

Australia's recycling rate "embarrassing": ACOR

Monday, 20 June 2016

The Australian Council of Recycling (ACOR) is calling on all parties contesting the July 2 federal election to take positive steps to increase the country's "internationally embarrassing recycling rate".



ACOR CEO Grant Musgrove.

Pointing to a 2013 report by the OECD, ACOR CEO Grant Musgrove said Australia was losing the recycling race. Despite being one of the richest countries in the world, the country ranked 13th in terms of recycling.

According to the report, Australia's rate of recycling sat at 41%. Germany, which topped the list, recycled 65% of its total municipal waste, followed by South Korea at 59%. Yet, Australia came in 7th in an IMF report that revealed the top 20 countries with the largest gross domestic product per capita in 2015, way ahead of Germany (19th) and South Korea, which did not make the top 20.

"Australia is losing the recycling race. This is despite being one of the richest countries in the world and having with one of the worst rates of waste generation," Musgrove said.

"Logically, we should have one of the highest recycling rates in the world."

And despite our poor performance, Musgrove questioned why no political party has so much as mentioned waste and recycling as part of their environment platform in this election campaign.

"We have an extraordinary disconnect between community expectations and government action. The community supports recycling but our national government is failing to take positive actions," Musgrove said.

He also pointed to the National Waste Policy, which provides a framework for Australia's waste management till 2020 and comprises 16 actions under six key directions, saying "progress against these directions has slowed to almost a complete halt since the strategy was agreed to in 2010 by the Commonwealth and all states and territories."

As Australians prepare to head to the polls, ACOR is calling on all parties to commit to five recommendations to improve the country's recycling performance:

- Parties should re-commit to the National Waste Strategy;

- Long-standing green procurement policies that were abolished by the Commonwealth by the federal government, for example the use of recycled materials such as paper and support for these markets, should be reinstated;
- Australia's anti-dumping regulations, such as the dumping of metals by China, should be enforced;
- The National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme's target of 50% should be increased to 70% or a scheme under the Product Stewardship Act should be mandated; and
- A mandatory product stewardship scheme for tyres, batteries, and fluorescent lights should be introduced.

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Aspermont Limited
Street Address 613-619 Wellington Street, Perth WA Australia 6000
Postal Address PO Box 78, Leederville, WA Australia 6902
Head Office Tel +61 8 6263 9100 **Head Office Fax** +61 8 6263 9148
e-mail contact@aspermont.com **website** www.aspermont.com **ABN** 66 000 375 048