



Victoria is in the midst of a waste crisis. The Greens' Waste Transition Plan takes the first bold steps towards a circular economy for Victoria to manage our waste better.

Landfill is often the first, not last resort for managing many different types of waste. In Victoria, we generated **12.7m tonnes** of waste in 2015/16, and a third was sent to landfill. With China cracking down on contaminated recycling in early 2018, Australia's recycling system is at risk of collapse. We can no longer afford to rely on our current 'take-make-dump' approach to how we make & use products.

The Greens' Waste Transition Plan represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to set us on a path to smarter use of resources & materials and to phase out landfills and problematic wastes. We are focused on an urgent statewide overhaul of Victorian waste management to lead Australia's transition to a circular economy.

The Greens plan will:

1. **Expand the local sorting & recycling industry** and boost demand for locally recycled content through state & local government procurement.
2. **End plastic pollution** by:
  - a. introducing a Container Deposit Scheme,
  - b. phasing out single-use plastics & microbeads, and
  - c. mandating 70% recycled content in packaging.
3. **Close the loop on food waste** by strengthening kerbside collection & expanding processing infrastructure to produce compost and other recycled products.

4. **Recycle smarter** by creating the Circular Economy Centre.
5. **Maintain waste-to-energy as a last resort** for managing health, safety & environmental impacts of waste treatment, disposal & storage.

The Greens' Waste Transition Plan can be accessed online at:

- <https://greens.org.au/vic/waste>

### TRANSITION PLAN FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The Greens believe public investment in waste reduction must always be prioritised using the Zero Waste Hierarchy. The Zero Waste Hierarchy prioritises waste management practices by accounting for the full extent of social, environmental and economic costs.

#### Zero Waste Hierarchy



Transitioning Victoria to a circular economy is geared towards applying the Zero Waste Hierarchy to every part of our economy.

# TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

## THE GREENS' PLAN FOR URGENT ACTION TO FIX VICTORIA'S WASTE CRISIS



### How a Circular Economy works



Restructuring Victoria's waste management system towards a circular economy means we can, by design, drastically reduce our waste, get the most value out of our resources for as long as possible, and protect our communities & environment from pollution.

By 2022, the Greens' Waste Transition Plan is designed to recover over **1.7m tonnes** from landfill each year & increase the Victorian waste diversion rate by **almost ten points**<sup>i</sup>. Our plan will also support local industries in business innovation & technological advancement in recycling. Importantly, our Waste Transition Plan will generate **1,520 secure local Victorian green jobs**.

### LOCAL RECYCLING, LOCAL JOBS

The fallout from China's ban on contaminated recycling has highlighted the urgent need to expand Victoria's local recycling capacity. We should be sorting & processing our recycling right here.

The Greens will invest an additional **\$100 million** in the Resource Recovery Infrastructure Fund. Expansion of local industry capacity to sort, process and recycle plastic, glass & paper will create over **1,200 secure green jobs** and ensure we are not caught out in a recycling crisis again.<sup>ii</sup> This would be on top of **\$60 million** for a dedicated plastics recycling plant & **\$45 million** for organics recycling infrastructure (see below).

Through our Waste Transition Plan, Victoria can:

- Create new & stable end markets for locally recycled materials and products;
- Increase source separation of plastic, paper, glass & metal to optimise the value of recyclable materials;
- Reduce the amount & risk of materials being stockpiled across Victoria;
- Simplify the range of materials, with a view to eliminating non-recyclable & problematic wastes.

We will:

- a) Invest \$100m to expand the capacity of our local recycling industry across Victoria;
- b) Set mandatory targets for recycled content in all state & local government procurement frameworks, to promote end markets for recycled materials;
- c) Change laws to encourage companies operating in Victoria to boost recycled content in all single use packaging to 70% over the next four years, after which financial penalties for non-compliance will operate;
- d) Increase the landfill levy across waste streams to encourage recycling & waste recovery. The levy funds will be used to deliver waste, climate change adaptation and circular economy initiatives;
- e) Introduce Extended Producer Responsibility Programs in Victoria and advocate for this nationally.

### ENDING PLASTIC POLLUTION

Environmental groups estimate that Australians use & throw away **five billion** plastic bags per year, and an estimated **three billion** disposable coffee cups are landfilled each year. Most plastic takes hundreds of years to degrade. This is having a devastating effect on marine animals & entire marine ecosystems.

