Terrace NSW was commissioned in 1999 and receives all municipal waste from Port Stephens Council area. The driving force for adopting this new technology was a genuine desire to reduce putrescible waste going to landfill. This desire was influenced by:

1. Geographic constraints that prevented the safe and cost effective construction of new solid waste landfills
2. A growing population that is affected by seasonal population peaks
3. Strong public desire to recycle

The 1990's and early 2000's have shown that movement towards greater resource recovery from the municipal waste stream is driven by a genuine need for landfill alternatives brought on by a lack of landfill space. In rare examples the driving force for resource recovery is a genuine desire to strive for a more ecologically sustainable waste management system.

Minimising harm to the environment in the provision of waste management services

In the case of Port Stephens Council, municipal waste management services have minimised harm to the environment by:

1. Processing putrescible wastes using proven alternative technologies
2. Removing the need for landfilling of putrescible wastes, thus reducing long term leachate and gas emissions
3. Pricing waste disposal to reflect the true cost of processing and disposal to ensure current waste generators pay the full cost of waste disposal now rather than leaving environmental legacies for future generations to pay for.
4. Producing recovered organic products that meet quality standards for specific uses

Additional comments

Resource recovery from the municipal waste stream has been and continues to be a high priority for Port Stephens Council. By being an early adopter to alternative waste technologies Port Stephens Council has shown its commitment to innovation in waste management and has proven that an integrated source separated recycling system combined with an alternative waste technology can reduce waste to landfill by at least 70% in real time figures.

Council is interested in seeing the following ideas progressed in local government with the aide of funding from revenue raised by the waste levy:

1. Standardised waste data reporting process that compares "apples with apples" when it comes to actual resource recovery.
2. Performance payments for recycling that are based on actual resource recovery rates
3. Continuation of household chemical clean up programs
4. Waste Levy exemptions for source separated green waste that is received and processed on a licensed landfill site.
5. Waste Levy exemptions for reprocessed materials that are used as cover materials for landfills. The proposal to remove exemptions for virgin excavated natural material and reprocessed concrete and glass fines when used as cover materials on landfills, will results in purchased materials from quarries being less expensive to use as cover than clean 'waste products'.

Yours faithfully

STEVEN BERNASCONI
WASTE MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR