

Waste Initiatives Progress Report

An update on key actions



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Summary

State Budget 2021-22

The Tasmanian Government is committed to building our circular economy and progressing important waste and resource recovery reforms. In the 2021-22 State Budget the following key commitments were made:

- \$3 million to invest with industry in the construction of a rubber crumbing plant to turn end-of-life tyres into products that can be used in the Government's Road Resurfacing Program.
- \$1 million to address the impacts of problematic single use plastics on the Tasmanian environment by phasing out single use plastics by 2025. This will include collaboration with local government and support to business.
- \$10 million for the COVID-19 Response – Circular Economy Fund. This will support strategic investments in waste management and resource recovery and support other waste initiatives and create jobs.
- \$4.5 million has been earmarked from the Circular Economy Fund to improve organic waste (including Food Organics and Garden Organics – FOGO) reprocessing capacity in Tasmania.
- \$1 million towards improving waste and resource recovery data and waste data infrastructure in Tasmania, which will help with the implementation of the waste levy and monitoring of resource recovery targets.

Current key initiatives

Over the past year or so the Government has also been working on the following important initiatives:

- Investing in the resource recovery sector through providing \$5.5 million towards the *Tasmanian Recycling Modernisation Fund (Plastics) Grants*. This funding was matched by the Australian Government with matched funding (or better) being provided by project applicants. The three successful projects will result in \$20 million being invested into plastics recycling and remanufacturing in Tasmania and generate over 50 ongoing jobs.
- Introducing a statewide waste levy. The levy will help to divert waste from landfill to more productive, innovative and valuable uses. The *Waste and Resource Recovery Bill 2021* is expected to be tabled in Parliament later this year, with collection of the levy to commence on 1 July 2022.
- Introducing a Container Refund Scheme (CRS), which will reduce litter and increase recycling of containers. The *Container Refund Scheme Bill 2021* is also expected to be tabled in Parliament later this year, with the CRS to commence in 2022.
- Strategic planning work on organic waste and waste infrastructure to inform the proposed Waste and Resource Recovery Board when it develops its first Waste Strategy.
- Ongoing work to help manage litter and illegal dumping, such as through Report Rubbish.
- Improving public awareness and education in waste management. This includes providing \$95,000 to Rethink Waste to offer a centralised source of information for communities and businesses on how to reduce waste, and what materials can be recovered/recycled, where and when.

This report provides a progress update on the key actions and other complementary policies, and outlines the further work that will be undertaken by the Government. Additional information can be found at www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/environmental-management

Introduction

There has never been a more opportune time to tackle Tasmania's waste and resource recovery challenges. In recent years, China and other countries have changed their import regimes for recyclables and, along with a strong interest in recycling from the community and private sector within Australia, this has caused us all to re-examine what we are doing with our waste and to look at productive uses and reuses for those resources.

Australian governments at all levels have come together to respond to changing markets and expectations by reviewing the national waste policy and implementing supportive policies and legislation. This includes the new federal laws to ban the export of unprocessed plastic, glass, paper and tyre waste that were initiated by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2019. We will no longer ship this unprocessed waste overseas, but will put in place frameworks that recognise its value as a resource to create more valuable materials, new products, and new jobs.

Soon after COAG endorsed the export bans developed by Australian Environment Ministers, COVID-19 entered its first phase. Like a host of other industries, the waste and resource recovery sector was hit hard. Waste services are essential to maintain, and the sector faced additional challenges such as increases in kerbside recycling and waste, high levels of contamination in recycling (e.g. soft plastics), significant decreases in commercial recycling, and a drop in the export of recyclables. COVID-19 also helped bring a sharper focus on local and regional manufacturing capacity.

The key initiatives in the waste and resource recovery space put in place by the Tasmanian Government have positioned us well to respond to these broader international challenges and will play a key role in helping Tasmania recover from the effects of COVID-19. Our recent commitments to invest in recycling capacity for plastics, tyres and organic waste will not only create new jobs, but provide important environmental benefits and help Tasmania move towards a more circular economy.

This report shows that the Tasmanian Government is already well-advanced in implementing the critical policy and legislative actions it adopted from the 2019 *Draft Waste Action Plan*, to adapt to the changing international markets and the new export bans, and particularly to tackle the priority waste and resource recovery issues for Tasmania. It provides an update on achievements and a timetable for some of the next actions.

