

Submission
No 1

**INQUIRY INTO PROCUREMENT PRACTICES OF
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND
ITS IMPACT ON THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE
PEOPLE OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Laundry Association Australia (LAA)

Date Received: 27 November 2023



If Australian laundries stop, Australia stops!

Procurement Inquiry Submission Social Issues Standing Committee (Legislative Council of NSW) Laundry Association Australia

The Laundry Association Australia

- 1. Supports a circular economy.**
- 2. Embraces technology.**
- 3. Encourage sustainability.**

Contact for further information or clarification

CEO of the LAA – Luke Simpkins

The Detail

The Laundry Association Australia (LAA) is the national peak body representing laundry and supply chain businesses across Australia. Our members range from laundromats through to large commercial laundries where 100 tonnes of laundry can be hygienically cleaned a day (100 tonnes is roughly the equivalent of 200,000 towels a day).

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT POLICIES

The LAA is making this submission in relation to the need for the NSW Government to properly prioritise the importance of the sustainable evaluation criteria when considering procurements. Specifically, the importance of prioritising environmental considerations, such as sustainable sourcing, energy efficiency, waste reduction and innovation.

Background

It has been the experience of the LAA, our member laundries and supplier members that in the area of health and aged care, there has been inconsistency with regard to sustainable sourcing, in particular, the procurement of reusable items. It is the view of the LAA and our members that on every occasion reusable items should always be procured as a fundamental principle, rather than disposable items. This should be a fundamental consideration in any consideration of sustainable sourcing and waste reduction.

Submission

The LAA is concerned about the increasing volume of disposable items being procured by Health agencies across Australia, when there are cost effective and superior quality reusable products provided by laundries and textile suppliers. Australian commercial laundries and textile suppliers have a large range of superior products that are currently available to hospitals and health providers. These items include isolation gowns, slide sheets, aprons, theatre drapes, scrubs, curtains and other items.

These are available at competitive prices and can be reused hundreds of times, before being recycled. This is in direct contrast to the disposable fascination that increasingly seems to be dominating procurement practices across public and private health systems. Literally a nurse could use 15 or 16 single use plastic aprons a day, all thrown away into landfill or potentially burnt, when our sector provides reusable options, with an infinitely lower impact on the climate. 10,000 reusable isolation gowns provided by our sector, takes the place of 230,000 single use plastic isolation gowns.

Our products are well supported by doctors and nurses, yet State and Territory Health procurement officers keep going back to a disturbing mentality of single use plastics.

Recommendations

It is the position of the LAA that the Committee should recommend:

1. Procurement policies must mandate against the procurement of single use and other disposable products, with this specification only being set aside with Ministerial approval.

2. That reusable products be repeatedly mandated as the required option, and that a specification for reusable items is to appear in all policies, guides, training and other documents, across every NSW department and agency.

Conclusion

The LAA appreciates that there is no adherence to single use plastics as a policy of the NSW Government, but there is also a concern that when the procurements are being managed by individuals, the priorities can shift. Absolutely clear procurement priorities and strict policies should exist at departmental and agency levels. Through such unequivocal written policies, even the newest procurement officials will not have any latitude to pursue a disposable approach to procurement. While the LAA fights hard for this change specifically with regard to health care items, there is no doubt that this proposed approach should be applied beyond health, clinics, dental clinics and aged care, to every element of government procurement. Reusable products should be mandated at every level of the NSW Government's processes and this will serve as an appropriate example to all other jurisdictions across the nation.

Further information is available from the LAA at any time by contacting us via at the abovementioned.