

Item 3.3

Save Our Recycling

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I am calling on Councillors to support the local government sector's Save Our Recycling campaign as outlined in the Local Government NSW (LGNSW) report *At the Crossroads: The State of Waste and Recycling in NSW*.

A worldwide waste crisis

We are living through the Earth's sixth mass species extinction. Scientists have warned that billions of regional or local populations have been lost, and that human overconsumption is to blame. The natural world is suffering as we destroy natural habitats to access virgin resources and pollute both land and oceans with our waste. The problem is spiralling out of control and we only have a short window of time in which to act.

The solution is to minimise our demand for virgin resources and our production of waste by transitioning to a more circular economy. It will require systemic change at the highest levels. As a society, we must address issues such as planned obsolescence, and introduce new metrics so that our economic managers are thoroughly evaluated on how efficiently resources are being used.

But we don't need to wait for that to take steps towards a circular economy at a local level. We can reduce the amount of waste produced in Sydney, and better manage the waste we do produce, even as our population continues to grow and become wealthier.

Unfortunately, years of inadequate planning, funding and action, combined with an international tightening of contamination standards, have led the waste and recycling systems in NSW to a crisis point.

Many solutions are available, and have been comprehensively explored in documents such as the *2017 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Waste and Recycling Industry in Australia*. But there are no signs that the crisis is being addressed. As the NSW Government's latest Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Progress Report shows:

- household recycling rates are decreasing
- less waste per person is being diverted from landfill
- the amount of waste being generated is expected to grow by 36 per cent by 2036 – well above population growth.

Procuring recycled material at the local government level

The City of Sydney is leading efforts through the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) to support the market for recycled materials, through signing a Memorandum of Understanding for procuring recycled material at a local government level. If we do not create the market for recycled material, there will not be a recycling industry.

Local councils in NSW are calling on the NSW Government to reverse this downward slide, to invest the money it collects from the Waste Levy to help fix our state's ailing waste and recycling systems, and help move towards a circular economy in NSW.

LGNSW's *Save our Recycling* campaign outlines ways that the NSW Government can work with Councils to properly develop, fund and deliver the waste and recycling systems our communities deserve.

What we need now is decisive government action and investment.

Planning

The NSW Government promised a major education campaign to help support kerbside recycling in 2015. However, this has not been delivered. A Waste Infrastructure Plan and a new Waste Strategy are also overdue.

The Government must provide funding for metro and regional waste plans for the future of waste and resource recovery, and co-develop them with Councils. It must also deliver the priority infrastructure and other local government projects necessary to deliver these metro and regional-scale plans, particularly where market failure has been identified.

Waste Levy

The NSW Government collects revenue from a Waste Levy via licensed waste facilities in NSW to discourage the amount of waste being landfilled and to promote recycling and resource recovery. According to the latest NSW Budget papers, this totalled \$772 million in 2018/19.

Our ratepayers paid a total of \$4.5 million via the Waste Levy in the 2018/19 financial year. Over the same period Council received only \$216,640 in non-contestable funding to assist with waste management and recycling infrastructure, programs and education. A further \$331,742 in contestable funding was received from the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) for the Food Scraps Recycling Trial as part of their 'Waste Less Recycle More' program.

Revenue from the Waste Levy is expected to increase by about 70 per cent from 2012/13 to 2022/23. By the end of this period the Waste Levy revenue is forecast to have increased to more than \$800 million a year: this represents \$100 for every woman, man and child in NSW. Yet, only a small portion –less than one fifth – of this revenue is invested back into waste and recycling programs.

In 2018, delegates at the LGNSW 2018 Conference unanimously voted to call on the NSW Government to reinvest the Waste Levy in recycling and waste infrastructure and programs.

The 2019 Conference further supported this approach, outlining specific solutions to the waste and recycling crisis which could be delivered in partnership with local government.

All proceeds from the Waste Levy should be reinvested into metro and regional waste-and-recycling plans and to deliver the infrastructure and services our cities and regions need.

Innovation

Recycling reduces our reliance on virgin resources and our impact on the natural environment if recycled materials are used in manufacturing. And manufacturers will only choose to use recycled materials if there is a market demand for them. ***As major purchasers of goods, local and state governments should drive demand for recycled materials by setting targets for domestic recycled content in the goods that they purchase.***

The City of Sydney has been involved in a number of sustainable material trials, including using:

- Green Star concrete, a mix that replaces virgin aggregates with recycled aggregate in the concrete by a minimum of 40 per cent
- TonerPave, an asphalt mix made from toner powder recovered from waste printer cartridges combined with ground tyres and oil to partially replace the virgin bitumen
- recycled crushed glass as a filter layer beneath the soil in raingardens.

The Government should also fund a large-scale, state-wide education campaign to support recycling and markets for recycled products in NSW, and work with councils to activate this campaign; community by community.

The Government should also be investing in the research, development and delivery of recycling technologies and products generated from recyclables, particularly by local or regional councils. The \$1.5 million announced in February 2019 by the NSW Chief Scientist for a Circular Economy Innovation Network is welcome news, but much more is needed. As the NSW Innovation and Productivity Council's *Environmental Goods and Service Sector* report found, NSW has significant research and industry strengths in this area, which create a strategic regional advantage and provide strong potential for innovation-led growth.

I am recommending that we support the *Save Our Recycling* campaign, which is being coordinated on behalf of the sector by LGNSW.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council acknowledge the growing imperative to manage waste and recycling within NSW and calls for urgent action from the State Government to help build a circular economy in NSW;
- (B) Council note:
 - (i) that the City has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) for procuring recycled content at the local government level;
 - (ii) that the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) is leading three research projects across metropolitan Sydney that include:
 - (a) a waste legislation and regulatory review;
 - (b) a waste data gap analysis; and
 - (c) a study to identify capacity deficits and future infrastructure requirements for the management of waste;
 - (iii) that the City's resource recovery team is expanding to increase its scope for community engagement on waste avoidance and recycling;
 - (iv) that the City's food scraps collection trial was oversubscribed and early results are positive with high participation and low contamination; and
 - (v) that City programs such as Better Buildings Partnership, City Switch and Sustainable Destinations Partnership continue to focus on improving recycling and data integrity within the commercial sector;
- (C) that Council endorse Local Government NSW's sector-wide Save our Recycling campaign, and ask the State Government to reinvest the Waste Levy in:
 - (i) funding councils to collaboratively develop regional-scale plans for the future of waste and recycling in their regions;
 - (ii) delivering priority infrastructure and other local government projects needed to deliver regional-scale plans, particularly where a market failure has been identified;
 - (iii) supporting the purchase of recycled content by all levels of government, to help create new markets; and
 - (iv) funding and delivery of a state-wide education campaign on the importance of recycling, including the right way to recycle, the purchase of products with recycled content and the importance of waste avoidance;

- (D) that Council continue to engage with the local State Members Alex Greenwich, Member for Sydney, Jamie Parker, Member for Balmain, Jenny Leong, Member for Newtown, Ron Hoeing, Member for Heffron, Minister for Energy and Environment, the Hon Matthew Kean MP, Local Government Minister, the Hon Shelley Hancock MP, NSW Treasurer, the Hon Dominic Perrottet MP, Premier, the Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP, Opposition Leader, Jodi McKay MP, Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage, Kate Washington MP, and Shadow Minister for Local Government, Greg Warren MP to confirm their support for recycling and outline the urgent need to educate, innovate and invest in local waste and recycling services via the Waste Levy; and
- (E) that Council shares and promotes the *Save Our Recycling* campaign via its digital and social media channels and via its networks.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor