

Future Melbourne Committee Meeting No.54, 16 April 2019
Council Meeting Room, Level 2, Town Hall Administration Building
Agenda Item 6.3 Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030

Submission to Future Melbourne Committee

We are writing in regards to *Agenda Item 6.3 Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030*.

While we do commend the team behind this plan for their approach towards a Zero Waste circular economy, and for the 10 priority areas identified, as well as some of the implementation actions like the Kensington organic waste collection trial, it still has a lot of work to do before the Future of Melbourne Committee should endorse it (in reference to point 10.1).

We do commend the plan's positioning: "Environmental sustainability is at the heart of this strategy. The city must be designed and managed to minimise the city's environmental footprint which will improve the health of ecosystems and social wellbeing." (pg.108)

It states all the right conclusions and all the right priority goals. Where it is lacking is the actions and roadmap that will get us to those goals. It's not setting up Melbourne as the innovative city we'd like to believe it is; with a clear direction, roadmap, and action plan. In its current form, Appendix 3 is mostly presenting the minimum actions that our city should be doing: mostly building on existing initiatives rather than introducing new innovative ones, with low, conservative targets by 2030 and no defined targets by 2023 when it's due to be evaluated and help inform the direction of this plan moving forward.

The current plan is lacking in showing a genuine effort in reducing Melbourne's contribution to Climate Change and in bringing the change at the scale that is currently needed if we are to avoid the dire future the IPCC, the world's leading Climate Change committee of scientists, is currently outlining in no uncertain terms. We only have until 2030 to get this right and to make drastic changes, as per the leading scientific experts in the field. After that, it'll be too late for any change to make any significant impact. If we don't act decisively now, with large-scale actions and strong targets, moving us towards a specified direction, we will continue to head towards the 6th mass extinction that humans have already triggered through mass-exploitation and other behaviours like careless waste management. An extinction which, as scientists have identified since 2015, is already underway with alarming extinction rates of other species, and with the human species following next.

This report doesn't need minor editorials at this point (in reference to point 10.3). It still needs more work with more ambitious, innovative, and decisive targets and actions. Including major improvements on the target numbers set for City of Melbourne waste. From its operational waste being higher than the targets set for households and industries, to its events waste output, which should follow the Zero Waste approach recommended and include a 95-99% target of diversion from landfill targets by 2030. It should also include a much higher target than a 20% reduction of household waste produced by 2030, or a 50% household organic waste recovery target, and be working towards a long-term goal of clean, renewable energy instead of building new, costly facilities to burn waste for energy, which goes against the priority of significantly reducing waste with 'avoid, reduce, reuse' by commoditising and creating a need for waste.

We've been patiently waiting for revision after revision, to see the innovative and decisive action our city needs for nearly a year now. Taking responsibility for its own and stakeholders' waste output, actively reducing its waste, and in creating a circular economy ecosystem. Only to be disappointed by the output each time. Wasting valuable time in the process, with tonnes of increasing waste ending up in landfill, affecting all of our futures. We only have one chance to get this right, before it's too late. And this plan in its current form, unfortunately has not gotten it right yet. We need to think bigger and bolder, delivering on the feedback of the community consultations and including actions primarily aiming to avoid & reduce, plastic waste reduction goals, methane gas emission reduction targets, clear recycling targets not just a 50% contamination target, commercial & industry sector waste reduction and recycling targets higher than just 75% (a small shift from the current 61% baseline) - a sector that accounts for 70% of all landfill waste. We need clear programmes and targets on reducing waste in the hospitality and food retail industry, like eliminating all non-recyclable take-away coffee cups in the CBD & Southbank and effective organic waste recovery with clear targets, as well as launching a CDS plan to prove results to State government and encourage a faster statewide adoption rather than just taking a position on it, among others.

We need to be braver and more ambitious with the actions our city can and should take.

As Maya Angelou said "When we know better, we do better". We now know better about how waste is a key contributor to Climate Change, along with proven methods to avoid, reduce, and reuse. Isn't it time we do better? Sooner rather than later?

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