

**WASTE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (WMAA) RESPONSE TO
THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY DRAFT REPORT ON WASTE
MANAGEMENT**

WMAA supports a national debate on waste management and welcomes the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report on Waste Generation and Resource Efficiency. While the WMAA support some of the findings, the Association and its membership have serious concerns about some major issues.

The Report's recommendation of the elimination of recycling targets and the discarding of waste minimisation as a central tenet of waste management, **is not well aligned with the policies of both the Federal and State Governments which have all been promoting waste minimisation and recycling for more than a decade.**

In fact in 1990 ANZEC (The Australian and New Zealand Environment Council) established a 50% waste recycling target by 2000 for all waste management across Australia.

The Federal Government then set about driving recycling and waste reduction with both State and Local Governments. Most State and Local Governments have subsequently introduced waste targets and invested heavily in improved recycling services. The Federal Government has endorsed a number of international agreements to support sustainability via improvements in recycling and waste minimisation Eg. United Nations Agenda 21.

Commenting on the report WMAA National President, Lillias Bovell said, "It is surprising that after 15 years of investment by businesses and effort by householders, the Productivity Commissioner is now saying 'sorry- recycling targets and waste minimisation were the wrong approach - cheap, large landfills and incineration are sufficient to meet most of our waste management needs.' **Such an approach has the potential to undermine recycling, and contribute to a dramatic rise in landfill.**"

Australians have adopted recycling with a passion. More than 90% support kerbside recycling. A recent Taverner Research survey showed that 94% also support the introduction of new waste processing technology (AWT) to recover resources from waste and to further reduce disposal at landfills.

Australians have made it clear to governments that they believe that sustainability is best achieved by reducing waste and recycling wherever possible and economically feasible to do so.

Resource recovery and recycling programs are also important in changing the throw away lifestyle attitudes that permeate our communities.

With recycling rates in Australia around 35-55% for most materials the **WMAA believes there are considerable further opportunities for economically viable and efficient recycling practices to be introduced.** These include Commercial and Industrial waste recycling, organic waste conversion to compost, construction and demolition waste recycling and recovery of recyclable products from the municipal waste stream.

The WMAA, however, does support several of the findings of the Productivity Commission

including:

- the finding that well run landfills (with leachate and methane gas capture) are relatively environmentally benign;
- the need for minimum environmental standards to be applied to all landfill operations;
- the need for enforcement of licence conditions on all landfill operators;
- the inclusion of a price for the external effects of landfills on the environment
- the finding that Zero Waste Targets are aspirational only and would, in the current climate, be uneconomic to achieve;
- the creation of alliances between Councils to deliver waste services;
- extended producer recycling schemes need to be well targeted;
- the need for a better planning framework for new recycling infrastructure;
- the need for a cost benefit approach to policy development and implementation and;
- the need to focus on economically efficient systems for resource recovery.

Further Information:
Lillias Bovell, WMAA President
0404 491 603
lbovell@wmaa.asn.au

Rebecca Pfeiffer, WMAA
02 8746 5000
rebecca@wmaa.asn.au

Information on WMAA

Operating since 1991, the Waste Management Association of Australia (WMAA) is Australia's leading association for waste management professionals with over 1000 members in the waste and resource recovery industry. Membership is wide ranging

and multi-disciplinary, including stakeholders from State and Local Governments, operators, industry, environmental consultancies, collectors, recyclers, transporters, researchers, manufacturers, designers, generators, educators, community groups and many more.

To view a copy of the full version of "Taverner Willingness to Pay Study" referred to in this release visit: <http://www.wmaa.asn.au/nsw/final1491.pdf>