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Committee Secretary

Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee

Parliament House

George Street

Brisbane Qld 4000

SUBMISSION TO; Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) Amendment Regulation 2018

Response from Queensland Local Government Reform Alliance (QLGRA) on the draft Queensland's new resource recovery and waste strategy dated 20th March 2017. The QLGRA has become a powerful movement, "a state-wide alliance of Queensland organisations and individuals aimed at re-empowering communities.

Our main objective is to work with councils and the LGAQ, and to lobby strongly to State Government. One of the roles of the group is to represent the state's interest in waste management by contributing to the development of relevant government policy and strategy.

QLGRA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission with a request to present to the Advisory Group with representatives at a later date.

Key principles Queensland's new waste management strategy will:

- Attract industry investment and innovation
- Create new jobs for our communities
- Have no direct impact on Queensland households
- Deliver long-term value to our environment
- Move Queensland towards a circular economy

General

- QLGRA recognises and understands the background to the development of the draft strategy and particularly that it is an “industry-led” document. Considering the non-traditional approach taken and the diversity of the steering group members, it is considered that overall there is common ground achieved with a blended balance of drafting statements, principles and objectives.
- It is noted to be a succinct high-level strategic document, with the “action” component being implemented at a later date through a mechanism of industry plans. This two-tier process offers the advantage that most of industry can choose the level of commitment, if any, that is appropriate to their business development. The disadvantage is that there is no clear line of sight to the action phase and therefore future uncertainty and inherent risks about the deliverability and overall success of the strategy.
- Further to point 2, it is noted that the structural “gap” is compounded by the lack of clear incentives and disincentives (economic and otherwise) to encourage all sectors of industry to participate. Considering the language used e.g. “industry led” and “waste - everyone’s responsibility” this is a major flaw. To elaborate further:
 - A major sector of the industry, contributing almost two thirds of the annual tonnage (i.e. heavy industry) has no set improvement targets.
 - There is an unlevel “playing field” with local government and the State being required to develop statutory waste reduction and recycling plans under the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011 (assumed to replace action plans) however these are voluntary for the rest of industry.
 - There is a concern that existing market forces are not large enough of an enabler to drive the quantum of change to meet the proposed targets. Whilst economic incentives are unpopular and can add to existing cost of living pressures, they do serve to make upstream resource recovery processes more viable compared to landfill. Even if individual Councils want to implement local landfill levies to support waste reduction measures they become anti-competitive against other external landfill operators.
- Whilst it is recognised that action plans will be publicly recorded and championed (and therefore provide some inherent motivation), other suggestions for strengthening accountability are suggested as follows.
 - Include targets for the number of action plans developed by industry type in a certain timeframe
 - Consider a mechanism for ongoing governance of the strategy implementation e.g. a continuation of the steering committee or State Government input to promote and encourage participation
 - Consider what regulatory safety net can be utilised under the Act, i.e. Chapter 6 part 4, to ensure the objectives of the Act to improve waste management at the business and industry level are enforced.
- As the content of future action plans is unknown, there could be a range of implications for local government and others that are unknown at this point in time. A suggestion is made that there should be a condition in the development of all action plans that the “boundary” of that plan does not adversely impact on any other industry stakeholder unless a clear partnership is established or the other stakeholder is a signatory to the plan.
- The vision at a glance sounds good however on contemplation is considered to be too optimistic and not achievable without any strong drivers.
- It is well known that waste is being transported long distances into Queensland landfills from interstate. Whilst this is a lawful activity, it is seen to compromise the

draft vision wording to manage “all products and materials as valuable and finite resources” and also one of the objectives of the Act to minimise the disposal of waste.

