

Response to Draft Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan 2020



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Submitted by:

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Executive Summary

Mornington Park Waste Transfer Station (MPWTS) is a 100% privately owned waste management and resource recovery facility located in the City of Clarence.

With a vision to create 'sustainable futures through resource recovery', MPWTS aims to be recognised as a leader in waste minimisation innovation.

We are active in the collection and transfer, sorting, recycling, and reuse of waste prior to final disposal of waste that cannot be recycled or reused into landfill – we do not own or operate a landfill site.

Our response to the Draft Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan 2020 has foundations in our belief that a shift to the circular economy is a fundamental element in supporting Tasmania's 2040 renewable energy target.

We believe that appropriately scaled investments will be required across Tasmania's regions to take advantage of the renewable energy options that are most suited to those regions. From our perspective this includes investments that turn waste streams into low cost, reliable, and clean energy with the dual benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We believe that partnership-based approaches are required to deliver smart and sound collaborative solutions to divert waste from landfill and introduce waste to energy projects for the benefit of Tasmania's circular economy.

For this reason, we support a Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan that finds the right balance for Tasmania between appropriately scaled regional investments in renewable energy and large-scale renewable energy options including hydrogen.

We would be happy to provide more information to support any of our comments or recommendations should it be required.

Overview

Mornington Park Waste Transfer Station (MPWTS) is a 100% privately owned waste management and resource recovery facility located in the City of Clarence.

Since 2001, MPWTS has been a vital service provider to the southern region, providing critical waste management infrastructure and services to the Municipalities of Clarence, Sorell, and beyond.

MPWTS employees more than 20 FTE's; currently 15% of our workforce are living with a disability. We operate under an Integrated Management System with certification to ISO 9001 (Quality), ISO 14001 (Environmental), and ISO 45001 (Safety) management systems.

MPWTS is active in the collection and transfer, sorting, recycling, and reuse of waste prior to final disposal to landfill of material that cannot be recycled or reused – MPWTS does not own or operate a landfill site.

MPWTS purpose is to economically divert materials from landfill. The site manages this by recovering materials that can be recycled, repurposed (such as into compost) or recovered and sold through the Second Chance Reuse Shop and Building Yard.

Understanding the life cycle of materials moving through the site and the potential to increase diversion rates under circular economy principles led MPWTS to enter a research contract with the University of Sydney in 2019. MPWTS has a significant amount of data and looking to take the next steps with insights to support its diversion strategies, increase opportunities for new product development from recovered waste materials, and provide data to stakeholders related to carbon footprint and circular economy performance. The research report received from the University of Sydney in 2020 supports the potential for MPWTS to work on renewable energy options.

Our perspectives on the waste and renewable energy options:

The State's clean green image resonates with many Tasmanians. In an environment where consumption is on the increase and the rate of waste per person continues to grow, most Tasmanian's work to recycle and express opinions on reducing waste.

This is supported by the National Waste Report (2018) and Tasmania's Draft Waste Action Plan which indicate that compared to a selection of other developed economies, Australia generates more waste than the average and the proportion it recycles is less than the average.

Due to Australia's inability to adequately resource its waste and recycling sector we are now facing circumstances where dry-recyclable materials are increasingly moving to landfill due to a lack of capacity and innovative solutions to recycle and/or repurpose. In Tasmania, this is compounded by the volume of waste we produce, which limits the attractiveness of investments unless they occur on a regional basis – a large proportion of recycled material is moved interstate adding cost to the process. In addition, rising costs of business (fuel, labour, cost of capital) place pressure on cash flow and investment opportunities within the sector.

Across Tasmania's regions, there is also the recognition that food and organic waste streams can provide different opportunities for use, including raw material for bioenergy. The challenge with a number of these technologies is finding the combination of materials to generate the calorific value to produce the energy anticipated from the investment. This requires new supply chain partnerships, growth in technical capacity, and collaborative decision making across industry, local, and state government environments to realise the full potential of bioenergy to support Tasmania's growth in renewable energy capabilities.

We believe that the Renewable Waste Action Plan should more strongly embrace and discuss options to support the bioenergy sector.

We support Tasmanian Government initiatives that find the right balance between appropriately scaled regional investments and large-scale investments to -

- assist waste management and resource recovery facilities increase the diversion of material from landfill and capture their energy potential by providing investment funds sourced through sufficiently positioned waste levies or other funding initiatives;
- where regional locations are not supported by waste management and resource recovery options, establish renewable energy investment programs that promote the uptake of bioenergy solutions in those regions;
- provide an agile policy and regulatory framework to support regions to develop feasible renewable energy projects that include bioenergy options;
- ensure that new training grants support the development of skills in all forms of renewable energy including technologies available to the waste management and resource recovery sector such as bioenergy; and
- develop an environment where all segments of the renewable energy space can participate in discussions with equal voice and/or representation.

Our perspectives on renewable energy policy frameworks

In taking a leadership position in Australia's renewable energy space, supporting opportunities for reducing waste, developing the resource recovery industry, and creating the shift to a circular economy are key.

For Tasmania, we believe that circular economy supply chains are built on partnerships which ensure that waste is diverted away from landfill and directed towards Australian based reuse, recycling, repurposing, and waste to energy initiatives.

The community needs to see real investment at industry level to support their efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle – we cannot afford to undo years of habit-forming behaviour by reducing confidence in the Tasmanian waste industry's ability to manage waste away from landfill.

Collaboration on the circular economy will be critical to achieving Tasmania's renewable energy target and maintaining our reputation as a clean, healthy, and sustainable place to live, work, and visit, whilst supporting the clean energy needs of the nation. We believe that the policy framework required to coordinate the renewable energy growth envisaged will need to include circular economy thinking and establish the right balance between technology and investment solutions that are fit for purpose for each region.

Current experience for waste management and recycling industry participants is that they are missing from many conversations related to renewable energy investments and we strongly encourage a framework that includes their participation.

Closing statement

As noted in the Overview, MPWTS is a 100% privately owned waste management and resource recovery facility, providing a vital service to the municipality of Clarence and beyond. We have a unique view, built from nearly 20 years of successful operation, and bring the perspective of a waste industry participant who is already active in the circular economy. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our perspective on where bioenergy fits within Tasmania's Renewable Energy Action Plan.