



Australian Government

**Australian Government response to the  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Industry, Innovation, Science and Resources:**

Inquiry into Australia's Waste Management  
and Recycling Industries

*From Rubbish to Resources:  
Building a Circular Economy*

February 2022





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## **Preamble**

The Commonwealth Government welcomes the Committee's report and its recommendations designed to remove impediments to innovation with waste and improve resource recovery. The Government recognises the importance of improving Australia's waste management and resource recovery capability to embrace processes that divert waste from landfill.

The circular economy exchanges the typical 'make, use, dispose' cycle with one in which material resources are kept in productive use for as long as possible using processes such as waste avoidance, reuse, repair, repurposing and recycling. Australia supports the transition to a predominately circular economy to transform waste into sustainable resources and reduce the impact of landfills.

The National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019 (NWPAP) reflects Australia's commitment and presents targets and actions to guide investment and national efforts to 2030 and beyond. It has been endorsed by Australian Commonwealth and State and Territory Environment Ministers and the Australian Local Government Association. The Action Plan was created following the National Waste Policy 2018 (NWP) that articulates the Commonwealth Governments' intention to transition to a circular economy and reflects new ways of thinking about waste and the use of resources within Australia.

The Australian Government is committed to reduce the amount of waste generated in Australia and accelerate the recovery and reuse of our resources. Through the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE), the Commonwealth Government is delivering programs and activities to support the NWPAP related to:

- Food and organic waste
- Plastics and packaging waste including the National Plastics Plan 2021
- Sustainable Commonwealth Government procurement
- Infrastructure investment support
- Waste reduction and harmonisation approaches across states and territories
- Product stewardship initiatives
- Chemical and hazardous waste
- Textile Waste
- Improving reporting and data related to waste.

Waste management, recycling, and material recovery activities are a significant part of Australia's economy. Recent modelling by the Centre for International Economics confirms that increasing Australia's recovery rate by just 5 per cent would add an estimated \$1 billion to GDP. The Commonwealth Government is keen to exploit circular activities and opportunities not only to extend the useable life of products but also extend their value, create new jobs and raise economic growth.

Through the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER), the Commonwealth Government is delivering on specific measures related to:

- Funding of clean energy technologies including some waste to energy technologies
- Supporting innovative solutions to waste through Cooperative Research Centre Project Grants.

In addition, through DISER, the Commonwealth Government is implementing the Modern Manufacturing Strategy (MMS) to build competitiveness, scale and resilience in the Australian manufacturing sector. The Strategy has put in place six National Manufacturing Priorities (NMPs) which reflect Australia's competitive advantages and emerging priority areas, one of which is 'recycling and clean energy'.

The Recycling and Clean Energy Roadmap released on 7 April 2021 paves the way for manufacturers to seize economic opportunities to manufacture products in Australia from recycled waste and clean energy. Initial funding rounds for the \$1.3 billion Modern Manufacturing Initiative have been launched and industry in the waste and recycling sector will be able to access funding across targeted funding streams.

Tasked by the Commonwealth Government, the CSIRO developed the *National Circular Economy Roadmap for Plastics, Glass, Paper and Tyres: Pathways for unlocking future growth opportunities for Australia* which was released on 25 January 2021. The Roadmap mapped the current state of products and waste across the whole value chain and identified six key areas that would promote a circular economy for the four nominated waste materials. These areas are:

- Retain material through use and collection
- Upscale and innovate recycling technologies
- Innovate and collaborate in design and manufacturing
- Develop markets for secondary materials and their products
- Streamline nationally consistent governance
- Build a national zero waste culture.

The Roadmap also sets a path forward by forecasting two, five and ten year opportunities for industry and government aligned with these six areas.

The Government is grateful to all those who took the time to provide submissions to the report. As noted by the Committee, finding and implementing innovative solutions to waste management and recycling is an issue for all levels of government, and requires the co-operation of state, territory and local governments across the country to get it right.

A number of recommendations in the report require the Commonwealth Government to consult and collaborate with state and territory governments. The Commonwealth Government has established a cross-sector reference group involving government, non-government organisations, and industry and business representatives to provide advice and help guide the implementation of the NWPAP; – the Resource Recovery Reference Group

(RRRG). Where relevant, the Commonwealth Government will work with the RRRG to further investigate and progress the recommendations of the report.

