



**NewsMediaWorks**

## **Publishers Response to the NSW EPA discussion paper: “Too Good To Waste”**

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### **Executive Summary**

For more than three decades, Publishers have supported Circular Economy principles to advance recycling, purchase newsprint with a recycled content, divert waste from landfill and enhance environmental outcomes. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the NSW EPA discussion paper on the Circular Economy: “Too Good To Waste”.

Publishers recommend that the current ability of pro-active industries, such as our own with existing Product Stewardship agreements, be allowed to continue to work voluntarily and remain outside any legislated framework. We believe that the commitment from such undertakings can provide greater long term success.

Publishers strongly support accurate and timely data that is publicly available to make informed decisions to advance waste management and recycling. Our industry has been providing such accurate statistics since 1990. We would welcome accurate data from other areas where waste is generated to help inform recycling markets.

### **NewsMediaWorks**

NewsMediaWorks is the not-for-profit organisation industry association of more than 1000 newspapers and websites across the region. This includes the vast majority of newspapers in Australia and New Zealand, as well as many English-language newspapers in South-East Asia and the South Pacific. We also have 90 subscribers who are suppliers and partners of the industry. NewsMediaWorks connects members and subscribers with the world’s best industry practice through events and information as well as promoting awareness and understanding of newspapers within the community.

In Australia, recycling of newspapers is a success story with recycling rates among the best in the world at 75% in 2017. This figure excludes use and reuse around the home which can account for an additional 6.7%. The potential exists for the new energy from waste plants in Australia to increase this figure further, as well as displace coal power generation, reduce



landfill and stabilise waste as inert.

Australian Publishers long history of supporting and advancing newspaper and magazine recycling which began with the establishment of the industry's Product Stewardship Organisation "The Publishers National Environment Bureau" (PNEB). The PNEB formulated a five-year, voluntary Newsprint Producer/Publisher Group Plan for Publication Paper Recycling together with the Australian domestic newsprint manufacturer, Norske Skog in 1991 (then know as Australian Newsprint Mills). This Agreement was endorsed by the Commonwealth, State and Territories environment ministers meeting as the Australian New Zealand Environment Conservation Council (ANZECC) in 1992 and it has run continuously since then.

The current Agreement covers the period 2015-2020 and is known as the industry's National Environmental Sustainability Agreement (NESA). The Agreement is managed by NewsMediaWorks and Norske Skog. Members of NewsMediaWorks Environment Advisory Group include the following:

- News Corp Australia
- Fairfax Media
- Seven West Media
- Bauer Media

### Principles that underpin successful recycling

Publishers have supported the following sound principles that underpin our Plan to advance recycling, these are:

- 1) **National Scope:** Sustainable sourcing and economic recovery and reuse of newsprint must remain market based and enacted on a national basis. Overly restrictive requirements, "red tape" or the implementation of state by state initiatives, will lead to confusion, contradictions, administrative problems and ultimately less desirable outcomes. Adequate economies of scale and operating efficiencies are essential to a sustainable outcome
- 2) **Market driven:** Newspaper and magazine recycling must be market driven to be sustainable. Inappropriate recycling legislation, targets or penalties result in economic distortions that lead to market failure and unsustainable outcomes
- 3) **No legislation is required:** The industry is voluntarily endorsing and extending an agreement format that has delivered world class paper recycling for



some three decades and makes mandated action on our sector unnecessary

- 4) **Recovery and re-use are paramount:** The Publishers and Norske Skog Australia remain wholly committed to the sustainable production, recovery and reuse of newspapers and magazines
- 5) **Optimum Source Separation:** To achieve the optimum quality and utilisation of recovered newspapers and magazines source separation is the preferred method of collection. It minimises contamination and improves value to Local Governments and processors.

### Principles for a circular economy

The principles for a circular economy outlined in the discussion paper align strongly with the Publishers principles above. Publishers strongly support these circular economy principles including:

- Replacing raw materials with recovered and recycled products. Publishers have supported this by the procurement of newsprint with a recycled content. Currently all newsprint manufactured in Australia has a recycled content of 30%.
- Decoupling economic growth from resource consumption is strongly supported. For example, recycled fibres in newsprint can be recycled up to seven times and replace virgin fibre with the benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to make pulp to one sixth of that used if virgin fibres are processed.
- Designing out waste and pollution is strongly supported. Publishers some time ago adopted the principle of only using offset and letterpress inks so that the floatation deinking technology used at Albury's newsprint recycling plant can operate at maximum efficiency. Flexographic inks would prevent this process from working. Other examples currently present themselves for consideration, for example, in recycling plastic containers lids made of different polymer types are often used and these become contaminants to the recycling process. Having containers made of the same material would solve this issue.
- Extending the lifespan of existing landfills and reducing demand for new landfills, is strongly supported. Newspapers now make up significantly less 0.07% in 2017 of the materials that go to landfill, a massive reduction from the figure of 3% in 1990.
- Increasing remanufacture and repair activities to minimise the amount of resources used and avoid the generation of waste are strongly supported.



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- Developing local markets for high quality post-consumer recycled materials, which keeps materials in use for longer, reduces dependency on international markets and reduces the impacts of commodity price fluctuations. While supporting this option, Publishers would like to emphasize that the quality of collected recyclables is critical to both market development, and export market utilization.
- Improving quality of collected materials and improving sorting of these materials so they are available for re-use is a critical aspect of recycling. One little publicised effect of the China Sword is that quality sorted newsprint (grade 8 or 9) has increased in value considerably to near record highs while at the same time contaminated paper cannot be sold.
- Publishers support innovation which is mentioned several times in the discussion paper as an important element of the Circular Economy. It is worth noting that Robert Solow won the Nobel prize for economics in 1987 by proving economic growth came from innovation, rather than capital or labour.

## **Conclusion**

Publishers note the timely importance of consideration of the Circular Economy and generally support the principles outlined in the discussion paper.

Areas of concern for Publishers centre around the appropriateness of government mandated targets. Targets agreed with industry may in the first instance provide the greatest commitment to advancing Circular Economy outcomes. Publishers recommend that the current ability of pro-active industries, such as our own with existing Product Stewardship agreements, be allowed to continue to work voluntarily and remain outside any legislated framework.

Publishers strongly support, and actively provide, fit-for-purpose and timely data that is publicly available to make informed decisions to advance waste management and recycling. Our industry has been providing such accurate statistics since 1990. This provides an immediate benefit to identifying and addressing waste reduction opportunities and similar data in other waste areas would further advance recycling.

Please direct any questions regarding this submission to:

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