



Submission to the Queensland Waste Strategy Consultation
August, 2010

Reverse Garbage Co-operative Ltd,
PO Box 5626, West End, 4101

Who we are

Reverse Garbage was established eleven years ago to support Friends of the Earth – Brisbane. We are a not-for-profit worker run co-operative that collects industrial and commercial discards from approximately 300 Brisbane factories and businesses, diverting them from landfill to make them available at low cost to the community. We facilitate the re-use of materials in their existing form to minimise the energy and time required to recycle. In a very practical way, Reverse Garbage encourages people to reduce their consumption of new materials and to re-use resources destined for the dump.

The materials, specifically selected based on their re-use potential, are collected free of charge and so save dumping fees for business.

Open to the public, the Reverse Garbage warehouse is at 296 Montague Road, West End. Materials collected include textiles, timber, tiles, perspex, plastics, polystyrene, props, paper and card, metal, vinyl, wadding, rubber, windows, doors, shop fittings and merchandising products.

Customers include home renovators, teachers, students, artists, prop makers, model makers and craftspeople. Our largest customer group consists of schools and childcare centres with many teachers preferring an environmentally responsible alternative to mainstream art supplies. We send materials to schools and childcare centres outside Brisbane.

Reverse Garbage is home to Echoes Gift Shop which showcases and sells the work of local artists and designers who use salvaged materials to create useful products.

Reverse Garbage runs creative workshops in schools, at festivals and on-site at Reverse Garbage. We offer the public a range of both practical and creative activities, with participants learning about the environmental implications of waste and consumption as well as creating something unique from salvaged materials. We believe this constitutes an important contribution to community education about consumption and waste issues and have found there is a distinct lack of understanding in the community about the resource management hierarchy, specifically the benefits of resource *reuse* as opposed to *recycling*.

Our submission

Reverse Garbage sees the Queensland Waste Strategy as an important step forward in addressing the growing issues of waste in Queensland. We congratulate the Government on its proposal to implement a waste levy and subsequently invest in waste reduction practices. The focus on the resource management hierarchy is welcomed.

As the problem of over-consumption lies at the heart of most, if not all, environmental problems, the Queensland Waste Strategy has the potential to be a key instrument with which to address sustainability issues that face this State.

Reverse Garbage Co-op Ltd.

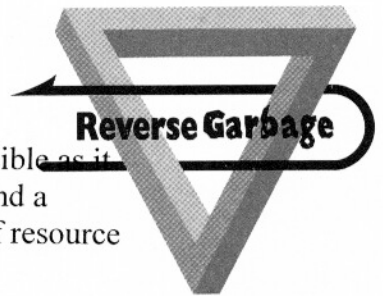
296 Montague Road (PO Box 5626), West End, Qld 4101

Phone: (07) 3844 9744

Fax: (07) 3844 6905

<http://www.reversegarbage.com.au>

Email: info@reversegarbage.com.au



Reverse Garbage advocates re-use of materials rather than recycling where possible as it results in a greater reduction in energy, water and other resource consumption and a greater reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. We see the following benefits of resource re-use facilities such as ours:

1. The energy required to process recycled materials (usually a large scale and energy intensive industrial process) is not required when simply collecting, sorting and re-selling useful materials.
2. The small scale that re-use organisations such as ours can operate on, means that materials can travel much smaller distances before and after reaching the consumer. Materials are collected from the industrial areas of towns and cities and taken directly to retail outlets that, due to their relatively small size, can be located close to densely populated urban areas. The current recycling scenario where container loads of metals and plastics are shipped across the country or even overseas before being shipped back as consumer products sits in stark contrast with the energy efficient nature of a locally based 're-use' resource recovery operation.
3. Re-use operations like Reverse Garbage encourage consumers to re-assess the way they use and throw out materials on a day to day basis by demonstrating the usefulness of things that would otherwise have been destined for landfill. We also challenge consumers to take a more creative approach to their use of materials in their lifestyles. We believe these are crucial parts of changing individuals' behaviour to a more conscientious approach to energy and resource use and ultimately a reduction in consumption (the biggest GHG saver of all).
4. Clearly, any instance where a consumer purchases a product from a re-use operation like Reverse Garbage, rather than an equivalent product manufactured from virgin or recycled resources involves a significant and immediate reduction in processing and transport related resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. We believe it also has the potential for massive long term environmental benefits as the consumer, at least for a moment, is shown an alternative to the unthinking consumption patterns common in today's society.

Recommendations:

That the Queensland Government commits to greater efforts to address consumption by both end users and industry, emphasising the resource management hierarchy.

That the Queensland Waste Strategy acknowledges the role of community re-use operations in reducing resource use and greenhouse gas emissions even at small scales and the Queensland Government considers supporting such initiatives.

Thankyou for the opportunity to input into the development of this strategy. We look forward to working with you into the future to promote waste reduction and a more sustainable Queensland.

Sincerely,

Bill Ennals and Eleanor Smith

On behalf of the board of Reverse Garbage Co-op Ltd

Reverse Garbage Co-op Ltd.

296 Montague Road (PO Box 5626), West End, Qld 4101

Phone: (07) 3844 9744

Fax: (07) 3844 6905

<http://www.reversegarbage.com.au>

Email: info@reversegarbage.com.au