

Media Release

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CALLS FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON WASTE EXPORT BAN

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The peak body for local government officers has called for significant Commonwealth investment in the recycling industry as a potentially disruptive ban on waste exports looms.

“Local government is on the frontlines of Australia’s recycling – at a significant cost to communities – and a hasty ban without proper consultation with local government can undermine its purpose and an opportunity for national leadership,” said Local Government Professionals Australia President, Mark Crawley.

“There is definitely a call for national leadership, but what is needed is direction that is nationally consistent but still regionally specific,” said Mr Crawley.

The key calls are for national co-ordination, support for councils in implementing the ban, and investment in the physical infrastructure required to localise recycling industries.

State Environment Ministers agreed to a progressive phase-out of plastic, paper, glass and tyre waste exports from July 2020, following a Council of Australian Government (COAG) directive in August 2019.

Local Government Professionals Australia has identified six ways the Australian Government could support local government in a submission on the development of Federal strategies to support the ban following consultation with the sector:

1. *Promoting and supporting the development of regional recycling hubs across Australia through collaboration between local government and private enterprise*
2. *Considering a range of State and Federal investment into recycling infrastructure from supporting start-up technologies to upgrading existing facilities and constructing new high-quality reprocessing and repurposing facilities*
3. *Changing procurement policies for all levels of government to include the use of locally processed recycled materials in projects*
4. *Encouraging State governments to reinvest a higher proportion of State levies back into councils for the managing of and investment into recycling*
5. *Providing national policy guidance and standards on kerbside recycling and education programs including product stewardship and reducing single-use packaging*
6. *Reviewing the current recycling sector for more transparency, quality assurance and competition.*

While national leadership is being called for, the importance of regional solutions was a clear message from local government respondents.

“What became increasingly clear when we consulted with such varied councils is that a one-size-fits-all policy would not reflect the complexities of recycling at State, regional and local levels,” said Local



Government Professionals Australia CEO, Clare Sullivan.

“Some local governments have been really proactive in this space and others have co-operated quite well, but some of the more isolated councils haven’t had that luxury,” said Ms Sullivan.

During consultation with the sector, some local government respondents noted the possibility of recyclable waste going straight to landfill, where incurring State levy penalties for this would actually be cheaper than paying contractors in some areas to take the waste.

Costs to communities of recycling have increased significantly since China’s ban on waste imports in recent years, with for-profit contractors charging councils higher prices to collect, sort, reprocess and on-sell materials. While local government has expected further national action since, the key message for Federal Government is to make sure they slow the pace of the ban and bring local government more deeply into the conversation.

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About Local Government Professionals Australia

Local Government Professionals Australia is the national component of the peak body representing local government professionals, with a focus on developing organisations and the broader local government sector, to build better communities around Australia.

Since the foundation of the organisation in 1936, LG Professionals Australia has created opportunities for the near 200,000 local government workforce across over 500 councils to come together to share ideas, discuss challenges and learn new ways of practice.

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