



**Draft State Waste Communication Strategy  
Interim MWAC Submission (February 2014)**

**Status of this Submission**

This Submission has been prepared through the Municipal Waste Advisory Council (MWAC) for the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA). MWAC is a standing committee of WALGA, with delegated authority to represent the Association in all matters relating to solid waste management. MWAC's membership includes the major Regional Councils (waste management) as well as a number of Local Government representatives. This makes MWAC a unique forum through which all the major Local Government waste management organisations cooperate. This Submission therefore represents the consolidated view of Western Australia Local Government. However, individual Local Governments and Regional Councils may have views that differ from the positions taken here.

This Submission was endorsed by MWAC on Wednesday 19 February.

**Introduction**

Waste education and communication are vital to the implementation of effective waste management systems and in order to generate long term behaviour change. Therefore MWAC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft State Waste Communications Strategy.

The key issue for the Strategy is to ensure that any activity undertaken is effective – and most importantly – demonstrably effective. It is no longer enough to only raise awareness of waste management issues, programs need to be clearly linked to specific issues and lead to actual changes in behaviour. As such MWAC considers that it is vital that the Strategy clearly link education/communication activities to specific behaviour change outcomes.

Feedback from the sector has indicated lack of measurable outcomes for waste education and communication activities lead to funding uncertainty. This Strategy offers the opportunity to introduce a robust and consistent approach to identifying if projects have been successful and providing evidence to assist with future programs.

This Submission is structured to first identify MWAC's Policy Statement on Waste Education, then comment on each of the sections in the Strategy.

**MWAC Policy Position**

MWAC has previously developed a Policy Statement on Waste Education which outlines that:

*Due to uncertainty surrounding roles and responsibilities for Waste Management Education there is the potential for conflicting messages from the different spheres of government.*

The Policy Statement was developed:

*With reference to Local Governments twin roles as a representative of the community and as a service provider. Local Government must represent community values, since these are the fundamental basis for undertaking new challenges and continuing past work. Local Government must also apply its service provider expertise when considering means by which to achieve community benefits.*

Given the importance of clearly stated roles and responsibilities, it is worth including this extract from the WALGA Policy Statement:

*The role of Local Government in Waste Management Education has primarily been seen as one of 'behavioural change' which:*

- *Informs the community about waste and recycling services available;*
- *Informs the community on appropriate types of waste that can/cannot be recycled;*
- *Shows the community that Local Government is leading by example with an active role in recycling and Waste Management Education programs;*
- *Keeps the local community informed on waste management initiatives and issues; and*
- *Through active community participation and support, achieves waste diversion from landfill.*

*The role of State and Federal Government in Waste Management Education includes:*

- *Improving the perception of the overall environmental benefits associated with waste avoidance and recycling;*
- *Showing the community that State/Federal Government is leading by example with active roles in Waste Management Education programs;*
- *Providing assistance, through funding for Waste Management Education programs;*
- *Creating Waste Management Education and recycling programs that can be utilised cooperatively between Local and State Governments;*
- *Promoting community awareness of the environmental impacts of waste; and*
- *Providing appropriate strategies for the community, to minimise their waste impacts.*

## **Background**

The section in the Draft Strategy which covers the background research that has been undertaken is comprehensive and provides a useful context for development of the Strategy, as it highlights the key Target Audiences:

- Residents in the Perth Metropolitan area and in regional centres who have access to kerbside recycling, who currently recycle some of the time and those who currently believe they are recycling all they can;
- C&D waste producing businesses; and
- Other small to medium enterprises (e.g. hotels, cafes etc)

This section also highlights the work WALGA undertook in relation to the needs of Local Government and Regional Councils. The recommendations from this report were for the Waste Authority to:

- Provide greater leadership;
- Provide ongoing funding for waste education and engagement;
- Develop consistent branding and imagery for use by Local Government and Regional Councils; and
- Provide a central information resource on effective methods of waste education and communication.

