



By Anne Prince
ACOR's CEO

The Australian Council of Recyclers (ACOR) is the peak resource recovery organization in Australia. Our mission is to encourage governments, industry and the public to take actions that advance the optimal use of Australia's secondary materials and to facilitate the removal of barriers that hinder effective recycling and reprocessing. Our members currently process more than 11,300,000 tonnes of material otherwise destined for landfill and directly employ over 5,000 people in resource recovery activities.

ACOR strongly opposes the promotion of one bin collection systems

ACOR members are committed to maximising resource recovery and achieving the highest resource order for Australia's secondary materials.

Tenders with a one bin option are of immense concern to ACOR members as well as the Publishers National Environment Bureau (PNEB). This approach whilst being cheaper for collection, requires a technology provider to separate the recyclables as best they can to produce a mix of materials for on selling or converting into high grade reuseable products.

We believe and have supporting research which shows that any one bin collection system promoting a mixed residual and recyclable stream jeopardises the core investment that the resource recovery industry has made in recycling infrastructure, research and development and people skills over the last 100 years within this country. But equally and more importantly, what is not factored into this perceived low cost, high benefit option for a Council or group of Councils is what role would they continue to play in maintaining consumer confidence in a system diametrically opposed to a collection system which is fully proven and totally economically sustainable both within this country and universally in place throughout the world. Technology, as good as it may be, can not separate recyclables to the same quality as source separation systems do



by a householder who passionately and voluntarily undertake this activity now as second nature in the home.

In addition, with widely available and economically viable markets open to all Councils and end users in Australia for the manufacture of newsprint, cardboard as well as other papers such as fine writing papers ACOR's members do not consider that paper and paper products diverted to compost or as an alternate landfill cover material is the highest resource order for these materials.

The recent "Assessment of Domestic Waste and Recycling Systems", which was undertaken by the NSW Jurisdictional Recycling Group and the Publishers National Environment Bureau shows that the recycling of paper to make paper (instead of composting or landfilling or energy recovery) provides

the most significant environmental benefits. The study reinforced that the maximum environmental benefits are only achieved where the recyclable materials are separated at the kerbside by the householder. The more material that is recycled the higher the benefit.

Furthermore, the quality of other commodities collected including steel, aluminum, plastic and glass containers all must meet industry specifications if they are to be reused or reprocessed into any value added end use.

Specifications for the reuse and reprocessing of all these products

for both use within Australia or for exporting and reprocessing internationally have now been collated onto a single CD and are available at the ACOR web site for anyone promoting or operating consumer product recycling systems. Refer to www.acor.org.au

Both the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and EcoRecycle Victoria have collectively expressed concern that one bin systems are not conducive to highest order recovery of resources but what of other state governments? What are their positions?

If they are supportive of these so called innovative systems ACOR members would be most interested in reviewing any data which is supportive of such a tragic approach to the collection of valuable secondary materials.

ACOR members include:



Alcoa Australia
Rolled Products



resource recovery sector

Extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs

Keeping consumer electronics including televisions, computers and mobile phones out of landfill is a major environmental objective for government, manufacturers and the resource recovery sector. How we achieve it is not easy but must be dealt with by industry. One such approach involves all parties embracing pro-actively a recovery program of these complex items from the manufacturer to the retailer, reflecting the commitment to achieving an environmentally sustainable outcome.

ACOR members play a significant role in the chain by being the "service provider" to these programs. Whilst governments provide and fund disposal facilities as a community service, the resource recovery sector relies purely on private sector investment. As private companies our members are answerable to Boards and in many cases must also meet shareholders expectations in relation to delivering reasonable returns on funds invested and some degree of certainty of volumes in order for projects to proceed is needed.

All commercial activities require careful planning prior to any investment being made with significant lead times prior to rollout of any programs to ensure the delivery of "services" by the recovery sector can be delivered on the ground.

Government support and quite often intervention is required for any system to be



successful, in particular where the recovery of those items have negative values. ACOR has identified a number of critical roles for governments if we are going to gain diversion from garbage bin to recycling system. These being:

1. **National Approach** – All programs must be national in approach. ACOR does not support individual state based approaches for materials which clearly are distributed and consumed nationally
2. **Financial Support Mechanisms**
 - a. Market development grants - to explore markets for by-products of the recovery process, many of which are voluminous materials, which currently are homeless and worthless.
 - b. Infrastructure grants - to provide a financial stimulus for investment in what is often a marginal commodity business.
3. **Legislative Support** – All programs must be underpinned by legislation, 'safety net'

regulations, to ensure that participants are protected from "freeloaders"

4. **Landfill Bans** – to provide the feedstock to drive the recovery processes
5. **Promotion** – ensure the message is delivered in a uniform and consistent manner to consumers for all materials
6. **Logistics of Collection** – ensure the widest possible usage and duplication of resources and infrastructure is minimized in an effort to contain costs

We must not lose sight of the objective namely improved product design to remove toxicity and enable greater disassembly, resource or component recovery and ultimately recycling.

ACOR members alone cannot achieve these goals but collectively with all parties in the chain closely linked and committed in the recovery of these complex materials a sustainable and bright future exists in long-term achievements of the goals being set.

Study tour to showcase activities

The significant investment in research and development, and "state of the art" resource and recycling facilities of ACOR's members will be showcased during an inaugural two day study tour of facilities to be held in Sydney on December 2 – 3.

This tour has been developed for, and in close collaboration with, the Waste

Management Association Resource Recovery Division. The tour will provide an insight for waste practitioners, many from local government, into the issues and challenges our members have in receiving and processing over

11,300,000 tonnes of resources otherwise destined for landfill annually.

It is planned to offer these tours regularly in most states where our members operate facilities in the new year. To express your interest in attending a future tour please respond to our feedback section at www.acor.org/feedback or telephone 02 9907 0994.

The inaugural tour will visit the following member facilities in Sydney:

- Visy Papermill, Smithfield,
- Alcoa Australia Rolled Products Remelt Facility, Yennora
- Visy PET, Prestons
- Boral C&D Reprocessing, Wetherill Park
- ACI Glass Manufacturing, Penrith
- GRL UR-3R facility, Eastern Creek Landfill
- Sell and Parker Scrap Metal, Blacktown

Feedback on issues - ACOR are interested in your views and feedback on the issues raised in this issue. To submit anonymous responses please go to www.acor.org.au/feedback

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