



2007 State Election Environment Policy Platform

Executive Summary:

The platform outlines the commitments being sought by Local Government and recommends NSW Government action.

Background:

The Associations' Environment Election Platform seeks commitments from the NSW Government in the following key policy areas:

- Waste reduction programs
- Weed control
- Container Deposit Legislation

Current Position:

Waste Reduction Programs:

The Government has legislated significant increases in the waste levy, which will increase incrementally by an indexed \$6.00 per tonne per year to reach approximately \$56 per tonne by 2011. This represents a gross income of some \$730 million over five years. The Government's environmental programs, committed under the City and Country Environmental Restoration Program, total some \$300 million over five years. Of this total, \$160 million has been committed to local government, via the waste performance payments scheme (\$80 million) and the Urban Sustainability Program (\$80 million).

Weed Control:

The government presently commits some \$7 million to weed control annually. This includes grants to local councils / weed control authorities.

Container Deposit Legislation:

The NSW Government has made a commitment to the National Packaging Covenant Mk 2, which expires in 2010. A mid year review will be undertaken in 2008, where the packaging industry's progress against covenant targets will be assessed.

Comment:

Waste Reduction Programs:

Local Government believes that a waste levy which is genuinely intended to provide an economic signal to discourage waste disposal should apply funds raised to the task of reducing waste. The Government's current commitment, at less than 50% of funds raised, falls well short of full hypothecation. The Associations believe that, in the absence of full hypothecation of the waste levy (the preferred position), the Government should allocate \$100million per year to waste reduction initiatives

Weed Control:

The Government's commitment has historically been shown to be insufficient, and the Associations have consistently requested a significant increase in funding.

Container Deposit Legislation:

The Associations do not support the National Packaging Covenant, the voluntary, co-regulatory approach to packaging waste. Management of packaging waste annually costs local councils many millions of dollars in litter control and in subsidising kerbside recycling services. These kerbside systems, despite their immense cost, do not return a high percentage of commodities. Current systems are not consistent with the principles of Extended Producer Responsibility, as they shift the onus onto councils. Container deposit legislation is a proven system, adopted in South Australian and many states and countries around the world. It results in high

return rates of well sorted, high value commodities, and fully addresses the significant “away from home” component of packaging.

Recommendation:

That the Government, Opposition and other candidates standing for election support and commit to:

- Waste levy funded waste reduction programs totaling \$100M per year. This funding should be used for:
 - Waste reduction education programs,
 - Garden waste and household food waste collection and processing initiatives,
 - Programs for the collection and processing of historic hazardous wastes such as asbestos,
 - Seed funding for Extended Producer Responsibility schemes which will be industry funded in the longer term.
- A significant increase in weeds funding, currently in the order of \$7M totaling \$15-20M per year.
- Introducing legislation for deposits on beverage containers if the national packaging covenant fails to deliver on its targets by its mid-term review in 2008.

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