Action Summary

Action	Timeframe	Status
Investment in the Resource Recovery Sector		
<i>Recycling Modernisation Fund (Plastics) Grants Program (\$5.5M)</i>	Commence in 2021	On track
<i>Circular Economy Fund – Organic waste processing capacity (\$4.5M)</i>	Commence in 2021	On track
<i>Rubber crumb processing co-investment with industry to support road building and resurfacing (\$3M)</i>	Commence in 2021	On track
Container Refund Scheme		
<i>Scheme governance announced</i>	2021	Complete
<i>Container Refund Scheme Bill introduced to Parliament</i>	Late 2021	On track
<i>Scheme commencement</i>	2022	On track
Waste Levy		
<i>Waste and Resource Recovery Bill and Levy Impact Study released for consultation</i>	February 2021	Complete
<i>Waste and Resource Recovery Bill introduced to Parliament</i>	Late 2021	On track
<i>Levy readiness grants to landfill operators</i>	January 2022	On track
<i>Public awareness campaign commencement</i>	March 2022	On track
<i>Commence collection of Waste Levy</i>	1 July 2022	On track
Waste Governance and Strategy		
<i>Establishment of Waste and Resource Recovery Board</i>	Once Bill is enacted	To be commenced
<i>Tasmanian Waste Strategy</i>	Within six months of the Board being established	To be commenced
Organic Waste and Waste Infrastructure		
<i>Strategic planning for Organic Waste</i>	December 2021	On track
<i>Strategic planning for Waste Infrastructure</i>	February 2022	On track
Problematic Single Use Plastics		
<i>Review Plastic Shopping Bag Ban Act</i>	2022	To be commenced
<i>Phasing out problematic single use plastics (\$1M)</i>		To be commenced
<i>Phase out from public areas and state and local Government events</i>	2023	
<i>Legislation to effect state-wide ban on problematic single use plastics</i>	2025	

Action	Timeframe	Status
Litter and Dumping		
<i>Increasing the penalties in Litter Act 2007 to reflect the cost to the environment and community for large scale dumping</i>	2019	Completed
<i>Litter Reporting Hotline Run by EPA Tasmania for people to report having witnessed littering or dumping</i>	Established 2008	Ongoing Fines are reported in the EPA Annual Report
<i>Development of "Report Rubbish" and the Litter and Dumping Management System. Report Rubbish established for the public to report the location of dumped rubbish. Management System established for land managers to coordinate action and seek assistance from Community Corrections, where appropriate.</i>	October 2019	Completed Ongoing
<i>Undertake litter surveys using the new Australian Litter Measure methodology</i>	May and October each year	To be commenced
Waste and Resource Recovery Data		
<i>Improvement in the accuracy and level of reporting around waste and resource recovery (\$1M)</i>	2022	On track
Awareness and Education		
<i>Renew agreement with Keep Australia Beautiful (Tasmania) for \$45,000 pa</i>	July 2021	Complete
<i>Finalise Teaching Manual series with release of Grade 6 Manual</i>	June 2022	On track
<i>Development of funding agreement with Rethink Waste (\$95,000)</i>	July 2021	Complete

Investment in the Resource Recovery Sector

Building the capacity of Tasmania's resource recovery sector to process or use waste materials is central to the Government's response to Australia's waste export bans, and for addressing Tasmanian's key challenges in this space. To build reprocessing capacity for materials subject to the export bans, the Tasmanian Government is providing \$5.5 million towards the Tasmanian *Recycling Modernisation Fund (Plastics) Grants Program*. This funding was matched by the Australian Government. Matched funding (or better) is also being provided by project applicants. The three selected projects will result in \$20 million being invested into plastics recycling and remanufacturing in Tasmania. This will create an estimated 15,000 tonnes per year of new capacity to reprocess and remanufacture plastic waste into valuable products once the new and upgraded facilities are at maximum production.

Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>Recycling Modernisation Fund (Plastics) Grants Program</i>	Commence in 2021	Applications closed in February 2021. The selected projects were announced in July 2021.
<i>Circular Economy Fund – Organic waste (including FOGO) processing capacity (\$4.5M)</i>	Commence in 2021	Funding agreement with Dulverton Waste Management to support development of a state-of-the-art composting facility. Expressions of Interest to be sought in late 2021 for facility development in the south.
<i>Rubber crumb processing co-investment to support road building (\$3M)</i>	Commence in 2021	Expressions of Interest to be sought in late 2021 for facility development in Tasmania.

Container Refund Scheme

The Tasmanian Government has committed to introducing legislation for a Container Refund Scheme in 2022. Container Refund Schemes operate in approximately 40 countries around the world and all Australian states and territories now have Container Refund Schemes in place or have committed to introduce them.

