



NewsMediaWorks

Publishers' Response to "Transforming Queensland's Recycling and Waste Industry" Directions Paper

Delivered by email to: wastepolicy@des.qld.gov.au

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Executive Summary

Newspaper and magazine publishers have been strongly committed to advancing recycling and operating as environmentally responsible corporate citizens since the start of the 1990s. News Corp Australia, Fairfax Media, Seven West Media, Bauer Media, together with Australia's newsprint manufacturer Norske Skog, have had a voluntary Product Stewardship Agreement known as the industry's "National Environmental Sustainability Agreement" on waste and recycling in place since 1992.

We are pleased for the opportunity to respond to the Discussion Paper and welcome reforms to reduce environmental impacts while increasing the efficiency of the recycling and waste industry.

Waste levy

Publishers note the waste levy is planned to be introduced in Queensland in 2019. At the appropriate level levies can provide economic incentives to avoid landfill and to support recycling. Equally important is the opportunity to provide for the investment of levy funds in recycling infrastructure, education and behaviour as outlined in the discussion paper.

Publishers note that the levy starts at a level low enough to help minimise financial impacts on industry, an important consideration for the health of the economy. The mooted rise of \$5 a year does raise concerns as it is above expected inflation rates and it may well end up creating an economic burden to business. It is acknowledged that the NSW levy at \$138.20 is considerably higher but it has also been argued that this levy is too high, promotes the interstate transport of waste and should be reviewed. NSW is seeing investment move to other States because of this levy being so high.

The objective in having a landfill levy that does not put an economic impact onto households provides a novel model. There is an incentive in the structure of the proposed system for local government's that achieve reductions in waste gaining a benefit from the levy rebate. Communicating this to residents is seen as important to achieving success in reducing waste to landfill from households.



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Performance targets

Queensland's performance targets set ambitious goals on an extended timeline. It formalises the Government's commitment to zero avoidable waste. Publishers support and encourage a Zero Waste vision for Queensland. Major newspaper printing sites in Queensland already meet the International Business Alliance definition of Zero Waste.

Waste management strategy

Part B of the Discussion Paper focuses on Resource Recovery, recycling and waste management strategy. Publishers welcome the move to a "circular economy" model. For some time, Australian newspaper publishers have committed to using newspapers with recycled content. Currently, the Norske Skog newsprint mill at Albury produces paper with about 30% recycled fibre content.

Product Stewardship Schemes.

Publishers recommend that pro-active industries such as our own, with existing Product Stewardship agreements outside the Product Stewardship Act, be allowed to remain outside any legislated voluntary framework.

Australian newspaper and magazine Publishers (News Corp Australia, Fairfax Media, Seven West Media, Bauer Media), together with Australia's newsprint manufacturer Norske Skog, have had a voluntary Product Stewardship Agreement on waste and recycling in place since 1992 – an Australian first!

The current Agreement runs from 2015-2020 and is managed by NewsMediaWorks for the industry. It is known as the industry's "National Environmental Sustainability Agreement" (NESA), it has been endorsed by all State and Federal governments. Its success can be seen in the increase in Australia's newspaper recycling rate to its current level of 75%, which is close to world's best. When success is demonstrated it is considered more efficient to minimise red tape and directly address issues through consultation between government and industry.

National approach

Publishers strongly support the Queensland government's intention to engage nationally in interjurisdictional waste issues. Efficient solutions to waste issues requires a national approach.



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Comprehensive Waste Database

Accurate information allows for identification of the most reliable waste management and recycling solutions. As such, publishers strongly support the proposed comprehensive waste database. For 28 years publishers have collected statistics on newspaper recycling in Australia, and these are made publicly available.

Waste-to-energy

Publishers encourage the exploration of waste-to-energy for residual wastes that have no option of economic reuse or recycling. This should not circumvent the first preferred option of reuse or recycling but in some cases, the best outcome is to recover remaining energy from the material. Benefits to the electricity grid, such as stability and low cost, that could be achieved from a large waste-to-energy facility should be explored in tandem to the benefits provided to waste management outcomes.

Conclusion

Publishers appreciate the opportunity of participating in the discussions around the proposed waste and recycling strategy outlined in the discussion paper and appreciate any future engagement on these issues.

Please direct any questions regarding this submission to:

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