

Submission on the draft Waste Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution to the future of waste emissions reduction and resilience in Tasmania. I am an average Tasmanian mother and scientist with serious concerns about current and future threats to the people and place I love. My concerns are based on the scientific consensus that our society needs to rapidly cut emissions and become a circular economy. My suggestions for the Waste ERRP reflect this need.

December is a busy time of year and I regret not having enough time to write a more complete submission. I will focus my submission on the core area of food waste in Tasmania since it is an important issue worldwide and the solutions have many co-benefits in Tasmania.

As I'm sure you are aware, the United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organisation have reported that "If food waste was a country, it would be the world's third highest greenhouse gas emitter."

The University of Tasmania have found that "One in two (51%) of Tasmanian households has experienced food insecurity over the previous month. This is nearly double the rate recorded in May 2021 (27%)."

(<https://www.utas.edu.au/research/institutes-and-centres/isc/updates/articles/hunger-and-food-insecurity-in-2022>).

No one in Tasmania wants to see food waste and insecurity continue. Advances in this area will have broad community support and should be relatively easy to implement.

With the weak Climate Change (State Action) legislation, the Tasmanian community are looking to the Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans (ERRPs) to do much of the heavy lifting in emissions reduction and resilience. I'd like to see more ambition and urgency in the Waste ERRP.

Tasmania should expand on our clean green image by implementing:

1. a zero organic waste to landfill policy
2. a zero food waste policy

There are many advantages of this, as well as the important emissions reductions. Both policies would demonstrate Tasmania's commitment to a circular economy.

Food waste in Tasmania sends 48.3 kilo tonnes to landfill every year ([https://nre.tas.gov.au/Documents/Organic%20Waste%20in%20Tasmania%20-%20Info sheet.pdf](https://nre.tas.gov.au/Documents/Organic%20Waste%20in%20Tasmania%20-%20Info%20sheet.pdf)). This is absolutely unacceptable when Tasmanians are going hungry and our soils lose nutrients. This amount is additional to the 25 tonnes of food donated to the extraordinary organisation, [Loaves and Fishes](#), every week!

While households account for approximately one third of food waste, the remaining two thirds are from other sectors. Tasmania needs a whole system approach to eliminating food waste. The Tasmanian Organics Strategic Framework recommends the adoption of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) principles to shift from organic waste generation to resource recovery. I would like to see this applied in the final Waste ERRP.

In 2016, France legislated a ban on food waste from large supermarkets. I would like to see a similar ban here, but it should extend to all retailers, primary producers and manufacturers. It should be accompanied by an increase in funding for food rescue charities to manage the increased amount of donations. The French law compels supermarkets to sort produce and donate packaged goods 48hrs before their expiry date. This improves the quality of donated food.

Starting with food waste in the commercial sector, normalises the reduction of food waste among the wider community and has the flow-on effect of getting people to change their habits.

The current cost of living crisis is the perfect time to tackle food waste in Tasmania. This will have a significant reduction in the GHG emissions from organic waste.

Smaller retailers should be included in the food waste ban. Many of these have a policy of providing their full range of fresh food items, right up to their closing time. This leads to a significant “food waste by design” problem. I am aware of a bakery in Hobart, that disposes of more food than the local bin divers can rescue.

A short story about fighting food waste:

Some years ago, I became aware of just how much food is wasted and sent to landfill by supermarkets and other retailers in Tasmania. As a University of Tasmania employee, I found that many students were meeting most of their food needs from local supermarket bins. While this is an admirable and efficient recovery of resources, they are not recovering all the wasted food.

Below are photos of a typical food haul recovered from one small independent supermarket bin and one larger supplier bin on one day. Extrapolating this to all food outlets across Tasmania, illustrates the scale of the food waste problem each and every day.





I wrongly assumed that if we could make the owners and managers of these supermarkets aware of how much food they were wasting, their practices would improve. A friend and I contacted the CEO of the popular independent supermarket chain that was the source of one of the above photos. They met with us and seemed genuinely concerned about their food waste problem. However, this concern has not translated into any noticeable reduction in the amount of good quality food in their bins. This is despite claiming on their website that they “have reduced their food waste”.

Anecdotal evidence from many student bin divers show that this chain of supermarkets continues to put a lot of food into their landfill bins, despite their promises to redirect their food waste. In fact, there is so much food in these bins, that the students are unable to deal with it all.

The bin divers are further dismayed that these supermarkets also put cardboard into their landfill bins. Clearly the waste levy is not a sufficient deterrent for putting cardboard into landfill. A ban on sending organic waste to landfill would be more effective.

My regular requests to this supermarket chain to rectify their poor waste management have been ignored.

I am happy to provide further information on this matter.

I do not expect this particular supermarket chain to be any worse at dealing with food waste than other supermarkets. I simply include this story to demonstrate that a chain that paints itself as striving for the highest standards of sustainability, has such poor food and organic waste practices. This leaves me with little confidence that other retailers perform better.

The above example of poor waste practices demonstrates why we need specified targets for waste emissions reductions. Terms such as “reduce” in the Waste ERRP are simply too ambiguous and allow for negligible improvements at a time when rapid and substantial change is called for. I would like to see more quantifiable terms used in the Waste ERRP.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my views.

Sharee McCammon