

Submission to the CRIS on Australia's waste export ban.

Consultation questions

1. **Do you agree with the problems that have been identified?** Yes but would add that the adverse impacts on those communities in countries receiving our waste has not been fully identified or articulated to the Australian industry or community. A greater understanding of the health, environmental and human rights impacts that waste exports from OECD countries are and historically have caused these communities, would motivate the Australian community, industry and all levels of government to pursue change more rigorously. See this reference report.
<https://wastetradestories.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Discarded-Report-April-22.pdf>

2. **What effect do you think the problems could have on the waste and recycling sector, consumers and environmental regulators?**

Waste management is an essential service. There are no quick easy solutions and the public are largely in the dark about the degree of the waste trade ban impacts on Australia. However, this is becoming clearer as plastic waste stockpiles all over Australia are increasingly involved in largescale fires that impact our communities, public health and environment. These events have considerable costs attached to them in terms of emergency response, health and environmental impacts and legal recourse that local, state and national governments bear. Therefore, it is essential that the federal government pursues the deep systemic changes needed to resolve Australia's "waste export crisis" and not just easy options to maintain business as usual for the waste management sector. The solutions a require a cross sector and multidisciplinary approach.

https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/what-happened-to-us-in-west-footscray-firefighters-call-for-answers-after-toxic-fire-20191106-p5382j.html?fbclid=IwAR2-s6Ppou8S2rPWZXj2wufKF-H9h-s_u00M1I1aeARbpyD9e2w0B7XTirA

<https://thewest.com.au/news/perth/third-cleanaway-recycling-plant-hit-by-fire-in-three-months-as-dardanup-based-facility-damaged-ng-b881445209z?fbclid=IwAR3wh0zdcggP9Oc1WPjLmtKiTZUnRjqaUOUD8uhvyJxM2L2xQ-dL8c4-G94>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-11/recycling-material-dumped-in-landfill-after-cleanaway-fire-perth/11781716?fbclid=IwAR3fmEWfZcyIC7BGpmvx8KT0vtIKM3ZrIP4gDYHXrbb6HZ6fNon08c0raLo>

3. Do you have any information, analysis or data that supports characterising the impact of the problems identified?

<https://www.ciel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Plastic-and-Health-The-Hidden-Costs-of-a-Plastic-Planet-February-2019.pdf>

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20191210/Toxicologists-find-toxic-chemicals-from-LCDs-in-nearly-half-of-household-dust-samples.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1rXJOtLn8d0iir7MzM96NAsQ06okNnSsmYK-Xwe19b-mgsWmYC-6NtCbQ>

<https://www.ciel.org/issue/plastic-global-law-policy/>

<https://www.ciel.org/issue/lifecycle-impacts-of-plastic/>

<https://www.ciel.org/reports/fuelingplastics/>

4. Are there any other problems that you think should be considered as part of the RIS? If so, please set out what they are, what effect you think these problems could have and how the problems should be addressed.

This CRIS has not fully considered the adverse impacts of recycling plastic and tyres under current conditions whereby many plastic waste products and materials contain toxic substances that render recycling difficult or impossible. Any plan to address Australia's recycling crisis must acknowledge the role that the chemicals and plastic industry sector has played and continues to benefit from by failing to implement toxics elimination and substitution policy.

The full impact of the risks and hazards that recycling toxics back into new products causes has not been adequately defined or addressed and this is particularly related to the recycling of tyres and plastic waste. Already impacts caused by recycling tyres into roads are well documented but seemingly absent from National policy discussion on this issue. Similarly, plastic and tyres used to make sports fields pose significant health and environmental impacts already documented. The Federal government needs to reconsider the use of plastic waste and tyres especially used for recycling outcomes that pose known and foreseeable risks to the marine environment through the spread of micro and nanoplastic pollutants. Failure to do this now will cost the government much more in the future.

<https://ipen.org/documents/toxic-loop-hole-recycling-hazardous-waste-new-products>

<https://ipen.org/documents/pops-recycling-contaminates-childrens-toys-toxic-flame-retardants>

<https://ipen.org/news/eu-withdraws-its-toxic-recycling-exemption>

<https://ipen.org/news/new-video-more-plastics-more-toxics>

plastic road impacts

<https://niva.brage.unit.no/niva-xmlui/handle/11250/2493537>

<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/heard-about-miracle-plastic-roads-heres-why-its-not-solution-our-plastic-problem-36927>

<https://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/blog/2019/2/13/can-our-recycling-problem-be-solved-by-using-plastic-for-roads>

https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/ntp/about_ntp/bsc/2017/june/publiccomm/stephanattach1_20170628_508.pdf

<https://niva.brage.unit.no/niva-xmlui/handle/11250/2493537>

5. Do you agree with the policy objective as outlined? 6. Are there any other objectives that you think the Commonwealth, state and territory governments should be pursuing in addressing the problems? If so, please set out what they are.

