

# Hon Paul Brown MLC

Member for Agricultural Region

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
West Perth WA 6005



27<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Dear Mr O'Brien

***Submission: Petition No 19 – Disposal of Metropolitan Waste in Rural Areas***

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2013 acknowledging the receipt of the above petition and inviting me to provide a written submission regarding issues related to it.

The scope of the petition, supported by over four thousand individuals, of whom Alice Bernal of the Avon Valley Environmental Society Inc. is the principal petitioner, outlines concerns pertaining to the dumping of metropolitan waste in rural areas as:

- 1) the potential for leaching into groundwater and river systems
- 2) the potential for serious pollution following any seismic event
- 3) the transfer of social and environmental costs from metropolitan areas to rural areas
- 4) the transfer of the cost of clean-up from the present generation to future generations

Waste management does, and will continue to have a detrimental effect on the environment and has pervasive impacts socially, environmentally and commercially. In the interest of ecologically sustainable development, the minimisation of harm to the environment, planning and the long term management of waste, I ask that the Committee launch an inquiry into:

- **Waste avoidance:** How to more effectively limit the tonnage of household, commercial, and non-toxic industrial waste to landfill by implementing systemic changes to community and industry attitudes to waste. While the change of intrinsic behaviour is challenging it is attainable with long term planning.

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- **Resource recovery:** How to implement more cost effective recycling of municipal solid waste, commercial & industrial waste and construction/demolition waste. WA has a very low rate of material recycling along with green waste and building waste and items that have potential for diversion from landfill are not being re used due to cost and other factors such as transport, handling and storage. How can we increase waste diversion rates and make diversion from landfill a more financially viable option and one that will greater take up by consumers?
- **Planning:** What capacity is there for a more cohesive policy around the planning and approval of landfill and recycling sites, 'tip shops' and energy from waste generation operations? The current planning process is challenging for service providers and does not allow for a clear and transparent process. The roles of the local government in planning approvals and the determination of land use areas potentially compete with the Department of Environment Regulation, Agriculture Department, Tourism WA, Environmental Protection Authority, Department of Agriculture, Waters & Rivers and Main Roads WA. The process by which neighbours, community members, groups, industry representatives and others impacted are engaged in, and informed of planning is inadequate and has, in relation particularly to the Sita Allawuna proposal, caused distress and impacted adversely on the proposal.
- **Impact assessments:** Ensuring that all applications for commercial landfill receive vigorous, impartial and consistent consideration, should reside within the combined jurisdiction of one independent authority. There appear to be some evidentiary discrepancies between reported factual information provided by landfill proponents and by the community bodies concerned with the various proposals under consideration. To avoid perceived or actual instances of misrepresentation of information it is essential the source of the information be prudent. Furthermore, the scope of any or all landfill assessments should extend to the long term viability of the environmental risk associated with each site and the eventual rehabilitation of the site with clear undertakings as to how risk will be determined and managed. Assessments need to consider, but not be limited to, the security of the Perth water catchment and collection areas, along with the protection of prime agricultural areas with additional consideration to organic practices and principals. The dissemination on information pertaining to applications, assessment and process needs to be obtainable.
- **Transportation of waste:** Current and projected growth in Perth will further impact on the capacity of arterial roads such as the Great Eastern Highway, Great Northern Highway, Great Southern Highway and the Gidgegannup-Toodyay Road. It is estimated that truck numbers on these roads will increase significantly, if even one of the current proposals for waste depositing in the urban fringe goes ahead. What measure is used to determine maximum road capacity and what level of risk deemed acceptable and by whom?

- **Alternative sites:** Waste needs to be deposited somewhere, but perhaps not within the peri-urban fringe. The process of determining where waste should be deposited needs to be revised and planned by government, not led by commercial interests. If suitable landfill sites were to be located and approved in areas further outside the metropolitan area where the capacity for water contamination and seismic disturbance are minimal with alternative transport modes, such as rail, could these sites be commercially accessible?

I ask that the Committee consider expanding the geographical limits of *The Waste and Recycling Infrastructure Plan* for the Perth Metropolitan, Eastern Hills and Peel Region so that its four interrelated parts of Planning and Approvals, Facilities and Sites, Technology, and Governance and Funding be applied to the urban fringe surrounding the Perth metropolitan area. This would include, but not be limited to, the Avon Valley including York and Toodyay and the Chittering Valley areas.

I further ask that the Western Australian Government consider the South Australian Government's *Waste to Energy Background Paper - Zero Waste SA* – document dated 02/07/2013 which reports on the extensive research conducted around waste management.

I can confirm none of the matters raised in the petition have been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Paul Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Paul Brown MLC  
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