The Commonwealth Government will continue to work closely with industry and manufacturers to realise the opportunities of transitioning to a circular economy and turning waste into a resource. Industry is well placed to deliver new opportunities to improve recycling rates, divert waste from landfill by leveraging Australian skills and innovations across the product life cycle including avoidance, design, consumption, collection and sorting. The Commonwealth Government is committed to work with industry, research institutions, not for profit sector as well as all levels of government to shift Australia to a circular economy.

Responses to individual recommendations are set out below.

# Response to Recommendations

## Recommendation 1

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government in consultation with state and territory governments implement a pathway to a predominantly national circular economy. This should pay attention to the design and composition of products to enable the greatest capacity for end of life recycling, and consider regulation and incentives to encourage greater repair, reuse, recycling and recovery of materials.**

### Support in Principle

Australia's environment ministers and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) committed to move Australia towards a circular economy by endorsing the National Waste Policy 2018 and the corresponding National Waste Policy Action Plan (NWPAP). The NWPAP lays down seven targets and corresponding actions which will move Australia in the direction of a circular economy.

The NWPAP is complemented by the Modern Manufacturing Strategy (MMS)'s 'Recycling and Clean Energy' Roadmap which was released on 7 April 2021. Under the \$1.3 billion MMS, 'Recycling and Clean Energy' has been identified as one of six National Manufacturing Priorities. The 'Recycling and Clean Energy' Roadmap was co-designed with industry and charts a course for the expansion of domestic capacity to manufacture and remanufacture for recycling and clean energy. It has been used to inform the development of guidelines for the delivery of funding initiatives under the MMS.

To inform the transition to a circular economy, the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources commissioned CSIRO to produce a National Circular Economy Roadmap for plastics, glass, paper and tyres which was publically released on 25 January 2021. The Circular Economy Roadmap is based on in-depth interviews with 83 business and government stakeholders. It puts forward a strategy to transition Australia to a more resource-efficient economy and proposes priority activities for each of the four materials across a two, five and ten year time horizon.

In addition, the Commonwealth Government asked the Productivity Commission to inquire into 'right to repair'. The Inquiry examined the potential benefits and costs associated with 'right to repair' in the Australian context, including current and potential legislative, regulatory and non-regulatory frameworks and their impact on consumers' ability to repair products that develop faults or require maintenance. This included considering the effectiveness of current arrangements for preventing premature or planned product obsolescence and the proliferation of e-waste, and further means of reducing e-waste through improved access to repairs and increased competition in repair markets. The final inquiry report was handed to the Australian Government on 29 October 2021 and publicly released on 1 December 2021.

The Commonwealth Government will continue to review progress under the NWPAP and examine options, in consultation with state and territory governments, industry and the broader community to build on what has already been achieved in the transition to a circular economy.

### **Recommendation 2**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government undertake further research to identify and examine waste management and resource recovery opportunities related to commercial and industrial, and construction and demolition waste.**

#### **Agreed**

The Commonwealth Government, through the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, has commissioned further research on commercial and industrial and construction and demolition waste streams, due to be finalised in early 2022. This work is being carried out in consultation with state and territory governments and industry representatives.

The Department of Defence, through the Defence Waste and Sustainable Procurement Program, also encourages research into resource reuse and sustainable procurement opportunities and partners with research organisations where required. Defence has partnered with the University of the Sunshine Coast, for example, to focus on the ability to reuse waste materials generated during airfield construction and maintenance projects.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Commonwealth Government update the National Waste Policy Action Plan to include measures focused on the transportation and infrastructure requirements to manage national waste across regions and state and territory borders.**

#### **Support in Principle**

The National Waste Policy Action Plan (NWPAP) is jointly owned by the Commonwealth, state and territory, and local governments in Australia and will be reviewed regularly to ensure actions are driving positive change in waste management.

The first review of the NWPAP commenced in October 2021 and is expected to be considered by Australia's environment ministers in early 2022. Reviews will outline progress to date, identify any further priority actions required and set out responsibilities and timeframes for delivery.