- Adopting “prudent and effective” resource recovery approaches is better supported rather than “innovative” approaches. Innovation can suggest higher order technology at higher cost to communities. [Are these the right targets/measures for the strategy?](#)
- It is necessary to have performance indicators to measure the success of the strategy. The targets as drafted seem to mainly focus on the middle range of the waste hierarchy. Whilst it is understood that targets have to be easily measured, the group considered targets should be developed across all 4 objectives.
- Objective 1 - driving cultural change there could be a target for the number of partnerships, networks and programs focused on behavioural change as per one of the points in the priority areas wording.
- Objective 2 - avoidance and minimisation, the existing target of 5% reduction in per capita generation is acknowledged to be ambitious but necessary. More clarity is required about what data is used to calculate this target.
- Objective 3 - reuse, recovery and recycling, the targets for domestic waste are acceptable. Targets should be established for heavy industry (which could include neutralising waste or improving environmental management standards in addition to or instead of increasing recycling rates).
- Objective 4 - management, treatment and disposal - targets could be set to ensure there is adequate licensed treatment and disposal capacity across the state for all waste types over a suitable planning horizon e.g. 25 years.
- Interim targets are suggested to be developed to coincide with the statutory review timeframes to allow for adequate assessment of performance.
- Governance targets. The domestic targets are differentiated for regional and metropolitan areas. The draft strategy states that the metropolitan area covers local governments within south-east Queensland. There are some councils in the SEQ region that due to their demographics, population and geography, may believe they are more suited to complying with the regional target than the metro target. The performance aspirations of those individual Councils will either be made as a separate submission on the draft strategy or could be included within their waste reduction and recycling plans. It is therefore considered important to allow some flexibility in defining the catchment basis of reporting on the metro target.
- There appears to be a lack of emphasis on the opportunity to design and make products that are easy to recover. There are still too many products and packaging that have mixed compositions which makes it difficult or costly to avoid landfill, e.g. buildings with polystyrene walls. This could be an additional priority area in objective 2.
- Managers of waste have to deal with the variety of end-products from manufacturing that they have no control over. In addition, there is no ability to forecast what types of waste will be received in the future from new products or processes, particularly where these are imported. This is a risk to scoping new infrastructure investment. There is an opportunity to work with importers of products towards an improved outcome.
- There is an opportunity for the state to take a lead role in the development of common key educational messages that can be adopted by all stakeholders in their community engagement activities. Water efficiency is an example of a successful state led education campaign in relation to a headline issue. This will avoid widespread duplication of effort and enhance business efficiency.
- Other priority wastes include biosolids, timber, polystyrene and glass. It is considered there could be a stronger emphasis placed on developing local markets for various materials to enhance the viability of their recovery.

- Mattresses should not be a stand-alone waste type as it is inconsistent with the other dot points and they can be included in the list of waste with regional impacts.
- The fact that agricultural and mining wastes are listed as a priority waste reinforces the need for targets for those waste types as per comments in point 12 above. For objective 3, the priority areas should include "service expansion" e.g. for growth in take-up of voluntary green waste collection service.
- The biggest tool is accountability as per point 4. Better defining shared responsibility would also assist all industry sectors. i.e. Who writes the community stakeholder action plan? What are the needs for data collection and reporting?
- The way in which future waste generation is calculated in the strategy is very simplistic, based only on predicted population growth. Consideration should be given to modelling that incorporates economic and social factors. Also, the waste figures rely on solid waste data from councils and private landfill operators which represents only one third of the waste stream.

Citizens are annoyed with the government (and with their local councils) that has charged them on waste just to see the results of their efforts burned. Our recycling system is consumer financed through a fee that is put on the price of groceries, which means that they are forced to subsidise a fossil-based energy production against their will. It is sheer MADNESS to increase CO2 emissions through the burning of plastic trash. After all, these plastics are made of raw oil that should be returned to their molecular structure and recycle. And yet, we are drowning in an ever-increasing flood of newly produced plastics, while our government is looking the other way. In conclusion, it seems to us that our recycling system has been corrupted by lobbyists and by politicians that stand on their pay roll. And it is the consumers as well as future generations who are paying the bill.

Several other points in this new Waste Reduction and Recycling (Waste Levy) Amendment Regulation 2018 that need to be addressed urgently:

The reason for this levy was to stop transport of waste from interstate to Queensland. Unfortunately, this bill does not capture this objective.

