

Inquiry Into Municipal Waste Management in NSW

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

Wingecarribee Shire Council
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Our Ref: MRR:ml 7502
Contact: Mr Miles Lochhead

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By e-mail:

Dear Sir/Madam

INQUIRY INTO MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN NSW

The Standing Committee on Public Works has invited submissions for the Inquiry into Solid Waste Management in NSW. Wingecarribee Shire Council is at the forefront of Resource Recovery in NSW having already surpassed targets set in the NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy for 2014. We welcome the opportunity to comment with reference to particulars of the Inquiry as set out below.

1. The effectiveness and appropriateness of current municipal waste:

There is a plethora of collection systems that determine the fate of the three major waste streams associated with 'municipal waste'. These systems are usually tailored to disposal/processing facilities available to local authorities and are usually contracted for a minimum of seven years.

The Department of Environment and Conservation, Sustainable Programs Division has continued the work of Waste Boards and Resource NSW in researching and promoting municipal waste systems in the Local Government sector with the support of the Waste Management Association of Australia.

As indicated below, there is a range of systems that cater for the needs of individual communities. With these systems usually tied up for long periods as stated, it is difficult to change when systems prove to be inefficient.

2. Impediments and incentives to best practice municipal waste management.

Perhaps the biggest incentive is the Section 88 Levy on landfilling under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. This tool has gained further leverage with increases proposed under the 'City and Country Environment Restoration Program' on top of the regulated increases. As no

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formal details have been released yet as to the procedure for accessing funds under this Program, it is difficult to determine how the increased funding will assist the domestic waste sector.

It is essential that the majority of funds collected from waste levies are directed back into the waste management sector to improve effectiveness.

3. Best practice methods, including cost effectiveness, of planning and providing municipal waste management services.

Traditionally, Regions of Council's set up linkages to encourage information transfer and Regional Planning. The formation of Waste Boards in the late nineties facilitated much wider communication and collaboration in the waste management sector. This has continued with many examples of 'best practice' being experienced in the wider community.

There is a realisation that there is no 'one best' solution in the municipal arena and the great diversity of systems has resulted in a move toward greater efficiency and therefore greater waste recycling and processing. One tremendous impediment is the traditional 'end-of-pipe' reality in Local Government. This sector is faced with managing the ever increasing discards of our consumer society with scant ability to influence wasteful consumption patterns. This situation means that management is 'reactive' and pursuit of 'best practice' in regard to avoidance is sometimes limited.

4. The development of new technology and industries associated with waste management.

New technology in the resource recovery industry is inherently risky, as Local Government is averse to risk, development of new technology in this sector has been slow. Wingecarribee Shire with its Macarthur partners, has recently entered into a 15 year contract for the processing of residuals that is at the forefront of resource recovery in Australia and indeed the globe. This contract was let with the contractor taking all the risk which no doubt was reflected in the price.

There is now substantial opportunity for local government to be supported by the boosted funds from Section 88 levies in pursuit of new technologies.

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

Current Regulation in the waste management sector ensures that operators and systems are very accountable. There is however a need to ensure that all players, small and large, private and public, regional and metropolitan comply with established Regulations.

In conclusion, there is now considerable funding available to ensure that development and implementation of sustainable municipal waste

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management systems is pursued. As many new systems are risky and require research and development, appropriate use of the funds in a regulated and effective manner will ensure the targets set for the industry are achieved within suggested timeframes. Further, previous focus has been on collection and disposal systems in the municipal sector, it is now essential to focus on avoidance if waste management is to be truly sustainable.

Should you have any queries, please direct them to the undersigned on telephone 4868 0510.

Yours faithfully



Miles Lochhead
MANAGER RESOURCE RECOVERY