The Greens have a plan to drastically cut plastic pollution at the source. We will:

- a) Introduce a container deposit scheme;
- b) Legally require companies to boost recycled content in their packaging;

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- c) Invest in local plastic recycling infrastructure & jobs;
- d) Phase out a wide range of single-use plastics;
- e) Introduce incentives for innovation that accelerate recycling & reuse.

For further details on the Greens Plan to End Plastic Pollution see:

- <https://plasticfreesea.com.au/>

## CLOSE THE LOOP ON FOOD WASTE

Victorians stand to gain huge opportunities to fight hunger, avoid food waste & divert as much food waste as possible from landfill. Victoria landfilled about **887,000 tonnes** of food & green waste in 2018, and only 40% is recycled.<sup>iii</sup>

Food waste that is sent to landfill has serious environmental impacts, releasing greenhouse gases, such as methane, a gas at least 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide, as well as leachate which can contaminate water supplies.<sup>iv</sup> Instead, we could make sure unused food is provided to Victorians in need. Or we could recycle food to produce compost.

The Greens aim to have Victoria:

- Close the loop on all food & green organic waste, so that none ends up in **landfills by 2030**;
- Create **320 secure green jobs**.<sup>v</sup>

We will:

- a) Ensure a kerbside 3-bin collection system that includes food & green organics (FOGO) is universal and mandatory across Victoria;
- b) Support & fund local councils in their transition to the 3-bin system;
- c) Expand local industry capacity to process food waste into compost, investing in organics processing plants & onsite recycling facilities to process an additional 350,000 tonnes of organic waste;

- d) Assist food rescue businesses & industry to collaborate on non-profit production of staple food items in bulk & fresh foods.

For further details on the Greens Plan to make Compost not Landfill see:

- <http://www.compostnotlandfill.org>

## RECYCLE SMARTER

The Greens will establish the Circular Economy Centre to enable industry, researchers & our communities to collaborate and generate knowledge & research to accelerate Victoria's transition to a circular economy. The Centre will:

- Foster collaboration between industry, researchers & community to change policy, regulation & practice for Victoria's rapid transition to a circular economy;
- Develop practical solutions to ongoing waste problems (e.g. non-recyclable or hazardous waste).

The Centre's initial focus will be on:

- a) Developing a Circular Economy road map in consultation with government, councils, & industry;
- b) Implementing a closed-loop for product or material or production process (e.g. for batteries, drink bottles, fabric);
- c) Explore regulation & enforcement to protect communities & phase out landfills & problematic wastes.

## WASTE-TO-ENERGY AS A LAST RESORT

The state government has been approving expansions of Victorian rubbish tips, instead of getting serious about an exit strategy for landfills.

The Greens take a 'precautionary approach' to the adoption of new technology - to ensure we do not create new problems whilst trying to fix existing ones. As per the Zero Waste Hierarchy, burning waste for energy should only ever be considered when all other higher-order waste management practices have been exhausted.

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There are two broad types of technologies that treat waste to make energy. There is incineration (burning) and biological treatments. Burning *mixed waste* (waste that is not a single type of material - e.g. paper only) is new territory for Victoria.

The Greens will require that any waste-to-energy proposals be considered within strict parameters.

These proposals must ensure:

- Safety for human health & the environment;
- Proposals are a viable & genuine alternative to landfill and have purposeful output;
- Proposals have a social licence to operate;
- Proposals do not use materials that can be recycled as feedstock;
- Regulation and operation complies with world's best practice.

Initiative	\$ (m)
Expand local recycling capacity	\$100m
Ending plastic pollution	\$78m
Close the loop on food waste	\$260m
Circular Economy Centre	\$10m
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$448m</b>
Increases in Landfill Levy	\$70m
<b>Total cost (over forward estimates)</b>	<b>\$378m</b>

## COST

The Greens Waste Transition Plan will be funded through improved use of the landfill levies collected into the Sustainability Fund. We will commit the following funds to each element of our plan.

<sup>i</sup> From 67% to 76%. See Waste Data Portal, <https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/Government/Victorian-Waste-data-portal/Victorian-Recycling-Industry-Annual-Report>

<sup>ii</sup> 2009 *Employment in Waste Management and Recycling* report 9.2 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs per 10 000 tonnes of recycling waste, <http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/waste-resource-recovery/publications/employment-waste-management-and-recycling>

<sup>iii</sup> Waste data portal <http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/Government/Victorian-Waste-data-portal>

<sup>iv</sup> Environment Victoria webpage, <https://environmentvictoria.org.au/resource/organic-waste/>

<sup>v</sup> See 2009 *Employment in Waste Management and Recycling* report for formula.