The Government notes that Infrastructure Australia identified waste management and recycling challenges as a high priority initiative in the 2021 Infrastructure Priority List. Consistent with the intent of the National Waste Policy Action Plan, Infrastructure Australia have identified the importance of a coordinated approach to waste and recycling initiatives across Australia.

The Government further notes that Infrastructure Australia has released reform recommendations to respond to the waste management challenges and opportunities identified in the 2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit in its 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan. The Plan has a number of recommendations to embed Circular Economy in infrastructure projects and foster a sustainable local recycling industry.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The Committee recommends that waste management and resource recovery be included as a standing item on the National Federation Reform Council agenda to monitor federal and state and territory progress against the National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019 and Response Strategy.**

#### **Noted**

On 11 December 2020, National Cabinet agreed to reset the Environment Ministers' Meeting to empower ministers to set their agenda and drive outcomes in their portfolio, in line with the recommendations of the 2020 Review of COAG Councils and Ministerial Forums. Environment Ministers have identified waste issues within their top three priorities for 2021.

First Ministers will determine the agenda for the National Federation Reform Council and what comes forward to any future meetings.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The responsible Minister report annually to Parliament on the progress of the targets and actions set out in the National Waste Action Plan.**

#### **Noted**

The Commonwealth Government agrees that transparency on the progress of our waste management and recycling targets is important and considers that existing reporting mechanisms are sufficient.

The National Waste Policy Action Plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure actions are driving positive change in waste management. The first review commenced in October 2021 and is expected to be finalised in early 2022. (See response to Recommendation 3).



## **Recommendation 6**

**The Committee recommends that recipients of Commonwealth waste management and recycling funding be required to report on the waste management and resource recovery outcomes as a result of that funding.**

### **Support in Principle**

The Commonwealth Government recognises the importance of connecting Commonwealth spending to the larger goals of the National Waste Policy.

The Commonwealth Government develops comprehensive reporting mechanisms to oversee Commonwealth investments. The Commonwealth Government assesses reporting requirements as part of the design of new programs and the evaluation of existing programs, including:

- enhancing the publicly available information where possible
- providing projected outcomes until actual outcomes are realised, measured and reported
- looking into measuring positive externalities and flow-on effects from the various activities.

Recipients of funding under various government programs, including waste management and recycling funding programs, are bound by reporting requirements under program guidelines and funding agreements. These requirements are targeted at specific deliverables. Longer term waste management and recycling outcomes will be progressed and monitored through the National Waste Policy Action Plan.

## **Recommendation 7**

**The Commonwealth Government in consultation with industry, identify and consider the inclusion of additional waste streams under the *Product Stewardship Act 2011*, particularly emerging or complex waste streams such as e-waste, solar panels, medical waste and textiles.**

### **Support in Principle**

The *Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020* (the Act) was enacted in December 2020 and supersedes the *Product Stewardship Act 2011*. The Act updates Australia's product stewardship framework to encourage or require manufacturers, importers, distributors, designers and other persons to take responsibility for products over their lifecycle.

The Minister's priority list, outlined in section 67 of the Act, signals to industry and all of Australia that product stewardship action is expected on a particular product. Priority products are listed annually, together with reasons for listing, actions and timeframes. The

Minister will consider progress of product stewardship actions for listed products every 12 months. Some form of regulation may be considered if appropriate steps have not been taken within the specified timeframes. It may take several years for product stewardship actions to be achieved, so products may remain listed for several years.

The 2021-22 priority list retains e-waste, solar (photovoltaic) panels, child car seats and plastic oil containers as products that require further industry action. New products added to the 2021-22 list are clothing textiles and problematic and unnecessary single use plastics. The Hon Sussan Ley, Minister for the Environment announced at the National Clothing Textile Roundtable held in May that the Australian Government intends to support action on clothing textiles, by providing \$1 million of funding under the National Product Stewardship Investment Fund for clothing textiles outcomes.

In preparing the annual Minister's priority list, consideration is given to emerging or complex waste streams. A public call for nominations for new products for listing will be made annually. These will be assessed in collaboration with the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence and in consultation with relevant state, territory and local government, industry and consumer groups.

### **Recommendation 8**

<p><b>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government undertake stakeholder consultations to better align the existing waste management and recycling funding and investment programs with industry's needs.</b></p>
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### **Noted**

The Commonwealth Government undertakes stakeholder consultation for the development of all waste management and recycling funding and investment programs.

