

Inquiry into solar panel reuse and recycling in Australia

Banyule City Council Submission

24 March 2026



Submission: Inquiry into solar panel reuse and recycling in Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water on “Solar panel reuse and recycling in Australia.”

Banyule City Council is making this submission as the owner and operator of a Resource Recovery Centre, and in response to strong community interest in having viable options to recycle or reuse end-of-life solar panels. Recent community engagement identified solar panel recycling as a priority area and for Council to advocate for improved access and infrastructure.

Banyule Resource Recovery Centre

Victoria has 271 Resource Recovery Centres (RRCs) and transfer stations. Banyule owns and operates one of these facilities, located in Bellfield. The site accepts more than 18 product streams, including tyres, household batteries, household electrical waste and paint. It serves as a collection point for several national product stewardship schemes:

Paint – PaintBack

E-waste - Televisions and Computers - National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme

Batteries - Household, power tool and handheld device batteries – B-Cycle

This site also accommodates Council’s operations depot, fleet storage, an education facility, staff offices and Visy’s Heidelberg Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).

National Product Stewardship

Banyule City Council strongly supports the establishment of a regulated or co-regulated national product stewardship scheme for solar PV panels. Council endorses the recommendation in the Productivity Commission Report to establish a national product stewardship scheme, where solar panel manufacturers, importers and retailers take on a shared responsibility for end-of-life management.

A national scheme is essential to achieving national and state circular economy outcomes and must:

- ensure full cost recovery for collection, transport and processing
- provide funding for local government-managed RRCs to act as collection points
- support infrastructure upgrades where required
- ensure equitable access to drop-off services across metropolitan and regional areas
- be supported by coordinated state-level planning and guidance

Section (b): Current Disposal Practices and Trends

Banyule’s experience with the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme (NTCRS) demonstrates the value of a well-designed stewardship scheme. Community members consistently express support for the scheme, where recycling costs are incorporated into the purchase price, and the NTCRS enables Banyule to offer free drop-off while meeting community expectations for responsible recycling.

Site limitations

Banyule's RRC does not currently have the storage capacity or infrastructure required to safely collect and store end-of-life solar panels. As solar panels are large and require:

- significant hardstand space
- covered storage
- appropriate manual handling areas and vehicle access

Given the site's existing operational constraints and co-location with other critical Council and MRF functions, Banyule is unable to expand its accepted product list to include solar panels. Ideally, Council would offer solar panel drop-off services to the community. Where this is not feasible, Banyule would work with neighbouring RRCs to ensure reasonable access to disposal options for residents and businesses.

Victorian government infrastructure planning

The *Victorian Recycling Infrastructure Plan 2024* (VRIP) reports that RRCs, and transfer stations are expected to manage material flows until 2053 and will play a critical role in aggregating materials as landfills reach capacity. However, the VRIP does not identify which sites will serve as future aggregation hubs.

Additionally, the VRIP states that many local government-owned facilities will face challenges due to ageing infrastructure, population change and rising operating costs, suggesting opportunities for consolidation of collection points. However, the plan does not specify which assets may be prioritised for future investment or upgrades.

This lack of clarity makes it difficult for councils to plan for new stewardship schemes, including solar panel recycling, and creates uncertainty about long-term infrastructure and roles and responsibilities to support existing and new schemes.

Coordination and State-Level Leadership

Since the abolishment of Victoria's Waste and Resource Recovery Groups in 2022, Sustainability Victoria (2026) and the transition of Recycling Victoria into the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), councils have experienced reduced coordination on waste and resource recovery planning, including supporting the delivering of product stewardship schemes.

Across Victoria's 271 RRCs and transfer stations, not all sites can act as collection points for stewardship programs. Therefore, it is essential that a coordinated state-led approach is essential to:

- identify suitable collection sites
- ensure equitable access for residents and businesses
- provide funding for necessary infrastructure upgrades
- align state infrastructure planning to support implementation of national stewardship

With the above changes, Victoria is lacking strategic coordination and leadership at the state government level, this impacts local government's ability to support national stewardship schemes.

Banyule's Towards Zero Waste Management Plan 2024 – 2028, outlines the vision where our community is motivated to achieve zero waste to landfill by 2030. To support this vision, the plan is based on four key strategic directions:

- Avoid waste generation
- Build, support and strengthen a community culture that is striving to be zero waste.
- Deliver environmentally responsible and cost-effective recycling and waste services.
- Advocate to other levels of government to avoid waste to landfill and increase recycling.

In addition, the plan includes **Action 32**, which commits Council to advocate to the Federal Government for product stewardship schemes for priority items, including solar panels.

Section h. any other relevant matter

Batteries continue to be a high-risk issue for council, particularly lithium batteries. Banyule strongly supports the federal government prioritising the establishment of a national product stewardship for all batteries. With NSW introducing the first mandatory battery stewardship scheme in 2025, Council believes a federally led national approach is essential to ensure consistency, safety, and effectiveness across all jurisdictions.