

Submission from Keep Australia Beautiful National Association regarding the National Waste Policy Consultation Paper

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1. Background on Keep Australia Beautiful

Keep Australia Beautiful is a network of independent state and territory organisations that have been leading, challenging and inspiring all Australians to strive for a sustainable and litter free environment since 1968.

Keep Australia Beautiful was founded to support civic pride and litter reduction and now delivers programs targeting a range of environmental issues including recycling, resource recovery, water and energy conservation, preservation of the built environment and conservation of the natural environment.

Our Australian Sustainable Communities Awards consist of:

- Tidy Towns: now in its 40th year
- Sustainable Cities: including all states and territories
- Clean Beaches: around our coast and along our rivers

The National Litter Index is Australia's only national, annual, quantitative measure of what litter occurs where and in what volume.

Keep Australia Beautiful Week in spring each year is a reminder of what we can all do to improve our local environment.

The thousands of communities and volunteers that take part in our programs each year provide examples of local activities that have commenced to tackle litter and have grown to support the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the local area.

The case studies are documented at www.kab.org.au in the section on each program and the section marked 'publications'. We estimate that over 1,000 communities and 90,000 volunteers contribute up to \$100m in voluntary labour each year on projects that are entered into our awards programs.

We subscribe to the 'broken windows' theory that small environmental issues such as litter, graffiti and broken windows lead to further neglect of a local area. By fostering community pride these small issues do not occur or are dealt with before they can escalate.

We believe that a whole of community approach is necessary and our network includes offices partnering with community groups, schools and service clubs, business, industry and local, state and national government.

2. Initial response to the National Waste Policy Consultation Paper

The National Waste Policy Consultation Paper that we have been invited to respond to includes the following:

8.7 Litter pg 35

*A report to the Environment Protection and Heritage Council in 2008 indicated that a wide range of actions are being undertaken by government and non-government organisations to minimise the impacts of litter on the environment. Based on data from a range of sources, including the Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index, the Environment Protection and Heritage Council noted that **national litter levels have been steady for at least the last three years and concluded that no additional national action on litter is required at this stage.***

Our initial response to this statement was delivered at the Australian Tidy Towns Awards, a section of which was hosted by the Governor General, in Canberra on 8 May 2009.

Our Chairman Don Chambers, addressed the attendees including community volunteers, Mayors, State and Federal MP's who were gathered to support community volunteers tackling litter and related waste issues.

Waving a copy of the consultation paper he strongly supported the proposition that litter was a litmus test for local sustainability and that our community volunteers deserved the support of all levels of government. His speech noted that it was not good enough to use stable litter levels as an excuse for inaction. It was not good enough for the Australian Government to be inactive on litter either because it was not important or because state and local government were expected to foot the bill.

He also said: *In looking at the material that goes into Landfill it can be broken down into materials that need separating, (See Table 4 page 34 of paper) Organics 10,473,000 tonnes, other waste 10,359,000m tonnes. (This includes paper & cardboard) Thus a concentration on organics to recover resources from the waste stream is a must.*

The material in e-waste some 50,000 tonnes can be covered by a pre disposal fee or take up the industry proposal with underlying legislation to catch the free riders.

Following our success with the Bunnings Plastic Bag Levy single use plastic bags should have a charge on them, across Australia , and we should move from Petrochemical bags to starch based bags.

Tyers should also have a pre disposal fee attached to them.

The comments were warmly received by the community representatives.

3. Offer of assistance from Keep Australia Beautiful

Keep Australia Beautiful National Association welcomes the reintroduction of a National Waste Policy and strongly urges that litter be considered an important part of the problem and that community engagement be considered an important part of the solution.

It seems that community groups and other levels of government have carried this burden for a number of years. Assistance from the Australian Government is essential to show a whole of community response.

Keep Australia Beautiful maintains local networks of community volunteers that are the envy of other environmental organisations, of business and of government. They are the result of 40 years of effort by state and territory offices each with their own board, staff and volunteers.

We pledge our networks to support tangible actions by the Australian Government that will help all Australians reduce litter and other misdirected waste. Waste that we have been too slow to turn into a resource.

This is in line with our board policy detailed below:

Keep Australia Beautiful National Association General Statement on Waste Policy

The Keep Australia Beautiful Network supports litter reduction, reuse and recycling through education, product stewardship, extended producer responsibility and other means including systems to encourage the collection and use of products that might otherwise be discarded

Response to Questions Raised in the Consultation Paper

Don Chambers presented at the Leaders Forum in Sydney hosted by the Minister. He also attended the Canberra consultation meeting. Scott Lyall and Don Chambers met with Paul Bainton to review the document. In the time available an answer to question 14 has been prepared, see below. Further discussion and consultation is welcome.