The Commonwealth Government's key recycling investment program—the \$190 million Recycling Modernisation Fund (RMF)—is being delivered in partnership with industry and state and territory governments. This delivery mechanism enables alignment with the needs of industry in each jurisdiction and with existing state and territory waste and recycling funding programs.

Another example of stakeholder consultation is the development of the 'Recycling and Clean Energy' Roadmap under the \$1.3 billion Modern Manufacturing Strategy. The 'Recycling and Clean Energy' Roadmap was co-designed with an industry taskforce made up of four industry leaders. It was also informed by one on one meetings with key industry stakeholders and online surveys which were distributed to industry stakeholders through relevant industry associations and publically available on the department's consultation hub.

### **Recommendation 9**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government undertake an assessment of Australia's current and future waste management and resource recovery infrastructure capacity, with particular emphasis on the volume of waste to be managed and potential markets.**

#### **Agreed**

The Commonwealth Government has a work program that includes an assessment of Australia's current and future waste management and resource recovery infrastructure capacity, with particular emphasis on the volume of waste to be managed and potential markets. For example, the National Waste Report identifies the needs and capacities of Australia's waste infrastructure. Under the National Waste Policy Action Plan, new markets in recycled material, including glass, plastics and rubber will be identified. Research is also being undertaken in a range of areas to better understand the barriers preventing businesses fully engaging in the circular economy.

### **Recommendation 10**

**The Commonwealth Government in consultation with the state and territory governments work towards identifying and harmonising relevant waste management and resource recovery policies and legislation to enable a seamless, coordinated and integrated industry across the country.**

#### **Support in principle**

The Commonwealth Government recognises the importance of harmonizing relevant waste management and resource recovery policies and legislation and is working closely with states, territories and local governments to implement a program of waste reform measures through the National Waste Policy Action Plan. This includes supporting consistency around single-use plastic bans and delivering agreed national data and reporting improvements.

Further opportunities for consistency in waste management and resource recovery policy and legislation will be considered by all governments through the upcoming review of the Action Plan (see response to Recommendation 3).

### **Recommendation 11**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments to improve access to container deposit facilities and collection points, particularly for people who use these facilities to earn extra money or fundraise.**

#### **Noted**

The Commonwealth Government understands that in addition to the benefits of reducing litter in the environment and creating homogenous streams of material that are more valuable for remanufacturing, many charities and community groups have been using the Container Deposit Schemes to undertake significant fundraising activities.

Responsibility for the legislation and scheme design, including the number of collection points rests with states and territories. At the Environment Ministers Meeting on 15 April 2021, Ministers agreed to harmonisation for the containers (size and products) across jurisdictions, refund amounts, standards for labelling, and community education by the end of 2025, ensuring consistent recycling collection strategies across all states.

### **Recommendation 12**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government design and implement a national public education and awareness campaign that emphasises avoiding waste, the impact of waste, and how it can be better managed by consumers.**

#### **Support in Principle**

The Commonwealth Government recognises the need to increase levels of understanding and awareness surrounding waste avoidance, the impact of waste and how waste can be better managed, among consumers and industry.

For example, under the National Waste Policy Action Plan the Government has provided \$1.1 million to the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) for a National Consumer Education Campaign to improve consumer information about recycling using the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL). The ARL is a world-leading consumer education tool that helps increase recycling rates and improve the quality of materials in kerbside recycling collection. The Government is also delivering \$5 million to support small-to-medium enterprise businesses to adopt the ARL and is working with large APCO members with an annual revenue greater than \$500 million to use the ARL by end of 2023.

### **Recommendation 13**

- (a) The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government develop a national waste to energy policy in consultation with the state and territory governments. Consideration should be given to where waste to energy fits into the waste management hierarchy.**
- (b) In developing a national policy, the Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government review current state and territory waste to energy regulation with a view to ensuring national consistency across planning, approval and operational processes.**

**(a) Noted**

**(b) Noted**

The National Waste Policy explicitly incorporates the waste hierarchy where waste avoidance, reduction, reuse and recycling are prioritised over waste recovery (including Waste to Energy (WtE) applications), and provides an existing framework for collective national action by businesses, governments, communities and individuals until 2030. The National Waste Policy recognises that regulation and management of waste and resource recovery is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments. The Commonwealth Government notes that each jurisdiction's existing laws and policies contain consistent linkages to the waste hierarchy.

Through the delivery of the National Waste Policy Action Plan, the Commonwealth Government will continue to work closely with states and territories and industry representatives to identify opportunities for national consistency for waste management and resource recovery activities.

### **Recommendation 14**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government in consultation with state and territory governments develop a national methane-to-power program for landfill sites in cities and larger regional centres.**

**Noted**

Currently methane-to-power from landfill site projects are being supported by the Commonwealth Government through a number of programs, including the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) and the Renewable Energy Target (RET) scheme. Under the Government's ERF businesses and individuals can earn carbon credits for approved activities that reduce emissions. This includes the capture and combustion of biogas/methane from waste, to generate heat or electricity. The heat or electricity can be used onsite, or the electricity can be exported into the grid to also earn Renewable Energy Certificates under the Large Scale RET (LRET) component of the RET scheme.

The Government has also prioritised the expansion of the ERF's coverage to allow projects to earn carbon credits for the displacement of fossil fuel derived natural gas, from refining biogas to biomethane suitable for injection into the natural gas pipeline. This expansion is expected to be available in early 2022.

### **Recommendation 15**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government facilitate and coordinate a national assessment of the capacity and potential of rural, regional and remote communities to establish a local waste management and resource recovery industry or serve as a regional hub. This assessment should include an examination of the attributes of communities, including but not limited to, the regional landscape, existing transport routes, local infrastructure, current amenities and services, and markets for recovered waste.**

#### **Noted**

State and Territory Governments regulate waste and recycling in their jurisdictions by imposing license conditions for waste and recycling facilities and the transportation of waste, imposing landfill levies, providing incentives for recycling, and undertaking environmental protection measures. Local governments are also directly involved in the management of waste and recycling through arrangements for its collection, processing and disposal. The Commonwealth Government therefore considers that the state, territory and local governments are in the best position to make decisions and provide local solutions on waste management and recycling opportunities and to respond to market developments.

### **Recommendation 16**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government examine measures for rural, regional and remote communities to access adequate funding to invest in local waste management and resource recovery infrastructure and solutions.**

#### **Noted**

The Commonwealth Government notes the limitations and barriers faced by regional communities in accessing funding for waste management and recycling infrastructure and acknowledges that management of waste in regional, rural and remote communities is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments.

The Commonwealth Government is implementing targeted policy and program measures to transform the waste and recycling industry and is investing to reduce waste, increase recycling rates and build capacity in the recycling industry nationally.

Commonwealth Government Programs such as the Recycling Modernisation Fund (RMF) and the Modern Manufacturing Initiative (MMI) are available to boost waste management, recycling and manufacturing related opportunities right across Australia – including in regional and remote areas. The Commonwealth Government is investing \$190 million into the RMF to support investment in new infrastructure to sort, process and remanufacture materials such as mixed plastic, paper, tyres and glass. Funding is provided to the states and territories through the National Partnership on Recycling Infrastructure. In addition, the RMF will fund a national solution for paper recycling infrastructure, and targeted regional and remote projects. As at October 2021, the Commonwealth has already co-funded 23 projects in regional and remote Australia across five states. As the outcomes of regional and remote state-based grants programs are known, we expect to see additional projects in these areas receive funding under the RMF.

The MMI is expected to fund manufacturing opportunities across Australia, relevant to the six national manufacturing priorities including recycling and clean energy.

### **Recommendation 17**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government, in consultation with state and territory and local governments, establish a mobile waste management and recycling program for rural, regional, remote and Indigenous communities designed to:**

- **Collect waste directly from properties, farms and Indigenous communities and transport this waste for processing and resource recovery in larger regional or town centres.**
- **Collect abandoned vehicles from properties and roads for crushing and resource recovery in larger regional or town centres.**

### **Noted**

The Commonwealth Government is supporting remote and regional communities through the Recycling Modernisation Fund (RMF). Projects under the RMF will be delivered under National Partnership Agreements through State and Territory governments. In some cases, these agreements specifically require states and territories to prioritise investment in regional and remote recycling facilities. In addition, the RMF will fund regional and remote projects identified through targeted state-based grants programs. To date, the Commonwealth has already co-funded 23 projects in regional Australia across five states.

