

Queensland Chapter AAEE
PO Box 134
Albany Creek QLD 4035



29 July 2010

Project Manager – Queensland's Waste Strategy consultation
Natural Resources and Environment
Department of Environment and Resource Management
GPO Box 2454
BRISBANE QLD 4001

RE: Queensland's Waste Strategy 2010 – 2020 - Waste Avoidance and Recycling Consultation Draft

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Australian Association for Environment Education (AAEE) is Australia's peak body for environmental education. It was established in 1979 and has chapters and affiliates in every state and territory. AAEE was instrumental in the development of Australia's first National Action Plan for environmental education in 2000 and the second National Action Plan that was released in 2009.

I would like to commend the Queensland Government in the development of *Queensland's Waste Strategy 2010 – 2020 - Waste Avoidance and Recycling Consultation Draft*, especially the inclusion of the waste hierarchy. Recycling is often the action that is focused on as the first step in waste minimisation, whereas it is the fourth step in the waste hierarchy. This needs to be a strong focus in all educational strategies that stem from the implementation of this strategy. In fact we believe the name of the strategy should be called Queensland Waste Minimisation Strategy 2010 – 2020.

The strategy includes many good points including the emphasis it gives to:

- waste avoidance and source separation;
- working through collaboration and partnerships;
- the government setting an example through its own practices;
- integration with existing programs;
- engagement and education to underpin better decisions and long-term improved practices, including local engagement and participation;
- building research and development capacity; and
- substantial waste reduction targets.

However what the strategy also has in common with many other waste and sustainability strategies is the absence of specific guidance on **what types** of learning experience, educational approach and learning objectives or outcomes are likely to make the most difference to implementing the Strategy's 26 broad actions and achieving the strategy's goals and targets, with the exception of its mention of "local engagement and participation."

Research in behaviour change strategies indicates higher order learning is critical for lasting, well-conceived, self-directed and self-motivated action to minimize waste. Information transfer and top-down, didactic approaches fall well short of achieving this, but these transformative educational strategies are not acknowledged in the strategy. Extensive past experience shows that the necessary high order learning is frequently overlooked during strategy implementation, especially if the strategy document lacks specific guidance on this.

We would highly recommend the authors of this strategy review contemporary environmental education for sustainability documents and community based behaviour change research papers that demonstrate best practice in achieving behaviour change outcomes for waste minimisation. If the implementation strategy does not include transformative environmental education and sustainability concepts that encompass contemporary skill sets, world views and levels of power/influence then the learning is not maximized.

working for sustainability

This is one of the reasons why Queensland has the lowest level of recycling in Australia.

The draft strategy, while emphasizing research and development, does not seem to include the key role research and development plays in implementing behaviour change strategies.

In addition, the 26 actions are arranged partly by sector, with little or no reference to the formal education sector. One only has to look at the huge contribution made by the formal education sector in the implementation of Waste Wise in Victoria through the Eco Recycling (now Sustainability Victoria through their Resource Smart AuSSI Vic program) and in New South Wales through Resources NSW to see the potential for Queensland. These highly successful and very effective environmental education programs for schools are supported through the allocation of a percentage of the waste level to quality transformative, not transmissive, environmental education for sustainability programs and serves for schools.

There are over 1,700 state and non-state schools in Queensland which represents one in every community. There are over 500,000 students and 60,000 staff who attend these facilities. That's a significant percentage of Queensland population that are an easy target for a contemporary environmental education for sustainability program, like Waste Wise Schools. This would have a huge impact in the school and the community. In Queensland we already have the Queensland Environmentally Sustainable Schools Initiative (QESSI) which is based on the contemporary transformation processes involving an alliance of strategic partners as well as a network of regional QESSI hubs across the state. The current programs that are being implemented by the QESSI Alliance partners include; Reef Guardian, Green and Healthy, Travel Smart, Plant Smart, Waterwise, EnergyWise, Wipe Out Waste and several other local council waste education programs, Schools Grounds for Learning, Earth Smart, Solar and Energy Efficiency to name a few. What is missing is a Wastewise program for schools. The Environmental Protection Agency managed a Wastewise Schools program in the late 1990s through the Eco Biz program, so this is not a new concept for the Department of Environment and Resource management.

The education sector should be included in the waste levy like other commercial operators. Several secondary schools have a population of over 2,000 students and staff. They can be bigger than some small businesses so we believe they should not be exempt from any disposal levy charges. These levies will be an incentive to reduce the waste to landfill by the schools.

2010 is the Year of Environmental Sustainability for Queensland Schools. This would be an ideal year to announce the launch of a Wastewise program for all Queensland Schools that is funded through a percentage of the landfill waste levy, which is the case in most other states and territories.

I hope these suggestions are useful and look forward to assisting in anyway possible to achieve the goals and targets of the Queensland's Waste "Minimisation" Strategy 2010 – 2020,

Yours for a sustainable future through environmental education



Cam Mackenzie
National Treasurer
Email: c.mackenzie@uq.net.au

working for sustainability