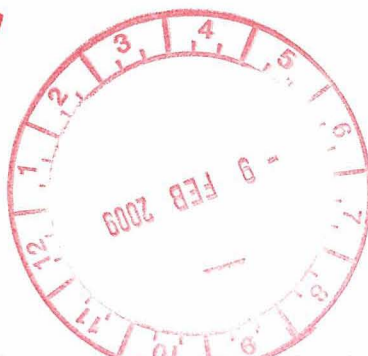




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Friday 6 February 2009

Hon. Sheila Mills MLC

Chair

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - Legislative Council

Parliament House

Harvest Terrace

Perth 6000

Dear Chair,

INQUIRY INTO MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Bowman & Associates Pty Ltd is a privately owned company that provides waste management consultancy services to Local Governments as well as local and multi national waste companies in Western Australia. Please visit our website for further information www.bowmanassociates.com.au

The management and staff of Bowman & Associates are committed to the development of environmental and economically sustainable waste management solutions throughout Western Australia and view this Inquiry as a unique opportunity to review the strategic direction of waste management in Western Australia. In addition to being the company's Director I am also the current State President of the Waste Management Association of Australia (WA Branch).

Within the Inquiry's Terms of Reference the Inquiry questions the function, effectiveness and efficiency of rural and metropolitan regional councils with respect to the management of waste.

In January 2001 the State Government adopted the WAaste 2020 *Towards Zero Waste* strategy and since that time the metropolitan regional councils have on behalf of their member councils invested heavily in alternative waste treatment (AWT) infrastructure to embrace the State's vision of working *Towards Zero Waste*.

Previous State Governments have provided direction that waste in Western Australia will not be incinerated leading to the investment in waste treatment infrastructure being compost orientated. The composting of municipal waste creates a residual to landfill in the order of 30%. The residual generally consists of both soiled recyclables and inorganic waste.

Recent developments in alternative waste technologies suggest that the economic and environmentally safe processing of refuse derived fuels (RDF) for energy generation is not far away. These technologies will operate with a minimal residual to landfill and in some non metropolitan areas provide a competitive alternative fuel to fossil fuel for the generation of electricity. At present there is no policy position on the use of refuse derived fuels in Western Australia.



It is recommended that the DEC develop a policy position on the use alternative waste treatment technologies and the use of refuse derived fuels.

Due to the large capital investment required for alternative waste treatment plants regional councils encounter a conflict of interest when the viability of these facilities is dependent on the volume of waste processed. The temptation is that emphasis is moved away from waste avoidance initiatives and towards resource recovery operations financially driven by volume through the AWTs.

Economic pressure placed on regional councils to make AWTs viable is limiting cross border cooperation between the regional councils resulting in limited opportunity for synergies from cross border interaction. The result being that waste transport is not at optimum efficiency with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and our overall carbon footprint.

Although metropolitan regional councils have in the past been extremely effective in gendering interaction between local governments with regard to developing waste management infrastructure going forward the corporate structure of the established regional councils is inhibiting the rationalisation of future waste management infrastructure developments.

In non metropolitan regions the regional council model will continue to be effective in nurturing cooperation between local governments in developing sustainable waste management infrastructure.

Another barrier to advancing the *Towards Zero Waste* vision is the lack of opportunity to develop strategically positioned waste processing infrastructure while minimising the resultant carbon footprint and maximising the resource recovery potential of the infrastructure. Appropriate waste management services are vital to the wellbeing of our communities and waste should be treated as an essential service. Leadership by way of strategic direction is required from State Government to provide opportunities for the development of the waste management industry.

It is recommended that the State Government take a more active role in the strategic direction of the waste management industry by firstly separating the policy and the regulation responsibilities of the environmental departments and secondly acknowledge waste management as an essential service

Should you have any queries please call me on 0402 373 582.

Yours Sincerely,
Bowman & Associates Pty Ltd

Bruce Bowman
Director