## **Recommendation 18**

**That the Commonwealth Government examine the flow of textile waste and other household goods in Australia, as well as Australia's current and future capacity to process and recover this waste. The aim of this assessment is to identify challenges and opportunities to better manage this waste stream.**

### **Support in Principle**

An initial assessment of Australia's current and projected future textile waste flows was commissioned by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment in 2020. This work estimated 780,000 tonnes of textiles waste was generated in 2018-19.

On 26th May 2021, the Australian Government hosted a National Clothing Textiles Waste Roundtable at Parliament House. Participants from the retail, fashion, charity, production, environment, research and waste management sectors discussed the key challenges and the opportunities in reducing the amount of textile waste going to landfill. Participants agreed that a circular economy for textiles is critical to achieving a sustainable Australian textile industry, and proposed a National Clothing Textile Summit be held in the future. The roundtable was the beginning of co-ordinated action and national leadership across the supply chain to put our textile waste to productive use and to contribute to meeting the targets set out in National Waste Policy Action Plan.

This action has been supported by the addition of clothing textiles to the 2021-22 Minister's Priority List and the announcement of \$1 million of funding under the National Product Stewardship Investment Fund for clothing textiles outcomes.



## **Recommendation 19**

**That the Commonwealth Government develop a specific national textile waste policy which is underpinned by the principles of a circular economy. It is recommended this policy focus on, but not be limited to:**

- **Greater investment in domestic recycling technology and infrastructure;**
- **Improved product stewardship and design;**
- **Introduction of standards and specifications for recycled content in textiles;**
- **Targeted government procurement policies for recycled textiles;**
- **Consistency across state and territory policy; and**
- **Greater consumer education and awareness regarding textile waste, reuse and repair.**

### **Noted**

The Commonwealth Government understands the need to reduce textile waste and is committed to working with industry, states and territories, and local governments to provide oversight and support for textiles recovery efforts.

The *Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020* (the Act) has made significant changes to Australia's product stewardship framework that encourage and regulate the reuse, remanufacture, recycling and recovery of products and related material, and to reduce or avoid generating waste through improvements to product design. To encourage the development of industry-led product stewardship schemes, the National Product Stewardship Investment Fund provides grants of up to \$1 million to support new, or the expansion of existing, product stewardship arrangements. To date, the Government has announced three grants to textile specific projects including:

- \$360,000 to the Australasian Circular Textile Association to develop a business case and design a product stewardship scheme to collect, reuse and recycle uniforms and workwear;
- \$350,000 to the Vinyl Council of Australia to develop a business case and design a national product stewardship scheme for PVC coated polyester textiles; and
- \$937,700 to the Australian Bedding Stewardship Council Limited to design and implement a product stewardship scheme for used mattresses and used bedding.

The Commonwealth Government is also taking action on sustainable procurement. The Commonwealth Procurement Rules require officials to consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits when assessing value for money. This includes the environmental sustainability of the proposed goods and services such as the use of recycled content. These considerations apply to the purchase of textiles by the Commonwealth Government such as uniforms and carpets for office fit-outs. Non-financial and financial costs also include whole-of-life costs including costs associated with decommissioning, remediation and disposal.

The Commonwealth Government's Sustainable Procurement Guide provides practical assistance to Commonwealth Government officials on how to consider environmental sustainability in their procurements. It was updated in 2020 to place greater emphasis on use of recycled content.

### **Recommendation 20**

**That the Commonwealth Government, in consultation with state and territory governments, examine options for:**

- **Improving the placement and availability of charitable and commercial clothing recycling bins in local government areas; and**
- **Minimising the costs associated with managing illegally dumped goods or unsuitable donations.**

### **Noted**

The placement and availability of charitable and commercial clothing recycling bins, and managing the associated illegally dumped goods and unsuitable donations, is typically the responsibility of local governments.

On 26th May 2021, the Australian Government hosted a National Clothing Textiles Waste Roundtable at Parliament House which was attended by stakeholders from the fashion industry, retailers, reuse charities, fibre producers, researchers and waste management. This roundtable considered the actions and commitments required to reduce textile waste, focusing on the circular economy.

