

From: Gerard van Rijswijk
Sent: Friday, 15 August 2008 1:04 PM
To: Committee, ECA (SEN)
Subject: Waste Inquiry

Dear Secretary,

I have just noticed that some additional information has been put onto the website. The first document is the Hyder Consulting report on net benefits. You should be aware that the Productivity Commission, when it reviewed waste management, was quite critical of Hyder's approach to determination of benefits and in particular the use of avoided upstream impacts in the calculation. There are a number of reasons why this approach lacks validity – the main one being that most manufacturing facilities producing starting point materials are licenced at the local level and thereby internalise some or all of the externalities. The Commission also asked Hyder to give it a copy of the method / formula used for valuation of impacts – as the Hyder numbers tended to differ from overseas studies. Hyder did not give the Commission access to this data, so it was not possible for the Commission to validate the Hyder approach.

The next two documents submitted by Mike Ritchie and Ann Prince, cover the same area. The major claim is that, through conservation of embodied energy, recycling can have a significant impact in the reduction of greenhouse gases. I suggest that the study lacks rigour – for example the full embodied energy of the recycled material is not taken into account, resulting in a highly optimistic outcome.

In general we find that environmental benefits of recycling household waste materials tend to be exaggerated – often through lack of rigorous analysis. I attach a copy of a study on glass recycling to make the point. This study suggests that the energy benefits are minimal and tend to be exaggerated in other studies because the energy savings inherent in equipment upgrades are not separated from the energy saving directly attributable to recycling.

Best regards

Gerard van Rijswijk