

## 6.5 AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT INTO RECOVERING AND REPROCESSING RESOURCES FROM WASTE

Submitting Councillor: Cr Josh Fergeus

### **MOTION**

*That Council:*

1. *Notes the Auditor General's report, Recovering and Reprocessing Resources from Waste, released on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019.*
2. *Writes to Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio affirming Council's support for the recommendations of the report, in particular:*
  - *The creation of a state-wide waste policy;*
  - *Clarifying the role of government agencies;*
  - *Improving the reliability and quality of waste data; and*
  - *Developing strategies to reduce reliance on international markets.*
3. *Notes that more than half a billion dollars is currently set aside in Victoria's Sustainability Fund.*
4. *Strongly supports the development of the Victorian recycling and waste recovery industry.*
5. *Notes that according to the Auditor-General, Monash Council is ably fulfilling its role in delivering waste and resource recovery services to their communities and have managed to provide continued waste services despite the challenges brought about by the Chinese Sword Policy.*

### **BACKGROUND**

This audit examined whether responsible agencies are providing strategic direction, support and effective regulation in order to maximise the recovery and reprocessing of resources from Victoria's waste streams.

The audit included the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG), SV, Banyule City Council and the City of Monash Council.

The Auditor-General noted that:

"As Victoria's population grows, so too does the volume of materials we discard. In 2016–17 available data suggests that Victoria generated 12.9 million tonnes of waste. SV predicts that by 2046 this will reach 20 million tonnes—an increase of 55 per cent".

An effective waste and resource recovery system is essential to manage Victoria's waste to minimise the impact on the environment. Achieving this requires leadership and clear policy direction to drive coordinated effort across both state and local governments and the engagement and cooperation of businesses, communities and individuals.”

### ***DISCUSSION***

The Auditor-General noted that:

Victorian agencies responsible for managing the waste sector are not responding strategically to waste and resource recovery issues. As a result, they are not minimising Victoria's need for landfill nor maximising the recovery and reprocessing of waste resources—recyclables. A significant amount of the waste that Victorians send to landfill could be recycled or reprocessed, and some recyclables that Victorians segregate for recycling eventually end up in landfills.

“DELWP's failure to fulfil its leadership role to ensure that the state operates under an overarching waste policy is depriving responsible government agencies and their stakeholders of a clear and definitive direction for waste management. This means that government responses to waste issues have been ad hoc and reactive.

In the absence of a statewide policy, agencies involved in waste management lack clear signals about what their priorities should be and how best to use their limited resources. DELWP's, SV's and MWRRG's six waste and resource recovery strategies and plans have myriad objectives and actions, which do not provide clear and coherent guidance in place of a statewide policy. Stakeholders, particularly some councils and waste operators, are confused about the roles and responsibilities of state-level agencies. Significant gaps in the waste instruments available lead to missed opportunities to improve waste management.

Further, DELWP, SV and MWRRG are not clearly and publicly reporting on the progress of the individual actions, overall objectives and outcomes of their strategies in a way that enables industry and the community to track their progress.”

Also, noted was that, both “Banyule Council and Monash Council are ably fulfilling their roles in delivering waste and resource recovery services to their communities. Both councils have managed to provide continued waste services despite the challenges brought about by the Chinese Sword Policy. This is due in part to the continued ability of their contracted resource recovery facility operator—both councils use the same operator—to process councils' recyclables.

Councils' waste plans include targets, action plans and performance indicators, and both audited councils are collaborating with MWRRG to achieve cost efficiencies in their waste service contracts, including organics processing, collection of recyclables and landfill services. Both councils are

also taking steps to ensure that their waste services to their communities remain undisrupted”.