Q1. Are there opportunities to further coordinate, harmonise or streamline approaches to waste management across jurisdictions?

Q 2.

Are the categorisations, definitions and standards used to manage waste between and within the different levels of government effective and appropriate?

Q 3.

Do the current waste management frameworks across jurisdictions:

-deliver an effective regulatory framework?

-provide an appropriate suite of approaches to address waste and resource recovery issues?

-work effectively in conjunction with planning and other environmental legislation?

-provide the right incentives to manage materials, products and waste sustainably and holistically?

-need improving, and if so, how could this be done?

-In the 1992 National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, COAG endorsed the strategies and objectives for a national approach to waste management (Appendix A). Looking ahead to the next decade, how could these strategies and objectives be updated to provide the basis for a national waste policy that responds to current and future challenges and opportunities?

Q 5.

What waste issues would most benefit from a national approach? What strategies could be considered and how could the need for local solutions be integrated with a national approach?

Q 6.

Are there waste management initiatives in operation overseas that could apply in the Australian context? If so, which ones and why?

Q 7.

Australia needs to safely manage hazardous waste and waste containing hazardous materials over the long term.

-Are there any changes to current arrangements that would improve Australia's capability to safely manage hazardous waste, for example in regard to adequate infrastructure or disclosing the contents of goods and substances?

Q 8.

There are a number of approaches to product stewardship operating in Australia.

-What, if any, role is there for a national approach and what would be the costs, benefits, opportunities and focus of such an approach?

-What models might work in Australia?

Q 9.

Are there any aspects of waste management that could be improved or streamlined through adopting national standards?

Q 10.

What fundamental data sets does Australia need to collect to better inform waste management policies, practices, investment, business operations and to assess and manage risk?

Q 11.

What, if any, place should there be for approaches that seek to avoid waste through changes in design, production processes and transport?

Q 12.

What changes could be made to improve management of the municipal waste stream and those of the commercial and industrial sector and the construction and demolition sector?

Q 13.

Landfill is currently the primary means of waste disposal. What, if any, changes need to be made to manage Australia's waste stream in the long term given current trends in the volume and nature of the waste?

Q 14.

Reducing the amount of organic waste sent to landfill has the potential to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as other potential environmental and economic benefits. What are the benefits and opportunities, costs and disadvantage of increased diversion and/or recycling of organic wastes?

A 14.

Draft Keep Australia Beautiful National Association Policy on Diverting Organic Waste from Landfill.

Waste generation is often related to the material standard of living in a particular area. With the standard of living increasing globally, waste production has also increased.

Around one tonne of waste is produced by the average household per annum, with around 30% of this being organic (food and green) waste.

The disposal of this organic waste in landfills results in emission of methane gas as it degrades. The diversion of organic waste from landfill to composting prevents the generation of methane and as such should be promoted .

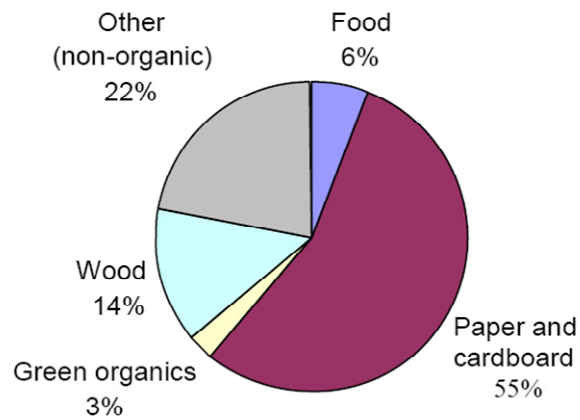
Therefore Keep Australia Beautiful National Association supports a policy for the diversion of organic waste from landfill.

Separating organic waste from the general waste stream, prior to its disposal in landfill, provides long term environmental benefits by reducing methane emissions, enhancing soil productivity and reducing irrigation needs. Application of composted organics to land also provides an opportunity to improve our farms by returning carbon to the soil.

The use of fit-for purpose organic products from organic waste - in our gardens or on the land – will assist in greenhouse gas reduction and the development of sustainable land use.

Schemes that encourage Australian households and businesses to use products derived from composted organic wastes, either from home composting/worm farms or waste processors, is strongly encouraged by the Keep Australia Beautiful National Association.

Fig 6. C&I Waste Stream Breakdown



Q 15.

What, if any, changes are needed to the way e-waste is managed?

Q 16.

The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will apply to emissions from landfill. Are there related approaches that would complement the scheme and thus contribute to meeting the emissions targets and the timeframes set in the Australian Government's climate change policy?

Q 17.

What are the opportunities to reduce water and energy use through the way waste is managed?

Q 18.

In what ways can waste management and resource recovery (including recycling, re-processing, re-manufacturing) industries add further value to the economy and create employment?