The Federal government needs consider the full life cycle impacts of the options it is proposing. Again, the issue of plastic and tyre toxicity and these impacts on downstream recycling outcomes needs further consideration and assessment. The solution to this problem is to focus on upstream solutions instead, such as a cap on plastic production, toxics elimination legislation, EPR legislation, product stewardship and zero waste city model solutions which are all proven, more cost effective and available. <https://zerowastecities.eu/>

7. What is your role in the waste stream (producer of waste, collection, recycler, exporter)?

Zero Waste policy educator, advocate, researcher, consultant.

www.ntn.org.au

8. How have waste import restrictions imposed by other countries impacted your activities?

Vastly increased community awareness and demand for solutions. There has been a concerning and relative increase in despair related to waste stockpile fires and the collapse of the perceived collapse of the recycling sector. People are choosing not to separate their waste as a result and this is driving and increase in adverse waste outcomes like landfill and dumping.

9. What would be the longer-term implications if similar import restrictions are imposed in other export markets? Increased illegal dumping, unsustainable waste to energy incineration, landfilling, toxic recycling and associated health, environmental, legal and human rights impacts.

10. Are there other existing or future government or industry-led initiatives that are relevant to addressing the problem?

Urgently needed:

- Zero Waste City models – recognition, support and implementation
- Extended Producer responsibility legislation
- Mandatory Container Deposit schemes
- Better resource recovery infrastructure
- Better collection services
- Local and state zero waste model plans
- Toxics elimination legislation for the manufacturing and plastic packaging sector
- Cap on plastic production
- Resources and funds to support the reuse economy
- International Conventions – Immediate ratification of the Basel Convention and all amendments

11. Does the status quo achieve the policy objectives?

12. Are current laws and government policies sufficient to address the problem?

No. The Federal government needs to implement mandatory Product Stewardship and Extended Producer Responsibility legislation to give certainty to industry, the community and state and local governments.

13. How effective are industry-led initiatives for addressing the problem?

The Australian packaging Covenant has failed. In the 20 years that it has been operating our global and local environment, oceans, food chain and human health have become increasingly polluted with plastic waste and micro plastic pollution.

https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/unwrapped_-_throwaway_plastic_failing_to_solve_europes_food_waste_problem.pdf

14. Are there any other benefits or costs associated with the status quo?

15. Do you have any suggestions that could help a future education campaign? What kind of information should be provided as part of an education campaign?

Any education campaign should be focussed on reducing consumption of plastic packaging and non essential plastic products. The government needs to assist states by setting best practice legislation for the collection and source separation of MSW, Construction and Demolition and Commercial and Industrial waste streams. Comingled recycling bins and ineffective MRF's have failed and are the basis for the current waste export bans. It is unconscionable that this process continues. Instead the federal government needs to design waste management policy and plans around a sustainable zero waste city model with advice taken not from the waste disposal sector – who has led us to the current crisis we now face, but from the sustainable zero waste experts that are available in Australia and other OECD nations.

Consultation questions 16. Are there any other benefits or costs or unintended consequences associated with Options 2(a) or 2(b)? 17. Under a prohibition or restriction on waste exports, how should the ban be designed to achieve the policy objectives while minimising costs and adverse impacts?

Zero waste city models are proven, cheaper and more effective than the current waste disposal models WA states are currently implementing

18. Under a prohibition or restriction on waste exports, do you consider there are waste materials that should continue to be eligible for export? Please provide details.

Clean separated metals, paper, plastic and glass should still be available for export. This will require a change in waste management system to:

1. Support consumers and local governments to collect waste in the best possible way to preserve the value of the product. Separate collection for aluminium and tin, glass, paper, cardboard, soft plastics and hard plastics.

2. The establishment of more effective resource recovery parks that include a range of mechanical, biological and human controlled waste separation. These centres could also become delivery points for consumer collected waste, organics for composting and recyclables including furniture and appliances. Such facilities could also establish a residual waste research component to find better ways to manage this waste stream and ultimately reduce and eliminate it.

19. What sort of penalties should apply to businesses that fail to comply with an export prohibition or restriction?

20. What kind of costs (including compliance costs) or loss of income will businesses face to comply with export prohibitions or restrictions? Will these costs be passed on and if so to who? Please provide data where possible. 21. How do recycling service providers manage changes of law in their contracts? What costs could introducing a prohibition or restriction on waste exports trigger under these contracts? How would service providers seek to manage these costs? Please provide details. 22. What impacts will Options 2(a) or 2(b) have for relevant markets, including impacts on prices and competition? 23. Do you consider there is existing Australian markets and infrastructure have capacity to respond to a prohibition or restriction on waste exports? If not, please provide details such as:
a. What is the infrastructure capacity gap that will need to be filled?

The most pressing infrastructure need is in the waste collection and source separation sector. There is an urgent need to demand better collection services than the current global waste disposal corporations have a monopoly over. Dump trucks that collect and compress comingled recycling are destroying the value of these waste resources. Largescale MRF's (these are not recycling plants but collection and sorting centres) that stockpile large volumes of flammable plastic that have not been adequately cleaned or separated is destroying the recycling industry and risking our environment and public health through uncontrollable and dangerous fires. This must change if there is to be any improvement in the quality of recyclable materials Australia generates and expects to sell to local and overseas markets.

b. How long will it take to commission the infrastructure? c. What is the cost of building the infrastructure and who will bear this cost?

This infrastructure cost is a lot cheaper and more effective than building largescale waste to energy incinerators that are known to entrench a linear economy – the cause of the global plastic waste pollution and climate change crisis, and contrary to the concept and success of a circular economy.