

## The Greens (WA) 2017 policy

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### Beyond Waste

The Greens (WA) envisage a future without waste.

A wasteful society is one which does not appropriately value resources, and one in which market mechanisms facilitate the perpetuation of a throwaway culture. This culture accepts the over-consumption of finite raw materials, built-in obsolescence, waste in our manufacturing processes, unnecessary packaging, single-use, disposable items and the resulting social, environmental and climate damage.

Today's waste management decisions leave a legacy for future generations. Waste in landfill generates many harmful pollutants, including methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide. Estimates of global greenhouse gas emissions include a large component of methane resulting from waste disposal.

Enhanced recovery of discarded materials presents considerable potential to positively contribute to climate change and sustainability solutions. It has the potential to create jobs within a sustainable economy.

The Greens (WA) acknowledge that progress towards a 'zero waste' society will require a significant shift in thinking and behaviour for West Australian people. We are committed to a realistic strategy that sets achievable targets and promotes a shared responsibility for waste.

Waste is a cross-sector issue affecting every aspect of the environment, economy and society. Sustainable solutions for waste must uphold the principles of zero waste – reduce, reuse, recycle – as described in the theory of the circular economy<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Aims**

*The Greens (WA) want:*

- a society that is actively and collaboratively progressing towards zero waste<sup>2</sup> by waste avoidance, reduction, re-use/repair, recycling and recovery
- to motivate individuals and businesses to understand and support the environmental, social and economic benefits of waste minimisation
- to minimise the use of limited resources
- specific targets to eliminate industrial and hazardous waste streams and drive clean production
- policy and financial incentives to develop processes for recycling and recovery of domestic and industrial wastes
- to remove economic drivers that encourage waste and wasteful practices
- a legislated, independent authority that protects the community and the environment from the impacts of toxic and hazardous waste streams

#### **Measures**

*The Greens (WA) will initiate and support legislation and actions that:*

- implement a fully costed and well-regulated container deposit system for Western Australia
- build a state waste strategy that fully articulates, prioritises and applies the waste hierarchy (avoidance and minimisation, reuse, recycling, recovery, disposal)
- has a focus on reducing biodegradable waste to landfill to minimum levels within ten years
- require mandatory extended producer responsibility / product stewardship by manufacturers and importers of consumer goods, particularly electronic goods
- require mandatory reduction of packaging material by manufacturers and retailers of consumer goods
- creates incentives for industrial design responsibility which reduces virgin resource<sup>3</sup> use in the manufacture of products, and which requires full recyclability of products where possible
- ensure that the full ecological costs of resources and waste management are borne by the producer
- ensure that any new proposals that generate dioxin and persistent organic pollutants<sup>4</sup> (such as mixed waste landfills) comply with Australia's obligations under the Stockholm Treaty and phase out any existing non-complying technologies
- prevent the term 'recycling or recovery' being used to justify export to, or siting of, waste treatment facilities in disadvantaged communities in Australia or overseas
- reject the incineration of waste through thermal waste technologies, such as, mass combustion incineration, pyrolysis, gasification, plasma arc and direct thermal desorption
- reject the classification of energy produced by thermal waste technologies as renewable energy
- ensure stringent standards are met for waste derived soil amendments, composts and 'fertilisers' to prevent contamination of agricultural lands and to increase soil productivity
- provide government incentives and education schemes for home composting systems that divert putrescible organic waste from landfill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- provide government incentives and education schemes for local government and private alternative waste management treatment options that divert putrescible organic waste from landfill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- establish specific rules to minimise waste from materials in the construction and demolition industry in Western Australia through application of the waste hierarchy
- develop appropriate planning and infrastructure plans to ensure waste management is incorporated into urban and regional planning with appropriate legislated buffer zones
- educate the community about the consequences of generating waste and the benefits of and ways to participate in application of the waste hierarchy
- create cost efficient reporting systems to define the true volumes, generators and types of waste, so as to target reduction strategies and evaluate success
- research, fund and publicise independent testing and evaluation of products to minimise the manufacture, import and sale of products found to be unreliable,

transitory, inefficient, non-recyclable, unreasonably costly to repair, toxic or dangerous

- improve the funding of government regulatory agencies to ensure safer and better waste management facilities and landfills
- ensure that local governments are fully supported and well-resourced to apply recovery and recycling schemes which divert waste from landfill
- redirect revenues from the fines collected under the *Waste Levy Act* to the relevant local governments
- ensure the waste levy is spent on waste management strategies in line with the waste hierarchy
- support and fund comprehensive recycling and recovery infrastructure tailored to regional Western Australia
- adopt appropriate Best Practice Environment Management (BPEM) guidelines for the siting and management of landfills in WA, along the lines of the BPEM guidelines issued by the Victorian EPA. These guidelines should include clear advice regarding the siting of the landfills in relation to nearby sensitive flora and fauna populations and groundwater resources, as well as management of predator and scavenger species.

(See also [the Australian Greens Waste](#) policy)

## Glossary

1. The **circular economy** is a generic term for an industrial economy that is producing no waste and pollution, by design or intention, and in which material flows are of two types: biological nutrients, designed to re-enter the biosphere safely, and technical nutrients, which are designed to circulate at high quality in the production system without entering the biosphere as well as being restorative and regenerative by design. This is contrast to a linear economy which is a 'take, make, dispose' model of production (*Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2016*).
2. **Zero Waste** – Zero Waste requires eliminating subsidies for raw material extraction and waste disposal, and holding producers responsible for their products and packaging 'from cradle to cradle'. It also refers to the policies and practice that support the development of beneficial uses for materials currently deemed 'waste' which then become resources.
3. **Virgin resources** –newly extracted and processed raw materials containing no recycled content.
4. **Persistent organic pollutants** - Persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are a class of chemicals that persist in the environment, are capable of long-range transport, bio-accumulate in human and animal tissue, and have significant impacts on human health and the environment, even at low concentrations. They include such substances as dioxin, PCBs and DDT.

## Beyond Waste policy ratified by The Greens (WA) in 2017