

The Committee Clerk
Environment and Public Affairs Committee
Legislative Council
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000
Attention: Linda Omar



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Dear Linda

RE: INQUIRY INTO MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT IN WA

I wish to provide the following submission in relation to the above Inquiry.

I work for Transpacific Industries Group as its WA Environmental Advisor. Prior to taking up this role I worked for the Department of Environment & Conservation (DEC) in the South West as the primary waste management licensing officer in addition to providing advice and encouragement to the South West Local Government Authorities to develop a regional waste strategy, albeit not just from a municipal perspective.

The following submission is based on both issues and observations made during my time in the DEC and now within the waste management industry.

If you have queries about the following submission, please contact me by telephone on 9724 6407 or by e-mail, dbills@transpac.com.au.

Yours sincerely

David Bills
WA Environmental Advisor

12 February 2009

Encl: Inquiry into Municipal Waste Management in WA Submission

Environment and Public Affairs Committee – Inquiry into Municipal Waste Management in WA

Submission to the Inquiry into Municipal Waste Management in WA

Environment and Public Affairs Committee

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Introduction

The submission is based on observations and issues encountered both during the author's time within the Department of Environment & Conservation (DEC) (licensing, compliance and waste management areas) and from my current role with Transpacific Cleanaway. I am based in the South West of WA.

Transpacific Industries Group (TIG) is an Australasian waste management company operating in all areas of solid and liquid waste collection, disposal, recycling, re-treatment and re-use. Its WA operations primarily involve:

- the provision of municipal and commercial liquid and solid waste collection;
- the provision of municipal and commercial liquid and solid disposal options;
- waste oil collection and recycling;
- operation of liquid waste treatment facilities; and
- the operation of a Class III putrescible and a Class I inert landfill sites in Dardanup and City of Mandurah, respectively.

In the late 1990's and early 2000's, the 15 South West Regional Councils, with the assistance of the South West Development Commission and Waste management board established the SW Waste Management Advisory Committee (SWWMAC) to foster and develop regional waste management initiatives that would:

- allow for improved municipal waste diversion from landfill (recycling);
- close or upgrade landfills to minimise environmental and community impacts; and
- consider the establish "waste precincts" to maximise resource recovery and regional development (recycling and recycling industry establishment) and minimise environmental impact (capture of landfill gases, controlling potentially contaminated water, reduce waste to landfill).

SWWMAC did encourage the establishment of kerbside and rural recycle collections and an excellent report was produced in relation to waste disposal options (including, setting up waste precincts, organics recycling and use of bioreactors). However, limited progress has been made in relation to "Zero waste to landfill by 2020" or the establishment of waste precincts due primarily a lack of cooperation at local and state levels.

Transpacific's Banksia Road Landfill Facility is located approximately 5-km SE of Dardanup in the Shire of Dardanup and ~ 20-km SE of Bunbury. It is a synthetically lined landfill established in 2000. It is licensed by the DEC. It receives municipal and commercial waste from the local, regional and metropolitan area.

Terms of Reference – Inquiry points:

1(a). *Current municipal waste management practice and methods in WA and in particular, the function, effectiveness and efficiency of rural and Metropolitan Regional Councils with respect to the management of waste.*

- the Metropolitan Regional Councils have been effective in improving waste services and increasing household waste diversion;
- this also means that private industry involvement is enhanced through competition and transparency. Also the recognition of where expertise lies and an understanding of the “real cost” of waste management services;
- however, rural regional councils are not as effective because the smaller councils seem bullied by the largest council, therefore obtaining consensus is difficult;
- rural councils seem reluctant to involve the private sector (it could take away a potential source of income);
- rural councils generally do not have the technical skills to provide the best waste management practises or ability to modify them to reflect their particular circumstances;
- rural councils do not have the volumes of recyclables or the prices to offer a sustainable recycling operation – as expected due to the large distances needing to be travelled to supply such services;
- rural councils and their communities are unwilling to pay the real cost of waste management and recognise that if the price is too high illegal dumping will occur and this is not to the overall benefit of WA;
- rural councils do not have the expertise or project management resources (noting the distrust between councils above) to establish waste precincts, which both facilitate improved waste management and regional development.

1(b). *Current municipal waste management practice and methods in WA and in particular, the role of the Waste Authority under the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2007 in municipal waste management.*

- To facilitate simple landfill technology for rural areas that encourage improved regional waste management solutions.
- To instigate trials with metropolitan and rural councils and industry to improve waste diversion opportunities – this will need interaction with the commercial waste sector to make viable.
- To instigate organic recycling markets, especially outside the metropolitan area.
- To instigate research into the products of organic recycling to enable improved marketing of recycled organics in WA – especially in the agricultural region to improve soil fertility and structure and reduce the effects of salinisation and acidification.

2. *Resource Recovery Technologies*

- Bioreactors are a simple technological system in which existing technical expertise is available to manage the environmental impacts encountered by the RRRC in Canning Vale.
- Bioreactors (and landfills) also have the benefit of being able to store carbon.
- Bioreactors are not much more expensive to operate compared to existing landfill technologies but have the benefit of improving landfill gas capture (and its use for renewable energy generation) and creating a more stable and inert final landfill product which minimises future environmental and social liabilities.
- Bioreactors and other Resource Recovery Technologies are opportunities to obtain Regional Rural Council cooperation.
- Bioreactors are an interim solution in WA until alternative waste treatment technologies are proven and economically viable units become available for the small rural quantities of waste encountered.

3. *Any other relevant matter*

- Due to the large area of WA which is sparsely populated, waste management policy should be split into two – Metropolitan – South West (including Peel) and Regional WA. This, both accepts the rapid growth in the Peel and South West Regions and that its natural boundaries will minimise people trying to take their wastes elsewhere, thereby creating a clear boundary. Although some cost sharing would be required, this area should be able to create a viable and consistent waste management regime for the majority of municipal and commercial waste generated in WA. It would also allow for greater transparency, opportunities for private involvement and efficiencies in collection and treatment / recycling systems.
- Organic waste recycling, including biosolids, has the potential to substantially improve the quality of WA agricultural soils, increasing production and drought resistance, by improving soil structure and organic carbon in the soil. There needs to be a major focus on this area as it has the greatest potential for WA, not just to divert waste from landfill, but for regional and agricultural development. It needs assistance to coopt with the fertilizer companies and Government Agencies (Health, Agriculture and Environment) to address the impediments currently in place.