

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

WASTE DISPOSAL

**A report from the Senate Standing Committee on Environment,
Recreation and the Arts**

SEPTEMBER 1994

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PREFACE

Terms of Reference

On 17 November 1993 the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts received a reference on existing and developmental waste disposal facilities and methods including:

- (a) the use of incineration as a means of disposal of waste and energy recovery;
- (b) the application of alternative technologies to the disposal of toxic and hazardous wastes (including but not limited to mechanochemical destruction; base catalysed dechlorination; plasma arc; molten metal, slag and salt; hydrogenation; and biological remediation); and
- (c) the potential for commercial development and the export opportunities of methods of waste disposal and waste disposal technologies.

In its inquiry, the Committee was required to take particular account of the findings and recommendations contained in the following reports

- Independent Panel on Intractable Waste - Report entitled *A Cleaner Australia*, dated 6 November 1992; and
- Scheduled Wastes Working Group - *Report to the Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council* (ANZECC), dated 22 May 1993.

Conduct of the Inquiry

The inquiry was advertised nationally on 20 November 1993. The Committee receive 89 submissions and a number of supplementary submissions, which are listed in Appendix 1.

The Committee examined 103 witnesses at 10 public hearings representing 60 individuals or organisations, which are listed in Appendix 2.

During the inquiry, the Committee held public hearings and inspections in the following places:

Public Hearings

Canberra	1 March 1994
Perth	8 March 1994
Canberra	30 March 1994
Wollongong	18 April 1994
Sydney	19 April 1994
Sydney	20 April 1994
Brisbane	21 April 1994
Melbourne	27 April 1994
Melbourne	28 April 1994
Geelong	29 April 1994

Inspections

University of Western Australia	8 March 1994
Dalite Holdings	8 March 1994
Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre	30 March 1994
EnvIRONment Process	18 April 1994
Waverley/Woollahra Process Plant	19 April 1994
Kolback Environmental Services.	20 April 1994
BCD Technologies	21 April 1994
Technosafe Waste Disposal	27 April 1994
Worth Environmental	27 April 1994
SRL Plasma Limited and CSIRO	28 April 1994
Blue Circle Southern Cement	29 April 1994
Geelong Cement facilities	29 April 1994

Acknowledgments

The Committee wishes to thank all those who participated in the inquiry by appearing as witnesses, providing written submissions and assisting with the arrangements for Committee meetings and inspections. The Committee is grateful for the interest shown, cooperation and the advice provided.

Although the Committee was not able to take oral evidence from everyone who provided submissions or to cite all submissions in the report, the Committee considered all the information provided in determining the conclusions in the report.

John Devereux
Chairman

The Senate
Canberra
September 1994

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACTEW	Australian Capital Territory Electricity and Water
ANZECC	Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council
ATD	CRA's Advanced Technical Development laboratory
BCD	base-catalyse decomposition (or dechlorinisation)
CDDs	chlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins
CDFs	chlorinated dibenzofurans
CDL	Container Deposit Legislation
CEPA	Commonwealth Environment Protection Agency
DDT	dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane
EMIAA	Environmental Management Industry Association of Australia
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
HCB	hexachlorobenzene
HTI	high temperature incinerator
NEPC	National Environment Protection Council
PAHs	polyaromatic hydrocarbons
PCBs	polychlorinated biphenyls
PET	polyethylene
POHCs	principal organic hazardous constituents
PVC	polyvinyl chloride
RDF	refuse derived fuel
TCLP	toxic characteristics leaching procedure
VGS	Viking Gasification System

RECOMMENDATIONS

Hospital Wastes

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Government investigate the need for legislation relating to the transport of hospital wastes across borders and implement an appropriate strategy to reduce the risks associated with the transport and treatment of hospital wastes (Paragraph 3.105).

Municipal Incineration

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that approvals for the construction of incinerators should include recycling and waste to energy facilities (Paragraph 3.107).

High Temperature Incineration

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that technologies designed to reuse or recycle be given priority, and environmentally friendlier alternative technologies for the destruction of scheduled waste be considered in preference to high temperature incineration (Paragraph 5.37).

Scheduled Waste

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that enterprises be required to disclose the quantities of scheduled wastes they have stored and that these be stored in National Environment Protection Council approved premises, and that an agreement for their disposal, or a research proposal for their reuse or recycling, be made with the National Environment Protection Council by the year 2001 (Paragraph 5.138).

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that enterprises be required to have scheduled waste disposed of according to the terms of an agreement with the National Environment Protection Council by an environmentally acceptable process, at a rate which is commercially feasible (Paragraph 5.139).

Cement Kilns

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Government investigate the potential and feasibility of using cement kilns for the disposal of particular waste streams (Paragraph 6.37).

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Government investigate the avenues available to regulate the use of materials for recycling in preference to their use as a supplementary fuel (Paragraph 6.39).

Independent Panels

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that independent panels be established to facilitate the settlement of ongoing disputes with regard to waste management issues (Paragraph 7.43).

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the members of these panels be determined by the National Environment Protection Council and not have members from the State or Territory in which the dispute occurs (Paragraph 7.44).

Import of Scheduled Wastes

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that a permanent ban on the import and export of scheduled wastes be implemented except in cases where technologies are developed which recycle them into useful products which are not hazardous (Paragraph 9.35).

Recycling

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that where technology is available governments work with industry to encourage the use of recycled materials instead of raw materials (Paragraph 11.50).

Consultative Processes

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that as a matter of urgency, Commonwealth Environment Protection Agency be required to establish formal and informal consultative processes with local, State and Territory governments, industry and the broader community on all the major principles of waste management, particularly those relating to the *National Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy* (Paragraph 11.62).

Waste Reduction Targets

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the Government give priority to the measurement, review and monitoring of performance against the waste reduction targets contained in the *National Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy*, and that the Minister provide details of the actions taken when responding to this report in Parliament (Paragraph 11.65).

Monitoring Program

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that as a matter of urgency, the Commonwealth Environment Protection Agency monitor the effectiveness of all measures adopted so as to ensure that the desired outcome is achieved, and provide ongoing reports to this Committee (Paragraph 11.67).

Review of Technologies for Disposal of Scheduled Wastes

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that emphasis be given to the prompt dissemination to local, State and Territory governments, industry and the broader community of the information collected in the review of available technology for the treatment of scheduled wastes (Paragraph 11.69).

Local Government

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the Government:

- recognise the central role of local governments in waste management;
- include representatives of Australian local government associations in national waste management planning;
- assist local government to disseminate information about the costs and benefits of waste management options; and
- encourage local governments to exchange information about developments in waste management (Paragraph 11.70).

National Standards

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the National Environment Protection Council be requested to give the determination of national standards priority on its agenda (Paragraph 11.73).