

Rescue Our Recycling Action Plan launched

7 March 2019

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has launched a *Rescue Our Recycling Action Plan*, which sets out five key actions each level of government should take to help solve our recycling crisis.

The plan identifies the need for stronger leadership and increased investment by governments, greater regulation of our recycling industry, plus more responsibility placed on businesses to generate less waste.

Following the sudden closure of SKM's material recovery facilities two weeks ago, affected councils have urgently sought alternative destinations for their kerbside recycling, with landfill the option of last resort.

The MAV is calling on the State Government to provide funding relief to cover councils' costs incurred due to the SKM shutdown. More than \$500 million of landfill levy income in the State's Sustainability Fund provides the means to offer short-term support and drive meaningful system change for the longer term.

The action plan also calls on the Victorian Government to:

- urgently increase Sustainability Fund investment into recycling sorting and processing infrastructure, plus market research and development to drive demand for recycled products
- commit to introducing a container deposit scheme
- establish greater State oversight of the recycling industry to improve industry transparency and accountability in delivering an essential community service.

To reduce waste generation and drive industry change, the plan calls on the Federal Government to:

- introduce mandatory product stewardship schemes to require producers to take responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products, eg. by ensuring products are recycled at the end of their life (such schemes already exist for mobile phones and TVs)
- require all consumer packaging sold in Australia to display the Australasian Recycling Label to improve community understanding of what is and isn't recyclable.

Actions local government can take to strengthen the system include:

- in partnership with the State, investigate and support options to collaboratively procure kerbside recycling services with the aim of attracting new investment in recycling in Victoria
- further community education to minimise waste generation and reduce bin contamination levels.

All governments must use their purchasing power to drive demand for recycled content.

Cr Coral Ross, MAV President said Victoria's recycling system is broken but, with the right policy leadership and investment, it can be saved and even strengthened.

"While China's National Sword policy exposed the vulnerability of our recycling industry, the current crisis is primarily due to Australia's unsustainable levels of waste generation and market failure.

"There are no quick fix solutions. However it's clear urgent action is needed by all levels of government together with the Waste and Resource Recovery Boards, industry, business and individual consumers.

"Each partner has a clear role to play. We need to prioritise actions that will reduce the amount of waste generated, strengthen our capacity for onshore processing and create new markets for recycled material."

The action plan can be accessed at www.mav.asn.au/rescueourrecycling

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