
Submission on the Draft Tasmanian Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2022 – 2025

Sustainable Living Tasmania (SLT) is a community-based NGO with a 50 year history of engaging with households, businesses and government to care for the natural environment and to encourage sustainable human communities. Advocacy and education around the waste hierarchy have been core activities over decades. We are glad to have the opportunity to comment on the Draft Strategy, from the point of view of householders and community groups.

- We commend and support the adoption of the circular economy goal and of the vision of Tasmania as a place where nothing is wasted. Humanity is approaching resource depletion and already experiencing climate change crises. Circular economy is not just a nice idea but a necessity. We appreciate that it is a 'journey' that needs to start somewhere; the Strategy is a start.
- The general description of the Strategy (p. 6) identifies a number of benefits including a rather cryptic statement that it will 'foster further renewable energy development'. We would like this to be clarified.
- Targets: We support the development of processes for collecting accurate, useful and publically accessible data.
We support the reuse, recycling or composting of all packaging by 2025 but remind the WRR Board that AVOID is the first element of the Waste Hierarchy. Identifying and then avoiding unnecessary packaging is essential.
- Pillar 1, Integrated Planning and Action: As the Draft Strategy acknowledges, Tasmania is a small island economy which is highly dependent on global and mainland supply chains. Much of our discarded goods and packaging are the result of bad design and decisions elsewhere. We would like the Strategy to identify Tasmania's role in being pro-active in influencing national policy and in searching out best-practice. For example, many of us have solar panels that are approaching their use-by-date. Currently they are likely to end up at the tip. How will the Strategy deal with that? What is best practice? We suggest that a clause be added – 'Contribution to the development of national policy that supports circular economy principles'
- Pillar 3, Prioritise Circularity: We see the sense in focussing initially on organics, plastics and C&D waste and but members of the community will look to a broader scope including for example managing electronic waste and promoting repair as well as recycling.
- Pillar 4, Engagement and Partnerships: The Strategy identifies in a number of places the importance of community engagement. SLT enthusiastically supports this.

While there is broad support for and appreciation of recycling at the community level, SLT is aware anecdotally of growing confusion and disillusionment. For example, a member reported a conversation with a café worker at a recent community event who was putting a glass bottle in the bin labelled for compostables. When alerted to the compostable label, he replied that he had been told by a council worker that 'everything goes to landfill anyway.' Another member asks what to do with soft plastics at the moment and another reports accumulating bags of soft plastics in their garage; another has a big bag of plastic milk bottle lids she would like to recycle but doesn't know what to do with them. The media at the same time carry frequent distressing and disillusioning stories of the failure of recycling nationally. A survey in 2022 of Southern Council advice on kerbside recycling by an SLT board member showed that

there were considerable differences between Councils in their advice on what and how to recycle. Another member identifies a fridge magnet guide to recycling from their local federal MP as their most useful advice source. At another level, SLT wants to be responsible in its waste management at the coming Big Weekend of Sustainable Living Ideas in Brighton in March and there is now a question mark about the compostable lids to coffee cups. How do members of the public get up-to-date advice?

We understand that this is a constantly developing field, but the community will only be carried along if there is transparency and consistent, honest, timely communication that restores confidence in recycling.

- We note in the Appendix of Priority Actions the inclusion of items under Prioritise Circularity/Reducing waste production p.13:
 - Identify the opportunities to support the circular and regenerative design of products within Tasmania that reduces the use of carbon intensive materials and increases recycling.
 - Develop options for introducing an “extended producer responsibility” scheme within Tasmania (where producers pay for the waste they create).

These are important principles and SLT supports them. Circular design should also maximise the options for repair as well as recycling. We also support the development of coherent links with government climate change policy and strategies.

In Engagement and Partnerships/Improved community and business education and engagement, the Strategy undertakes to ‘develop a coordinated package of education and engagement support programs for both community and business’.

And under ‘Strong partnerships addressing priority issues’ by mid-2023, the Strategy undertakes to develop ongoing programs of working closely with business and industry, the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, the building industry, local government, agricultural and food retail sectors, and charitable recyclers.

We strongly urge the Board to include partnering with community organisations that can speak for and with householders, who will be important to the success of the Strategy, for example our own organisation but also organisations such as neighbourhood houses and TasCOSS and other organisations that have strong community reach.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to contributing along the circular economy ‘journey’.



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