

Chapter 1

Introduction

Referral and terms of reference

1.1 On 17 August 2017 the Senate referred the following matter for inquiry and report by 29 November 2017:

The waste and recycling industry in Australia, with particular reference to:

- (a) the quantity of solid waste generated and the rate of diversion of solid waste for recycling;
- (b) the accreditation and management of landfills;
- (c) the extent of illegal landfilling;
- (d) the role of landfill levies in determining the end destination of material, including the hypothecation of collected levies for enforcement and waste diversion purposes;
- (e) the role of different incentives and collection methods in determining the quality and quantity of material collected for recycling;
- (f) the destination of material collected for recycling, including the extent of material reprocessing and the stockpiling of collected material;
- (g) the current economic conditions in the industry, including the market for material collected for recycling;
- (h) the transportation of solid waste across state boundaries;
- (i) the role of the Australian Government in providing a coherent, efficient and environmentally responsible approach to solid waste management, including by facilitating a federal approach; and
- (j) any other related matters.¹

1.2 On 14 November 2017, the Senate granted an extension of time to report until 13 June 2018.²

1.3 On 12 June 2018, the committee presented a progress report seeking an extension of time to report until 26 June 2018.³

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 55, 17 August 2017, p. 1759.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 69, 14 November 2017, p. 2208.

3 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 98, 18 June 2018, p. 3121.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.4 In accordance with its usual practice, the committee advertised the inquiry on its website and wrote to relevant individuals and organisations inviting submissions. The date for receipt of submissions was 20 October 2017. The committee received 63 submissions, which are listed at Appendix 1.

1.5 The committee held public hearings in:

- Melbourne on 20 November 2017;
- Sydney on 14 March 2018;
- Canberra on 21 March 2018; and
- Brisbane on 30 April 2018.

1.6 Following the public hearing in Brisbane on 30 April 2018, the committee also conducted a site visit to the REMONDIS Swanbank Renewable Energy and Waste Management Facility.

1.7 The list of witnesses who participated in public hearings is at Appendix 2.

1.8 The public submissions, additional information received and *Hansard* transcript are available on the committee's website at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/WasteandRecycling.

Acknowledgment

1.9 The committee would like to thank the organisations and individuals who provided evidence to the inquiry.

Structure of the report

1.10 This report comprises eight chapters, as follows:

- Chapter 1 outlines introductory matters regarding the referral and conduct of the inquiry.
- Chapter 2 summarises the waste management and recycling sectors in Australia; considers the generation and fate of waste; the deficiencies in waste data; and the regulation of waste.
- Chapter 3 discusses issues related to the management of landfill.
- Chapter 4 canvasses evidence received regarding landfill levies.
- Chapter 5 examines the current state of Australia's recycling industry including the impact of market volatility and demand, and recent changes in international markets.
- Chapter 6 outlines other issues affecting the recycling sector related to the collection, sorting, and processing of materials.

- Chapter 7 explores opportunities for national leadership in improving the management of waste and recycling.
- Chapter 8 contains the committee's views and recommendations.