Other inputs to the draft Strategy are also acknowledged, such as the Consultation workshop held and the Policy documents developed by the Waste Authority on the Waste Hierarchy and Source Separation. The economic benefits of improving the waste sector are also explored, particularly the benefits in terms of jobs of recycling.

**Comment: The Background section of the Draft Strategy provides an overview of the range of research and consultation that have been considered in the development of the Strategy.**

## **Strategy Direction**

This section outlines some of the approaches that are envisioned for the Strategy, these include:

- Research;
- Mass Media Campaign;
- State and Local Government as role models;
- Leadership role;
- Business;

- Partnerships;
- Waste Wise Schools;
- Social media;
- The importance of reporting back to the community; and
- Implementation.

## **Research**

This section identifies the need for ongoing research to evaluate the success of the draft Strategy and to identify how behaviour change for waste avoidance can be undertaken.

The final paragraph of this section appears to make recommendations to the Waste Authority in relation to using the national/international research and linking with tertiary institutions.

In relation to research, it should be highlighted that it could include learning from existing programs in other jurisdictions – rather than research being an activity which is undertaken by consultants. Jurisdictions (practitioners) undertaking waste education programs are often very keen to share the outcomes of interventions. The Department of Environment Regulation has good contacts with other States/Territories in Australia and could provide the linkage to other practitioners.

**Comment: The Waste Authority take the opportunity to learn from activities in other jurisdictions regarding successful and unsuccessful approaches to behaviour change.**

The third paragraph of the document identifies some actions for the Waste Authority. As this is a Waste Authority document and outlines the Waste Authorities strategy, the wording should reflect commitments from the Authority to action. For example using wording like 'the Waste Authority will' rather than 'the Waste Authority should'.

## **Mass Media Campaign**

The mass media campaign section mentions several options in relation to general communication. As previously stated the key is to ensure such a campaign achieves changes to behaviour and those changes can be measured.

**Comment: For any mass media campaign, the changes to behaviour sought and how those changes are going to be measured must be determined.**

## **State and Local Government as Role Models**

This section identifies the importance, for community perception, of State and Local Government leading by example.

**Comment: MWAC supports the idea of State and Local Government leading by example, as an important strategic direction.**

## **Leadership Role**

This section identifies the feedback from Local Government that the Waste Authority/State Government should provide more leadership in this area.

**Comment: MWAC supports the Waste Authority/State Government providing greater leadership in relation to waste education and communication.**

## **Business**

Businesses are a focus area, both C&D business and Small-Medium enterprises.

## **Partnerships**

The Waste Authority has worked closely with a number of stakeholders, including MWAC. The intent of the strategy is to continue to work closely with those organisations which can contribute to achieving the outcomes of the Strategy.

**Comment: MWAC supports the Waste Authority working in partnerships, where those partnerships can clearly demonstrate outcomes which contribute to achieving the targets in the State Waste Strategy.**

### **Waste Wise Schools**

The Waste Authority will continue to support this Program, with additional programs in secondary schools being developed.

### **Social Media**

The Authority itself is not planning to engage directly in social media, but will through partnerships and supporting organisations that communicate through social media.

### **The importance of reporting back to the community**

The draft Strategy identifies the necessity of reporting back to the community as a way of highlighting the positive outcomes.

**Comment: MWAC strongly supports informing the community of positive waste management outcomes.**

### **Implementation**

This section identifies the Communications Strategy is intended as a high level document, with specific implementation plans for each section.

**Comment: MWAC supports the idea of specific and more detailed implementation plans, as long as the Communications Strategy clearly sets the framework for these plans.**

### **Western Australian Waste Strategy: Creating the right environment**

There is a section in the Draft Strategy which identifies the overarching objectives and targets of the WA Waste Strategy, however, the linkage between the draft Strategy and the Waste Strategy and Business Plan is not altogether clear. In the *Western Australian Waste Strategy: creating the right environment*, under Strategic Objective 5 there are listed 6 specific strategies, focusing on knowledge, infrastructure and incentives. Given this structure, MWAC considers that it would be more appropriate to structure State Waste Communication Strategy in the same manner to clearly link the different activities to what is covered in the WA Waste Strategy. The Strategies that appear in the WA Waste Strategy are high level approaches, which do require more detail and that could be included through the State Waste Communication Strategy.

