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ACOR head slates government on Australian steel situation

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April 11, 2016 by Annmarie Unwin

The CEO of Australia's peak body for recycling has criticised policymakers in the wake of the country's steel industry woes, saying Arrium and Onesteel need not be in voluntary administration.

Grant Musgrove, CEO of the Australian Council of Recycling (ACOR), issued a statement on Friday (8 April) saying that Australia's steel companies are victims of China's overproduction, with the country either "willingly or inadvertently" destroying the market for steel and scrap metals as a result.

Mr Musgrove also asserted that relevant government ministers took no notice of ACOR's report on the scrap metal market, published last November, which noted that Chinese steel was "flooding" the Australian market and made several recommendations to stimulate the use of recovered metal from Australian recyclers.

ACOR sent its scrap metals analysis report to the appropriate federal ministers this past November. This had several recommendations to stimulate an economy for Australian derived recycled steels, which is worth \$2.4 billion a year:

- Formal support for use of recycled steel in projects across all tiers of government
- Elimination on taxes and levies on residual waste generated in the recycling process
- Offer freight subsidises to enable delivery of recyclables to processing facilities
- Enforcement of anti-dumping regulations to protect the Australian steel industry from dumped Chinese

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- Accelerated depreciation allowances for investment in recycling infrastructure and equipment.

However, Mr Musgrove says he received no response to the report. He accuses policymakers of “studiously ignoring” its findings and recommendations because they “were busy celebrating the China ‘Free’ Trade Agreement coming into force in late December 2015”.

“Today [Friday] we had our Industry Minister calling on the need for a procurement policy approach. I remind the Minister that he was part of the Cabinet that ripped buying recycled or local content where practical out of our national procurement policy in 2014, replacing it with a least cost approach,” said Mr Musgrove.

Industry Minister Chris Pine said on Friday that domestic governments ought to buy Australian steel, without going as far as to mandate this course of action. Meanwhile

“I support the Ministers change of position, but that fact that he is at odds with his colleagues is of great concern.

“The metals recycling industry does not want protectionism, but it’s time to stop being the only virgin in the brothel since the GFC. We are in a global currency and trade war and simply pretending it’s not happening,” added Mr Musgrove.

On Friday afternoon, Mr Musgrove told Waste Management Review that dialogue has reopened between ACOR and appropriate government contacts.



News

ACOR, metals, Musgrove, recycling, steel

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