The introduction of the Container Refund Scheme is an important part of the Tasmanian Government's commitment to reducing litter and increasing resource recovery and recycling. A Container Refund Scheme will also generate purer streams of recyclable materials that can have a second life as inputs to new products, helping to build a more sustainable circular economy. It will also help Tasmania achieve the goal of having the lowest rate of littering in the country by 2023.

Under the Scheme, Tasmanians will be able to receive a 10 cent refund for every empty drink container they return to a designated Refund Point for recycling. There will also be the option of donating the 10 cent refund to eligible charitable organisations or donating recyclable containers to a community group who can redeem the refund. There will also be an opportunity for organisations to elect to become a Refund Point

Operator. It is expected that there will be a range of different Refund Point types including over-the-counter refund points, large depots, and automated kiosks.

On 4 February 2021, the Tasmanian Government announced that it had adopted a ‘split-responsibility’ model, which will bring together all relevant sectors to deliver the best Scheme for Tasmania. The split-responsibility model (which already operates in NSW and ACT and has been announced as the Victorian Government’s preferred model) involves a Scheme Coordinator who will run the administration and finance for the Scheme, while a separate Network Operator/s run the network of Refund Points.

The draft *Container Refund Scheme Bill 2021* was released for public consultation on 5 June 2021 until 9 July 2021. The public were given the option to have their say on the draft legislation via the formal submission process, as well as a short 10-question survey and free online webinars.

A total of 101 formal written submissions were received, 3,334 people completed the survey, and over 100 people participated in one of the online webinars. The feedback received during the public consultation period was overwhelmingly positive, with a few areas requiring further development and stakeholder consultation before the legislation and regulations can be finalised.

Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>Scheme governance announced</i>	2021	The Minister announced that ‘split-responsibility’ governance would be the preferred model on 4 February 2021
<i>Legislation for a Container Refund Scheme in Tasmania</i>	2021	Draft legislation was released for consultation in June 2021. Tabling of the Bill is anticipated in late 2021.
<i>Scheme commencement</i>	2022	Commencing requires the legislative framework to be in place before planning for the network of refund points and associated logistics can be undertaken.

Waste Levy

While the immediate focus is on the materials and wastes subject to the export ban, Tasmania also has a wide range of other waste and resource recovery matters that require attention. Waste levies help divert waste from landfill and create an incentive to find valuable reuses for that waste, which in turn helps to create new businesses and jobs. The levy will provide a funding stream to tackle the main waste challenges for Tasmania into the future, building on the significant initial investment made by the Government in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 State Budgets. Support will also be provided to the EPA to ensure there is a focus on litter and dumping compliance.

The Government intends to introduce the *Waste and Resource Recovery Bill 2021* to Parliament in late 2021 and for the legislation to be enacted before the end of the year. Collection of the Waste Levy will commence 1 July 2022, to provide adequate time for local government and businesses to prepare. The impacts on business and the community from COVID-19 have been considered in setting the initial low

rate, which will be approximately one third of the average regional waste levy rate across mainland Australia. The initial waste levy will be set at \$20 per tonne of material disposed of in landfill.

The levy will then increase to \$40 per tonne in July 2024 and \$60 in July 2026. These rates were determined after a detailed Cost Benefit Analysis by consultants, Urban EP. This staged approach to increasing the levy will allow time for businesses and local government to plan for changes and provide certainty to businesses to invest in waste reduction and resource recovery activities.

To support the transition into the waste levy system, the Government will establish a Levy Readiness Fund for relevant landfill operators, local government or other authorities to access. This will help with the costs of infrastructure and/or IT resources required to administer the levy. Guidelines for these grants will be finalised as levy activity progresses.

Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>Waste and Resource Recovery Bill and Levy Impact Study released for consultation</i>	February 2021	Consultation completed and issues raised to be addressed in finalisation of Bill
<i>Waste and Resource Recovery Bill introduced to Parliament</i>	Late 2021	Final Bill being prepared following consultation feedback
<i>Levy readiness grants to landfill operators</i>	January 2022	On track
<i>Public awareness campaign commencement</i>	March 2022	On track
<i>Waste Levy commencement</i>	1 July 2022	On track

Waste Governance and Strategy

The Waste and Resource Recovery Board and Waste Strategy

Over the past two years the Tasmanian Government has worked closely with and provided funding to the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) to explore potential governance models for waste management and resource recovery in Tasmania. This work has provided us with a comprehensive guide to the types of functions a contemporary waste governance structure should have. To ensure a contemporary governance framework for waste is in place, the Government intends to establish a Waste and Resource Recovery Board through the levy legislation.

