

Waste and Recycling Industry of Queensland
Response to Verbal Question on Notice
8 May 2024
Public Hearing Sydney

Thank you for the extension of time to provide a response to the question I elected to answer on notice at the recent Senate Inquiry into Waste Reduction and Recycling Policies in Sydney. My response on notice is as follows:

Comments on the Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group Interim Report Findings: It's a lovely, well presented glossy document, but as a former recycling business owner I'm not sure it reflects the practicalities of how the industry works. Australia's drive to create a circular economy needs to be instilled in the products we import and sell right through to the way government purchases. In my former recycling business, I worked on so many federal government funded construction projects which had targets for recycled content but in an environment with constant greenwashing, time and monetary challenges these targets do not always translate into recycled products being given priority. Rather than talking about good design principles, these design principles really need to be mandated or a levy imposed after a certain adjustment period to help cover the cost of safe disposal for poorly designed products that contain contaminants such as PFAS or lithium batteries that cause fires in our waste recycling trucks and facilities.

Our industry constantly experiences targets set by governments with no understanding of the practicalities of achieving them, then we are disparaged for not having achieved the targets... we keep putting the cart before the horse and forgetting to feed the horse. I'd like to see waste recycling industry experts, people who have been at the coal face driving innovations in waste and recycling and community sanitation services for the last 50 or more years, consulted before targets are announced and real and positive partnerships between industry and government rather than blame shifting between different levels of politics and vilification of an industry that doesn't deserve to be treated so poorly.

I am very supportive of circular economy activities forming part of Director duties and do believe this will drive some positive change. I am also very supportive of Commonwealth, State and Territory procurement being leveraged to assist with our transition, but the method of that leveraging must be clear and practical. NWRIC has already commissioned a study that would see the waste and recycling sector contribute substantially to Australia's net zero efforts, but the redesign of ACCU credits for carbon offsets will need to be carefully managed to ensure it is achievable. Waste recycling sector ACCUs are currently under threat but these form a genuine Australian abatement method that will also contribute revenue to assist Australian recyclers in competing with products manufactured from virgin materials.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you have any further queries. WRIQ President Richard Taylor and I would welcome an opportunity to appear again as

Witnesses at a future Committee Hearing if you require additional input. We would also be happy to organise site tours for the Committee at any Queensland waste recycling facility if you wish to understand the challenges first-hand.

Alison Price
Chief Executive Officer
Waste and Recycling Industry of Queensland