

ACT GREENS POSITION ON NEW WASTE FACILITY PROPOSALS

SEPTEMBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

Waste and recycling are part of a vital ongoing national conversation about how to ensure the future liveability of our planet. The Greens remain committed to avoiding waste, encouraging recycling, and creating a circular economy where less waste ends up in landfill and more can be recycled and reused.

The ACT Greens have been listening to the concerns of community and businesses in relation to a number of development proposals for waste processing and recycling in Fyshwick. We believe that the community has justifiable concerns about environmental and air quality impacts, the scale of proposals and the impact of cumulative proposals on the evolution of this precinct.

The ACT Greens strongly support measures to ensure we treat waste as a resource and establish new industries to divert more waste from landfill. However, we also need to consider the many policy drivers that have led to a number of interstate businesses looking to the ACT to establish large waste processing and recycling businesses, many of which appear to involve large-scale waste transfer from outside the ACT. We believe that these proposals need to be considered in the context of their impact on the ACT as well as the region more broadly. There is also a need to ensure that proposals meet holistic environmental goals including minimising impact to the natural environment, protecting air quality and reducing whole of life carbon emissions.

BACKGROUND

Many people would remember the CRS waste incineration proposal for Fyshwick, and the FOY plastics to fuel (or 'waste to energy') proposal for Hume a number of years ago. The ACT Government did not have a policy on waste incineration or on waste-to-energy at the time, so the ACT Greens developed a position paper that outlines the many environmental and health impacts of such incineration proposals. The Greens were very concerned about the thermal treatment of waste contributing to emissions, noting that there are far cleaner, greener and more efficient ways of managing waste than burning it. The FOY proposal was withdrawn, and

CRS said that they would no longer incinerate waste as part of their proposal, given that we wouldn't support it.

We were very pleased that two years later, the Government finally developed a policy which reflected the Greens values in this space, and thus the Greens have been able to ensure incineration is now banned in the ACT Government's waste-to-energy policy. This was a real win for the ACT community.

TO INCREASE RESOURCE RECOVERY AND MINIMISE IMPACTS ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND OUR COMMUNITY, THE ACT GREENS WOULD IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:

1. PROVIDE CLEAR GUIDANCE AND REGULATION FOR THE WASTE AND RECYCLING INDUSTRY

Just as we now have a clear policy on waste to energy, we believe there should also be clear ACT Government waste policy direction and guidance for the business sector on how to support the desired outcomes. The Greens will work to provide clear waste policy direction to inform industry proposals and pursue measures to maximise resource recovery and highest value use of materials.

2. REQUIRE A LIFECYCLE ASSESSMENT FOR WASTE PROPOSALS

We believe that the best way for new waste technologies, processes and proposals to be assessed is with life cycle analysis, which takes into account the long term impacts of a facility and the broader waste and recycling outcomes. This analysis should be undertaken by an ACT Government agency with waste analysis expertise, rather than planning expertise.

The Greens are concerned that our current planning processes mean that waste proposals are not assessed for their waste policy outcomes, but only on their planning impacts, with pollution taken into account. We believe that waste facility proposals should be evaluated using waste policy expertise, not just planning expertise.

We believe that the absence of clear waste policy guidelines is leading to a problem where major waste proposals are only evaluated by the ACT Government via the planning system. The system then relies on EPA pollution regulations to ensure it isn't polluting excessively. However, neither the EPA nor EPSDD are currently able to consider the overall cumulative waste impacts and outcomes and ensure consistency with the government's waste policy goals through the planning process.

To address this, we would require waste facility proposals to be evaluated by waste experts for their alignment with ACT Government waste policy goals and lifecycle impacts. A positive evaluation would be required prior to applying for planning approval.

3. INTRODUCE A MORATORIUM ON NEW WASTE FACILITIES BEING APPROVED

We note the multiple proposals for waste facilities in Fyshwick currently: CRS waste facility, Ipswich St; Fragmentiser, Lithgow Street; and Hi-Qual waste facility, Tennant Street. Given that there are no such life cycle or waste outcome evaluations undertaken at present - particularly within EPSDD or the EPA, the Greens propose a moratorium on any new waste processing technologies or proposals being approved until:

- life cycle and impact assessments are undertaken for these proposals, either through waste expertise in ACT NoWaste, or through independent analysis through an EIS inquiry panel,
- a clear waste policy and assessment regulatory framework to guide industry proposals is established,
- a review of industrial zonings is undertaken, and
- a levy on interstate waste importation is investigated.

4. ESTABLISH A LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY INQUIRY INTO LAND USE ZONING FOR INDUSTRIAL SITES ACROSS THE ACT

The ACT Greens would like to see a Legislative Assembly Inquiry into zoning for industrial land use across the ACT to review how fit-for-purpose these zoning categories are in relation to the evolving nature of the city. We understand that there is also a review of industrial zoning underway internally within EPSDD which would inform this work, and will likely lead to a Draft Territory Variation Process, which will go to the Assembly's Planning Committee.

As an example, Fyshwick is evolving. It has traditionally been an area that has supported bulky goods retail, light industry, low impact recycling facilities, and a broad range of cottage industries. However, there are now a number of significant residential developments that are planned in the vicinity and it is close to environmentally sensitive areas including the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. We believe that the competing visions of Fyshwick need to be reconciled, in consultation with members of the community. We support a master planning process or similar for Fyshwick to establish a shared vision of the precinct and a clear pathway of how to realise this vision and resolve the conflicting proposals for land use. This may then require changes to the Territory Plan.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Greens will be announcing our detailed waste commitments for the election in the coming weeks. In the meantime, please note that our policies are [online here](#), and our election commitments [can be found here](#).