

Wednesday 18 July 2018

Elise Archer MP
Minister for Environment

Waste and Recycling Round Table

The Minister for Environment, Elise Archer, convened a Waste and Recycling Round Table to discuss with local government and industry the further development of a Waste Action Plan for Tasmania, particularly in light of the recent restrictions on solid waste imports into China.

Discussions noted that the move by China to reduce levels of contamination in recyclates entering that country has had an effect on Australian export markets. This in turn has impacted recycling businesses and local councils across the country, including in Tasmania. However, it was noted that this change in policy internationally could also be viewed as an opportunity for new business and industry to be developed locally.

Attendees at the Round Table explored potential responses that align with the actions recently agreed to at the April Meeting of Environment Ministers. The Minister for Environment welcomed the opportunity to hear what industry and local government would like from the Tasmanian Government to assist with responding to short, medium and long-term issues.

Opportunities were seen in reducing packaging waste, working with industry leaders to boost consumer awareness and education, increasing recycling capacity, and boosting demand through market development.

The Round Table also discussed the broader waste management priorities for Tasmania. These included dealing with various streams such as organic material (including waste from the food sector), hazardous waste, industrial waste, and waste from construction and demolition projects. Discussions also noted the importance of the principles of the waste management hierarchy and a circular economy.

The development of an overarching strategy, public policy and waste action plan for Tasmania was seen as a key way to address a range of waste and recycling issues in Tasmania.

It was agreed that the Waste Action Plan must be a collaboration between all levels of government, the waste and recycling industry, and also include appropriate community consultation.

The discussions at the Round Table will inform the development a draft Plan, which will guide work on managing waste and developing the waste industry in Tasmania. It is also critical that the Plan supports the integral role of local government in managing waste in Tasmania.

The Minister emphasised at the Round Table the importance of working in partnership with Local Government and industry on waste management issues. A strategic state-wide approach, developed collaboratively between State and local government, is recognised as being an essential element in improving long-term waste outcomes.

The Minister also provided Round Table participants with an outline of the consultant's report on a model framework for a Container Refund Scheme (CRS) for Tasmania. This was to initiate discussion about CRS within the scope of the Waste Action Plan because any initiative, be it a CRS or other specific waste stream measure (such as banning single-use plastic bags, straws and containers) needs to be considered within this broader context. The consultant's report to the Government is the key outcome of the 2017/18 State Budget initiative and it will be available on the EPA Tasmania website for information.