### **Recommendation 21**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government undertake further research into improving waste management and resource recovery in the medical sector including opportunities to reduce, recycle and reuse waste from hospitals, clinical practices and medical facilities.**

- (a) Consideration should be given to establishing a unit similar to NHS England's Sustainable Development Unit to harmonise Commonwealth and State and Territory regulation.**
- (b) The Committee recommends that the Department of Health take the lead on this body of work in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment**

### **Noted**

The management of medical sector waste is a complex issue and correct handling and disposal is essential to manage potential risks to human health and the environment.

Medical sector waste generated by individual health services, including hospitals, is managed in accordance with state or territory and local government regulations. Waste management options will also depend on the infrastructure available in the given location for recycling and disposal.

The Commonwealth Government (through the Department of Health) works with jurisdictions to ensure the national consideration and coordination of environmental health issues through the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC). The Department of Health will continue working through this forum and with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment on this matter.

### **Recommendation 22**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government in consultation with the states and territories, ensure that any ethical issues arising from the management, handling and disposal of human and anatomical waste are respectfully addressed.**

### **Noted**

The Commonwealth Government notes the importance of ensuring that any ethical issues arising from the management, handling and disposal of human and anatomical waste are respectfully addressed.

Environmental Protection Agencies across each state and territory offer regulatory and legislative requirements for operators and individuals to ensure proper management and handling of clinical waste, including human tissue waste.

## **Recommendation 23**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government in consultation with the states and territories explore options for resource recovery of food organics and garden organics waste including processing as compost and fertiliser for horticulture and agriculture. It is recommended that a business plan be developed to identify opportunities for reprocessed food organics and garden organics waste to be transported and sold in rural and regional markets.**

### **Support in Principle**

Under Target 6 of the National Waste Policy Action Plan, Australia's governments have agreed to halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill for disposal by 2030. Organic waste, including food and garden waste, is a valuable resource that can be harnessed and returned to productive use, for example as compost to improve and fertilise soil. All tiers of Australia's governments will therefore work together to:

- consider whether updated national standards and specifications for organic waste products are required
- report on options to increase recovery of organics from all waste streams
- provide support to develop distributed infrastructure solutions to process organic waste, including composting infrastructure
- deliver food organics and garden organics collection to households and business.

Addressing organic waste that goes to landfill is a priority for the Commonwealth Government. In 2021, the Commonwealth Government announced the Food Waste for Healthy Soils budget measure to increase the amount of organic waste that gets recycled. A key component of the measure is the Food Waste for Healthy Soils Fund to build new, and improve existing, processing infrastructure to turn organic waste into nutrient rich compost and soil enhancers.

The budget measure also includes supporting elements to reduce contamination – for example plastic – from organic waste streams, build agricultural demand for compost products and review national standards to ensure compost product quality, consistency and safety.

The Fund will divert up to 3.4 million tonnes of food and organic waste from landfill, generate \$401 million in industry value and avoid over 2 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

## **Recommendation 24**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government in consultation with state and territories explore options to sustainably manage decommissioned wind turbines.**

### **Noted**

Australia remains at an early stage in the deployment lifecycle of wind farms. Wind farms are expected to have an operational life of 20 to 30 years and Australia is not yet experiencing large scale waste from wind turbines. The Office of the National Wind Farm Commissioner notes in its 2019 Annual Report that there is likely to be increased concerns about the decommissioning of wind farms in the next few years, and recycling may provide one option to defray the associated cost.

All energy infrastructure has similar issues related to decommissioning and recycling materials which all parties will need to manage and the development of innovative solutions is an existing area of work for industry. For example the Australian Renewable Energy Agency has supported research into dealing with end of life issues associated with solar panels, and AGL has raised the prospect of using existing older infrastructure sites to accommodate new technologies such as a floating solar photovoltaic farm at a disused generation site.

In regard to potential offshore wind farms, the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources is developing the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure regulatory framework to enable the full development of offshore renewable energy projects (including wind) and electricity transmission infrastructure in Commonwealth waters. The framework will provide mechanisms to ensure that relevant Commonwealth and State government agencies are consulted, including on aspects of de-commissioning of future offshore wind projects.