



DISCUSSION PAPER: CURRENT RECYCLING CHALLENGES

Draft Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030

This discussion paper is part of consultation on the Draft Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030. We are seeking views via our website at participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/waste-resource-strategy

Since China announced restrictions on what kinds of recyclable material can be imported for processing, the global recycling industry has experienced significant and rapid change. Countries like Australia are no longer able to send some categories of recyclable material to China.

The impact of these changes has reached the City of Melbourne as it now costs more to get recyclables from kerbside collections to processing plants as the over-supply of materials has reduced its value.

The Victorian government has provided \$12 million in emergency funding to support all Victorian local councils until the end of June 2018.

What are the current issues?

Cost to City of Melbourne - The City of Melbourne's recycling processor SKM Recycling needs to find ways to cover their operational costs and so are now charging the City of Melbourne whereas previously we were paid for our recyclables. At the moment, the additional costs are not being passed directly onto ratepayers.

Far reaching consequences - The China recycling crisis is impacting every local government in Australia and many other countries across Europe, Asia and North America.

Individuals are questioning whether they should recycle - The recycling crisis has some people concerned that the items they are recycling will not end up at a recycling plant and could end up in landfill.

What are other cities doing?

South Australian Recycling Market Development Grants - The SA Government is awarding grants to stimulate the state's recycling market. The grants aim to encourage a closed loop economy to process recyclables within the state and increase the market share of products containing recycled content.

New South Wales Government - The NSW government has released \$47 million to support councils and industry impacted by China's new restrictions. The relief funding aims to provide short-term relief and build longer-term resilience in the recycling industry.

British Columbia, Canada - The local recycling industry in British Columbia has received significant investment in recent years; locally processing recycled plastics and sorting recycled paper to a quality that is acceptable to export to China.

What should be done to address these issues in Melbourne?

Keep recycling - City of Melbourne ratepayers should keep using their recycling bins. Despite the changes in the recycling markets, material is still being recycled.

Minimise waste and maximise reuse - Packaging and product designers should "design out" waste. Unavoidable packaging should be manufactured from recycled materials and be fully reusable or recyclable.

Support local recycling industry - State and federal governments should invest in recycling infrastructure where this provides cost effective and environmentally beneficial solutions. Improved local infrastructure means more jobs and reduced transport costs.

Purchase items made from recycled material - City of Melbourne should support and create new markets for recycled products through its own purchasing.



What if?

Manufacturers and retailers were required to take back their waste.

A container deposit scheme was established for Victoria.

Only certain types of packaging were allowed to be sold in City of Melbourne.

A tax on 'virgin' plastics, paper, metals was introduced.

We stopped recycling low value materials and switched to waste to energy.

We want your thoughts

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