The Waste Authority Business Plan also provides more detail on specific Programs. Again the linkage between these two documents is not entirely clear.

**Comment: The link between the strategies and strategic direction provided in the WA State Waste Strategy and Waste Authority Business Plan and the Communication Strategy needs to be more clearly identified.**

**Comment: The specific strategies in the State Waste Strategy could provide a structure for the Communications Strategy.**

### **Other Waste Reduction Objectives**

This section in the draft Strategy identifies some additional comments in relation to waste reduction, however it is not clear what the link is between these objectives and the Waste Strategy. These objectives appear to come from the drivers section of the document. While worthwhile objectives, this section of the document is perhaps not the optimal place for their inclusion.

**Comment: Remove or relocate the Other Waste Reduction Objectives.**

## Communication Objectives

The communication objectives are identified in table 1, with comments on each.

Objective	Comment
To build levels of knowledge and behaviour change in accordance with the waste hierarchy.	Agree – it is important that behaviour change occur from waste avoidance to disposal.
To enhance the profile of the Waste Authority to increase awareness and behaviour change towards waste reduction and recycling.	Increasing the profile of the Waste Authority may not be the most effective way to quickly achieve increased awareness and behaviour change. Achieving awareness of a 'brand' is difficult, costly and time consuming. It is also important to be clear about who the target audience for that 'brand' is. So while it is vital that the Waste Authority has influence within Government, increasing the public profile of the Waste Authority to achieve the outcomes of the communication strategy is not as importance. Increasing behaviour change, including waste reduction and recycling, could be achieved through partnerships with organisations which can already communicate with the general public. In a similar way the 'Social Media' section of this publication identified the Authority was not focusing on Social media.
To increase understanding of the economic and environmental benefits of waste reduction and recycling.	Agree
To work collaboratively with local government and regional councils to plan and implement integrated programs targeting metropolitan solid waste (MSW).	Agree
To work collaboratively with industry, local government and regional councils to plan and implement integrated programs targeting Construction and Demolition (C&D) and Commercial and Industrial (C&I) waste.	Agree
To support communication work being undertaken by others that effectively leads to the achievement of the waste targets.	Agree

Table 1: Comments on objectives

## Broad Strategic Approach

The three broad strategies are identified. These Strategies and specific comments on them are identified in Table 2.

Strategy	Comment
Centrally coordinated and implemented programs to promote and reinforce consistent messaging about waste as a resource, improved recycling, and behaviour based around the waste hierarchy.	It is not clear from the wording, who will be undertaking the central coordination and implementation of Programs. The Waste Authority clearly had a major role in the coordination of activities – but may have a more limited role in implementation – depending on the approach taken.
Centrally coordinated and implemented programs to target specific target audiences identified through research or consultation such as residents 'action', residents 'maintenance', industry, business, schools and institutions.	As for Strategy one.
Support of regional and local government communication initiatives which continue the consistent messaging, and value-add in the local community context.	Agree

Table 2: Comments on specific strategies

While these Strategies have the potential to be successful, a key concern is the lack of a clear link between these and the Strategies identified in the Waste Strategy.

#### **Proposed Australian PR Evaluation Model**

The proposed model in the Draft Strategy appears to be very much focused on an approach for Businesses – rather than Government agencies. For example, the Reporting column which looks at 'sales/profit'. For the purposes of this strategy a much similar approach could be taken. For further comments see the Evaluation section.

#### **Target Audiences**

Various target audiences are listed in this section, including specific sections of residents in the metropolitan and non-metropolitan area. These groups have been identified by the research undertaken by the Waste Authority and are termed 'Action' and 'Maintenance' stage; meaning those residents who recycled some of the time, but not consistency and those who believe they recycle all they can. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) and Aboriginal residents are mentioned specifically under one of the target audiences.