The Board will develop strategic plans to set long term directions and will also oversee the roll-out of annual operational plans. This is expected to include the coordination and dispersal of resource recovery grants sourced from levy funds and the provision of advice to the Government on a range of waste and resource recovery matters. The Board will be accountable to the Minister and to Parliament through regular annual reporting on the implementation of its strategic plan.

The most important waste and resource recovery actions the Government is already taking will underpin the Board's first strategic plan, which will be informed by our current strategic planning work on organic waste and waste infrastructure. Funding for these strategies was provided in the 2020-21 State Budget. The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment will have the lead role in administering the waste levy system (collection, regulation and compliance) and local government will continue its own management and regulatory roles. The Board will play a strategic role in helping to move Tasmania towards

circular models of resource use that reduce the impact of waste on the environment while boosting the Tasmanian economy, creating jobs, and providing for a more resilient and self-sufficient Tasmania.

Waste and Resource Recovery Targets

The 2019 *Draft Waste Action Plan* for Tasmania identified the following targets for waste and resource recovery.

- Reduce waste generated in Tasmania by 5% per person by 2025 and 10% by 2030
- 50% recovery rate from all waste streams by 2025 and 80% by 2030
- Reduce the volume of organic waste sent to landfill by 25% by 2025 and 50% by 2030
- Have the lowest incidence of littering in the country by 2023

The Tasmanian Government committed to the above targets through the *National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019*. These important targets will be considered in the development of the Board's first Waste Strategy.

Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>WRR Board establishment</i>	Once Bill is enacted	Expressions of Interest for Board membership will be released as soon as possible once the Bill is passed by Parliament.
<i>Tasmanian Waste Strategy</i>	Within 6 months of the Board being established	As soon as the WRR Board is established, they will focus on developing Tasmania's first statutory waste strategy.

Organic Waste and Waste Infrastructure

Some of the lowest-hanging fruit in waste management is dealing with organic waste. Whether it is scraps from home kitchens or residues from agriculture, aquaculture or hospitality, there are numerous ways to reuse organic waste and increase its value. Taking organic waste out of our municipal waste stream would mean 30% less waste in our kerbside bins, and less organic waste in landfill also means lower greenhouse gas emissions in the form of landfill gas.

A key challenge with organics is providing a level of certainty on the location, amount, and type of organic feedstock, as well as understanding the specific infrastructure that may be required to achieve our target of 50% diversion of organic waste from landfill. Strategic planning is currently being carried out to address this lack of information. This will complement the Bioenergy Vision being developed by the Tasmanian Government, and the Agricultural White Paper, which has an objective to set up value chains for organic and agricultural waste, and other circular economies in Tasmania's agricultural sector.

In addition to understanding the infrastructure required for reusing organic waste, there is also a need to map out wider infrastructure needs around all waste streams, such as Construction and Demolition, Commercial and Industrial, and municipal waste. This will help to map out a plan for waste and resource recovery infrastructure in Tasmania for the next five to ten years. The strategic planning for both organics and waste infrastructure will inform the Waste and Resource Recovery Board's first strategic plan.



Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>Organic Waste Planning</i>	December 2021	Commenced
<i>Waste Infrastructure Planning</i>	February 2022	Consultancy underway

Problematic Single Use Plastics

There is an increasing focus on the impact plastic is having on the environment, and on the oceans in particular. While plastic can be a valuable material for many purposes, there needs to be significant improvements in the way plastic is recovered, recycled and made into new products. Key to this is ensuring that the plastics being used in products and packaging are easily recyclable. The Government supports plastic recycling efforts by the waste and resource recovery industry, such as through the work of the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation, to constantly improve the design of the materials being used, and programs to recover that material once it's been used.

There has also been significant work across Tasmania by businesses to reduce their use of plastic. Coles Bay was the first town in Australia to stop the use of single-use plastic shopping bags, and legislation to extend this throughout Tasmania has been in place since 2013. The City of Hobart recently introduced a by-law to extend the ban of single use plastics to a range of takeaway food containers and implements. Other councils have undertaken work to phase out problematic plastics, such as some councils banning single-use plastics at events and supporting organisers to implement waste diversion strategies.

In the 2021-22 State Budget the Government provided to \$1 million and committed to working with local government to phase out the use of problematic single use plastics from Government and council facilities and events on public land by 2023. In addition, the phase-out would be extended to a legislative ban to ensure consistency with other jurisdictions in Australia.

Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>Review Plastic Shopping Bag Ban Act</i>	2022	To be commenced
<i>Phasing out problematic single use plastics (\$1M)</i>		To be commenced
<i>Phase out from public areas and state and local Government events</i>	2023	
<i>Legislation for a state-wide ban on problematic single use plastics</i>	2025	

Litter and Dumping

Litter and dumping are not only significant environmental problems; they are a major detriment to the Tasmanian brand. In 2019, EPA Tasmania established Report Rubbish to monitor illegal dumping. This program has been a success, enabling officers to monitor problematic dumping areas and notify the land managers, who are responsible for clean-up. EPA Tasmania has also operated the Litter Reporting Hotline that allows people who witness littering or dumping occurring to report it. These reports are carefully followed up, with Litter Infringement Notices issued where appropriate. In significant cases, prosecution through the Courts is considered.

Offences dealing with the dumping of rubbish were increased in 2019 to ensure that there were commensurate penalties for larger scale dumping incidents. Previously, the *Litter Act 2007* had been more focussed on domestic scale dumping of rubbish. However, there was also a need to address larger scale dumping with penalties that reflected the harm caused by such dumping, and the cost to the community when dumping needs to be cleaned up.

The need for comprehensive and accurate litter statistics to support measuring the success of the wide range of policy initiatives across the country has led to the development of a new methodology that will be rolled out in all States and Territories. The Australian Litter Measure (AusLM) will commence in 2021 and replace the former National Litter Index.

Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>Increasing the penalties in Litter Act 2007 to reflect the cost to the environment and community for large scale dumping</i>	2019	Completed
<i>Litter Reporting Hotline Run by EPA Tasmania for people to reporting having witnessed littering or dumping occur</i>	Established 2008	Ongoing
<i>Implementation of Report Rubbish and the Litter and Dumping Management System Report Rubbish established for the public to report the location dumped rubbish. Management System established for land managers to coordinate action, and seek assistance from Community Corrections where appropriate.</i>	October 2019	Completed Ongoing.
<i>Undertaken litter surveys using the new AusLM methodology</i>	May and October each year	Ongoing

Waste and Resource Recovery Data

Under the National Partnership Agreement with the Australian Government, Tasmania has agreed to improve data and reporting systems around waste and resource recovery. This will help us measure our real baseline recycling and reuse rates and to track improvements over time. This will also provide important information to government and industry on opportunities for investment in certain waste streams, or around which improved regulation may be required.

Tasmania has also been participating actively in the ongoing development of the national waste data system, which is used to underpin knowledge and understanding of waste trends across the country and support the review and revision of the National Waste Policy. The Government has committed \$1 million to improve data management arrangements hosted by EPA Tasmania to assist with the above, and to support implementation of the waste levy in the State.

Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>Improvement in the accuracy and level of reporting around waste and resource recovery</i>	2022	Work continues to improve our ability to record, manage, and report on the amount and fate of waste in Tasmania.

Awareness and Education

Reusing and recycling materials is a key part of the circular economy. While there is a general goodwill across the community to recycle, there is sometimes a lack of clarity around what can be recycled and how items can be recovered. There are various initiatives in place to enhance this.

The charity sector provides ways that items can easily be reused, the sector often runs programs to collect goods that can be reused, and this has diverted significant amounts of material away from landfill. The Government also has a long-term relationship with Keep Australia Beautiful (Tasmania) to run education and awareness campaigns, including the popular Tidy Towns awards, in which a number of Tasmanian towns have also featured prominently at the national awards.

Another key target area is the education sector. Supporting teachers with resources that focus on the Tasmanian context has led EPA Tasmania to develop a collection of Teaching Manuals¹ for Primary School aged children. Staff from EPA Tasmania also support the education sector and the wider community through information workshops and engagement.

Finally, local government has a key role in waste management at the local level, and undertakes a range of awareness and education programs. A focus for the State Government is partnering with local government to help deliver campaigns and supporting material for all Tasmanians, including a new agreement with Rethink Waste for delivering accurate and reliable information to the Tasmanian community.

¹ Teaching Manuals are available from <https://epa.tas.gov.au/sustainability/resources-for-schools/waste-education>

Action	Timeframe	Status
<i>Renew agreement with Keep Australia Beautiful (Tasmania) for \$45,000 pa funding</i>	July 2021	New three-year agreement signed in June 2021
<i>Finalise Teaching Manual series with release of Grade 6 Manual</i>	June 2022	Draft in development ahead of expert review
<i>Development of agreement with Rethink Waste</i>	July 2021	Agreement signed in June 2021 with activities to commence in August 2021



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