1 November 2015

Waste and Resource Efficiency team

Sustainability Policy

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

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Dear Sir

**Comments on the Discussion Paper: Managing e-waste in Victoria –Starting the Conversation**

The Consumer Electronics Suppliers Association (CESA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above Discussion Paper regarding managing e-waste in Victoria and the proposal to ban e-waste from landfill.

CESA is the premier national, industry body in Australia representing the consumer electronics industry suppliers, retailers and recyclers. CESA was instrumental in the development and implementation of the industry led product stewardship initiative for televisions through the establishment of Product Stewardship Australia (PSA). CESA and PSA were key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Commonwealth’s National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme (NTCRS).

**General Comments**

CESA endorses the broad Government objectives outlined in the Discussion Paper to:

* **Adhere to the key policy principle** that outcomes will reflect a net environment, social and economic benefit to the Victorian community. CESA looks forward to commenting on the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) which will outline preferred approaches and draft legislation.
* **Establish an e-waste criteria** that will be applied to the various e-waste types to help determine the approach that best meets the needs of the Victorian environment, industry and community.
* **Increase community awareness** of e-waste, its impacts, risks and opportunities. CESA supports the comments:

 *A community that understands the value of both the electronic goods they purchase and the impacts of these goods once discarded, will help to sustain a healthy e-waste recovery industry. Australian Studies show that the Australian community is very willing to pay to recycle, and strongly supports the recovery of non-renewable resources.*

* **Create more jobs** in the waste and resource recovery sector.
* **Improve recycling technology** by encouraging investment into the trial and introduction of new and improved technology, and into best practice recycling operations.

**Specific Issues**

In regard to the specific questions posed in the Discussion Paper, the following comments address those issues of most importance to CESA members.

**Scope of the proposed ban on e-waste to landfill**

CESA Members do not support the proposition that a total ban on e-waste to landfill is justified. CESA believes rigorous research is required to demonstrate the case for a legislative ban on e-waste to landfill in Victoria, particularly in the light of successful Commonwealth/State regulatory programs/legislation associated with product stewardship. The scope of the proposed approach, outlined in the Discussion Paper, includes a vast range of electronic products already adequately addressed under national, voluntary and mandatory recycling schemes:

* National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme (NTCRS)

Commencing in 2012, the National Scheme was developed by the Commonwealth/State Governments to regulate the recycling of televisions, computers and computer products (such as keyboards, mice and

hard drives) in Australia. The NTCRS is funded by product suppliers.

* Whitegoods (Refrigerators, Washing Machines, Dryers and Air Conditioners)

The Commonwealth Government considered whitegoods for inclusion under Federal e-waste Product Stewardship legislation and found that existing commercial arrangements (take back schemes) were adequate to address product stewardship for these products largely due to the value of the metals contained in the products.

* Mobilemuster

The successful, national, voluntary mobile phone recycling program collects mobile phones, accessories and batteries.

* Batteries

Commonwealth and State Environment Ministers recently agreed to development of a national recycling scheme for rechargeable and hazardous batteries.

* Cartridges 4 Planet Ark

A successful voluntary printer cartridge recycling scheme that has been running for 12 years.

* FluoroCycle

Is a scheme that aims to increase the recycling of lamps that contain mercury and reduce the amount of mercury entering the environment. To achieve this, FluoroCycle provides a national, voluntary recycling scheme.

CESA considers the substantial range and scope of products covered by the national programs listed above should not be included in the proposed e-waste landfill ban.

**Issues to be addressed in the event of a ban on e-waste to landfill**

Funding of alternatives to landfill

The cost of recycling most types of e-waste can be greater than the

revenues generated from the recovered materials, often making disposal to

landfill a cheaper option for managing e-waste. The alternative of recycling will require funding from the community either from equipment suppliers, consumers or state/local government. Ultimately, the costs will be passed to consumers in the form of higher prices or taxes. The funding mechanism is a complex issue and will require careful consideration particularly in regard to continued supply and availability of products to the Victorian market.

Compliance and enforcement are vital to successful regulation. Funding of effective enforcement will ensure participation from all stakeholders and a fair and level playing field.

Another cost issue is how to insure online suppliers and retailers in other states and overseas pay their share of the regulatory cost burden.

Reducing the Regulatory Burden

The Discussion Paper raises the issue of minimising the regulatory burden the impact of the ban, particularly on small business, may impose. CESA strongly supports this approach of consistency with the Commonwealth deregulation agenda.

A phased approach such as implementing a landfill ban on electronic products containing hazardous materials in the first instance would be more acceptable to industry. The removal of hazardous materials such as lead, mercury, arsenic, phosphor, and refrigerants from landfill would be less of a burden to industry and welcomed by the community.

Under investment in recycling technology and instability in e-waste volumes

Lack of sufficient and consistent volumes of e-waste available for recycling creates uncertainty for the industry, resulting in a reluctance to invest in e-waste recycling, a lag in implementation of new and improved processing technologies, and an insecure environment for jobs in e-waste recovery. It should be noted that under the NTCRS, state, territory and local governments retain responsibility for e-waste beyond the scheme’s recycling targets. Efforts by these organisations, particularly local governments, are vitally important to address gaps in e-waste management capacity and funding at the local level.

Standards

Mandatory minimum occupational health and safety standards for processing, collection and transportation of e-waste must be in place prior to introduction of a recycling program. Guidance and standards may differ for different waste streams.

Best Practice and Transparent Recycling

To ensure the development of an innovative and competent recycling capability, CESA believes the design of a scheme must demand transparent processes that fully comply with OH&S standards and best practice recycling. This includes ensuring recyclers are able to fully account for downstream movements and processes of the components and materials to the stage they become new raw materials suitable for manufacturing (as mandated in AS 5377). If this is not the case then the ban may lead to stimulating a rogue sector which will do more harm than good to the health and wellbeing of workers, the environment and the standing of e-waste recycling sector.

Consultation and Timing

Adequate consultation and lead-in timing is vital for the development of required recycling infrastructure (processing and transportation).

Finally, CESA welcomes the opportunity for further consultation with the Department on the Discussion Paper and future RIS, and is happy to clarify any of the comments above.

Yours sincerely



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Executive Director