**Comment: Clarify if CaLD and Aboriginal residents will be a target group for each of the types of resident groups identified.**

Partnerships are also a major part of the Target Audience section. While they may be a target audience for some communications, they are also major stakeholders in the roll out of the various communication approaches. For example WALGA and Local Government are listed in the target audience section.

**Comment: Instead of listing the Partnerships under Target Audience, list as Stakeholders.**

#### **Messages**

A range of messages are identified in this section – the majority focus on general themes rather than specific messages. Given this is an overall strategy document this is appropriate, however these messages need to be clearly linked to both the research undertaken and the programs to be delivered.

#### **Implementation Plan**

It was MWAC's understanding that the aim of this draft Plan was to provide a broad overview, rather than specific detail on proposed approaches. The inclusion of these specific Implementation Plans, seem to be counter to that approach. It is suggested that instead of providing detail in these plans, a simple outline of what would be *in* an implementation plan would be useful. For example, the strategy, implementation approach, then evaluation methodology and target.

## Evaluation

Effective evaluation of interventions, which aim to change attitudes and behaviour, is vital. Without that, there can be no certainty that funds spent on the various activities have been used in the best way possible. The evaluation approach suggested in the draft document seems to be relatively complex, requiring multiple approaches and somewhat complicated methodologies (particularly for the Evaluation Framework). The Evaluation Framework also seems to be more geared towards a commercial operation rather than a government entity. There also seems to be a mixture of project success criteria included – such as ‘delivery of programs on time and on budget’ and general project planning approach. While that is important it is more of a project / contract management issue. A simple approach to evaluation would be to identify for each activity:

- Outcomes – did the program/activity meet the outcomes it was seeking to achieve? Measured as both
  - Attitude: were people aware of the program/activity?
  - Behaviour: Did it change their behaviour in a quantifiable way?

How these factors are going to be measured can be set up at the beginning of any project and will be consistent whatever the project.

## Additional Comments on Prioritisation

In the implementation plans, a large range of actions could be identified. A framework is needed to ensure that actions are prioritised to achieve the best outcomes.

Table 3 identifies options for decision making frameworks, which encompasses the importance of the activity, the likelihood of success, or whether there are other reasons that the activity should be undertaken. If these factors are considered for each communication activity undertaken, then the various planned activities can be evaluated in a consistent context.

Factor	Questions to ask	Example
Importance of activity	Will undertaking the activity make a substantial contribution to the achievement of the targets in the State Waste Strategy?	For example, a communication project to support the roll out of a three bin system in a large Local Government would be make a significant contribution to achieving the Targets in the Strategy.
Likelihood of success	Is this a new activity, or is it based on a previously successful activity?	For example, the communication project is based on a successful project undertaken by a Local Government to reduce the amount of plastic used by consumers.
Other factors	Are there other factors that mean this activity is necessary?	For example, a campaign on how to dispose of Household Hazardous Waste won't make a substantial contribution to the overall waste diversion targets, but will focus on materials that are hazardous to the environment and human health.

Table 3: Decision making framework for prioritising communications projects.

## Further Consultation

The consultative approach employed by the Waste Authority in developing the draft Strategy is appreciated and MWAC is keen to engage further with regard to the development of education campaigns – to ensure there is an integration with existing messages and systems.

## **Conclusion**

This Submission contains a range of very specific comments on the detail of the Plan. However, the main issues that are vital for a successful plan are:

- A clear and concise Executive Summary;
- Clearly link the strategies identified in the Waste Strategy / Business Plan to those in the Communications Strategy;
- Identify the decision making framework for how actions to be undertaken will be prioritised;
- Simplify the evaluation framework, so that the main focus is measuring attitude and behaviour change; and
- Make sure the actions undertaken are very clearly linked to the measurements for attitude and behaviour change.