

Position Statement of the Waste Management Association of Australia

August 2010

1. Purpose

The Waste Management Association of Australia (WMAA) was formed in 1991 to promote the interests of the Waste Management Industry.

WMAA is Australia's largest membership-based organisation of waste and resource recovery professionals and industry specialists. Members and non-members benefit from access to WMAA's network of professionals, events and knowledge resources.

WMAA provides a national forum to foster professional practice in the waste and resource recovery sectors and acts as a facilitator of information exchange and a key agent for change.

Since its inception, WMAA has developed a range of resources and knowledge for industry members. WMAA provides ongoing resource access and knowledge development of for its membership.

WMAA seeks ongoing and regular engagement with its membership as a means to shaping future directions.

It is a charter objective of WMAA to promote the advancement and growth of the sector in the interests of members.

2. Membership

Since 1991, the WMAA membership has grown to over 1,000 individual and corporate members, with more than 3,000 individuals registered on its mailing list.

The membership base covers the integral disciplines in the waste management sector including Government, consultants, academia, waste contractors, resource recovery operators, equipment suppliers, service providers, not-for-profit groups, manufacturers and waste generators.

WMAA members originate from all Australian States and Territories as well as a number of other countries and cover a wide range of specialty interest areas.

WMAA is the Australian National Member of the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA).

3. Structure

WMAA operates a national organisational framework. Within this, State and Territory interests are represented through State Branches, and technical interests are represented through specialised National Divisions and State Working Groups.

The specialist National Divisions currently active within the WMAA include:

- Landfill
- Carbon
- Resource & Energy Recovery
- Compost
- Bio-hazardous Waste
- Waste Education
- Construction & Demolition Waste Recycling

In addition, specialist State Working Groups also exist for:

- Hazardous Waste
- Industrial Ecology
- Metal Recycling
- Commercial and Industrial Waste
- Young Professionals

4. Member Activity

Members of WMAA are involved in a broad range of activities in the waste and resource recovery sector:

- Local Government professionals, planning, providing, contracting or managing the provision of services in various forms;
- Operators and contractors delivering services, including collection, transportation, reprocessing, and disposal of materials;
- Companies developing technologies associated with waste management and resource recovery;
- Public and private sector personnel involved in education and communication about waste and resource recovery issues;
- Companies and individuals advising the industry on compliance, strategic planning and technical issues;
- Businesses marketing and promoting the use of recovered resources;
- Companies manufacturing and supplying equipment to the sector; and
- State and Federal Government professionals involved in planning, strategy and regulation.

5. Directions

As issues of global sustainability, resource depletion and climate change have become more prominent, the role of the waste management and resource recovery industry has become more central. WMAA holds the following positions on a range of topics and special interest issues.

Waste Minimisation and Resource Recovery

WMAA supports the avoidance of waste generation initiatives promoting cleaner production and use of the Waste Hierarchy as a 'general' guide to prioritising waste management approaches.

WMAA supports the Commonwealth in its endeavours to provide a National Strategic Framework for the delivery of cost effective and sustainable resource recovery services across all jurisdictions.

WMAA supports the development of integrated policy at all levels of Government and initiatives that further improve resource recovery and industry development.

WMAA supports efforts by members and other stakeholders to reliably service established markets for recovered resources and to continually explore and develop new outlets and markets in response to constant changes in the productive economy.

WMAA supports the adoption of tools for the measurement of the costs and benefits of resource recovery activities.

WMAA supports significant improvement in both, the science and the accounting practices associated with cost benefit analysis for resource recovery operations and the disposal options for residual materials.

WMAA considers that transparency and effective stakeholder engagement are important aspects associated with policy development and cost benefit analysis.

Targets

WMAA supports the establishment of Federal, State and Local Government waste reduction targets. The setting of targets should involve:

- Meaningful consultation with all stakeholders in the resource use supply chain;
- Achievable time frames;
- Year-to-year milestones;
- Clear accountabilities;
- Incentives and / or sanctions relative to performance;
- Measurement and reporting;
- Support, where necessary, via financial and regulatory measures; and
- Support for the planning and development of required infrastructure.

Emerging Technologies

WMAA supports the introduction of best practice techniques and technologies to optimise resource recovery from wastes and to limit the potential for impacts from facility operations and residual waste disposal.

WMAA considers life cycle assessment and triple bottom line analysis should form part of the review process when developing Advanced Waste Treatment (AWT) facilities.

Economic Instruments

WMAA supports the redirection of waste flow taxes and levies to support waste avoidance or minimisation objectives, improve resource recovery or lessen the impacts of residual waste disposal. WMAA's framework of Branches, Divisions and Working Groups can provide assistance to review and advise on the preferred form or structure of such initiatives. This will assist in linking the proposed policy objectives to the provision of the necessary systems and infrastructure to deliver the required outcomes.

Residual Waste Disposal

WMAA is of the view that landfills have a central role to play in an integrated waste management system for:

- Disposal of intractable wastes, after treatment and / or stabilisation as appropriate;
- Disposal of residuals from waste processing and recycling plants;
- Disposal of wastes not currently suitable for further processing or recycling;
- Waste disposal in regions where recycling and resource recovery is not viable;
- Provision of a backup to waste processing technologies including AWT and Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs); and
- Use as a transitional technology whilst alternative resource recovery facilities are commissioned.

WMAA supports the parallel delivery of energy recovery from landfill activity, which often includes the remediation of minesites as a collateral benefit.

WMAA supports landfill operation and management to best-practice standards.

Climate Change

WMAA will assist the design and implementation of practical strategies in support of Government policy agendas with regard to climate change and resource depletion.

WMAA supports action to reduce carbon emissions from all waste and resource recovery sector activities.

The waste sector's contribution to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions may include:

- Increasing and optimising gas capture rates from existing landfills;
- Maximising the recovery of materials with high embodied energy;
- Sequestering carbon in soils through biochar and composts;
- Increasing electricity generation from wastes that have no higher resource value; and
- Reducing the biologically degradable organics content of waste consigned to traditional landfills.

Planning and Infrastructure

WMAA supports appropriate planning and the use of planning instruments to provide confidence for both Government and private capital investors working with new systems and infrastructure for waste management and resource recovery.

WMAA supports State Governments taking a proactive role in waste planning, including the identification of appropriate sites for new infrastructure and providing 'planning' protection.

Data

WMAA supports development of common systems for collecting, storing, collating and accessing waste management and resource recovery data.

WMAA supports national consistency in data collection terminology, nomenclature and methodology.

Education

WMAA supports continuing education of the community and ongoing expansion of waste education services, systems and programs on issues and policy decisions surrounding waste avoidance, minimisation and resource recovery.

WMAA supports the professional development, knowledge and networking needs of waste managers, operators, and personnel across the sector.

Extended Producer Responsibility

WMAA supports the expansion of planning and implementation of product stewardship for extended producer responsibility (EPR) for post-consumer products and services.

WMAA supports collaboration between its diverse range of stakeholders to make resource recovery initiatives financially viable through the sharing of systems and infrastructure.