1) The levy is for transport of waste. That in itself will disadvantage some councils. Councils such as Mt Isa have to transport waste longer distances and it was revealed that this levy would cost Mt Isa council \$2.5 million a year. The North West Star published that Mount Isa is likely to be slapped with a new waste levy forcing council to fork out millions of dollars more each year. The Waste Levy Bill, before state parliament this month is aimed at curbing the flow of New South Wales trucks driving across the border to dump trash in Queensland landfills. The \$70 per tonne levy is slated for 38 Qld councils including Mount Isa. Mount Isa City Council has been hounding MP Robbie Katter to lobby against the proposed legislation, which will cost them about \$2.5 million each year. It is unclear whether Mr Katter has asked the government to exclude Mount Isa from the waste levy zone and he has not responded to questions from The North West Star about the issue.

<https://www.northweststar.com.au/story/5603655/new-waste-levy-could-cost-council-millions/>

2) The levy will not stop the transport of waste, as waste is a billion dollar business. It was revealed by the Queensland Times that the Ipswich City Council's 2017-2018 budget shows revenue from the council's waste service was \$35.5 million. Expenditure totalled \$24.3 million - resulting in a net operating surplus of \$11.274 million. This is the council profit.

An article by IBIS World called *Waste Treatment and disposal Services - Australia Market Research Report* - tells us The Waste Treatment and Disposal Services industry has benefited from increased household, construction and commercial waste generation over the past five years. Though greater volumes of waste have driven industry expansion, the diversion of recyclable and recoverable waste materials has increased, which has constrained revenue growth. Government regulations that encourage recycling and have raised landfill disposal costs have further constrained demand growth for industry treatment and disposal services over the past five years. However, industry firms continue to treat and dispose of a large proportion of waste generated by households and businesses. The revenue of the industry is \$3 billion with an annual growth from 13-18 of 0.3%. (<https://www.ibisworld.com.au/industry-trends/market-research-reports/electricity-gas-water-waste-services/waste-treatment-disposal-services.html>)

There are certainly a lot of companies - 663 companies - that have a EO permit (ERA 57 - Regulated Waste Transport 2: Transporting regulated waste, other than tyres) to transport waste to Swanbank.

Not for profit organization being exempt gives another out for organizations such as LGAQ

Section 28 relates to Not For Profit companies being exempt. The LGAQ is a registered not for profit company and was a consultant in the drafting of the Bill. It is clear that they had a vested interest and relating to the Waste To Energy have proposed the introduction of 8 incinerators for local councils where they would return a profit to their own company Peak Services. This section needs to be revised so as that a Not For Profit cannot create or be a partner in a joint venture where its partners or subsidiary companies can circumvent the Waste Act.

Australia is signatory to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants with aims to protect human health through the reduction and elimination of intentional and unintentional Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs /UPOPs). Waste to Energy incinerators are recognised as a primary source of POPs and UPOPs generation. There is therefore a compelling obligation on all Australian states to pursue the safest waste disposal options available to avoid the generation of POPs, which, once released, remain in the environment for very long periods contaminating the food chain and building to dangerous levels in humans and other biota. Australia is not immune from the long-term impacts of POPs pollution in the environment with recent biomonitoring of Swan River dolphins in Western Australia revealing they had the highest body burden of POPs, such as PCBs, HCB and dieldrin of any cetaceans worldwide. It would be a retrograde step to invest in new sources of POPs contamination, such as incinerators, as it undermines our obligations under the Stockholm Convention. Australia therefore needs to set its policy drivers towards Zero Waste and increased recycling and composting prior, rather than introducing the waste to energy incineration industry."

Another concern is that at no time was the CCC consulted in the drafting of the Waste Levy Bill, yet it would most likely be the regulatory authority charged with regulating the Act.

This also shows how hard it will be to regulate this levy and to make sure that people abide by the bill. As there is no criminal offence attached to the bill the CCC will not be able to investigate. We are back at breaches of a bill and no real power to regulate same, as we have seen with councilors breaching the local government act. Nothing has been done in

that regards and no punishment followed breaches. There is no criminal offences hence there is no deterrent to not breach the levy.

Yours sincerely

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