Managing e-waste in Victoria – starting the conversation

City of Whittlesea Submission - Brad Byrne Coordinator Waste Management

Introduction

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has released the public discussion paper, *Managing e-waste in Victoria*, to invite feedback on possible approaches and issues with implementing the State's election commitment to ban e-waste from landfill.

The discussion paper indicates that the State is interested in considering both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to the ban. It anticipates releasing a regulatory impact statement (RIS) together with any draft legislation in relation to preferred regulatory approaches in mid-2016. Implementation of the ban is expected early-mid 2017.

The following submission is written on behalf of the City of Whittlesea from a Council officers perspective only, following an internal consultation and engagement process and review of *Managing e-waste in Victoria* discussion paper. The submission aims to identify uncertainties and queries in implementing such a ban, whilst also recognising the opportunities the ban can create. The submission is positioned from a local government perspective experiencing rapid growth at the interface of the urban/rural zone of Melbourne.

Discussion

Definition of e-waste and e-waste categories:

> *Electrical or electronic equipment with a power cord or battery and its parts that have been discarded by the owner as waste without the intention of re-use.*

- The definition of e-waste as outlined in the discussion paper is very broad. The definition makes mention of e-waste as 'being discarded without the intention of re-use', in many cases this might not be accurate given peoples intentions may be to in fact have the item re-used or recycled but the options are not available to them.

E-waste categories:

- *Large appliances*
- *Small appliances*
- *IT, telecommunications*
- *TV equipment*
- *Lighting equipment*
- *Electrical and electronic tools*
- *Toys, leisure and sports equipment*
- *Other e-waste*

- While the seven categories of e-waste as outlined in the paper goes some way in broadly grouping e-waste items, consideration should be given to develop a comprehensive list of all items that fall into these categories. Consideration should also be given to identify those items which fall into the 'Other' category as outlined in the European Union's Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive.

E-waste criteria:

- The establishment of e-waste criteria to determine the best approach to meet the needs of the environment, industry and community is sound, however, the current list as identified in the discussion paper should be more comprehensive in its entirety, including reference to re-use options. While it is acknowledged that the criteria is not limited to those listed in the document, more work should be completed in developing a robust list of criteria prior to further comment.

Consequences of an e-waste ban:

- Increased incidence of dumped rubbish increase
- Increased operational costs for local government
- Interstate e-waste transportation
- Overseas e-waste transportation and transfer of e-waste burden to poverty stricken countries

Current strategies to prevent e-waste to landfill:

- **TV and Computer Product Stewardship scheme** - The TV and Computer Product Stewardship scheme was also considered an important step when reflecting on the roles and responsibilities of industry in the e-waste problem. The City of Whittlesea is active in establishing partnerships with e-waste recyclers and to ensure sustainable initiatives such as this are promoted amongst our residents. Council Officers would encourage the expansion of such as program to include other e-waste category types and a continuation of funding to support the ongoing management of the scheme.

- **Free drop-off days** - Council has also had some success when running free television and computer recycling drop-off days at sites throughout the municipality. Council Officers would encourage an increase in support and funding of free television and computer recycling drop-off days which would enable an increase in frequency for such events.

- **Raspberry Pi -** Teaching children to build low-cost computers using e-waste could be an important part of the e-waste solution. The City of Whittlesea encourages viable e-waste recycling programs and has had some recent success with the 'Raspberry Pi Project'. Small and low cost computing devices, such as the Raspberry Pi, have opened up opportunities linked to the productive re-use of old computer hardware. A fully functioning computer can be built for less than AU$100. A low cost computer

trial was conducted at Lalor Primary School (Lalor PS) using old computer e-waste hardware powered by Raspberry Pi computers. Children were taught about the origins of electronic waste, how to use the Linux operating system and related open source software, and introduced to electronics and robotics. The Raspberry Pi project won the Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria (KABV) Sustainable Cities award for Resource Recovery and Waste Management in 2015 in partnership with Lalor PS, Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries, La Trobe University and City of Whittlesea. The Raspberry Pi is a lower cost option for schools and students, but it needs to be supported with education, training and funding. This project could also be extended to old and out-dated laptops and desktops to extend their useful life, especially for use by school aged students.

- **Bright Sparks Project -** A new social enterprise specialising in reuse and repair for small electrical appliances. Bright Sparks will rescue small appliances to keep them out of landfill. Residents can donate unwanted or broken appliances, get their appliances repaired affordably, or buy good-as-new kitchen appliances, household appliances, lighting and electronics. Bright Sparks has begun a pilot project with funding from the Victorian Government (through the Metropolitan Local Government Waste and Resource Recovery Fund) and five councils -- Moreland, Boroondara, Darebin, Whittlesea and Yarra.

Tools to achieve a successful e-waste ban:

- **Pre ban phase –** Council Officers would advocate for an extensive lead in time prior to the ban being put in place. This would allow for a comprehensive education and marketing plan to be implemented and the establishment of required infrastructure and resources to manage e-waste.

- **Federal Policy –** while a ban on e-waste to landfill across Victoria is supported, Council Officers advocate that such a ban is best lead by Federal Government Policy. As with the TV and Computer Product Stewardship scheme it is evident that a nation-wide approach to such a ban would increase the likelihood of its success.

- **Fiscal support for Local Government** - While the guiding principles outlined in the discussion paper are a good start there is no mention of fiscal support for local government. When you consider the unintended consequences such as dumping and a heavy reliance on local government to dispose of e-waste, financial aid is essential in the success of the e-waste ban. Most notably local government would require funding for additional education and behaviour change programs and infrastructure such as a transfer station or front-end sorting facility.

- **In depth case study investigation** – The discussion paper touches briefly on some case studies from around the world, however, Council Officers believe an essential component to any due diligence is a comprehensive investigation into existing case studies, more extensive than what has already been completed in the discussion paper.

- **Litter Prevention Officers** – Council Officers would advocate for the expansion of the litter prevention officer taskforce. It is evident that the responsibilities of litter prevention officer's span not only in planning and implementing litter awareness, education, and enforcement programs but also in establishing partnerships across organisations that drive behaviour change.

- **Environmental Justice** - Council Officers would like to acknowledge the importance of environmental justice as a guiding principal which promotes the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens and equal access to the decision-making process around the e-waste ban and its social, environmental and economic implications.

- **Recycling technology and innovation –** support of new technologies and innovation to ensure e-waste recycling options are expanded continually.