

Submission



To Matt Walsh
Stewardship & Waste Section
Department of the Environment and Energy

From Max Spedding, CEO - ALOA

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Subject **Waste Management in Australia – a landfill operator’s perspective.**

Waste Management in Australia 2016

In general terms Australia’s waste management industry meets international best practice and provides a sustainable balance between meeting resource recovery expectations and keeping costs at affordable levels.

The industry is also committed to improving employee safety, enhancing environmental protection and minimising climate change impacts.

Challenges facing the industry in 2016

The waste industry currently recycles around half of the waste generated in Australia. The remainder - residuals from recycling and mixed putrescible wastes - is landfilled.

Each of these activities has its challenges -

Recycling

The recycling industry comprises three segments – construction materials; organics; and discarded packaging. Notwithstanding recent advances in processing technology across the three segments, growth continues to be hindered by the availability of secure markets for the various products produced.

Landfill

Major landfill practices have improved significantly over the past twenty years and now are at world's best practice. This is evidenced by most sites embracing composite liners, leachate extraction and disposal capability, landfill gas combustion and responsible long term re-habitation and after use. Unfortunately, many smaller regional landfills are not at this standard and more needs to be done to close the poorer quality sites and provide local waste transfer facilities.

Other challenges facing landfills include the permitting replacement facilities and managing the ingress of recoverable materials such as e-waste and tyres.

Opportunities available in 2016

As concern over climate change continues to influence environmental policy, the waste industry is well positioned to contribute to emission reduction by diverting organics from landfills for processing. This initiative has commenced in some city markets but has considerable scope for expansion.

Diverting organics from landfill has a double benefit – reduced landfill gas emissions and sequestered soil carbon contributing to improved farm production.

Other opportunities are also now becoming available from the use of mechanised waste sorting technology that allows acceptance of higher contamination waste feed stocks without compromising on product quality.

Where to by 2026

The waste industry has seen much change over the past twenty years and this trend will continue for the next ten. Many of these changes will be driven as new harmonization programs lift the service levels in regional levels.

Further, it is expected that energy from waste will begin to be introduced over the next decade.

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