



Innovative, sustainable energy, water and waste management

For our region to establish itself as a leader in renewable energy production; effective, sustainable water management; and innovative approaches to waste management to improve environmental and service delivery outcomes



Removal or redistribution of the Waste Levy

Goal: *Strategic Action #10.3* - Increased recycling, reduced landfill and improved, cost-effective service delivery through collaborative, innovative approaches to waste management.

Background: The *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (POEO Act) requires certain licensed waste facilities to pay a contribution to the NSW Government for each tonne of waste received at the facility.

Waste and recycling management is a major responsibility for councils, and is significant socially, environmentally and economically. As a region in the NR we face a future impacted by waste disposal challenges related to pressure on landfill and a changing recycling industry.

In 2016/17, the NSW Gov't collected \$726 million from LG, community, businesses and industry via the waste levy, but only committed to use \$72 million on waste avoidance and recycling in 2017-18.

Policy Context: In NSW, waste activities and strategy are primarily governed by the State under the direction of the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA). Local councils aim to meet State government targets and are usually responsible for the collection and disposal of waste.

Regional groups, such as North East Waste, provide support to Councils and help facilitate collaboration and resource sharing. At a Federal level there exists a National Waste Policy but the day to day operations of waste management are generally governed at a State and Local Government level. Other new legislation impacting on waste management in NSW and also in Queensland is the introduction of the Container Deposit Scheme in December 2017.

It is imperative that LG has a 'seat at the table' in setting future policy direction on the waste levy.

What has been achieved: Under the State Government's *Waste Less Recycle More* initiative, a number of challenges have been met. Significant progress has been made in areas such as organics collection and processing, managing household problem wastes, waste avoidance and improved engagement of the commercial sector. However, many challenges remain. NRJO councils are part of North East Waste (NEW), a voluntary regional waste group, formed in 1997.

In 2013 a Regional Waste Strategy was developed in collaboration with Councils to set the strategic direction of waste management through a coordinated and collaborative approach that optimises skills and resource sharing opportunities. NEW has an updated Strategy to guide the region in 2017-2021.

It is the firm view of Councils that a great deal can be achieved by the desired policy changes.

Problem: In NSW, councils manage an estimated 3.5 million tonnes of waste generated by residents each year.

Councils across the state work tirelessly to reduce the amount of waste ending up in landfill. According to Environment Protection Authority's Local Gov't Waste and Resource Recovery Data, some councils are achieving up to 77% diversion of waste from landfill.

To achieve these outcomes, councils are dedicating effort across the waste and recycling process to:

- Collect an ever-increasing variety of materials for recycling
- Provide improved waste and recycling education and communication to the community
- Process waste in new ways to increase recycling, decrease reliance on landfills and avoid other environmental impacts.

Support and Partnerships: There is a good strategic alignment between this advocacy area and *the North Coast Regional Plan 2036*, changes to the waste levy would enable pursuit of the following directions:

Direction 4: promote renewable energy opportunities

Direction 5: strengthen communities of interest and cross regional relationships

Direction 21: Coordinate local infrastructure delivery

Support from Local Government NSW's campaign, [Save Our Recycling](#), so that 100% of the Waste Levy collected by the NSW Gov't be reinvested in waste avoidance, recycling and resource recovery.

DPC has advised that that State Gov't. wants to see 'region-changing projects' and DPC is keen to participate in innovative projects such as the Richmond Valley's Energy from Waste Proposal considered by the NRJO General Managers in December 2018.

There is broad community support for change, with the NR region being an outstanding example of a committed community in terms of responsible waste management.

Solution and Actions Sought: Adopting innovative and sustainable approaches to waste will play a vital role in allowing the NR to continue delivery of essential services to regional residents.

That the NSW Government be called upon to ensure that 100% of the levy arising from Section 88 of the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 be used for waste infrastructure and programs, predominantly by local government and the waste sector, for initiatives such as:



- Development of regional and region-specific solutions for sustainable waste management (e.g. soft plastic recycling facilities, green waste, waste to energy).
- Support innovative solutions to reduce waste and waste transport requirements.
- Protect existing and identify new waste management locations.
- Local community waste recovery and repair facilities.
- Funding a wider range of sustainability initiatives, such as marketing and strategies, that promote and support a circular economy.

Above motion unanimously endorsed at the Local Government NSW (LGNSW) 2018 Conference.

Status Quo: No action by the NSW Govt will negatively impact Councils and NR communities

Redistribution of Waste Levy: 100% of waste levy returned and reinvested by Councils will enable opportunities for implementation of pilot or demonstration projects to establish the NR as a 'Centre of Excellence' for innovative waste processing and to realise the potential for economic growth, new infrastructure, new technology and new jobs, particularly in our regional areas.

Removal of Waste Levy: Will enable Councils to direct monies where needed in the budget process to resolve the issue of waste collection and processing.

